

NEGOTIATING BELONGING:
THE CHURCH OF THE EAST'S CONTESTED IDENTITY IN TANG CHINA

by

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To Ann M. Morrow and the late Elbert M. Morrow, my parents

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The University of Texas at Dallas
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
HISTORY OF IDEAS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

May 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the chairman and to the members of my committee, J. Michael Farmer, Rosemary Admiral, Monica Rankin, Peter Park, and Frederick Turner, and also to Cihan Yüksel Muslu, now at the University of Houston. My special thanks to J. Michael Farmer, who did his best to educate me in the *dao* of the sincere China scholar—I will daily examine whether I have mastered and carried out his instruction. He also opened doors for me to meet and to learn from other China scholars beyond UT Dallas.

The scholars of the Tang Studies Society have been generous with their expertise and encouragement. Naming them all would be tedious reading, but I should at least mention Wendi Adamek, Stephen Bokenkamp, Jessey Choo, Anthony DeBlasi, Alexei Ditter, Paul Kroll, Amy McNair, and Anna Shields. The Society's workshop reading Buddhist and Daoist texts and the New Frontiers in the Study of Medieval China workshop at Reed College on *muzhiming* both provided training that I hope bore fruit in this dissertation, and travel subventions from the organizers of each workshop helped to make my attendance possible. I must also mention the helpful feedback that I received generally at a University of Colorado at Boulder Asian studies graduate student conference, and particularly conversations with Paul Kroll and Michael Nylan which are now reflected in my discussion of Hua Xian and family.

A travel grant from the University of Kansas East Asian Library and the assistance of Vickie Doll and Michiko Ito made possible the core research in Chinese language sources from which this dissertation launched. In Luoyang, Mao Yangguang kindly met with me and my entourage, and he provided background on the *muzhiming* of Hua Xian and the Lady née An, helped me to

obtain rubbings of the stones, and introduced us to Wang Linghong who graciously hosted us at the Longmen Museum where the *muzhiming* are kept.

I am indebted to the McDermott Library's interlibrary loan staff and to Alexander Rodriguez, research librarian extraordinaire, who doggedly pursued that wayward book for me. My thanks to Thomasina Hickmann, Madhavi Biswas, Sharron Conrad, Jennifer Kraemer, and Lance Lusk for their help and camaraderie in the writing process. Travel grants from UTD's School of Arts & Humanities and from the Tang Studies Society enabled me to present my research at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting where I benefited from valuable questions and comments.

The love and support of my wife, Cheeying, and our daughter, Michelle, have been essential. Not only my help and anchor at home, they were my charming entourage adding to the fun and excitement of field research. Completing this project has been a long road for us, and now . . .
Woohoo!

April 2019

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The University of Texas at Dallas, 2019

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The Church of the East entered along the Silk Roads from Persia through Central Asia to China during the prosperous and cosmopolitan Tang dynasty, and the church, naming itself *Jingjiao*, enjoyed an official status before the imperial court from 638 to 845 CE. This dissertation uses four important stone-inscribed commemorative texts from the *Jingjiao* community, along with the larger historical record, to explore the ways leaders and well-placed lay people of the church sought to negotiate for the church and for themselves a place of belonging in China even as various dynamic forces within Chinese society contested that identity.

A crucial part of *Jingjiao*'s context is the method of the church-state relationship that the Church of the East had learned under Sassanian rule and continued under Muslim rule, for the model of political and social integration with religious distinctiveness marked *Jingjiao*'s attempts to negotiate its place of belonging in Tang China.

Beginning with the *Jingjiao bei*'s account of *Jingjiao* in the High Tang, this study also draws upon other transmitted and excavated texts to explore how *Jingjiao* leaders sought to negotiate a place for the church within the Tang state and society during the empire's most secure and

broad-minded period. Though *Jingjiao* experienced difficulty during the time of Wuzetian's Zhou dynasty and the tumult of the restoration of the Tang, the record of *Jingjiao*'s response and efforts to reclaim its lost position reveal yet more of its strategy to negotiate a legitimate identity in China.

A rhetorical analysis of the *bei*'s visual rhetoric as well as of its text preface and verse traces *Jingjiao*'s argument that, as China recovers from the devastation of the An-Shi Rebellion and emperor Dezong begins to institute reforms to restore a political structure nearer to that of pre-Rebellion times, the Creator-God, the Three-in-One who reaches out to humankind through the Messiah, has blessed China when wise emperors honored *Jingjiao*, and He stands ready to bless emperor Dezong as he follows their precedent and honors God by securing the church's place before the Court and, thus, in Chinese society.

The study then draws primarily upon recently excavated commemorative stone inscriptions from three near-contemporaries from Luoyang's *Jingjiao* community. Rhetorical analyses of the *muzhiming* of Han man (d. 827) and of his Sogdian wife (d. 821) draw upon historical context and studies of the *muzhiming* genre while comparing the oddly different texts in order to draw conclusions about the aspirations and social obstacles facing Christian, mixed Han-Sogdian families in 820s Luoyang. Next, the dissertation studies the innovative use of a Buddhist *dharani* pillar form to bear a *Jingjiao* devotional text and commemorative inscription at the grave of a Sogdian woman by her Han and Sogdian family upon her burial at Luoyang in 815. Then, the discussion weaves observations of the three commemorative stone inscriptions with the time's intellectual and political currents that culminated in the Huichang Persecution of Buddhism and other foreign religions in China.

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CONVENTIONS

Sources cited in the notes are treated with a full bibliographic reference in their first occurrence and an abbreviated author-title reference in each subsequent incident. Full page numbers are always provided. For references to certain Chinese Classics, standard Sinological conventions are followed, omitting reference to specific editions unless necessary. Chinese characters are provided with the initial occurrence of names, titles, or terms. The *pinyin* system of romanization is used throughout this study, except in cases where an alternative system appears in the title of a published work. In the case of adoption of another scholar's translation which uses a different romanization system, I have converted that usage to the *pinyin* system. For official titles and their associated duties and salaries, I have generally followed Charles Hucker's *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Dates in traditional China use a lunar calendar divided roughly into twelve months of thirty days each, with occasional "intercalary months" added to approximate the length of a solar year. When Chinese texts mention a specific date, an equivalent counterpart in the European calendar has been provided according to the Chinese-Gregorian Calendar Converter 兩千年中-西曆轉換 of Academia Sinica, Taiwan (<http://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw>). All quotations from the Holy Bible are from the *English Standard Version*.

INTRODUCTION

The Church of the East mounted the first organized effort to establish Christian faith in China. The church entered China along the Silk Roads from Persia and through Central Asia during the prosperous and cosmopolitan Tang dynasty, and the church enjoyed an official status before the imperial court from 638 to 845 CE. Recent finds of stone inscriptions concerning these Christian believers are revealing new knowledge about their attempts to propagate the faith and to integrate into Chinese society, and how “foreignness” mattered in the course of the Tang dynasty’s evolving historical and ideological context. This dissertation uses the texts of those stone inscriptions along with the larger historical record to explore the ways leaders and relatively well-placed lay people of the Church sought to negotiate for the Church and for themselves a place of belonging in China even as various dynamic forces within Chinese society came to contest that identity.

Though this Christian group is commonly referred to as the “Nestorians” by earlier scholars, current scholarship is moving away from the “Nestorian” label, for naming the church after a man adjudged a heretic by the Western Church implies an uncritical judgment on the doctrine of the organization that generally calls itself the “Church of the East” or the “East Syrian Church.” In China, however, around 780 CE they gave themselves the name *Jingjiao* 景教, “The Luminous Religion.” Therefore, I will use “Church of the East” for the larger church and, where the church’s manifestation in China is concerned, I will use the untranslated *Jingjiao*.

Argument and Organization

This dissertation argues that the Church of the East took lessons learned in the church's homeland and transferred them to the Chinese context as *Jingjiao* sought, through various channels, to integrate itself within China's political and social structures and thus to show itself a valuable subject-partner to the imperial court. China, itself, was dynamic during this time, with the result that some of *Jingjiao*'s attempts to negotiate belonging found initial success, only to be thwarted as invigorated forces arose to contest *Jingjiao*'s claims to a Chinese identity.

The dissertation is built around translating four important commemorative texts from the *Jingjiao* community and placing those texts within their social and historical contexts. A crucial part of that context is the method of the church-state relationship that the Church of the East had learned under Sassanian rule and continued under Muslim rule, for that model of political and social integration with religious distinctiveness marked *Jingjiao*'s attempts to negotiate its place of belonging in Tang China. Under the headship of its catholicos patriarch (in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and then in Baghdad) the Church of the East appears to have continued to encourage this approach in its diocese and then metropolitan province in China. This contextual theme is so important that the first chapter is devoted to surveying the development of the Church of the East from its beginnings in Mesopotamia and Persia through the early Abbasid period, paying special attention to elements of its character that would influence the Church's mission to China, such as its ecclesiastical structure, its relations as a minority religion with the state and the state's official religion, its theological distinctives and the spirituality of its monks and their scholastic asceticism, and its transmission of learning through medical training and through the translation of Greek texts to build good relations with political and cultural authorities.

The *Jingjiao bei*, a two-ton, nine-foot limestone monument, provides the only known recounting of the church's history in China that was written by the church itself during the Tang dynasty. Since it was unearthed in 1625, the *bei* has been the subject of study by fine scholars from around the world for a long time. Accordingly, I was reluctant to embark on a new study of my own. Once begun, however, I saw that the dictionaries of today are far better than what earlier scholars had to work with. I also had the benefit of accumulated scholarship on not just *Jingjiao*, but also on Tang dynasty political, religious, and cultural history, and on the history, theology, and practice of the Church of the East. Advances in cultural anthropology, intercultural communication theory, and missiology also informed my approach. The result, I believe, is a distinct advance over the older English translations of more formidable scholars.

The *Jingjiao bei* is a starting point for Chapter 2's account of *Jingjiao* in the High Tang, using the *bei* as an historical text while remaining mindful that the text has a rhetorical purpose that might color its historical assertions. The study also draws upon other transmitted historical texts and *muzhiming* to explore how *Jingjiao* leaders sought to negotiate a place for the church within the Tang state and society during the empire's most secure and broad-minded period. The period yet included a time of difficulty for the church during the usurpation by Wuzetian's Zhou dynasty and the tumult of the restoration of the Tang. However, the record of *Jingjiao*'s response and efforts to reclaim its lost position reveal still more of its strategy to negotiate a legitimate identity in China.

The third chapter examines the *Jingjiao bei* as a rhetorical text. A visual analysis of the *bei* reveals a clear claim for the Christian God's supremacy even within the Chinese context dominated by Buddhism and Daoism. A rhetorical analysis of the *bei*'s preface and verse traces

their argument that, as China recovers from the devastation of the An-Shi Rebellion and emperor Dezong begins to institute reforms to restore a political structure nearer to that of pre-Rebellion times, the Creator-God, the Three-in-One who reaches out to humankind through the Messiah, has blessed China when wise emperor's honored *Jingjiao*, and He stands ready to bless emperor Dezong as he follows their precedent and honors God by securing the church's place before the Court and, thus, in Chinese society.

The fourth and fifth chapters rely primarily upon recently excavated commemorative stone inscriptions from three near-contemporaries from Luoyang's *Jingjiao* community. Chapter 4 employs a rhetorical analysis of the *muzhiming* of Hua Xian (d. 827) and his wife, the Lady née An (d. 821), that draws upon historical context and studies of the *muzhiming* genre as it compares the oddly different texts in order to draw conclusions about the aspirations and social obstacles facing Christian, mixed Han-Sogdian families in 820s Luoyang. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the innovative use of a Buddhist form, the *dharani* pillar, to bear a *Jingjiao* devotional text and commemorative inscription at the grave of a Sogdian woman by her mixed Han and Sogdian family upon her burial at Luoyang in 815. Then, observations of the three commemorative stone inscriptions are woven into discussion of the time's intellectual and political currents that culminated in the Huichang Persecution of Buddhism and other foreign religions in China.

The dissertation concludes with a brief historical survey of the ends of *Jingjiao* in China after the Huichang Persecution, a discussion of the inter-cultural issues demonstrated by *Jingjiao*'s attempt to set roots in Chinese society and the Court's ultimate reaction, and, as a

counterpoint, a recent study of the three-hundred-year history of a Roman Catholic village offers illuminating points of comparison.

Through its method of close reading that draws from a broad range of historical, cultural, political, religious, and literary contexts to complete rhetorical analyses of its principal source texts, this dissertation makes its contribution to the scholarship of Tang dynasty with a new, more complete understanding of *Jingjiao*'s strategy or, at least, its consistent approach to negotiating belonging in Tang China. It clearly proves the occasion, purpose, and method of the *Jingjiao bei* in that enterprise before the Court in Chang'an. Its analyses of two *muzhiming* and a *jingchuang* from two different Han-Sogdian blended families in Luoyang break new ground to discover the identities, activities, and aspirations of *Jingjiao* believers in Luoyang of the 810s and 820s. This dissertation's analyses of the arguments of these four texts also provide the clearest picture yet of the counter-arguments, attitudes, and competing interests that contested the assertions of Chinese identity by actual *Jingjiao* believers.

Translated Texts

My annotated translations of this dissertation's principal source texts appear in the appendices. The *Stele Commemorating the Propagation in China of Jingjiao of Da Qin* 大秦景教流行中國碑 (the *Jingjiao bei*) is in Appendix A. The Chinese text follows Pelliot's representation and his line-numbering system,¹ though I have checked characters and their spacing against a rubbing of the *bei*.

¹ Paul Pelliot and Antonino Forte, *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou* (Kyoto: Scuola di studi sull'Asia orientale, 1996), 497-501.

Appearing in the order of their subject's demise are two *muzhiming*, the *Epitaph of the Great Tang's Late Lady née An* 大唐故夫人安氏墓志 in Appendix B and the *Epitaph of the Tang Late Honorable Prefectural Governor Hua* 唐故花府君公墓誌銘 in Appendix C. I have transcribed the Chinese texts from rubbings of the respective *muzhiming*. I have checked my readings against those of Mao Yangguang² and Li Tang,³ noting where my reading differed from one or both of theirs.

The final principal translation, in Appendix D, is the *Account of the Stone Pillar Inscribed with the Jingjiao of Da Qin's Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* 大秦景教宣元至本經幢記. I have based my transcription of the *jingchuang* text based upon the transcription in *Jingjiao yizhen—Luoyang xinchu Tangdai Jingjiao jingchuang yanjiu* 景教遺珍—洛陽新出唐代景教經幢研究 [*Precious Nestorian Relic: Studies on the Nestorian Stone Pillar of the Tang Dynasty Recently Discovered in Luoyang*],⁴ along with reference to the color photos and rubbings of the pillar in that book. Because the text of the *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* is beyond the scope of this paper, I did not transcribe, much less translate, that portion of the *jingchuang's* text.

² Mao Yangguang 毛阳光, "Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花献及其妻安氏墓志初探," *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究, no. 2 (2014). Mao's transcriptions have converted the text to simplified Chinese characters.

³ Li Tang, "Critical Remarks on a So-Called Newly Discovered *Jingjiao* Epitaph from Luoyang with a Preliminary English Translation," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. Li Tang and Deitmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2016). Tang deals only with Hua Xian's text, drawing information for the Lady née An's *muzhiming*, but without transcribing or translating that text.

⁴ Ge Chengyong 葛承雍, ed. *Jingjiao Yizhen—Luoyang Xinchu Tangdai Jingjiao Jingchuang Yanjiu* 景教遺珍—洛陽新出唐代景教經幢研究 [*Precious Nestorian Relic: Studies on the Nestorian Stone Pillar of the Tang Dynasty Recently Discovered in Luoyang*] (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2009).

My visual analysis of the *Jingjiao bei* (Chapter 3) is based upon visual inspection of the *bei* itself and of a rubbing of the *bei*. My visual analysis of the Luoyang *Jingchuang* (Chapter 5) is based upon color photos of the pillar and of rubbings published in *Precious Nestorian Relic*.

In this dissertation and its translations, *dao* 道 could have been translated as the “way” or the “path” as it relates to Church of the East’s teaching and practice. Indeed, language of “the way” has early precedence in Christianity, for Christ said of himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,”⁵ and, before they came to be called Christians, his devotees were called “followers of the Way.”⁶ However, I have chosen to leave *dao* untranslated to help make present the sense that the Church of the East was engaged in an attempt to transmit their faith across cultures in a way that the Chinese would find natural, or “at home,” as Andrew Walls might put it.⁷ *Jingjiao*, the Church of the East in China, was also operating, at least nominally, within the construct of the Conversion of the Barbarians, so the *dao* that they followed was logically related to China’s ancient *dao*.

A Historiography of Tang Dynasty *Jingjiao*

The period of the Church of the East in China (*Jingjiao*) is distinctly bookended. The imperial court received the Church’s emissary, given the Chinese name of *Aluoben* 阿羅本, in 635 and Tang [Emperor] Taizong 唐太宗, having examined translations made of the Christian scriptures

⁵ John 14:6.

⁶ Acts 9:2.

⁷ See Andrew F. Walls, “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture,” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996).

and teachings, issued an edict in 638 permitting the propagation of the teaching throughout the empire. The period was brought to a close in 845 with the decree of Tang [Emperor] Wuzong 唐武宗 banning all foreign religions and laicizing their monks and priests. The historiography of that period of the Church of the East in China seems to be, if not bookended, perhaps somewhat dumbbell-shaped. While the “discovery” of the *Jingjiao bei* 景教碑 (stele) in 1625 began a long and lively discussion led by Catholic and Protestant missionaries, the first portion of scholarship with which this historiography will deal was the work of Christians engaged as professional historians or academics, writing from around the turn of the 20th century until around the time of the Chinese Communist Party’s Liberation of China in 1949. Generally coinciding with the end of the Cultural Revolution and the opening of China, and so perhaps fueled at least in part by renewed contact with the Chinese indigenous church in its various manifestations, there has been a renewal of scholarly interest in Christianity in the Tang dynasty. Again, many of these scholars are themselves Christian, but present-day renewal of interest has commanded a broader appeal as scholars are drawing from wider fields of knowledge as they seek new ways to look at the limited number of texts and archaeological evidence available and as new texts come to light. This review will attempt to sketch out the historiography of Christianity in the Tang dynasty as it has been written in English from around 1900 to the present day. The amount of Chinese scholarly attention devoted to this area is growing, and there is a great deal of work done and being done in French and German—the 1996 publication of *L’inscription Nestorienne De Si-*

Ngan-Fou containing Paul Pelliot's notes on the *Jingjiao* monument as edited and supplemented by Antonio Forte⁸ is greatly influencing the field—but these are beyond the scope of this paper.⁹

General Histories and Handbooks

Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884-1968) in 1929 wrote the classic general history, *A History of Christian Missions in China*.¹⁰ Part of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions with a particular interest in China while a student at Yale, he later returned to Yale when ill health cut short his stay in China. At Yale he enjoyed dual appointments in the history department and in the divinity school where he taught missions. Latourette's history covers the "Nestorians" and later Catholic missions, but the greater part of his 933-page text examines the history of missions (Catholic and Protestant) in modern China.

Arthur C. Moule (1873-1957) was born in Hangzhou to Anglican missionaries and educated in England before himself becoming a missionary in China. His *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*, was published in 1930 while he was serving as Vicar of Trumpington, near Cambridge. It established his reputation as a Chinese scholar, and he became a professor of Chinese language and history at Cambridge in 1933.¹¹ In that book, he sought "to gather into one

⁸ Pelliot and Forte.

⁹ For example, one of the most recent works is Max Deeg's annotated translation of the *Jingjiao bei* into German. Max Deeg, *Die Strahlende Lehre: Die Stele Von Xi'an* (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2018). For a review of the Chinese literature on *Jingjiao*, see Nie Zhijun 聂志军, *Tangdai Jingjiao Wenxian Ciyu Yanjiu* 唐代景教文献词语研究 (Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 2010), 28-45.

¹⁰ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

¹¹ E. G. Pulleyblank, "Arthur Cristopher Moule," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 3/4 (1957), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25202101>.

volume the available evidence of the existence of Christian in China in the early and middle ages of the Christian era, and to give in English translation the actual words of the original authorities in every case, avoiding as far as possible all generalizations, summaries, or expressions of personal opinion.”¹² His collection makes for disjointed reading, but it is fine reference work that brings together in English the best source materials available in 1930 for a general history.

Moving to writings from the same generation with a narrower scope, John Foster (1898-1973) published *The Church of the T'ang Dynasty* in 1939. Foster had been a Methodist missionary serving on the faculty of the Union Theological College in Canton (1926-37) from whence he returned to Britain to become a professor of church history at Selly Oak Colleges in 1937, and then to the University of Glasgow in 1947 where he held the Chair of Ecclesiastical History (1949-69) and served as Dean of the Faculty of Divinity (1957-60).¹³ Warning against a “West-first” bias to church history, Foster said, “Those who serve the Church in the East ought to have in the *foreground* of their thoughts a Church which was always universal, and which from the days of the Apostles onwards was always advancing eastwards.”¹⁴ His book first situates the Church of the East and the movement of the Christian message to China, stressing the importance for the Church’s survival under the Sassanid Empire of claiming Nestorius, who had been spurned by the Roman Church. In this way, the Christian church within the Sassanid

¹² A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), vii.

¹³ “The University of Glasgow Story: John Foster,” University of Glasgow, last modified August 13, 2008, accessed December 10, 2012, 2012.
<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH2244&type=P>.

¹⁴ John Foster, *The Church of the T'ang Dynasty* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), vii.

realm asserted independence from the church of the Roman state.¹⁵ The bulk of the book then follows the shaping of the Church's message and mission in the context of their political situation in China. The appendices provide a translation of the "Nestorian tablet," a discussion of Chinese Christian literature, and translations from Chinese sources regarding the 845 suppression of foreign religions.

Sixty-six years later, in 2005, Samuel H. Moffett, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, wrote a 2 volume work, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, of which the first volume deals with Asia up to 1500.¹⁶ Moffett, was born in Korea to Presbyterian missionaries, and he himself served in China at Nanjing Seminary until he was deported by the Communist government in 1951.¹⁷ His readable, scholarly history benefits from his attunement to missiological issues. Organized chronologically and then geographically, this book is strongest in its treatment of theological questions, the Nestorian Church in Iran, and in its analysis. A good complement to Moffett's book actually preceded it in publication. Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit in 1999 published *Christians in Asia Before 1500*.¹⁸ Gillman is a professor at

¹⁵ On the other hand, Bishop Mar Bawai Soro, in his history, argues convincingly that the Church of the East's independence from the Byzantine church freed it from political and ecclesiastical fights in Constantinople and in the Western church that led to the deliberate mischaracterization of Nestorius's teaching and to the excommunication of Nestorius. To survive in Persia, the Church of the East needed to be independent of Constantinople and the Western church. Its assertion of independence was not motivated by the honor that it afforded to Nestorius. Mar Bawai Soro, *The Church of the East: Apostolic and Orthodox* (San Jose: Adiabene Publications, 2007), 224-59.

¹⁶ Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 1st ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

¹⁷ Samuel Hugh Moffett, "Has Christianity Failed in Asia?," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 26, no. 2 (2005).

¹⁸ Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

the University of Queensland, and the late Dr. Klimkeit was at the University of Bonn. Their book is organized geographically, which is fine when used as a reference work for a particular area, but not ideal for seeing an integrated picture of regional interactions over time. The more detailed coverage of Christians in Central Asia and Klimkeit's discussion of texts from Dunhuang and Turfan are the primary strengths of this book relative to Moffett's.

Richard Foltz, approaching his topic from other than a Christian point of view, provided a valuable new perspective with his 1999 book, released in its second edition in 2010, *Religions of the Silk Road*.¹⁹ Foltz focuses on trade as the mechanism and merchants as the actors that carried Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam along the overland Asian trade routes of pre-modern times. He describes the religions' interplay as the cultures that bore them interacted, influenced, and competed with one another, culminating in the dominance of Islam on the western Silk Road and Buddhism on the eastern.

Just two years later, in 2001, came the *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 1: 635-1800*, edited by Nicolas Standaert.²⁰ Father Standaert is professor of Chinese Studies in the Catholic University of Leuven, and the volume is marked by a more European historiographical approach that becomes increasingly evident in its post-Yuan dynasty coverage. Rather than provide a general history, it seeks to supplement such works by focusing on more recent scholarship, and the section on the Tang by Penelope Riboud stands out from the previous works mentioned in that it makes use of the work of Pelliot and Forte on the *Jingjiao* stele that was

¹⁹ Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization*, 2d ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

²⁰ Nicolas Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China. 1. 635-1800* (Leiden [u.a.]: Brill, 2001).

published in 1996. It is organized according to discussions of sources, actors, the general scene, and the themes of relations with court and of doctrinal issues.

The Jingjiao Bei and the Dunhuang Texts

“Peter” Yoshiro Saeki (1871-1965) wrote *The Nestorian Monument in China* in 1916 when he was a professor at Waseda University.²¹ The book’s three parts include an introduction of the monument, an annotated translation, and the Chinese text of the monument as well as of certain other Chinese texts or contemporary Chinese scholar’s notes on the monument. Saeki had followed up with a second book, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, incorporating “Nestorian” documents from Dunhuang and other sites in western China that had been removed to Japan or that had been “recovered” by Stein, Pelliot, and von Le Coq, but the first print run sold out in a year (by autumn 1939) and publication in Japan of a second edition had been rendered impossible by “incidents” and “the wicked wars.”²² Finally published in 1951, the first part of the second edition updated the first book’s treatment and translation of the *Jingjiao* monument and organized and translated the Chinese and Syriac manuscripts; part two described the “Nestorian” relics and provided translations of inscriptions; part three provided translations of all references to Nestorians in Chinese historical or literary sources; and part four provided the Chinese texts of translations provided in parts one and two. Saeki, a Methodist minister, hoped to stir up a renewed missionary fervor, closing his preface for the second edition with “a most

²¹ Yoshiro Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916).

²² Yoshiro Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo: Toho Bunkwa Gakuin: Academy of Oriental Culture, Tokyo Institute, 1951), 1.

humble prayer that the book may prove ‘the Macedonian Cry’ for the cause of the Christian Churches in the Far East.”²³ By the 1950s, however, the attitudes of academics had changed, and reviewers of the second edition, while appreciating the convenience of having all the direct primary sources collected in one book, grew weary of Saeki’s Christian agenda and expressed caution about relying too uncritically on Saeki’s translations. In Schurmann’s review, for example, he shrugged at Saeki’s motivation of religious self-interest, arguing that, given the insignificance of *Jingjiao*’s religious influence in China, focusing on such a pursuit simply expressed a Christian ethnocentricity. He suggested that “For the historian of China, the history of Nestorianism is of greater interest in terms of Chinese political and mercantile relations with nations of the West,” and so he hoped “that future scholars would expand their study of foreign sects” to include the likes of Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and Judaism.²⁴ In this manner, scholarly interest in *Jingjiao* slowed after World War II and after Liberation. Nevertheless, Saeki’s books have remained important for the access that they grant to primary sources.

In the interim between Saeki’s two books, in 1935 Francis S. Drake published descriptions of the *Jingjiao bei* and 12 “Nestorian” texts from Dunhuang.²⁵ Especially in light of later scholarship, his early reports are remarkable for their negativity toward the “heretics.” On the stele text for example, he failed to appreciate the text’s rhetorical elegance and instead attributed certain rhetorical moves to doctrinal weakness on the part of the “Nestorians.”

²³ Ibid., 3.

²⁴ H. F. Schurmann, "Review: [Untitled]," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (1957): 301, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2941397>.

²⁵ Francis S. Drake, "Nestorian Literature of the T'ang Dynasty," *The Chinese Recorder* (1935).

In 1986, the University of Pittsburgh's venerable Cho-yun Hsu 徐兆鏞 led the way in renewed interest when he published a nice treatment of the *Jingjiao bei*, summarizing the background of the "Nestorian" Church, the stele itself, and its history leading up to its safe installation in Xi'an's Stele Forest Museum.²⁶ The article includes a new translation of the stele text.

Peter Chung-hang Chiu's 1987 PhD dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is entitled "An Historical Study of Nestorian Christianity in the T'ang Dynasty Between A.D. 635-845."²⁷ His conclusions for application in present day missionary approaches to China suggest that China's opening up was an important motivator for the revival of interest in Tang Christians. Academically, the most valuable aspects of the dissertation are Chiu's discussion of the "Nestorian" texts. He discusses stele's text in terms of what it reveals about the church's beliefs, practices, leaders, and relations with outsiders. He also discusses each of the texts from Dunhuang in terms of their content—sometimes providing partial translations—and what they reveal about the church's beliefs and practices. He further provides a new translation of *Daqin jingjiao xuanyuan zhiben jing* (*Sutra on the Origin of Origins of the Luminous Teaching from Daqin*) after finding fault with Saeki's translation, and what he believes to be the

²⁶ C. Y. Hsu, "Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument in China," *Asian Culture Quarterly* 14 (1986).

²⁷ Peter Chung-hang Chiu, "An Historical Study of Nestorian Christianity in the T'ang Dynasty between A.D. 635-846" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303614564?accountid=7120>.

first full translations of a shorter text, *Daqin jingjiao da sheng tong gui fa zan* (*Eulogy of the Refuge of Law of the Penetrating Truth of the Great Saint of Daqin*).²⁸

Many scholars had been awaiting the publication of Pelliot's notes on the *Jingjiao* stele. The new grist that that work provided coincided with growing production from Christian scholars, and the hum began drawing other scholars to area. Max Deeg is professor in Buddhist studies and Head of Religion in the School of History, Archaeology, and Religion at Cardiff University in Cardiff, Wales. In his 2007 article on the rhetoric of the Nestorian stele, he criticizes the predominantly Christian scholars of the stele text, Pelliot excepted, for being too quick to supply Christian referents for its terms and so, by their superficial treatment, missing the deeper literary allusions in the text that reveal a subtle but clear rhetoric that criticizes other religious groups and certain Tang dynasty rulers and also promotes the benefit to the realm derived from Nestorian influence. On situating allusional referents, he observes that "the concrete historical situation is usually referred to by quotations from the *Shijing* and the *Shujing* while the more religio-ideological allusions in the stele are accomplished by citations from the classical Daoist literature, especially the *Daodejing*."²⁹ Deeg gives several examples in the article, but also points readers toward his German-language annotated translation of the stele text that was later published in 2018.³⁰

²⁸ Chiu uses Wade-Giles for the titles: *Ta-ch'in-ching-chiao-hsuan-yuan-chih-pen-ching* and *Ta-ch'in-ching-chiao-ta-sheng-t'ung-chun-kwei-fa-tsan*

²⁹ Max Deeg, "The Rhetoric of Antiquity: Politico-Religious Propaganda in the Nestorian Stele of Chang'an 安長," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 1 (2007): 28.

³⁰ The aforementioned Deeg, *Die Strahlende Lehre: Die Stele Von Xi'an*.

Deeg seems to have overlooked the French Jesuit Father Henri Havret (1848-1902) who published a 3-volume study on the stele (*La Stèle chrétienne de Si-gnan-fou*) in 1897 while he was director of the Xujiangui Jesuit Seminary in Shanghai. He said that he had identified three or four hundred literary allusions in the stele text:

[T]hat is to say, that four hundred times a skilled *litteratus* would, on reading our inscription, experience that satisfaction of the humanist, which every Chinese experiences when someone conjures up before him a recollection of past ages. More than thirty of those expressions are borrowed from the *Book of Changes* alone; almost as many come from the *Book of Odes*; twenty or so from the *Annals*. The Canonical Books alone furnish a total of about 150 allusions. The Historians provide more than a hundred others; the Philosophers about thirty; the remainder come from different collections.³¹

It is curious, however, that scholars writing in English have been slow to look at what Havret may have done and to dig deeply into the allusions in the text.

In another article, Deeg brought his expertise in Buddhism to bear on one of the *Jingjiao* manuscripts from Dunhuang, the *Sutra of the Ultimate and Mysterious Happiness*.³² Deliberately choosing a later text that would have been written after *Jingjiao* had had more than a hundred years in China to settle its vocabulary, Deeg showed that the text borrowed widely from Buddhist and Daoist texts.

Jingjiao Monasteries. Inscriptions, and Images

Francis Drake, in 1937, surveyed the text of the *Jingjiao bei*, Chinese records and literature, archaeological evidence, and even the neighborhood lore of Xi'an to identify the locations of

³¹ Columba Cary-Elwes, *China and the Cross; Studies in Missionary History* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 34. (English translation by Cary-Elwes)

³² Max Deeg, "The 'Brilliant Teaching'--the Rise and Fall of 'Nestorianism' (Jingjiao) in Tang China," *Japanese Religions* 31 (2006).

Jingjiao monasteries during the Tang dynasty.³³ At the end of his article, he summarized his results in a chart showing locations and the various sources that attested to them, their locations on maps of Chang'an and Luoyang as well as on maps of China. In the early 1980s, Donald Daniel Leslie dealt with the problem of distinguishing the *Jingjiao*, Zoroastrian, and Manichean temples that are often confused and confusingly lumped together as "Persian religions" in the Tang Chinese texts.³⁴ In his analysis, he draws largely a 1923 Chinese article by Chen Yuan that is difficult to find. Finally, though he was writing on Chang'an primarily in terms of its urban and socioeconomic development, Victor Xiong's 2000 book is important for its discussion of *Jingjiao*'s principal monastery and its environs.³⁵ Xiong likewise provided a helpful examination of Luoyang in a 2017 book.³⁶

Ken Parry, a senior lecturer in church history at St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College in Australia, wrote on the type of images used by the Church of the East in China. Rebutting the notion that the Church of the East eschewed images, he argued that evidence from Central Asia and China reveals a use of iconography that "was more often symbolic and decorative than figural."³⁷

³³ Francis S. Drake, "Nestorian Monasteries of the T'ang Dynasty: And the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet," *Monumenta Serica* 2, no. 2 (1937).

³⁴ Donald Daniel Leslie, "Persian Temples in T'ang China," *Monumenta Serica* 35 (1981-1983), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/40726510>.

³⁵ Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the Univ. of Michigan, 2000).

³⁶ Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 BCE to 938 CE* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

³⁷ Ken Parry, "Images in the Church of the East: The Evidence from Central Asia and China," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 8, no. 3 (1996): 144.

The Church of the East

From whence *Jingjiao*? Alphonse Mingana (1878-1937) was a scholar of early Christian and Muslim studies on whom most of the earlier scholars discussed in this paper relied for the history of the Church of the East in the Sassanid empire and later in Central Asia. He was born in Iraq where he studied and became a priest in the Chaldean Church (part of the Church of the East that was in communion with Rome) and taught Syriac in a Mosul seminary before moving to England where he made his name in the West as a scholar.³⁸ His often-cited 1925 work, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document*, provides as background material a fair overview of the Church of the East in Persia and its early missionary efforts and organization as he lays out “a comprehensive list of all the Syriac and Christian Arabic passages that we have been able to collect on the subject of the evangelization of the Turks, and other peoples of Turanian stock.”³⁹ Accordingly, his discussion of the *Jingjiao* monument is limited to the Syriac portion of its inscriptions and his identification of most of the names as being of Persian origin.

As they considered the “Nestorians,” earlier scholars generally assumed the church held heterodox doctrines, but their question was to the degree of heterodoxy. Rufus Suter, for example, wrote an article in 1938 in which he summarized competing translations of the *Jingjiao* monument’s term, “*sanyi fenshen*” 三一分神 (e.g., Three and One, Trinity, Threefold Unity,

³⁸ Samir Khalil Samir, "Alphonse Mingana 1878-1937 and His Contribution to Early Christian-Muslim Studies" (paper presented at the Christian Arabic Apologetic Texts during the Abbasid period 750-1258 CE, Birmingham, May 25, 1990, 1990), accessed December 8, 2012, <http://www.mingana.bham.ac.uk/biog.pdf>.

³⁹ Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document* (Manchester: University Press, 1925), 7.

One of three Persons, Trinity being divided in nature, etc.), and the arguments made by 19th and early 20th century scholars for and against the orthodoxy of Nestorian theology, concluding that a final answer awaited further study of East Syriac Christian doctrine.⁴⁰ Since then, more study has been done to understand the theology and practice of that church before they came to China and how they might have contextualized or accommodated among the Chinese, but that change of inquiry took time.

Aubrey Russell Vine (1900-1973) wrote a 1937 history of the “Nestorian” church in which he began by stating that the theology of the Western church had not lost much by the absence of “the oldest surviving schism from the Catholic Church of the early centuries,” but that their history as a minority religion “is of value in showing how Christianity was able to survive centuries of subjection.”⁴¹ After pointing out the difficulty posed by the scarcity and the geographic distribution of primary sources and the diversity of their languages (“at least a dozen”), Vine goes on to provide a good 200-page history of the “Nestorian” Church from its beginnings to 1936.

Later treatments included more diverse voices, and the tone of the discussion became less judgmental. Aziz S. Atiya (1898-1988) was a prominent scholar in the fields of the Crusades and Islamic and Coptic studies. Himself a Coptic Christian, he said that he wrote his *History of Eastern Christianity* in 1968 “partly as a modest work of scholarship, and partly as an act of

⁴⁰ Rufus Suter, “The Words San I Fên Shên in the Inscription on the Nestorian Monument at Hsi-an Fu,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 58, no. 2 (1938).

⁴¹ Aubrey Russell Vine, *The Nestorian Churches; a Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians* (London: Independent Press, 1937), 9.

faith.”⁴² Of the five chapters on the “Nestorian Church,” the most helpful are those on the origin and development of the church and on the church’s faith and culture. The material on the Church’s mission to Tang China, admittedly intended as a brief overview, draws from the work of Moule, Saeki, and Vine without adding more.

Bishop Mar Bawai Soro (b. 1954) was a bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East until his advocacy of communion with the Roman Catholic Church in the face of a 2005 breakdown of talks between the churches led to his release from the Assyrian Church and his move to the Chaldean Catholic Church, the part of the historic Church of the East that is in communion with the Catholic Church.⁴³ In 2017, the Pope appointed him Bishop of the Chaldean Eparchy of Mar Addai of Toronto, Canada. He argues in his 2007 book, *The Church of the East: Apostolic and Orthodox*,⁴⁴ that the early history of the Church of the East shows that the church was founded through the ministry of Addai (the Syriac name for Thaddeus, the Apostle), and so was on par with the other apostolic sees of the Western church while also recognizing the primacy of Saint Peter, the see of Rome. He also argues that there was no question of the orthodoxy of the Church of the East’s theology and practice, yet the predominantly Jewish character of the early Church of the East, as opposed to the Greek-influenced Western church, added to the Persian-Byzantine

⁴² Aziz Suryal Atiya, *History of Eastern Christianity* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), xiii.

⁴³ "Assyrian Bishop Explains His Journey to Communion with the Catholic Church," Catholic News Agency, accessed June 27, 2018.
https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/assyrian_bishop_explains_his_journey_into_communion_with_the_catholic_church.

⁴⁴ Soro.

political considerations in creating the distinction between the two branches of the Christian Church.

Wolfgang Hage (b. 1935), professor emeritus at the University of Marburg, Germany, researched the history of East Syrian Christianity, especially its missionary efforts in Central Asia. The St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute in Kottayam, Kerala, India published in English a series of lectures that he gave there in March of 1986 in *Syriac Christianity in the East*.⁴⁵ Every lecture was based on an article that Hage had previously published in German. The 93-page volume is especially valuable for the use it makes of texts now located in Germany and for the early access it granted to German-language scholarship. The first lecture argues that as the Roman Church under Constantine adopted a political theology of the Christian Roman emperor as the “Image of Christ,” Christians under Persian rule essentially were forced to establish the autonomous Church of the East to avoid being considered a subversive element within the Sassanid Empire, and this position as a minority religion influenced the nature of its missionary effort. The second lecture describes the reach of the Church’s missionary enterprise from Central Asia to southern Siberia, China, Tibet, and to northern India, and the difficulties the Church experienced in administering and supporting such widespread Christian communities and the failure that resulted when those communities, kept dependent, were cut off from their head in Mesopotamia. The third lecture uses the criticisms leveled by Friar William of Rubruck after his journey to see the Great Kahn in central Mongolia (1253-1255) to argue that the shamanism dominant among the Turco-Mongols both led to the Church’s initial missionary success in

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Hage, *Syriac Christianity in the East* (Kerala, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1988).

Central Asia, and also helped to explain its quick disappearance as the syncretizing Church, when its linkage to its orthodox head weakened, adopted a shamanism-like tolerance that admitted many “truths” and relinquished the Christian claim to an exclusive “Truth” with the result that it lost both its missionary impetus and its distinctive strength. The fourth lecture argues that the Christian community of the Turfan oasis (c. 850-1300) engaged their majority literate religious competitors, Buddhists and Manicheans, in high-level theological discourse as evidenced by Sogdian and Uighur-language texts based on Syriac sources tweaked to accentuate certain theological differences (compared with Chinese-language texts at Dunhuang that were created in Chinese). The fifth lecture discusses archeological evidence of the influence of Christian influence on Central Asian cultures, primarily in the small Christian communities but also in the form of Mongol writing. Lectures six and seven discuss Catholicos-Patriarch Yahballaha III (r. 1281-1317), an Ongut monk who traveled from Khanbaliq with Rabban Sauma on a pilgrimage to see Christian relics in Jerusalem only to be elected head of the Church of the East, and Gregory Bar-Hebraya (1226-1286), a scholar important in Syriac literature and maphrian (second in rank) of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

Three more recent general histories of the Church of the East have demonstrated significant advances in the current state of scholarship. In 2003, Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar Winkler’s *The Church of the East: A Concise History* provided non-specialist church history students a solid, lightly footnoted textbook on the church from the time of the Sassanians to the twentieth century.⁴⁶ Christoph Baumer, Swiss explorer and a founding member of the Society for

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). First published in German in 2000, the English translation was published in 2003.

the Exploration of Eurasia, published *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History* in 2006.⁴⁷

The book is illustrated with photos Baumer took as he visited various Church sites, and it covers the history and spirituality of the Church from its apostolic beginnings to the present day.

Baumer's book is sympathetic toward the Church of the East—it begins with a letter of thanks to Baumer from the Church of the East's Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinka IV—whereas David Wilmschurst's 2011 book, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East*, is both respectful and critical. For example, after describing a typical experience in his research of finding a villainous patriarch being followed by a pious and competent one, and himself being reminded that human beings follow a variety of motives to good ends and to bad, Wilmschurst says,

Many of the patriarchs and bishops of the Nestorian and Chaldean Churches have been crooks and charlatans, and some of them have been murderers too, but their misdemeanors are only one side of the story. Any fair appraisal of the history of the Church of the East must also recognize the zeal of its missionaries, the acumen of its theologians, the spirituality of its solitaries and the sheer doggedness with which the members of this beleaguered Church have continued to uphold the Christian faith in the lands of Islam for nearly one and a half millennia.⁴⁸

While he has no use for the Church of the East's own origin myths, Wilmschurst covers the history of the Church from its beginnings to the present day.

Two books in particular are helpful in understanding how the Church of the East came to relate to the state sovereign and to the body of official the religions of those states. William Young was a student of John Foster, and he became Bishop of Sialkot in the Church of Pakistan.

⁴⁷ Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*, trans. Miranda G. Henry (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

⁴⁸ David Wilmschurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East & West Publishing Ltd, 2011), xix.

His 1974 book, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*,⁴⁹ argues that the Synod of 410 was definitive for church-state relations from that point in the Sassanid empire through the Abbasid caliphate and that the Church generally thrived under that system with little interference in the day-to-day life of the Church except when Christians themselves appealed to the state to help solve the Church's internal difficulties. More recently, John Payne has researched deeper into church-state relations in the Sassanid empire. In his 2015 book, *A State of Mixture*, Payne points out the triangular relationship between the leaders of the Church of the East, Christian secular elites, and Zoroastrian authorities as the parties sought to find and maintain a place for Christians to participate in the Zoroastrian political community. He argues that,

Rather than acting as bulwarks that effectively segregated Christians from Zoroastrians, East Syrian institutions sought to manage interactions between these groups and to provide communal narrative that facilitated Christian integration into the empire without compromising what ecclesiastical leaders regarded as the essential components of religious identity.⁵⁰

This learned practice of mixing cultures to take legitimate positions in the political establishment while still maintaining their essential religious distinctiveness is a skill that *Jingjiao* would rely upon in China.

Dealing with the Church's "sending base" in Central Asia, Brian E. Colless wrote in 1986 of the Church of the East in Samarkand where, though there is much confusion as to when it

⁴⁹ William G. Young, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph: A Study of the Relationships of the Church of the East with the Sassanid Empire and the Early Caliphates up to 820 A.D with Special Reference to Available Translated Syriac Sources* (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Christian Study Centre, 1974).

⁵⁰ Richard E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 15-16.

became a metropolitanate of the Church, Christians were known to live there at least from the 5th century onwards.⁵¹

Related to the textual evidence of the Church of the East in Turfan, Jes Asmussen presented a good discussion of Christian texts in Sogdian, Iranian, and Uighur-Turkic languages that were found at a Nestorian monastery complex at Bulayiq, north of Turfan.⁵² He noted that the biblical texts were based on the Peshitta, the Syriac Bible, and he also gave an accounting of non-biblical texts translated from the Syriac such as creeds, stories of saints and martyrs, theological works, and writings on the Christian life. Then, at a 1992 international conference in Venice, Nicholas Sims-Williams presented a report on the manuscripts from the German expeditions to Turfan.⁵³ He concluded that the texts in Pahlavi, Syriac, Sogdian, and Turkic revealed a Sogdian lay and monastic community at Bulayiq from the 9th century that initially retained a Persian influence, but over centuries increasingly blended in until they disappeared into the Turkic people around them. Most recently, Klimkeit included a strong, more up-to-date discussion of textual evidence from Central Asia/Western China in his 1999 book.⁵⁴ He noted that "[t]he bulk of the Syrian literature found by the 'Prussian Turfan Expeditions' in the oasis of

⁵¹ Brian E. Colless, "The Nestorian Province of Samarqand," *Abr-Nahrain* 24 (1986).

⁵² Jes Asmussen, "The Sogdian and Uigur-Turkish Christian Literature in Central Asia before the Real Rise of Islam: A Survey," in *Indological and Buddhist Studies Volume in Honor of Professor J.W. Jong on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. L. A. Nercus (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982).

⁵³ Nicholas Sims-Williams, "Sogdian and Turkish Christians in the Turfan and Tun-Huang Manuscripts," in *Turfan and Tun-Huang: The Texts: Encounter of Civilizations on the Silk Route*, ed. Alfredo Cadonna (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1992).

⁵⁴ See Gillman and Klimkeit. p. 251 ff.

Turfan, primarily in the Christian centre of Bulayiq, has not yet been edited and translated. These include some 400-500 texts.”⁵⁵

With the progress of time, however, that work has been completed. Nicholas Sims-Williams, in 2012, published a catalog of the Sogdian and New Persian Christian manuscripts in Syriac script, nearly five hundred folios and fragments, from the Turfan collection in Germany.⁵⁶ In 2016, Chiara Barbati published a study of a Gospel lectionary that was preserved in more than thirty fragments totaling about eight hundred lines of writing.⁵⁷ Sims-Williams completed publication of Christian Sogdian texts from the Berlin Turfan collection with his translations of Biblical, liturgical, and other Christian texts in 2014 and 2019.⁵⁸

Recent Collections from Jingjiao Conferences

Beginning in the Millennial decade, a triennial Salzburg International Conference on the Church of the East in China and Central Asia convened in Salzburg, Austria, and assembled their presented papers into books. The 2003 conference published about 30 essays in their 701-page book in 2006.⁵⁹ Part 2 of the volume includes 9 papers on *Jingjiao* in the Tang dynasty, including essays by Stephen Eskildsen and by Chen Huaiyu drawing connections between

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 251.

⁵⁶ Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Iranian Manuscripts in Syriac Script in the Berlin Turfan Collection* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012).

⁵⁷ Chiara Barbati, *The Christian Sogdian Gospel Lectionary E5 in Context* (Wein: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016).

⁵⁸ Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Biblical and Other Christian Sogdian Texts from the Turfan Collection* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014); Nicholas Sims-Williams, *From Liturgy to Pharmacology: Christian Sogdian Texts from the Turfan Collection* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2019).

⁵⁹ Roman Malek and Peter Hofrichter, eds., *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia*, Collectanea Serica (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006).

Jingjiao texts and Daoist and Buddhist texts, and Part 5 is a 200-page multi-lingual *Jingjiao* bibliography.

From the second conference in the series (2006) came a 395-page volume published in 2009.⁶⁰ Among its articles on inscriptions (7), manuscripts and texts (3), history (11), and liturgy and arts (3), some of its most intriguing include Li Tang's translation and analysis of the Luoyang *Jingchuang*. Also of special interest is Ge Chengyong's Chinese essay on the favorable reception by Tang Taizong of *Jingjiao* chant music.

The third book in the series, *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores*,⁶¹ includes some papers in addition to those which were presented at the 2009 conference. The scope of the papers is somewhat broader, with relatively more coverage of sites or texts from Central Asia, Turfan, Inner Mongolia. There are also, however, important China-specific articles, such as Max Deeg's discussion of the *Jingjiao bei*'s patron, Yisi; Matteo Nicolini-Zani's study of the Sogdian clergy listed on the Luoyang *jingchuang*; and Zhang Naizhu's research on Luoyang's Sogdian community.

The book from the fourth conference (2013), *The Winds of Jingjiao*,⁶² presents articles on various archaeological finds including manuscripts and inscriptions (8), historical inquiry about the Church of the East in China and Central Asia (11), and Syriac liturgical tradition and theological reflections (5). Included in the volume is a brief article by Li Tang in which she

⁶⁰ Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang, *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters : Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Wien: Lit, 2009).

⁶¹ Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler, eds., *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Zürich: LIT, 2013).

⁶² Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler, eds., *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia* (Zurich: LIT, 2016).

raises questions about the authenticity of Hua Xian's *muzhiming* that, as noted in chapter 4, my field research answers, so that the only issue which remains is the unfortunate importance of approach and luck when research involves privately held artefacts.

The Salzburg International Conference held its fifth meeting in June 2016, but the publication of its assembled papers remains anticipated.

Conclusion

As World War II and the Chinese Communist Party's Liberation of China brought a decisive end to the heyday of Christian missions in China, so ended a period and missionary-scholar led inquiry into the history of *Jingjiao* in the Tang dynasty. The questions being asked tended to be about who was the Church of the East? What was their message? How did they differ as missionaries and in their evangelistic approach? Once the curtain had been drawn on Christian missions in China, answering those questions no longer seemed so important. Once China drew back the curtains again, so many things had changed. The indigenous Chinese church stepped forward to present itself to a surprised world audience that had itself undergone change.

Christian scholars again initiated the inquiry into the history of *Jingjiao* in the Tang dynasty, but the inquiry shifted its focus. The unexpected strength of the indigenous Chinese church after years of persecution raised the question of why did this church survive, but not the church of the Tang dynasty? Changes in the non-Chinese community of Christian scholars also influenced the type of questions asked. The Christian world was leveling as the importance of the Western church was declining compared to the growth and influence of the two-thirds world church with the result that the criticisms of "Orientalism" helped to shift the focus away from the "foreign influencer" toward the Chinese people of the Tang dynasty. The rise of cultural history also

helped to make that shift more natural. Finally, better considered communication theory encouraged Christian mission-minded academics to place more importance on the message received by the Chinese audience than on the message sent by the *Jingjiao* missionaries. As a result, the questions Christian academics were asking began to focus more on the Chinese reception of the Church's message.

Interest began to grow in the broader academic community, however, as the publication of Pelliot's work on the *Jingjiao bei* drew more attention to the field, and as the breadth of inquiry spread beyond a relatively narrow focus on the stele and the Dunhuang texts to find ever more creative and interdisciplinary approaches to understanding this aspect of Tang cultural history and broader world history. The recent discovery of new stone inscriptions has further stoked interest among a broad range of scholars.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHURCH OF THE EAST

The Christian church in Mesopotamia organized as the Church of the East, and its missionaries spread the Good News far and wide in the Middle Ages, particularly in the sixth through the tenth centuries. As the Church of the East grew from its obscure beginnings, its associations with the church in the West, attenuated by distance and later strained by theological differences, suffered further from political rivalry between the Byzantine and Persian states. Though the Church of the East was always a minority religion in its Iranian homeland, it grew to include a greater area than the Western church, ranging from Egypt and Arabia, across Mesopotamia and Persia to India and from Central Asia through China to Japan. The period of time within the Parthian and Sassanian empires and then within the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates not only saw the Church of the East develop its theology and distinctive devotional practices, but also evolved the church's imagined place within society and under government, including the ecclesiastical and cultural structures to support that role. These experiences then uniquely prepared the Church of the East for its life and mission in Tang dynasty China.

The Origins of the Church of the East

The origins of the Christian population that would form the Church of the East remain obscure, though origin myths certainly assert the church's apostolic origin, and, thus, parity with the authority of the Western church. It appears that Christianity's spread eastward through Mesopotamia was carried out primarily among the Jewish diaspora by Jewish travelers, traders, and missionaries who are anonymous today. Since the Assyrian deportations of Jews from the

kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 BCE and since the Babylonians completed their deportations of Jews of Judah into captivity in 586 BCE, a large part of the Jewish population lived in Mesopotamia. In the Parthian Empire at the first century of the Common Era, these Jews were most concentrated in the Khabur and Babylonian regions. Also, in the early first century CE, the royal family Adiabene, an Assyrian client kingdom of Parthia, converted from paganism to Judaism and became strong supporters of the Temple in Jerusalem and of Jewish national causes in the face of Roman oppression.¹ These Jewish communities appear to have provided some of the early converts to Christianity.

The biblical record notes that devout men—both Jews and proselytes—including, from, among other places, “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia,”² had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, in 36 CE. There, according to Luke, they witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit and heard Peter preach the gospel of Jesus Christ—upon which some three thousand persons from the audience “received his word and were baptized.”³ These new “followers of the Way” must have taken the seeds of the Church with them as they returned to their homes. Further, the early persecution of Christians by Jewish authorities led to the geographic spread of believers from Jerusalem. Their numbers continued to increase as they evangelized others along their way, first among Jewish

¹ On the political context involved, see Jacob Neusner, “The Conversion of Adiabene to Judaism: A New Perspective,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 1 (1964).

² Acts 2:9 (ESV).

³ Acts 2:41.

communities and then among Gentiles. Luke, for example, records that after the martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem,

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.⁴

Luke's concern in Luke-Acts was to provide Theophilus, perhaps a Roman officer, with an orderly history of Christ and his followers in the Roman Empire.⁵ Therefore, though Luke mentions only refugee destinations within the Roman Empire, it is reasonable to expect that persecuted Christians also spread out to the Parthian Empire, but the movement in that direction was not recorded because it would have been beyond the scope of Luke's literary purpose.

Other waves of Christian believers fleeing from Jerusalem and Judea to the Parthian Empire would have coincided with Roman suppression of Jewish rebellions in 66-73 (First Jewish-Roman War) and 132-136 (Bar Kokhba Revolt). According to Jacob Neusner, the evidence reasonably confirms the presence of Christian communities in Edessa and Adiabene by the early second century. The evidence, he says, also tends to show that there was little or no Christian presence in Nisibis at that time, and the important dual-city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon did not have its own bishop until around 280. Neusner concludes that Christianity "found a sympathetic hearing among the Jews" where the influence of the Tannaitic rabbis was weaker, but strongholds of their teaching (academies in Nisibis and the province of Babylonia) and of

⁴ Acts 11:19–21.

⁵ Luke 1:1-4.

their leaders (Seleucia-Ctesiphon within Babylonia) proved more resistant to Christian evangelists.⁶

Mar Soro argues that early Christianity in regions of the Parthian Empire bore a distinctive Semitic flavor because the early converts would have been predominantly from among Jews. These would not have been Hellenized Jews, as they often were in the Roman Empire, but Jews who instead had been “exposed to the larger framework of the Near Eastern Persian, Assyrian and Babylonian religious thought.”⁷ In practical terms, they would have tended toward an ascetic spirituality that emphasized the exercise of “truth, unity, humility, justice, and, above all, love.”⁸

The Church of the East’s own origin myths rely upon the witness of Thomas, Addai, and Mar Mari. The Apostle Thomas is said to have established churches in Mesopotamia and Khurasan on his way to India. Addai, the Syriac form of the Greek name Thaddeus, is said to be either Judas Thaddeus, one of the twelve apostles, or a different Addai/Thaddeus who was one of the Seventy-Two Apostles whom Jesus sent out before him to preach the coming of the kingdom of God.⁹ Addai is credited with establishing churches in Edessa and Adiabene. Mar Mari, a disciple of Addai, is said to have established churches in the province of Babylonia.

The Church of the East has treasured these origin myths as assurance of the Church’s apostolic succession and apostolic authority. However, actual evidence to support the traditions

⁶ Jacob Neusner, "The Conversion of Adiabene to Christianity," *Numen* 13, no. 2 (1966): 149-50.

⁷ Soro, 97.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See Luke 10.

is lacking. Historian David Wilmshurst presents a revisionist perspective, arguing that the three principals of Church of the East creation myths, namely Thomas, Addai, and Mari, were introduced in response to Manichaeism in the third century. Mani was born in the region of Babylon and died in a Persian prison in 277 CE. His principal disciples are said to have been named Thomas, Addai, and Mari. Wilmshurst suggests that the Church of the East's defenders appropriated these names from the Manicheans rather than *vice versa*. He argues, "The Manicheans were the first to bear these hallowed names, and third- and fourth-century clerics in Edessa, alarmed at the name recognition these detested pioneers enjoyed both in the Roman Empire and in Persia, appropriated the reputations of the three Manichean disciples and relaunched them as Christian missionaries."¹⁰ Later, in the fifth and sixth centuries, he says, the different regional manifestations of the Church in Sassanid Persia developed the various myths more fully as they sought to establish apostolic primacy over one another and over their rival Jacobite Church neighbors.

While its origins remain obscure, the church did arise with bishops serving their various dioceses in a shared liturgical language of Syriac, a form of Aramaic standard in Edessa. Aramaic was used throughout the lands of the Church of the East. As Mar Soro explains, "Aramaic was the major language from Egypt to Asia Minor and Pakistan, due to the great political and military prominence of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, by the eighth century BC. The Parthian (Persian) empire also used Aramaic in its Western provinces."¹¹ Thus widely spoken, it remained the language of commerce and diplomacy until more than a hundred years

¹⁰ Wilmshurst, 9.

¹¹ Soro, 100.

after the Muslim Conquest, when Syriac was displaced by Arabic under the Abbasid caliphs (beginning in 750 CE).

The scriptures upon which the Church of the East relied also were in Syriac. Tatian of Assyria (110-172) harmonized the four Gospels in the Diatessaron around 170 CE. The Diatessaron was very popular in Mesopotamia and Eastern Rome until it was suppressed by the Roman empire in the fifth century. It continued to be used in Persia, but it faded out of use in favor of the four gospels. The whole bible in Syriac, the Peshitta, has been available and in use since the fourth century. The books of the Peshitta largely conformed to the canon of the Roman church at that time, and it was used universally by both Roman and Persian Churches by the sixth century.¹²

The Distinction of the Church of the East and the Nestorian Controversy

The gradual separation of the Church of the East from the Western church resulted from the rivalry between the Persian and Roman Empires, ecclesiastical politics, and from arguments over theological claims. Only one representative of the Church of the East, Jacob of Nisibis, participated in the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in 315, and it was not until the synod of 410 that the Church of the East, with the support of Khosrow I, unanimously adopted the Nicene Creed and showed its confessional unity with the Roman Church.¹³ Geographic and political distance, however, seems to have kept the Church of the East from participating in the dramatic events that climaxed with the excommunication of Nestorius in 431.

¹² Wilmshurst, 44.

¹³ Moffett, 155.

Nestorius (c. 386-450) became the Archbishop of Constantinople in 428. Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) appointed Nestorius in an attempt to use an outsider to rise above the powerful factions in the capital. J.A. McGuckin argues that it was principally due to Nestorius's own political inexperience and related inflexibility that his demise was sealed before the Council of Ephesus that condemned him was convened.¹⁴ By his actions to implement the zealous orthodoxy and the ascetic values of his Antiochian tradition, Nestorius managed to incite the anger of nearly all of Constantinople's factions, whether high- or low-born, military or monk. Nestorius angered the noble women of Constantinople by curtailing their roles in liturgical services and in common meals of the church by which they had gained stature and influence in the church.¹⁵ He angered the common man (or men, in general) by forcing women dancers (similar to today's "exotic dancers") to stop performing within the city.¹⁶ He angered the capital's commanders of the Gothic mercenary forces whom they employed to defend the city, because Nestorius unsettled the Goths when he went to the city's outlying areas and destroyed the heretical Arian churches where they worshipped.¹⁷ He angered the monks in Constantinople by forcing them to return to monkish devotion within their monasteries and to give up jobs as secretaries and scribes for nobles by which they had gained income, status, and power within

¹⁴ J. A. McGuckin, "Nestorius and the Political Factions of Fifth-Century Byzantium: Factors in His Personal Downfall," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78, no. 3 (1996): 20-21.

¹⁵ Ibid., 16-18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 12-14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10-12.

the capital.¹⁸ Most to his detriment, Nestorius made an enemy of Augusta Pulcheria, the emperor's sister and, beginning in 414, regent during Theodosius's minority.¹⁹ Despite the emperor's hope that Nestorius might help to liberate him, Pulcheria continued to dominate her brother, and none who crossed her fared well.

Formerly a monk and presbyter in Antioch, Nestorius was educated in the Antiochian tradition directly or indirectly under Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428).²⁰ As Schaff explains, "The Antiochian School was not a regular institution with a continuous succession of teachers, like the Catechetical School of Alexandria, but a theological tendency, more particularly a peculiar type of hermeneutics and exegesis which had its centre in Antioch."²¹ The Antiochan School prevailed in Syrian monasteries, and Kevin McNamara describes its approach as

the home of ancient Christian humanism, concerned above all to make revealed truth intelligible to human reason and to define its implications for human conduct. The services of philosophy were not dispensed with, but the close reasoning and minute analysis of Aristotle were preferred to the lofty but less disciplined intellectualism of the Platonists.²²

The school's hermeneutic focused on the plain meaning of the biblical text, paying close attention to its grammatical structure and to its cultural and historical contexts to exegete the scriptures. It combined Aristotelian logic with a Syriac background that still retained Rabbinic

¹⁸ Ibid., 14-16.

¹⁹ Ibid., 18-20.

²⁰ Other important proponents of the Antioch School include Diodore (d. 390), Bishop of Tarsus; John Chrysostom (c. 349-407), Archbishop of Constantinople; and Theodoret (c. 393-458), Bishop of Cyrrhus.

²¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910), 2: 816.

²² Kevin McNamara, "Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1952): 260.

influence so that it understood the Hebrew Scriptures “historically,” attributing “greater independence and *meaningful* integrity to the biblical text and the narrative within it.”²³

In contrast, the older Catechetical School of Alexandria’s hermeneutic “more fully mapped the New Testament over the Old,” downplaying the historical element of the Hebrew Scriptures in order to emphasize allegorical interpretations vividly revealing Christ.²⁴ The Catechetical School of Alexandria had developed into a sort of theological seminary amidst cosmopolitan Alexandria’s learned legacies of Philo and of Neo-Platonism and alongside the mysterious spirituality of Gnostic religion. With these influences, the School tended toward theocentric speculation that was transcendent and mysterious.²⁵

Cyril (378-444), Patriarch of Alexandria and head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria, presented a ready foil for Nestorius, not merely as a proponent of a rival theological school, but also to vindicate the diminution of honor felt in Alexandria since Nestorius had been name Archbishop of Constantinople.²⁶

²³ Adam H. Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 152.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Schaff renders the following assessment: “The Alexandrian theology is intellectual, profound, stirring and full of fruitful germs of thought, but rather unduly idealistic and spiritualistic, and, in exegesis, loses itself in arbitrary allegorical fancies. In its efforts to reconcile revelation and philosophy it took up, like Philo, many foreign elements, especially of the Platonic stamp, and wandered into speculative views which a later and more orthodox, but more narrow-minded and less productive age condemned as heresies, not appreciating the immortal service of this school to its own and after times.” Schaff, 780-81.

²⁶ For recent scholarship that downplays the notion of theological schools and argues that Nestorius and Theodore were outliers beyond the realm of their day’s widespread Christological consensus (as represented by Cyril), see Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Moffett argues that Cyril was further motivated by an abiding political bitterness since the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381) had raised the bishop of

The question of the appropriate title for the Virgin brought the brewing conflict to a head. The practice of devotional veneration of Mary was especially strong in Alexandria and in Ephesus. It may be of consequence that, prior to Christianity's rise to prominence, Alexandria had been a center of the Isis cult, and Ephesus had been the center of Artemis worship.²⁷ Any predilections to venerating goddesses that may have existed, however, were clothed in Christian contexts and theological issues. Under the influence of the School of Alexandria, heightened reverence of Mary was strong in some circles of Constantinople. Prior to Nestorius's appointment as Archbishop of Constantinople, there was already a lively controversy in the city between those who believed that Mary was properly called "Mother of God" (θεοτόκος), and others who believed her title was more properly "Mother of Man" (ἀνθρωποτόκος). Weighing into the controversy and trying to bring peace without giving Mary more credit than her due, Nestorius suggested a compromise title, "Mother of Christ" (Χριστοτόκος), for God and Man were united in the person of Christ.

Cyril, however, seized upon Nestorius's suggested solution of the controversy over Mary as a denial of the true identity of Christ. Whatever their motives or ambitions, these churchmen knew that a proper Christology is vital to the Faith. As Schaff explains, the fitness of Christ for his redemptive work was at stake:

The notion of redemption, which forms the centre of Christian thinking, demands a Redeemer who unites in his person the nature of God and the nature of man, yet without

Constantinople to equal status with the bishop of Rome, and, thus, demoted the position of the bishop of Alexandria relative to Constantinople. Moffett, 173-74.

²⁷ On the cult of Isis, including her title as "Mother of God" and the argument that Isis presented a forerunner of Christianity's Virgin Mary, see R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971). On relations between the cult of Artemis and the polis of Ephesus, see, Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos: Cult, Polis, and Change in the Graeco-Roman World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

confusion. In order to be a true Redeemer, the person must possess all divine attributes, and at the same time enter into all relations and conditions of mankind, to raise them to God. Four elements thus enter into the orthodox doctrine concerning Christ: He is true God; he is true man; he is one person; and the divine and human in him, with all the personal union and harmony, remain distinct.²⁸

The charge against Nestorius was that he emphasized the separate divine and human natures of Christ to the point that they must remain separate divine and human persons rather than unite into a single person.

Emperor Theodosius II called church leaders to the Council of Ephesus in 431 to settle the matter. Cyril and his delegates combined with the delegates from Ephesus to take advantage of the late arrival of the delegates from Antioch. Before their arrival, Cyril began the proceedings, and, ignoring Nestorius's refusal to submit to questioning prior to the Antiochian delegates' arrival, Cyril and his followers deposed and excommunicated Nestorius.²⁹ Initially sent back to his monastery in Antioch, in 435 Nestorius's writings were ordered to be burned and his followers forbidden from meeting. An imperial order in 436 banished Nestorius to Arabia, but he actually served out his banishment in the deserts of Egypt under the eye of guards influenced by the Alexandrians' hostility.³⁰

The Church of the East did not participate in the councils that condemned Nestorius. The Church of the East, to this day, holds Nestorius in honor, and adjudges his teachings to be in line with those of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Church of the East's most venerated theologian

²⁸ Schaff, 3: 705-06.

²⁹ Moffett, 174.

³⁰ Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides: Newly Translated from the Syriac and Edited with an Introduction, Notes & Appendices*, trans. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), xxiv.

among the fathers of the church. Dismissing the Western church's judgment against Nestorius as worldly politics rather than sound theologizing, the Church of the East welcomed supporters of Nestorius who came to them because of persecution in the West.

As for Nestorius, his only surviving book, *The Bazaar of Heraclides*, having been preserved in a Syriac translation from the original Greek, provides his self-defense in entwined historical and doctrinal lines of argument. Written in 451 or 452, Nestorius looks upon Flavian, Archbishop of Constantinople from 446 to 449, as a faithful servant of God who had suffered for holding to the same orthodox Christology as Nestorius. Flavian had taken a stand against a proponent of Alexandrian Christology as represented by Eutyches, a presbyter and the head of a cloister of three hundred monks in Constantinople. Eutyches was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, says Schaff, but merely a staunch popularizer of the Alexandrian School's position, arguing that the incarnation fused in Christ the divine and human into a single nature so that the personal Logos assimilated and deified an impersonal human nature.³¹ Flavian led a local synod in Constantinople in 448 that deposed Eutyches and excommunicated him for his heresy. That council affirmed that "Christ, after the incarnation, consisted of two natures in one hypostasis and in one person, one Christ, one Son, one Lord."³²

Rising to defend Eutyches and Alexandrian Christology, Dioscorus, Cyril's successor as Patriarch of Alexandria, convinced emperor Theodosius to call a general council the next year. Dioscorus presided over the Robber Council of Ephesus with violence and intimidation, railroading Flavian out of office and giving him such a beating that he died a few days later.

³¹ Schaff, 3: 736. This position is monophysitism or miaphysitism (both mean "one nature").

³² Ibid., 3: 738.

Pope Leo of Rome, however, vindicated Flavian and the Council of Chalcedon (451) declared Flavian a martyr.

Nestorius took this as a vindication of the orthodoxy of his own position, if not his own person. Responding to the criticism of his friends for not applying to Leo to extend that personal vindication to him as well, Nestorius said, “[F]or this reason I wrote not, not because I am a proud man and senseless, but so that I might not hinder from his running him who was running fairly because of the prejudice against my person.”³³ Thus, Nestorius chose (or claimed to choose) to remain in ignominy rather than to risk animosity against his person impeding the triumph of true doctrine. Indeed, there was yet so much animosity directed against Nestorius that relations between the Roman Church and the Church of the East suffered as a result of the Church of the East’s refusal to repudiate Nestorius.³⁴ Furthermore, monophysite Christians

³³ Nestorius, 378. In fact, sentiment against Nestorius was so strong at the council of Chalcedon that, to keep some peace in the council’s raucous discussions, Antiochian theologian and Bishop of Cyrrhus, Theodoret, agreed to anathematize Nestorius and all who would not call Mary the “Mother of God.” It does not appear, however, that Nestorius knew of this at the time of writing his book. As for the “Mother of God, while there was widespread willingness to embrace and to venerate Mary, Schaff explains the Christological significance of the title as follows: “the expression was intended only to denote the indissoluble union of the divine and human natures in Christ, and the veritable incarnation of the Logos, who took the human nature from the body, of Mary, came forth God-Man from her womb, and as God-Man suffered on the cross.” Schaff, 3: 716-17.

³⁴ The Church of the East neither participated in nor affirmed Chalcedon. They stood firmly in the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia, as they believed Nestorius did, also. Chalcedonian and Theodoran Christology appear very close, and Wilmshurst reasons that, taking into consideration differences between Greek and Syriac terms, they could be considered to be in harmony:

The normative definition adopted at Chalcedon in 451 was that Christ was incarnate in two natures (*physeis*), and constituted one hypostasis and one person (*prosopon*). The Church of the East, on the contrary, held that Christ was incarnate in two natures (*kyane*), two hypostases (*qnome*) and one person (*parsopa*). The formula, which was in some ways more logical than the Chalcedonian compromise (two natures, in the eyes of the strict dyophysites, necessarily implied two hypostases) was open to misunderstanding in Western eyes. The Syriac term *qnoma* had a slightly different meaning than the Greek *hypostasis*, and was even capable of being mistranslated ‘person’ (Syriac *parsopa*, Greek *prosopon*). Since ‘two natures in two persons’ is the classic Nestorian position, it was hardly surprising that many Westerners jumped to the conclusion that the strict dyophysites were

would later present challenges to the Church of the East as the monophysite population in Persia grew as a result of their resettlement in Persia as refugees from persecution by Chalcedonian Christians, as captive Roman soldiers, or as deportees from Persia's conquest of Roman lands.

The symbol produced by the Council of Chalcedon also proved unacceptable to the Church of the East.³⁵ As John McGuckin shows, European theologians have often mischaracterized the creed as an affirmation of the Tome of Leo that had been written in support of Flavian but which was never presented at the Council of Ephesus. Rather, the creed is a statement of Cyril's Christology that takes its framework from the Tome of Leo (as Emperor Marcian's demand for a consensus required) but then qualifies it with terms from Cyril's writings.³⁶ The subtlety was lost on some in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire who held to a more rigidly monophysite position, but it was a necessary compromise for adherents of the Antiochene school and those from the Western regions who could still point to language from the Tome of Leo. Cyrilline Christology, however, continued to build its dominant position in the

Nestorians. In fact, if full weight is given to the meaning of the Syriac terms *kyana*, *qnoma* and *parsopa*, the Christology of the Church of the East is perfectly orthodox. Wilmshurst, 30-31.

³⁵ The pertinent part of the Chalcedonian creed reads as follows: "Following the holy fathers, we unanimously teach one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete as to his Godhead, and complete as to his manhood; truly God, and truly man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; consubstantial with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin; as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all worlds, but as to his manhood, in these last days born, for us men and for our salvation, of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in (of) two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis. We confess not a Son divided and sundered into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, and God-Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ, even as the prophets had before proclaimed concerning him, and he himself hath taught us, and the symbol of the fathers hath handed down to us." Schaff, 3: 744-45.

³⁶ John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 233-40.

Eastern part of the Roman Empire with the result that, at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553, followers of Cyril's Christology succeeded in winning the anathematization of three late mainstays of the School of Antioch, Theodoret, Ibas of Edessa, and Theodore of Mopsuestia.³⁷ With such a result, the Roman Church and the Church of the East yet more decisively washed their hands of each other.

Becoming a Subject-Partner of the State

Prior to this ecclesiastical divide between the church in the Roman and Persian empires, what would become the Church of the East was maturing in its own political context within the Persian Empire. Iranians overthrew their Parthian overlords to establish the Sasanian Empire in 224. The Sasanians were united around a Zoroastrianism national vision, and so naturally made Zoroastrianism the state religion. In this new context, around 280, the church established a diocese for Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the Sasanian empire's capital. In 315, the bishops of the church recognized the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon as first among equals.

The Parthian government had not been particularly concerned about religion, so the Christian church had experienced little persecution from the state, but that began to change under the Sassanids. Shapur II (r. 309-379) led the Great Persecution against the Christians from 340 until his death in 379. The conventional attribution of motivations behind the Great Persecution include Zoroastrian suppression of Christianity combined with the Persian emperor's concern that Christians in his realm might give their loyalty to a Christian emperor from Rome. In the Roman Empire, Constantine (272-337) legalized Christianity with the Edict of Milan (313),

³⁷ Ibid., 241-43.

declared himself a Christian, and he convened the Council of Nicaea (325) to unify the Church around an agreed orthodox faith. Constantine established the role of the Roman emperor as a patron of the Christian faith, followed with varying enthusiasm by his immediate successors, until the Edict of Thessalonica made Nicæan Christianity the Roman Empire's state religion in 380.

Recent scholarship, however, challenges the conventional explanation of Sasanian persecution of Christians. Richard Payne argues, instead, that the Great Persecution was Shapur II's effort to bring the recalcitrant Church of the East to conform to its proper role in Persia's Zoroastrian society.³⁸ The Zoroastrian state, Payne explains, envisioned itself leading the people and the land of Iran to recover the purified state that the land enjoyed before evil arose to contend with good. The Zoroastrians saw the various religions hierarchically, with Zoroastrianism at the pinnacle of goodness. Monotheist religions such as Christianity and Judaism occupied the hierarchy's middle ground as religions that, though tainted by evil, had retained some original goodness. Idolatrous religions, including Buddhism, were relegated to the hierarchy's bottom, bereft of any goodness and hopelessly given over to evil. Such bad religions, according to Zoroastrian thought, should be eliminated, for they only increased the strength of evil in the world. The middle-range religions, on the other hand, presently served a useful purpose in helping to restrain evil until the Good Religion, Zoroastrianism, had gained sufficient leverage to be able on its own to finally eradicate evil and to bring in the age of completion. In the context of this Zoroastrian vision for cooperation in the age of mixed good and evil, Shapur

³⁸ This paragraph relies upon Payne, 23-58.

II had commanded the bishops of the Church of the East to take their place in service to the state by raising taxes for the court from among their Christian communities. Thus, Payne contends,

The killing of Christians under Shapur II was the result of a refused invitation that the court had extended to ecclesiastical leaders to participate more actively in the administration of the empire. It was not the result of the ineluctable hostility of Zoroastrians at court toward religious others.³⁹

Shapur needed to finance his ongoing war with the Roman Empire, but many bishops and lower church leaders refused, arguing that it was not their place to raise taxes but only to tend to their people's spiritual needs. Upon continued refusal, Sasanian authorities executed these church leaders for their obstinacy.

While the Great Persecution was widespread, Shapur II focused his wrath upon the persons of uncooperative Church leaders, upon public symbols of the Church's agency—destroying church buildings, and upon the stores of its wealth—confiscating church property, presumably in lieu of the taxes that the Church had refused to collect.⁴⁰ The Great Persecution subsided with Shapur II's death in 379. Then, the Church of the East in 410 agreed to participate more actively in the empire's administration when Yazdegerd I (r. 399 – 420) took a different tact, incorporating the church within the state's networks by recognizing Christianity as a minority religion in Persia.

Now that Christianity was a participant in the state as a recognized minority religion, the Church of the East had to adjust its structure to its role within the Zoroastrian government. The Persian king of kings had final say over the appointment of the Church of the East's grand

³⁹ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁰ Young, 26.

metropolitan (the title changed in 497 to “Catholicos Patriarch of the East”), for he represented the church to the court. The church, in the synod of 410, also adopted more of pyramidal structure, taking away some of the free-spirited power of the various bishops and appointing metropolitans over them in order to adapt to the greater need for centralized authority and accountability as a participant in the state.

Both the Sasanians and the Church, however, required time to adjust to Yazdegerd I’s innovation. Philip Wood characterizes affording official status to the Church of the East as an attempt by Yazdegerd to bring in another player to offset some of the power of the Zoroastrian priestly class over the shah. The Zoroastrian *mobeds* (priests) chafed at sharing any state power with Christians, and they were highly critical of Yazdegerd’s openness to Christian counsel and assistance—to the point that, after his death, the *mobeds* bestowed on Yazdegerd the epithet, “the sinful.” Meanwhile, though the Church’s grand metropolitan showed himself a useful partner in some state affairs, Wood points out that the unity of the Church and the obedience of some of its bishops proved problematic. When, toward the end of Yazdegerd’s reign, a few bishops led Christians in destroying some fire temples, the outrage led Yazdegerd to alter his sympathetic stance and institute a new persecution of the Church of the East, and of his son, Bahram V (r. 420 - 438) continued the persecution during his own reign.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the Sasanians still retained the new role of the Church of the East within the government. According to Young’s survey, between 410 and 540, about half, perhaps more, of the heads of the Church were elected by the Church and appointed by the shah, while the

⁴¹ Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 37-39.

others were simply appointed by the shah, though the shah otherwise had little involvement with the internal functioning of the Church.⁴²

The chastened Church further distinguished itself as an appropriate partner for the Persian state in a 424 synod by proclaiming the catholicos of the Church of the East to be independent of and on equal footing with the patriarchs of the church in the Roman empire.⁴³ In 484, however, the Synod of Beth Lapat trimmed the power of the grand metropolitan by empowering a province's bishops to elect their own metropolitan independent of the input or approval of the grand metropolitan. The same synod relaxed the rule of celibacy, allowing bishops and metropolitans to marry, perhaps, as David Wilmschurst suggests, to conform to the context of the moral expectations of the Zoroastrian majority who regarded fecund procreation as a principal social good,⁴⁴ and they saw enforced celibacy in the Church as "perverse and unnatural."⁴⁵

The election by church bishops and the appointment by the shah of Mar Aba as catholicos in 540 introduced an unusual time in relations between the Christian church and the Zoroastrian state. The parties explored and negotiated what political and social space the Sasanian court would allow, even as the Church of the East maneuvered to maintain and to defend its theological distinctiveness amidst the Zoroastrian milieu. Earlier in the reign of

⁴² Young, 55.

⁴³ Ibid., 31-32.

⁴⁴ To ensure that a man enjoyed the blessing of many children, Zoroastrians expected him to take more than one wife and, when expedient for maintaining the purity of the family's bloodline, the man might virtuously produce offspring through incestuous relations. Christian rejection of these practices was both proof to Zoroastrians of the moral inferiority of Christianity and a source of tensions between the groups. Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵ Wilmschurst, 27.

Khosrow I (r. 531-579), Christians had joined the new professional class of government administrators that previously had been restricted to Zoroastrians.⁴⁶ Playing their new roles in government, these Christian gentry began to participate in Zoroastrian feast culture and they began to conform certain views to Zoroastrian standards of morality. They, however, met with correction from Catholicos Mar Aba. Himself a convert from Zoroastrianism, Mar Aba was well educated, a savvy politician, devout in his faith, and effective in bringing discipline to the Church. Zoroastrian leaders so resented Mar Aba's effectiveness in rooting out the Christian gentry's accommodations to Zoroastrian customs and values that Khosrow I could ensure Mar Aba's survival only by exiling him to house arrest in Azerbaijan for seven years beginning in 543. Yet, while in exile, as Payne shows, Mar Aba used canon law to restrain worldly bishops and Christian aristocrats from surrendering too much of their Christian identity in their attempts to engage in the social and political structures of the court. Where, for example, Zoroastrian-guided Persian law allowed aristocrats means to preserve their hereditary estates by resorting to incest to produce an heir, canon law instituted by the Catholicos foreclosed that solution to Christian aristocrats and even broadened the range of near-kin relations that the church would define as incestuous.⁴⁷

Mar Aba returned to the capital in 549, where he was returned to captivity and kept in chains. He was released in 551 after he used his authority as Catholicos to quell a rebellion against Khosrow I, and Mar Aba died a natural death in 552. Thereafter, from 552 to 630, the

⁴⁶ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, Ad 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 166.

⁴⁷ Payne, 95-97, 108-09.

shah ever more involved himself with the selection of the catholicos, and Christians continued gaining influence at court.⁴⁸

Monasticism and Learning

Though early monasticism had been nearly killed off when the Church of the East's leaders in the second half of the fifth century and early sixth century were encouraging monks to marry, monasticism revived under the influence of Abraham of Kashkar (502 – 597). Having learned the ascetic life from the monks of the Egyptian desert of Scetis, Abraham returned to live a solitary life in a cave of Mt. Izla, near Nisibis. There, other ascetics gathered to learn from him, and he established an order of celibate monks visibly distinguished by shaving the crowns of their heads.⁴⁹ After a novitiate of three years in Abraham's order, the brother who remained on at his monastery could either continue within the community as a cenobitic monk, or he might request to become a solitary in his cell. While monks pursued their ascetic spirituality, communities welcomed monasteries for benefits that they provided such as countering the work of evil spirits, healing the sick (both man and beast), and offering material aid in times of natural disaster.⁵⁰

Another motivation for renewed monastic piety, suggests David Wilmshurst, may have been a response to the challenge presented by the new presence of a fully formed Jacobite

⁴⁸ Young, 72-76.

⁴⁹ Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Marga A.D. 840*, vol. 2 The English Translation (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1893), 37-42.

⁵⁰ Wilmshurst, 84.

Church in Persia at about this time.⁵¹ In the war that Khosrau I waged against Justinian's Roman Empire from 540 to 545, Khosrau resettled in Sasanian lands vast numbers of captives from the ranks of Roman armies or deportees removed from captured territories—at times amounting to whole villages. While the captives were deployed as needed for their skills as artisans or as slave labor, there arose from among them a relocated Jacobite Church complete with primate, bishop, and monks to serve the Jacobite faithful. This church's sudden appearance in number presented challenges to the Church of the East's Christology as well as a challenge to its political position as the voice of the empire's Christians to the court. The Church of the East argued to the court that the Jacobites should be forcibly converted to the Church of the East, but the court, instead, treated the Jacobites generously. The Sasanians recognized that the Jacobites' non-Chalcedonian Christology made them unwelcome in the Roman Empire but potentially reliable Sasanian citizens, and the court also hoped to win the support of Jacobites who remained in territories that Persia had taken from Rome.⁵² Up to 628 there was no thought of the state recognizing two Christian churches, so the determined struggle between the two groups was carried out within the one Church.⁵³ The new religious competition—and bitter disputes—with the Jacobites may have helped to spur more soul-searching and a renewed desire for ascetic piety and religious education that found expression in a renewal of the Church of the East's monastic movement.

⁵¹ This monophysite Christian church from Syria took its name from Jacob Baradaeus (c. 500-578), the bishop of Edessa, founder of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

⁵² Wilmshurst, 52-53.

⁵³ Young, 58.

The renewed monastic movement influenced the church as monasteries became an important source of its ascetic leaders. The monastery of Beth Abhe (the “Forest Monastery”) provides a strong example of one monastery’s draw among believers and its influence on church leadership. Jacob of Lashom, in 595, founded the monastery in the mountains along the Zab river some fifty or sixty miles northeast of Mosul. A monk of the monastery who was named Thomas served Catholicos Mar Abraham (r. 837 – 850) as a secretary before being appointed bishop of Marga. He wrote a history of the monastery and of the holy men who had been associated with it.

Thomas’s history shows that a good portion of the monastery’s brothers came from Persian and Arab families of high social status, and that the monastery well-earned its reputation for producing ascetic monks of wisdom and learning, including four or five patriarchs and at least one hundred bishops and metropolitans who led the church from positions throughout the Church of the East’s vast territories between 595 and 850.⁵⁴ For example, when Cyriacus was the abbot (second half of the eighth century), he received a “visitation” during a service in which it was revealed to him that forty-two of the brothers then present (including Thomas) had been “set apart [to be] governors of the Holy Church; some of them Patriarchs, some of them Metropolitans, and some of them Bishops.”⁵⁵ Thomas then records that the vision was fulfilled in subsequent years as two of those brothers were appointed the catholicos, and forty others went on to become metropolitans or bishops in areas ranging across northern Mesopotamia and up to

⁵⁴ Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga A.D. 840*, vol. 1 The Syriac Text, Introduction, etc. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1893), x, xxx.

⁵⁵ Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Marga A.D. 840*, 445.

Gilan and Daylam at the Caspian Sea and over to Armenia, in southwestern Iran's Elam, in Yemen, and a monk named David was made metropolitan of China.⁵⁶

The Christian (Church of the East) community expected its leaders, whether churchmen, monks, or lay leaders, to be men of learning. By the fifth and sixth centuries, the production of these men of learning was carried out predominantly in schools that served as the place of learning rather than simply relying upon charismatic individual teachers and their disciples, though the two educational models continued in parallel operation for some time. These schools might be hosted by villages or monasteries, or they might be independent schools such as the School of Nisibis, the independent school most renowned for having trained men who later went on to high office in the Church of the East during the sixth and seventh centuries.⁵⁷ Generally, students in village schools trained in basic literacy, liturgy, and perhaps in basic biblical exegesis as they observed the lectionary cycle, and students in monastic schools likewise learned literacy skills, became adept in the liturgy, and studied doctrine through catechetical training. The type of training was fluid across locations, and some locations became recognized centers of learning.⁵⁸ In these advanced centers, including independent schools, more advanced study included

⁵⁶ Ibid., 447-49. Scott Johnson notes that both Mar Thomas and Isho'dnah of Basra, author of another ninth century Syriac history of Church of the East monastics, show themselves to be uninterested in the eastward geographic frontiers of the church; instead, he argues, they focus their geographic imagination fixedly upon Jerusalem and Egypt. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, "The Westwardness of Things: Literary Geography and the Church of the East," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. L. Tang and D.W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2016).

⁵⁷ Adam H. Becker, "The Comparative Study of 'Scholasticism' in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians," *AJS Review* 34, no. 1 (2010): 94-95. Though independent, the School of Nisibis required its students to remain on the school's grounds, maintaining an ascetic lifestyle similar to that of a monastery. Wilmschurst, 58.

⁵⁸ Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 201-09.

liturgical studies, biblical exegesis, the Greek fathers (in Syriac translation), the theological tradition from Theodore of Mopsuestia, and translations of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle's theories on logic and Neo-Platonist commentaries on them.⁵⁹

In the system of the Church of the East's scholasticism, the embodied rituals of learning prepared the men in mind and body to know, to experience, and to serve God. As Becker reveals the Church of the East's understanding, even learning the alphabet was following in the footsteps of the angels, for the angels learned from God himself an alphabet and the making of words so that they could interact with God and exercise their duties in creation. Likewise, through the ritual of learning that formed an embodied practice, the learner trained his body to seek God and God illumined his mind to apprehend God and His truths.⁶⁰ The School of Nisibis, for example, couched the learning process in the context of a "semi-monastic community" whose ascetic rules enforced communal living among the learners while insulating them from contact with the life of the village. The school visibly represented the separation from the village by requiring of learners that "they shall go about within the school and on the streets of the town in chaste tonsure and dignified dress that is far from luxury."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Becker, "The Comparative Study of 'Scholasticism' in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians," 103.

⁶⁰ Explicating the late sixth century Church of the East work, the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, Becker finds that, in the text presented as a welcome to new students at the School of Nisibis, "illumination" describes a knowing and understanding mind, and Becker brings out the document's argument that "The human being via the illumination of the soul can find the hidden image of God in the 'rich treasury of his kingdom.' Reason will help us 'see,' or rather more significantly, 'distinguish,' that which is hidden. Our mind, which is rational and illuminated—two terms which seem to be one and the same here—is itself a likeness of God because of its dependence on the divine light for its ignition." Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 181.

⁶¹ Arthur Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1965), 287-88.

In hagiographies, the Christian learner left behind worldly learning to embrace the learning culture of the Church and the practice of the learned ascetic.⁶² Thus, the “ideal” progression of learning might begin with basic learning in a village school, furthered in the enclosed society of an independent or a monastic school, refined in a monastery’s smaller community of cenobitic monks, and finally culminating in the unbroken solitude of a monk’s cell where the ascetic monk had so embodied his learning that, apart from the society of fellow learners, he solely devoted himself to meditating and communing with God in silence.⁶³ For the “schoolman” who was created in the independent school, however, his practical path might lead to the monastery, or it might also lead to an office in the church hierarchy, or to a school instructor’s position.⁶⁴ Yet, as Vööbus insists for the School of Nisibis, the path of learning was designed to instill a “zeal for the active propagation of the Christian faith,” which also led many learned men to the mission field.⁶⁵

The Church of the East monastery at Beth Lapat (or Gundeshapur) in the southwest of the Persian Empire was renowned for its hospital and attached medical school. A Church of the East diocese already existed in Beth Lapat probably from before the end of the second century.⁶⁶ The monastery was established before 366 or 367. When Shapur I conquered swaths of Roman

⁶² Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 50.

⁶³ Ibid., 214.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 123. Describing the school and the monastery as “intentional communities” with similarities in ritual practice, Becker distinguishes their goals: “One attempted literally to socialize the ‘student’ and inculcate him with a certain body of knowledge; the other served as a space for him to go beyond knowledge in the privacy of his cell.” Ibid., 226.

⁶⁵ Vööbus, 208.

⁶⁶ Wilmshurst, 32.

territory in the 250s, he resettled a large population of captives from Antioch in Beth Lapat and renamed the place “Gundeshapur.” The Church of the East incorporated the Christians brought from Antioch, some of whom had medical expertise, and began a medical school teaching Greek medical knowledge and practice, building a school that was well regarded by the fifth century.⁶⁷ In fact, these Church of the East doctors were so valued that they were the doctors called upon to serve in the Sassanian court and, later, in the courts of the Umayyads and of the Abbasids.⁶⁸

At the School of Nisibis, the director of the school, Abraham of Beth Rabban (510-569), built a hospice to care for the sick, and the school made medicine one of its fields of training.⁶⁹ Medical study, however, was secondary to theological study, and a certain separation of the learners was required. Canon 19 of the additional canons ratified by the school in 590 under director Henana makes this clear, providing that monks and physicians must not share living quarters so that “books of the craft of the world” would not be read together with the “books of holiness.”⁷⁰ Becker sees in this required distinctiveness an attempt to socialize “schoolman” religious specialists as a “semi-distinct social entity.”⁷¹ As will be seen in the Church of the East’s experience in China, however, the Church relied upon both the scholasticism and the medical expertise of some its leading members to negotiate a place for the Church in China’s social space.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁹ Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 106.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 112.

⁷¹ Ibid., 123.

Adjustment to Muslim Rule

The developed institutional structures of the Church of the East put it in a strong position when the surprising success of Arab raiding parties turned into a Muslim conquest. While Persia and Byzantium spent their troops and treasure fighting each other to a stalemate in the early seventh century, Prophet Muhammad (570-632) united the tribes of Arabia under Islam or, at least, under a mutual commitment to Abrahamic monotheism,⁷² and Rashidun Caliph Abu Bakr (r. 632-634) held the tribes together after Muhammad died.⁷³

The armies that burst out of Arabia to initiate what became the Muslim Conquest were not ensconced in a fully formed Islam, and they posed no existential challenge to the Church of the East, but rather allowed the Church greater freedom than it had known. Jonathan Berkey emphasizes the eclecticism of Islam as a developing religious movement. What it meant to be a Muslim, he says, required a dynamic answer that reflected the larger historical factors—

⁷² Christian Arab tribes who committed to the *umma* (Muslim community) participated in raids and enjoyed the spoils as full members of the community without being forced to give up their Christianity for Islam. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam I: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), 199. Eventually, however, they gave up their Christianity and fully assimilated into the *umma*.

⁷³ These enforcement actions (632 – 33) are known as the Ridda Wars or the Wars of Apostacy. Some tribes, holding that their agreements to join the community were personal agreements between the tribe and Muhammad that had perished with Muhammad, announced that they would go their own way, trading and raiding on their own and returning to their previous religious practices. M. A. Shaban sees the issue in economic terms, and he explains that the tribes who converted were paying *zakat* (a tax on income to relieve the poor) and those who had agreed to join the *umma* without converting were paying *jizya* (a poll tax) on an individual basis, but Muhammad had died before they saw a return on their investment, and they feared that the scheme had failed. The Meccans and Medinans, however, were desperate to hold the scheme together, for their fortunes depended upon its success. M. A. Shaban, "Conversion to Early Islam," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 27. Hodgson, on the other hand, foregrounded a religious motivation for the decision to forcibly return the errant tribes to the community, arguing that Abu Bakr and Umar, "Companions" of the Prophet who had become the *umma*'s new leaders, advocated for a more "ambitious conception of Islam" in which "Islam was not merely a matter of each individual's obeying God; it was a compact in which all Muslims were bound to each other as well." Hodgson, 197.

including competing faith traditions—influencing Muslims in that moment. The process of developing a Muslim identity was slow and gradual, at first creatively interacting with other faith traditions, and later tending to use other faith traditions as foils to draw ever more distinct lines of definition.⁷⁴

Fred Donner also argued for the dynamic religious character of the early Islamic movement. In his 2010 book, *Muhammad and the Believers*, he dealt with the problem that Muslim sources on early Islam come from a relatively late date by taking the Qur'an as an historical text. Arguing that the Qur'an emphasizes "Believers" rather than "Muslims" and that the use of "Muslim" as an exclusive identifier came later, Donner uses a critical reading of the Qur'an to flesh out the markers identifying an ecumenical group of monotheist "Believers" in the earliest period of Islamic history. He also uses contemporary non-Muslim sources as well as coins and other archaeological evidence to examine the Islamic conquest, the growth of the state, and the Umayyad reforms after the Second Civil War. He argues that "Islam began as a religious movement—not as a social, economic, or 'national' one; in particular, it embodied an intense concern for attaining personal salvation through righteous behavior."⁷⁵ It was during the Umayyad Caliphate—and with the second civil war (680 – 692), in particular—that success in gaining an empire led the Muslim "aristocracy" to refine membership (and power) from a broader monotheist group of "Believers" specifically to the Muslim believers.

⁷⁴ Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the near East, 600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁷⁵ Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), xii.

As the successes of early Arab raiding morphed into a conquest of Byzantine and Sasanid lands, the Muslim Arabs assumed the posture of a ruling elite, separate and exclusive of the conquered peoples. Their goal was to rule, not to convert, and they even allowed Christian Arab tribes “to participate actively in the conquest.”⁷⁶ Rashidun Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644), engineer of the initial expansion, created garrison cities such as Kufa and Basra to keep the Arab-Muslim armies together. Rather than settle the land to pursue agriculture, he left the conquered peoples in place to continue their work under the administration of their own religious authorities, paying taxes to their Muslim overlords. Muslim expansion slowed or halted under caliphs Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644-656) and Ali ibn Abi Talib (r. 656-661) while the community struggled within itself over issues of succession and authority, but it resumed under the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) while continuing the policy of maintaining Islam as the religion of the ruling elite and discouraging conversion among the subjugated.

Muslim society carved out a protected place, the subordinate *dhimmi* class, for Jews and Christians as monotheist religions with a revealed scripture—though revelation of the Qur’an had been necessary to correct their errant practices. Prophet Muhammad, himself, had recognized Jews and Christians as “People of the Book,” not requiring them to convert to Islam. As the Umayyads found themselves a ruling minority over vast lands, they preferred the Sassanid model of religious pluralism with taxpaying self-ruled communities to the Byzantine model of enforced religious conformity.⁷⁷ Christian and Jewish communities carried over the

⁷⁶ Hodgson, 199.

⁷⁷ Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 47-48.

religious institutions that they had developed under the Sassanids.⁷⁸ Islamic law, not always enforced, required *dhimmis* to maintain ritual subservience by wearing identifying clothing, riding mules so that only Muslims could ride horses, and giving way to a Muslim that they might meet in public. Otherwise, the *dhimmis* were free to practice their religion and to live under their own religious community's laws provided that they paid the poll tax on non-Muslims and did not give offense to the Prophet or to Islam.⁷⁹ A Muslim man could even take a *dhimmi* as a wife. Because the population of Zoroastrians was so large in the lands of the former Sassanid empire, however, *hadiths* (sayings attributed to the Prophet) emerged that allowed Zoroastrians also to be considered *dhimmis*, though of a lower class than Jews and Christians, for a Zoroastrian taken to wife (or to lesser positions that involved sexual service) had to convert to Islam.⁸⁰ In the long term, most *dhimmi* communities eventually merged with the Muslim community, but their special "protected" status delayed their conversion to varying degrees, depending upon local circumstances involved in setting initial *dhimmi*-Muslim relations, and on how those relations with Muslim authorities continued in that area.⁸¹ Not until the times of the Abbasid empire (750 – 945) did *dhimmi* communities begin becoming isolated and identifying as their own ethnic groups.⁸²

⁷⁸ Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 382.

⁷⁹ Hodgson, 269. Egger, 249.

⁸⁰ Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁸¹ Berkey, 91.

⁸² Hodgson, 306.

The immediate result of the Muslim Conquest was a boon for the Church of the East. Already accustomed to paying taxes in exchange for a degree of self-rule, the Church enjoyed greater freedom and status under Muslim rule than they had under Zoroastrian rule. For example, Young's survey of the surviving letters of Catholicos Isho'yahb III (r. 649-59) written while a bishop, a metropolitan, and as catholicos, shows that Isho'yahb preferred Muslim rule to the Zoroastrian rule of the Sasanians, seeing the Arab conquest as God's judgment on the Magian religion, and he felt that he enjoyed generally good relations with Muslim rulers.⁸³ The frustration of Zoroastrian eschatological hopes for the Sasanian Empire and the general stress of chaotic times led to significant rates of conversion to Christianity among Zoroastrians and also among pagans and Jews,⁸⁴ with the result that the Church of the East grew to its largest number of believers during the Umayyad Caliphate, it built more monasteries, and it intensified its missionary efforts in Central Asia and in China.⁸⁵

After the second *fitna* or Muslim civil war (680 – 692), the assertion of a more defined Muslim identity drew firmer lines of advantage between Arab Muslims and *dhimmi* groups. In seeking to unify the Muslim community and to justify their leadership of it, the Umayyads put new emphasis on the religious nature of Islam and on the caliph's role as the successor of Prophet Muhammad to lead the Muslim community, guided by God's revelation to Muhammad

⁸³ Young, 85-99.

⁸⁴ Keeping the conversion of Jews to Christianity in perspective, Berkey also notes that this was a formative time period for Judaism in the Near East as leadership of the Jewish community and authority to interpret scripture centered on the rabbis and the leaders of the major rabbinical training schools in Iraq. He says, "Now, for a time at least, the Jews of the Near East—who made up as much as ninety percent of world Jewry—came to know and to operate under a single ruling institution." Berkey, 94.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 92, 97.

in the Qur'an.⁸⁶ Caliph Abd al'Malik ibn Marwan (r. 685-705) marked this shift with a monument to the dominance of Islam and to the eschatological hope of Muslims as God's true followers on Judgement Day, completing construction of the Dome of the Rock in 692, in the form of a Byzantine martyrium on the holy site in Jerusalem from which Muslim tradition holds that the Prophet ascended to heaven in his "night journey," and which was also the site of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem.⁸⁷ He also inscribed on the structure's walls the earliest extant quotations from the Qur'an, including a call for Christians to give up their Trinitarianism and return to monotheism.⁸⁸ Clarifying these distinctions not only helped to legitimate the Umayyad's rule, but also raised the social status of the Muslim elite.

While the caliph continued to rule from the Umayyad power base in Syria, administration of former Persian land was delegated to appointed governors. As Wood points out, some of these governors tended to see the Church of the East's catholicos as merely an agent for fulfilling their revenue quotas and, perhaps, their own personal demand for wealth-building. Rivals of the catholicos, too, might seek out the aid of a Muslim ruler, bundling a bribe with his accusation against the patriarch's loyalty.⁸⁹ For example, Yohannan the Leper accused Catholicos Hnanisho I (r. 686-698) of uncertain loyalty, and Yohannan added weight to his charge by paying a bribe to Bishr ibn Marwan, then governor of Kufa (692-694). Bishr accordingly deposed Hnanisho and

⁸⁶ Donner, 209-11.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 199-202. For more on the Prophet's Night Journey, see Ghulām Murtaza Azād, "Isra' and M'iraj: Night Journey and Ascension of Allah's Apostle Muhammad (S. A. W. S.)," *Islamic Studies* 22, no. 2 (1983), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23076051>.

⁸⁸ Donner, 213-14.

⁸⁹ Wood, 226.

installed Yohannan the Leper as catholicos in 691. Yohannan died shortly after in 693, and Hnanisho continued as a diminished catholicos overseeing the Church from the Monastery of Jonah in Mosul until he died in 698. Thereafter, Governor al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (governed Iraq 694-714) declined for his remaining fourteen years to appoint a new patriarch.⁹⁰ As a result, not only did the power of the catholicos to advocate the Church of the East's interests become increasingly enfeebled, but also the burdened bishops and monasteries of the church became less responsive to the discipline of their weakened catholicos if there was one, and yet more self-reliant when the office was vacant. Despite these challenges, however, the Church of the East was still vibrant at the time of the Abbasid revolution.

When the numerous and battle-hardened Muslim armies of Khurasan (of Merv, in particular) powered the revolution that would end the Umayyad caliphate and install the Abbasids as the new rulers of the Muslim empire in 750, the non-Muslims of the realm looked on with a spectator's interest. Muslims were still a minority, and the non-Muslim majority saw no difference for themselves whether one faction of the army and Muslim elites won out over another. As it would happen, the one goal of the revolutionaries that was achieved unequivocally, the assimilation of all Muslims to do away with the super-class of pure-Arab Muslims,⁹¹ would retard Church growth and gradually lead to an increased rate of conversion to Islam within the prosperous Abbasid state.⁹²

⁹⁰ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997), 201-02; Young, 160.

⁹¹ M. A. Shaban, *The 'Abbasid Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 163-68.

⁹² Fairer opportunities for non-Arab Muslims to join the governing elite and to take preference of appointment to official positions over similarly qualified non-Muslims over time added to the social

The Abbasids moved the capital from Damascus nearer to their Khurasani power base, and Caliph Abu Ja'far Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur (al-Mansur, r. 754-775) founded Baghdad in 762, completing the original settlement of the new capital in 777.⁹³ In 775, Catholicos Hnanisho II (r. 773-80) decided to move the Church of the East's central administration to Baghdad. Though he and his successors retained the title "Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon," they remained in the Abbasid capital with access to the caliph, and in the ninth and tenth centuries served on the caliph's council of state.⁹⁴

Hnanisho II died in 780 and Timothy I succeeded him as catholicos later that year. The succession was controversial, and, after factions shed blood in the streets of Baghdad, the Church of the East finally had to appeal to Caliph Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Abdallah al-Mansur (al-Mahdi, r. 775-785) to settle the matter. Summarizing Wilmshurst's telling of the election of Timothy I and of resistance to him, Timothy was the bishop of a rural suffragan diocese in the metropolitan province of Adiabene when he stood for election as catholicos. The field of nominees was narrowed when one nominee died suddenly, and another withdrew upon Timothy's offer to appoint him Metropolitan of Adiabene instead. Now a favorite in the election, Timothy showed the voting bishops sacks that appeared to be full of gold, offering them a share if they voted for him. Once elected, Timothy's sacks proved to be full of stones, and he rebuked the greedy bishops for trying to sell the priesthood. Metropolitans Ephrem of Elam and Joseph of

pressure for Zoroastrians, Christians, and, to a lesser extent, Jews, to convert to Islam. Amira K. Bennison, *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 28.

⁹³ Matthew Gordon, *The Rise of Islam* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005), 54.

⁹⁴ Wilmshurst, 115.

Merv then arose in opposition, forming a party to set aside Timothy's election and to elect Ephrem as catholicos. When conflict between the two factions led to rioting in the streets of Baghdad and several Christians were killed, the caliph's Church of the East physician, Isa bar Quraysh, intervened, and the Church confirmed Timothy's election. Caliph al-Mahdi appointed him catholicos, and Timothy was consecrated in May 780. His designs to dislodge Timothy frustrated, Joseph of Merv converted to Islam, and then tried to take advantage of his new status as a Muslim to undermine Catholicos Timothy.⁹⁵ Joseph's attempts, however, only succeeded in ruining his own credibility before the caliph and court, and Joseph ended his days disgraced, an exile in Byzantine territory.⁹⁶

Baghdad grew as a center of political power and commerce, and it soon flowered as the hotbed of learning and culture in the Islamic world. Arabic language had spread enough by the beginning of the Abbasid period to become the language of government and of the educated elite.⁹⁷ For the elites, Arabic poetry, especially the panegyric, as well as religious and secular literature expressed the "mannered and intellectualized culture of the period."⁹⁸ Caliphs al-Mansur (r. 754-775), Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809), and al-Ma'mun (r. 813-833) led a broader

⁹⁵ The Arab armies had earlier made Merv a garrison city in Khurasan, and these Arabs assimilated with the local Iranian population. Merv then served as a center for the Abbasid revolution as these assimilated Arabs and local non-Arab Muslims sought to establish one Muslim community with equal rights for all Muslims. Joseph must have believed his Muslim contacts from Merv placed him in a position of potentially great advantage in the Abbasid regime. Indeed, a convert once so highly placed in the Church of the East's hierarchy would have represented a public relations victory for proponents of Islam. See Shaban.

⁹⁶ Wilmschurst, 140-42.

⁹⁷ Gordon, 50-51.

⁹⁸ Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005), 251.

movement in supporting the translation of Hellenic texts into Arabic.⁹⁹ Subject areas included astrology, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, physics, metaphysics and logic, alchemy and magic.¹⁰⁰ In 830, al-Ma'mun, personally interested in Hellenic sciences and philosophy, endowed a renowned public research library called the "House of Wisdom" (Bayt al-Hikma) that led to a permanent improvement in the quality of translations as it built a world-leading collection, even seeking additional Greek texts from Constantinople.¹⁰¹ Translation of useful Hellenic and Persian texts from Syriac and Pahlavi had begun in the Umayyad period, but, with caliphal support—particularly, the keen example of al-Ma'mun—patronage of the translation movement became fashionable among the Baghdad's great families, and their salons became the centers where classical learning was discussed and advanced.¹⁰²

The Church of the East's familiarity with Hellenic texts helped it to play an important role in the translation movement and in Baghdad's intellectual culture. As Muslim scholars read and absorbed translations of Aristotle, shared Aristotelian logic became the common ground upon which Muslims and Christians debated the relative merits of their faiths before the Caliph in court-sponsored debates.¹⁰³ In 781, Caliph al-Mahdi himself debated with Catholicos Timothy I over a two-day period.¹⁰⁴ Christian and Jewish scholars contributed to the translation of

⁹⁹ Gordon, 64-65.

¹⁰⁰ Bennison, 182-85.

¹⁰¹ Hodgson, 298.

¹⁰² Kennedy, 244-60.

¹⁰³ Wilmshurst, 186.

¹⁰⁴ For a translation of the Catholicos's account of the debate, see Timothy the Patriarch, *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*, trans. Alphonse Mingana (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009).

classical Hellenic texts on philosophy and medicine from Greek and Syriac into Arabic.¹⁰⁵

Jacobite and Melkite Christians also contributed to the translation movement, but the schools and monasteries of the Church of the East held the best libraries, so their scholars dominated the translation movement among Christian translators.¹⁰⁶

Beyond important roles in the translation movement, Christians of the Church of the East played important professional roles within the Abbasid regime. Christian doctors attended Abbasid caliphs and their households as they had Umayyad caliphs and Persian shahs, and these physicians, likewise, enjoyed power through their personal access to the ruler and his family. At the behest of Caliph al-Mansur, a community of physicians from the medical school in Gundeshapur formed in Baghdad, and, under Harun al-Rashid, they developed hospitals, some also serving as medical schools where Christians, Jews, and Muslims extended the knowledge and practice of pharmacology, surgery, and specialties.¹⁰⁷

The Abbasids also followed the Umayyads in relying upon *dhimmis* to serve as administrators of the state apparatus. The Abbasids saw the Persian model as the highest statecraft, and so not only did the Abbasid caliph leave behind the previous model of a “low power-distance” caliph to take on an exalted status more similar to a Persian shah, but also continuing to rely upon the complex Persian bureaucratic system became necessary. As Mun'im Sirry argues, it was not simply due to the technical expertise of Christian Jewish, and Zoroastrian bureaucrats within the old Persian system that made the Abbasids prefer them, but *dhimmis*’ lack

¹⁰⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 56.

¹⁰⁶ Wilmshurst, 184.

¹⁰⁷ Bennison, 90-91, 184.

of Muslim connection made them reliant upon the caliph for protection even as their lack of connection to Muslim sect or Arab tribe rendered them more reliable officers for the executing the Caliph's ruling power.¹⁰⁸

Muslims sometimes complained to the caliph about non-Muslims exercising authority over them in the, yet the *dhimmis* tended to remain in their positions. When Caliph al-Mansur, attempting to establish the Abbasid's regime as a purer Islamic state than that of the Umayyads, tried to empty his office of public treasury of Christians, his need for the Christian bureaucrats' unique expertise soon forced him to bring them back.¹⁰⁹ Christians commonly rose even to high offices such as vizier or secretary. Sirry concludes that Muslim and non-Muslim relations were better than commonly thought, but one does well to remember that Muslim reliance on non-Muslims in governance was not borne out of a humanistic ideal of tolerance, but out of practical need.¹¹⁰ Thus, while some Christians attained high state office, and they may have been willing and able to use the authority of their office to assist the Church of the East in odd matters, they always remained answerable to and dependent on their Muslim sovereign.

Christians negotiated a place for their *dhimmi* community within Abbasid society through their practical professional roles and through the institutional role of the Church of the East. The

¹⁰⁸ Mun'im Sirry, "The Public Role of Dhimmīs During Abbasid Times," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 74, no. 2 (2011). On at least one caliph's preference for appointing Christians over others for office, Sirry records that Caliph al-Mu'tadid (r. 892-902) is said to have given his vizier the following advice when the vizier showed reluctance to appoint Christians to office: "If you found a Christian suitable for any office, you should appoint him. A Christian is more truthful than the Jews because the Jews want the return of kingdom to them; he is also better than a Muslim as the latter is of the same religion as yours he desires to take over your position; he is also better than Zoroastrians because the kingdom is in their hand." Ibid., 202-03.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 192.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 188, 204.

Church also adjusted its own polity to attune its center of gravity in Mesopotamia to the core of the Abbasid political world, and the Church further adjusted its relationship with its more distant metropolitan provinces. Timothy I led the reorganization of the structure of the metropolitan provinces at a synod in 790. There, the Church differentiated interior and exterior provinces. The interior metropolitan provinces were in Mesopotamia: Elam, Nisibis, Maishan, Adiabenne, Beth Garmai, and nearby Hulwan. The metropolitan bishops of these central provinces would elect the patriarch, personally present themselves to the patriarch at least every four years, and accept other oversight from the patriarch. The exterior provinces included Fars, Merv, Herat, Rai, Armenia, Barda'a, Samarkand, China, India, and Damascus. The metropolitans of the exterior provinces enjoyed greater freedom in the administration of their provinces, and rather than physically reporting to the patriarch, they submitted a written report to the patriarch in Baghdad at least every six years. The geographical distance from the patriarch that afforded them greater autonomy, however, also excluded those metropolitans from the exterior provinces from the circle of metropolitans who would elect new patriarchs.

One of the practical results of the new organizational scheme was that the catholicos tended to look within his familiar pool of well-trained and faithful men in the interior provinces for appointments of metropolitans in the exterior provinces. David Wilmshurst particularly notes the cultural bias that resulted:

Henceforth the Nestorian episcopate was dominated by Syrians, and the exterior provinces were run as Syrian colonies. Greeks, Armenians, Persians, Turks, Mongols, Tibetans, Chinese and Indians attended church services conducted in Syriac. Their priest may have been trained locally, but their bishop, if they ever saw him, was nearly always a Syrian.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Wilmshurst, 158-59.

The liturgical use of Syriac would not have been an insurmountable difficulty—as the exclusive use of Latin in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council (1959) demonstrates—but the long-term inability of local believers to rise to the most senior position in their own metropolitan province presented a real barrier to the indigenization of Christianity in those exterior provinces. Especially in the newly created metropolitan provinces, with their shorter history of Christian faith, limitations on the ability of local churchmen to exercise leadership of the Church in their homeland must have perpetuated a sense in that place that Christianity remained something foreign.

CHAPTER 2

JINGJIAO IN THE HIGH TANG

The Tang dynasty (618-907) presided over China's golden age, and the High Tang (618-756) marked dynasty's most prosperous and secure period. China had been divided between various kingdoms since the fall of the Han dynasty (220 CE), until the Sui dynasty (581–618) reunified it. Religion, particularly Daoism and Buddhism had played an important role in the states that controlled Chinese lands from division through the Sui unification.

The various schools of Daoism, from the Han Dynasty's Celestial Masters to the Highest Clarity (Shangqing 上清) and the Numinous Treasure (Lingbao 靈寶), had developed over the centuries with Highest Clarity reaching its apogee in the Tang. When Li Yuan 李淵 (Emperor Gaozu 高祖, r. 618-626) established the Tang dynasty, he and his Li clan of mixed Han and Xianbei heritage played to their Han heritage by claiming Li Dan 李聃 (Laozi) as their ancestor and by promoting China's native Daoist religion. At the time, Daoism was widely considered a repository for Chinese culture, and the Tang dynasty proved to be a time of summing up, synthesizing, and organizing the riches of Daoist doctrine, including what it had gained from its ongoing contact with Buddhism.¹

Buddhism had entered China during the Later Han dynasty (25 – 220 CE). It is first attested in the biography of Prince Ying of Chu 楚王英 (in modern northern Jiangsu Province),

¹ On the development of Daoism, see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

the half-brother of Han [Emperor] Mingdi 漢明帝 (r. 58-75), where the *Hou-Hanshu* records that Prince Ying, in 65 CE, held a maigre feast for the pious laymen and monks living in Chu.² Following the fall of the Han dynasty, Buddhism took hold in the south first among the court and gentry stunned by the failure of their Confucianism but finding comfort and new intellectual stimulation in Buddhism. In the north, Buddhists served the states established by various barbarian invaders, providing both practical skills and a route to sophisticating the new rulers' recently nomadic cultures without making them unduly reliant on native Confucian specialists. Buddhism spread among common folk in the war-torn north through Buddhist efforts to relieve suffering, to build up community, and to advance local economic development. Buddhism widespread in China by the end of the sixth century, Emperor Wen of Sui 隋文帝, a devout Buddhist of Han background, looked to the north and south's shared Buddhism to provide a unifying ideology for his new dynasty.

Buddhist and Daoist institutions were so strong at the beginning of the Tang dynasty that, when Grand Astrologer Fu Yi 傅奕, a Daoist, in 626 presented a memorial complaining about Buddhists promoting their foreign and unfilial religion, Emperor Gaozu 唐高祖 responded with an edict limiting the number of both Buddhist and Daoist institutions. Li Shimin 李世民 (Emperor Taizong, r. 626-649) that year forced his father's abdication, and he never enforced the edict, but, as Florian Reiter observes, the edict marked a shift toward emphasizing secular power

² Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 33. See *Hou-Hanshu* 42.1428-29.

while balancing off Buddhist and Daoist interests against one another.³ Even as he perpetuated the claim that his clan was descended from Laozi himself, Taizong continued the balancing policy. For example, he assured Buddhist monks during visits to their temples “that his policy of giving precedence to Daoism was based largely on grounds of filial piety, and that he was not unfriendly toward Buddhism.”⁴ This context of a sovereign both drawing power from influential religious groups and managing their power by playing them against one another must have felt familiar to the emissaries of the Church of the East when they arrived in China from Persia.

A Jing Wind Blows Eastward

The Church of the East sent a delegation to the court of Tang emperor Taizong in 635. The delegation was received at the highest level with great dignity, and the emperor admitted the Church into the state administration in 638. The Church’s emissaries were well prepared for such a role by their experience under Sassanid rule, and their approach of contributing secular expertise to the empire would have parallels in their later strategy for living under Muslim rule in their homeland. This chapter will examine the Church’s efforts in that hopeful time of the High Tang to establish a worthy position for the Church in the Chinese social hierarchy through the high value of their contribution to state. The Chinese state first gave the Church of the East the Chinese name of *Bosi jiao* 波斯教 (the Persian Religion) and later corrected the name to *Da Qin jiao* 大秦教 (the Syrian Religion), but at some uncertain time, the Church of the East gave

³ Florian C. Reiter, *The Aspirations and Standards of Taoist Priests in the Early T'ang Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 4-5.

⁴ Ch'en, 217.

themselves the Chinese name of *Jingjiao* 景教 (the Luminous Religion). For convenience, I will risk being anachronistic at times and generally refer to the Church of the East in China by their self-ascribed name, *Jingjiao*.

There are a few sources that speak directly to the *Jingjiao* experience at this time. The most important is the *Jingjiao bei*, or *Jingjiao* monument erected in 781.⁵ The text of the stele was composed by Monk Jingjing 僧景淨 of the Da Qin Monastery in Chang'an.⁶ The monument was created as a piece of persuasive rhetoric, and I will analyze its rhetoric in the next chapter. Here, however, I will attempt to glean historical facts (or what Jingjing claims to be fact) and discuss them in the context provided by other historical evidence.

The *Jingjiao* monument describes the mission of the monk whose Chinese name was Aluoben, the first emissary of the Church of the East to China's imperial court. The introduction to the mission begins as follows:

[] [] 太宗文皇帝，光華啓運，明聖臨人，大秦國有上德，曰阿羅本。

The *honored*⁷ Taizong, the Cultured Emperor (r. 626 – 649), as his glory began its turn of destiny, with insight and wisdom ruled the people, and in the kingdom of Da Qin there was a Highest Virtue named Aluoben.⁸

⁵ The stele is on display in Xi'an's Forest of Steles Museum, and so, in the context of things *Jingjiao*, it is sometimes simply known as the Xi'an Monument or the Xi'an Stele. My analysis of the stele's visual and verbal rhetoric follows in the next chapter, and my annotated translation of the stele text is in Appendix A. For a history of the unearthing of the stele in 1625 and a study of the stele's subsequent place in Western sinology and imagination, see Michael Keevak, *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625-1916* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

⁶ *Jingjiao bei*, line 2.

⁷ This term verbally represents the non-verbal honorific present in the text in the form of a space or *que* 缺 before the emperor's name. Presented, thus, in italics, but without note hereafter.

⁸ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 10-11.

What Aluoben's name may have been in his mother tongue is not known, but scholars have suggested that "Aluoben" may have been a transcription of the Syriac name, "Yahballaha." David Wilmshurst notes the similarity in meaning between the two names, translating the Syriac as "God has given," compared with "God is my origin" for the Chinese.⁹ Aluoben's title of "Highest Virtue" (*shangde* 上德) is probably here anticipating the high rank (metropolitan bishop) that Gaozong would later grant Aluoben,¹⁰ for the title recorded in the Gaozong's edict admitting the Church to the empire was that of "Great Virtue" (*dade* 大德).¹¹ Used three times in the preface of the stele text, a "Great Virtue" is the Chinese term that Buddhists used for the Sanskrit *bhadanta*, a title of respect for a monk (especially of the Hinayana school). This title in the *Jingjiao* context appears to distinguish rank, as from the lesser rank of "monk" (*seng* 僧) also used elsewhere in the stele text. John Foster probably correctly argues that the *Jingjiao* church used the title "Great Virtue" for its bishops.¹²

Bishop Aluoben set out on his mission to China, bringing the treasures of his faith and its practice. According to the *Jingjiao* Monument,

占青雲而載真經，望風律以馳艱險。

Holding ambitions as high as a cloud in the blue sky and with carts loaded with the true scriptures, he looked to [his monastic] Rule for guidance, and by this means sped through [the journey's] difficulties and perils.¹³

⁹ Wilmshurst, 122.

¹⁰ See *Jingjiao bei*, line 15.

¹¹ This edict, recorded in *Jingjiao bei*, lines 12-13, is discussed below.

¹² Foster, 43.

¹³ *Jingjiao bei*, line 11.

To accomplish the high ambitions that brought him from Da Qin, Aluoben brought only a cart or carts loaded with Christian texts and the ascetic practice that he had learned from the Rule of his monastic order. Indeed, the discipline and customary self-deprivation of his monk's asceticism had already proved its value in speeding him through the difficulties and perils of the long and arduous journey to China. But what were the monk-bishop's ambitions? The Church of the East sought the Court's recognition so that it might become a contributor to the good of the emperor and his realm, and their efforts were rewarded.

According to the Monument text, Aluoben's embassy from the Church of the East was well-received in the Tang capital.

貞觀九祀，至於長安。帝使宰臣房公玄齡，惣仗西郊，賓迎入內。翻經書殿，問道禁闈；深知正真，特令傳授。

In the ninth year of the Zhenguan Era [635 CE], he reached Chang'an. The emperor dispatched the prime minister, Duke Fang Xuanling, to lead an honor guard to the western suburbs where the visitor was received and conducted to the palace. [Aluoben] translated scriptures in the imperial library, and [the emperor] inquired into their teaching within the palace court. With his profound understanding of the upright and pure, [the emperor] specially commanded [that the teaching] should be taught to others.¹⁴

The reception by the court was certainly worth noting, for the monument's audience would take notice of the honor afforded the Church of the East's embassy. Duke Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579 – 648) was an early advisor to Taizong, even prior to Taizong ascending the throne, and he was considered to be a model chancellor in service to the emperor.¹⁵ According to *Honored Persons and Sacred Books* (Zunjing 尊經), a *Jingjiao* text found in the Mogao Grottoes' "library

¹⁴ *Jingjiao bei*, line 11.

¹⁵ See *Jiu Tangshu* 66.2459-67, *Xin Tangshu* 96.3853-58.

cave,” Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng 魏徵 together presented to the emperor a memorial requesting that the scriptures brought by Aluoben be translated.¹⁶ Wei Zheng (580 – 643) had served on the staff of crown prince Li Jiancheng 李建成, Taizong’s brother and former rival for the throne. While serving Li Jiancheng, Wei had been critical of Taizong, but emperor Taizong valued the honest criticism that Wei ever remained faithful to give, and so kept him on as an official in his own administration—even raising Wei to a chancellor’s position.¹⁷

The extravagant honor afforded to Aluoben’s embassy is curious. Though perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) describes a more likely reception scenario in his 819 anti-Buddhist memorial to Emperor Xianzong 憲宗. As Han Yu reasoned from Confucian values against the extravagant reception that the emperor was preparing for a bone-relic of the Buddha, he imagines how the Court would have received the Buddha if he were to come as a living person:

Were he still alive today, were he to come to court at the bidding of his country, your majesty would give him no greater reception than an interview in the Strangers’ Hall, a ceremonial banquet, and the gift of a suit of clothes, after which you would have him sent under guard to the frontier to prevent him from misleading your people.¹⁸

One might have expected Taizong to have treated Aluoben’s church in such a courteous but summary way if he came as an ambassador of Persia, much less if he had come merely in his

¹⁶ For a recent translation of that text, see, Li Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and Its Literature in Chinese: Together with a New English Translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents*, 2d ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 184-88.

¹⁷ See *Jiu Tangshu* 71.2545-63, *Xin Tangshu* 97.3867-85.

¹⁸ Yu Han, "Memorial on the Bone of Buddha," in *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), 252.

own capacity as the Church of the East's emissary with a letter of introduction from the shah of Persia. Taizong, however, was of a more open-minded period in Tang China than was Han Yu, and Taizong certainly possessed a more cosmopolitan outlook than Han Yu thought was wise.¹⁹ Nevertheless, that Fang Xuanling himself received Aluoben, and that—if the *Honored Persons and Sacred Books* is to be believed—Wei Zheng joined Fang in recommending to the emperor that Aluoben should be allowed to translate his scriptures, then the dignity of the reception is remarkable indeed. The Church of the East must have come to the Chinese Court in some capacity related to its official position in the Persian state, for, at the end of the process, emperor Taizong focused on its Persian identity, naming the Church “the Persian Religion” (*Bosi jiao* 波斯教).²⁰ The association between the Church and Persia so strong that, forty-three years later, Gaozong built a second *Jingjiao* monastery in Chang'an at the request of Peroz, the Persian king in exile.²¹

Aluoben took about three years working in the imperial library to produce a sample of translated texts to provide the Court with an overview of Christian doctrine. *Honored Persons and Sacred Books* lists by title thirty-five *Jingjiao* works translated into Chinese, and it then says

¹⁹ Though emperor Gaozu decreed only that limitations be placed on the number of Buddhist institutions, Han Yu's “Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha” praises the wisdom of emperor Gaozu in seeking to *eradicate* Buddhism, and Han Yu indirectly excoriates Taizong by blaming unnamed “ministers” for not following through: “But the ministers of the time were lacking in foresight and ability, they had no real understanding of the way of the ancient kings nor of the things that are right both for then and now. Thus they were unable to assist the wise resolution of their ruler and save their country from this plague. To my constant regret the attempt stopped short,” *ibid.*, 251.

²⁰ For a treatment of the various theories about the Tang court's reception of Aluoben and why it granted the name *Bosi jiao*, see Antonino Forte, “The Edict of 638 Allowing the Diffusion Christianity in China,” in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou* (Kyoto: Scuola di studi sull'Asia orientale, 1996), 359-67.

²¹ See discussion below.

that there were five hundred thirty *Jingjiao* texts in all.²² Apparently, these were the Syriac language scriptures brought by Aluoben and presented to the Court, for the *Honored Persons and Sacred Books* also says that, after Aluoben's translation work, Great Virtue Jingjing, author of the stele text, was later summoned to translate thirty texts.²³ The texts that Aluoben translated probably were shorter than one of the Gospels or other biblical books, but instead were more introductory in nature. Taking the *Jingjiao* texts found in the Mogao Grottoes' "library cave" near Dunhuang as possible examples, scholarly consensus attributes two of the texts to Aluoben, namely, *Book of Jesus the Messiah* and *On the One-God*.²⁴ In her analysis of these two books, Li Tang describes Aluoben's work product not as straight translation of a known work, but as summarizing Church of the East doctrine, highlighting key elements of the life and ministry of Christ, and including translations of select scriptures.²⁵ Whatever translations Aluoben may have prepared for the Court in those three years, emperor Taizong received them well.

After reviewing the translated *Jingjiao* texts, Taizong granted the Church official status and ordered the construction and staffing of a *Jingjiao* monastery in the capital, Chang'an. The stele provides the following text of the edict:²⁶

²² Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and Its Literature in Chinese: Together with a New English Translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents*, 187.

²³ Ibid., 188. That would seem to mean that Jingjing was summoned to translate texts that were already in the Court's possession, but it is not clear what prompted the Court to issue the summons—the Court's own interest? At the suggestion of Jingjing himself or of someone else?

²⁴ *Xuting mishisuo jing* 序聽迷詩所經 and *Yishen lun* 一神論

²⁵ Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and Its Literature in Chinese: Together with a New English Translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents*, 129.

²⁶ Forte compares the version of the edict in the stele with the edict recorded in the *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 49.1011-1012, and he concludes that the version in the stele text is more reliable because of copying errors in the *Tang huiyao*. The anachronisms that appear in the stele text—referring to the state of Da Qin and the Da Qin Monastery rather than Bosī (Persia) and the Bosī Monastery and affording

道無常名，聖無常體；隨方設教，密濟群生。大秦國大德阿羅本，遠將經像，來獻上京。詳其教旨，玄妙無為；觀其元宗，生成立要。詞無繁說，理有忘筌；濟物利人，宜行天下。所司即於京義寧坊，造大秦寺一所，度僧廿一人。

The Dao does not have a constant name; the sage does not have a constant incarnation. As religions are established to suit their regions, they combine to succor all peoples. The kingdom of Da Qin's Great Virtue *Aluoben* from that distant place brought along scriptures and images, and came to present them at Our high capital. Having carefully examined this religion's meaning, it is mysterious, marvelous, and conforming to the principle of non-action (*wu-wei*). Considering its fundamental ideals, they engender, mature, and establish what is essential. Its expression is without voluminous discourse, and its truth persists [in practice] even after the words are forgotten.²⁷ It is helpful to other living beings and benefits the person, so it ought to be practiced in the subcelestial realm. Let there be appointed officials immediately in the capital's Yining ward to construct a Da Qin monastery and to ordain twenty-one persons as monks.²⁸

The rhetoric of the edict situates *Jingjiao* squarely within the context of the “Conversion of the Barbarians” theory (*huahu lun* 化胡論). According to this trope, Laozi, after teaching the Chinese about the Dao in the Zhou dynasty, had gone west to other lands to teach those peoples a “Daoism” dumbed down to be appropriate for their own (inferior) cultures. The deified Lord Lao had undergone various incarnations to establish the tailored teachings fit to provide all peoples with a means of “salvation,” but Chinese Daoism remained the highest form of Lord Laozi's

Aluoben the title “Great Virtue” rather than “Persian Monk” 波斯僧—reflect adjustments to the edict to update it according to later law. A 745 edict changed the name from Persia to Da Qin to reflect accurately Christianity's place of origin. Also, at some point after 638, an edict granted *Aluoben* the title, “Great Virtue.” Thus, *Jingjing* recorded the 638 edict on the stele in its current legal form in 781. In terms familiar to American legal practice, he read the edict from the pocket parts. Forte, in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, 349-57.

²⁷ “After the words are forgotten,” literally, “forgetting the fish trap,” *wang quan* 忘筌, is an allusion to the *Zhuangzi*: “The fish trap exits because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exits because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?” *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 140.

²⁸ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 12-13.

teaching, for the Chinese people had long undergone the refinement of their advanced culture. Where Buddhists, for whom the Conversion of the Barbarians argument was originally developed, repudiated such hubris,²⁹ the proponents of *Jingjiao*, far numerically and politically weaker than the Buddhists, chose to work with the idea as they developed their own China-situated rhetoric. Concluding its record of the emperor's edict approving the dissemination of *Jingjiao*'s teaching in China, the Monument's text explains:

宗周德喪，青駕西昇；巨唐道光，景風東扇。

The virtue of the Zhou ancestors died away, and the dark carriage's driver³⁰ has ascended in the west. The Dao of the Great Tang glows, and a *Jing* wind blows eastward to fan it.³¹

As the virtue of the Zhou ancestors died away, so the knowledge and teaching of the true Dao became attenuated in the homeland. The teaching of the true Dao, however, had taken hold in the West in the form of Christianity. As the embers of the Dao were glowing again in the virtue of the Tang dynasty, the Church of the East had come to China to join and to enhance the glow of the Tang dynasty by returning the teaching and practice of the true Dao.

Finding the Right Name

Nearly a hundred and ten years after Taizong named Christianity "the Persian Religion," Xuanzong rectified the name in 745 to *Da Qin Jiao* (the Syrian Religion) to reflect the religion's

²⁹ See, e.g., Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China* (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2008).

³⁰ Laozi is said to have left China riding a dark ox or driving a cart drawn by a dark ox.

³¹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 13.

true place of origin.³² The change also must have reflected a shift in diplomatic reality. The land of Persia and the catholicos of the Church of the East had been under Muslim rule for about one hundred years by 745. Though Persian royalty and aristocrats had been granted sanctuary in China, realistic hopes for their restoration were done. For the Church of the East, too, it had probably become uncomfortable to explain their Chinese name to the caliph and to his representatives. Changing the name to “the Syrian Religion” not only more accurately identified the province from which Christianity arose, but also Syria was the center of Umayyad power, and the caliph who had authority to appoint the catholicos had his capital in Damascus. Whatever may have motivated emperor Xuanzong, T. H. Barrett argues that changing the official name of China’s Church of the East to *Da Qin Jiao* scored a rhetorical victory for positioning the Church atop the hierarchy of Lord Lao’s barbarian religions, for Daoist scriptures had described Da Qin as an earthly Daoist utopia.³³

The grand name of Da Qin, however, apparently began to lose its luster, for Tang dynasty Christians at some point came to call their religion *Jingjiao* (the Luminous Religion). It could be that the timing coincided with the fall of the Umayyads in 750, for the power base of the new Abbasid caliphate was in Khorasan, so the Abbasids moved their capital closer than Syria, to Mesopotamia, and they built the new capital city, Baghdad. The Tang state never adopted *Jingjiao*’s autonym, but the Church still saw benefit in rebranding itself. With this name, it could

³² The edict as quoted in the stele was updated to reflect the state of the law when the stele was erected in 781. Thus, “Da Qin” replaces “Bosi” in the edict.

³³ T. H. Barrett, “Buddhism, Taoism and the Eighth-Century Chinese Term for Christianity: A Response to Recent Work by A. Forte and Others,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 65, no. 3 (2002).

position itself as a universal religion rather than as a religion first associated with a barbarian land. The new name also communicated the promise or expectation of the compelling benefit of the Christian religion. The text of the *Jingjiao* Monument introduces the new Chinese name of Christianity thus:

真常之道，妙而難名，功用昭彰，強稱景教。

The true and unchanging—this Dao—is marvelous and difficult to name, but the merit of its practice is obvious, so putting a strong effort into it, we call it “*Jingjiao*.”³⁴

Lin Wushu 林悟殊 points out that the author’s wordplay in presenting the Christians’ chosen name was a master stroke of learned Chinese language and argumentation. “*Jing*” 景 can mean “bright” or “luminescent” like sunlight, and it can “great” or “grand,” or, by extension, it can mean “sacred.” Building up to the *Jingjiao* name, author Jingjing uses *zhaozhang* 昭彰, which means “obvious” or “manifest,” to describe the evident merit of practicing *Jingjiao*. Lin points out that, taking the characters separately, *zhao* 昭 means “bright” and *zhang* 彰 means “manifest,” so that various senses of *zhaozhang* claim that Christianity’s teaching enlightens, and that this produces visible evidence. All of this, concludes Lin, is nicely captured in *jing*, claiming the function and benefit of the religion that is “bright,” “great,” and “sacred.”³⁵ While the Chinese audience could appreciate the sophisticated wordplay, making use of these same senses

³⁴ *Jingjiao Bei*, line 10.

³⁵ Lin Wushu, “A Study on Equivalent Names of Manichaeism in Chinese,” in *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, ed. Xisha Ma and Huiying Meng (Boston: Brill, 2011), 69-70. Lin’s secondary argument that *jing*, then pronounced with an initial “k” sound, cleverly retained the crack of Christianity’s initial “k” is less successful, for “Christ” comes from the Greek (Χριστός), but the Church of the East instead used the Aramaic form of “Messiah,” pronounced *m^ešīḥā*, and which they transliterated into Chinese as *mishihe* 弥施訶.

of *jing* also would help to communicate neatly to the Chinese the Church of the East's scholastic tradition that Christianity is a form of learning, and the mind illumined by God can use its rational faculties to discern the mysterious image of the transcendent God.³⁶

What does Jingjing mean when he says that he is “putting a strong effort into it” to call the Christian religion “*Jingjiao*?” A number of scholars have seen this primarily as an admission to the hard work that went into finding an appropriate Chinese name, and that it took someone with the linguistic expertise of Jingjing to accomplish it. Lin Wushu suggests that it recognizes the effort that Jingjing put into his craft, and Lin sees Jingjing as the only known *Jingjiao* writer with the literary talent to pull off coming up with such an apt name.³⁷

However, Legge calls attention to “putting a strong effort into it” as an allusion to chapter twenty-five of the *Daodejing*, which he translates as follows:

There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.

I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Dao (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.³⁸

By making this allusion, Jingjing makes a claim about the identity between the mysterious Dao and the *Jingjiao* teachings about the ineffable God. Emperor Taizong had already compared the two teachings in his edict of toleration (638). Here again making the most of the “Conversion of

³⁶ See Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 180-81.

³⁷ Lin, in *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, 70.

³⁸ James Legge, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1891), 67.

the Barbarians” trope, the Church’s advocate reaches deep into Chinese culture to identify a “redemptive analogy.”³⁹ Jingjing went back to Daoism’s principal text, the *Daodejing*, to situate *Jingjiao* as the Dao from earliest times. Ignoring (as best he could) questions of a hierarchy of cultures, Jingjing seeks to present *Jingjiao* as the highest revelation and practice of the Dao.

The rhetorical force of Jingjing’s allusion to the *Daodejing* yet leaves some room for doubt about the timing of adopting the *Jingjiao* name. The state had applied the “Conversion of the Barbarians” trope to the Christians from the beginning, so the Church had a long time to develop a response to it. Lin Wushu observes that the surviving examples of Aluoben’s translations into Chinese do not employ “*Jingjiao*,” and, considering this body of work, Lin reasons that any alternative name that Aluoben might have suggested likely would have been a transliteration of a Syriac name or an incorporation some crucial Christian symbol, such as the “Religion of the Cross,” as happened with Zoroastrianism when the state named it *Huojiao* 火教 (the Fire Religion).⁴⁰ Perhaps an early “unpublished author” or committee brainstormed the *Jingjiao* name or even simply the commitment to emphasize the idea of *jing* in the Church’s teaching. After all, Monk Adam’s Chinese name Jingjing 景淨, “Luminous Purity,” likely arose from such a commitment. It would certainly be unseemly for a monk, however eminent and well-named, to suggest his own name as the label for the Christian faith unless his name were simply part of a larger school of pious thought.

³⁹ Don Richardson popularized the idea in Christian missions of the “redemptive analogy” in which one seeking to communicate the Gospel to a culture where it is unknown seeks out a cultural element, a “cultural key,” which can be analogized to an element of the Gospel and thereby lead to making the whole Gospel sensible within the new culture. Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Glendale, Calif.: G/L Regal Books, 1974).

⁴⁰ Lin, in *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, 71-72.

Still one more consideration would tend to favor a later date for applying the new name. Foreigners were generally a welcome sight in the prosperous times of the High Tang. Their presence and service in China provided proof of the prosperity and high culture of the Tang that attracted admirers from distant lands. The rebellion of An Lushan 安祿山 (755-763), however, was led by immigrants and put down with much help from foreign mercenary armies. The restored dynasty had lost its golden luster, and thereafter—among historians—earned the more modest moniker of “the Silver Tang.” Public sentiment among the ethnic Han turned generally against foreigners for the losses that their kind had caused or for which they could be blamed. Though Jingjing’s own name and the natural use of “*Jingjiao*” and of “*jing*” as an adjective in the stele text may suggest that the terms were in use before the *Jingjiao* Monument was erected in 781, one might accept that negative sentiment toward foreigners in the malaise of the restoration period probably helped to motivate the Church to change its brand to *Jingjiao*.

Monasteries and Monks

Going back to the happier times of Taizong’s 638 edict, to establish *Jingjiao* as a new participant in the state apparatus, the emperor authorized a grand monastery in the capital’s Yining ward. The Yining ward was along the western wall of Chang’an, at the Kaiyuan Gate, and not far from the Western Market. Where the quarters near the Eastern Market held the mansions of the noble and powerful, this area’s Han denizens tended to be commoners, and the foreign merchants and others doing business in the Western Market made its surrounding area more exotic and cosmopolitan.⁴¹ The authorized staff of twenty-one monks was the size customary for major

⁴¹ Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*, 170.

religious institutions,⁴² but it is not clear whether the first Da Qin monastery was afforded this honor merely because of their ties to Persia, or because there was already a population of foreign Christians in Chang'an sufficiently large to justify a first-tier institution.

Taizong demonstrated the linkage between the state and the Church by installing the imperial likeness on the wall of the monastery's sanctuary. As the stele text describes it,

旋令有司，將帝寫真，轉摸寺壁。天姿汎彩，英朗景門；聖迹騰祥，永輝法界。

Immediately following the decree, officials took in hand a portrait of the emperor and transposed it to make a fresco on a wall of the monastery. The [Son of] Heaven's figure floated in colorful hues, its nobility resonant in the Jing [monastery's] entrance [hall], so the Sage-sovereign's traces piled up auspiciousness, forever radiant in the congregation.⁴³ The Christians did not begrudge this intrusion into their holy space, but rather welcomed it as wholly appropriate and desirable. Formal and warm relations with the state both would legitimize *Jingjiao* in Chinese political and social spaces, and they would protect *Jingjiao* from other and more powerful players in China's religious space.

Warm relations continued under emperor Gaozong (r. 649 – 683) as the Church expanded its presence and increased its stature in the Tang regime. The stele text paints the picture in cheerful colors:

[] [] 高宗大帝，克恭纘祖，潤色真宗；而於諸州各置景寺，仍崇阿羅本，為鎮國大法主。

The most honored Gaozong, the Great Emperor, succeeding in reverently following in the line of his ancestors, embellished the luster of the True Religion. So, in each of the various prefectures, a *Jing* monastery was established, and at the same time, [His Majesty] elevated Aluoben to become Defender Lord of the Great Doctrine.⁴⁴

⁴² Forte, in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, 358-59.

⁴³ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 13-14.

⁴⁴ *Jingjiao bei*, line 15.

Having ascended the throne, Gaozong continued his father's policy of welcoming *Jingjiao* into the realm. That *Jingjiao* is here identified as the "True Religion" does not reflect Gaozong's assessment, but it may be Jingjing's claim suggesting a reasonable conclusion from observing the blessings upon China when *Jingjiao* was welcomed, or it may represent a historical claim from the time of Gaozong when the "Persian Religion," as it was then known, sought to distinguish itself as the true religion among the *san yijiao* 三夷教, the "three foreign religions" that had come to China from Persia, including Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Whatever may be the case, it appears that Gaozong "embellished the luster" of *Jingjiao*, first, by allowing the religion to spread, or, as the verse portion of the stele text restates the point,

真道宣明

The true Dao was publicly proclaimed.⁴⁵

To take literally the preface's claim that a monastery was established in each of the various prefectures would be problematic—the historical record does not support it—but perhaps a *Jing* monastery was established in every prefecture where one was wanted? Even while adopting a more modest view of the expansion of *Jingjiao* during Gaozong's reign, however, the Church did grow enough that Gaozong "embellished the luster" of *Jingjiao* in a second manner: he elevated its chief representative in China, Aluoben, to the title of Defender Lord of the Great Doctrine (*zhenguo dafazhu* 鎮國大法主).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, line 28.

⁴⁶ *Jingjiao bei*, line 15. When mentioned in the stele text's verse, the title is shortened to "Lord of Doctrine," *fazhu* 法主 (line 28).

This title is equivalent to “Metropolitan of China.” The Church’s growth in numbers and spread in geography increased the demand on the Church of the East’s personnel resources, for *Jingjiao* leadership appears always to have been predominantly Persian and Central Asian. The catholicos must have sent more personnel and raised China to a metropolitan province. As John Foster argues, Aluoben probably was elevated by Catholicos Isho‘yahb III (r. 649–59), and Tang Gaozong so appointed Aluoben in the public sphere of the state.⁴⁷ Though Wilmshurst points out that Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318) says that Catholicos Sliba-zkha (r. 714-28) raised China from a diocese to metropolitan status,⁴⁸ Young offers a reasonable solution. Young offers in evidence a letter that Isho‘yahb III wrote around 651 to call back to the church some disobedient monks in Qatar. In that letter, Isho‘yahb mentions but does not name two distant “metropolitans in the East.” According to Young, these are most likely metropolitans in China and Samarkand.⁴⁹ He argues that the best explanation for harmonizing evidence from Isho‘yahb’s letter to the monks of Qatar and Abdisho’s record of Sliba-zkha’s action is that the metropolinate of China was first created by Isho‘yahb III, but that the office sometime during the ensuing sixty-plus years went vacant until it was reestablished by Sliba-zkha.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Foster, 62-64.

⁴⁸ Wilmshurst, 123-24.

⁴⁹ Regarding Samarkand as a metropolitan province, Brian Colless notes that Church of the East priest and polymath, Abu al-Faraj ‘Abd Allah Ibn al-Tayyib al-‘Iraqi (d. 1043) recorded that Isho‘yahb also had restored the Samarkand metropolitanate. Unfortunately, ibn al-Tayyib did not specify which catholicos Isho‘yahb he was speaking of from among the three who served between 582 and 659. Colless suggests that a cycle of conquest and fall of rulers in that place likely accounts for other records variously establishing a metropolitan in Samarkand under Ahai (r. 410-414), Shila (r. 503–523), and Sliba-zkha. Colless, 51-52.

⁵⁰ Young, 91-92.

Jingjiao's close ties with Persian nobles continued to benefit the *Jingjiao* church in Gaozong's China. Having lost their kingdom to the Muslim Conquest, Persian nobles settled in Tokharistan and sought Chinese protection. Some of the nobility immigrated to China or sent their children as "hostages" (*zhizi* 質子) to demonstrate their loyalty to the Chinese emperor. Christianity had made inroads into the Persian aristocracy before the fall of Persia, and the Church of the East's Iranians had embraced a national identity in Ērānšahr—it was the monks of a nearby Church of the East monastery who recovered the slain corpse of Persia's last reigning king, Yazdegerd III, floating in a river at Merv and buried him with honor.⁵¹ Yazdegerd's son, Peroz, named the titular king of Persia in 655 at Balkh by the armies of Tokharistan, appealed to China for protection. In 662, emperor Gaozong appointed him King of Persia, head of the Persia Area Command (*Bosi dudufu* 波斯都督府).⁵² From 675, Peroz served Gaozong in Chang'an bearing the title General of the Right Militant Guard (*you wuwei jiangjun* 右武衛將軍).⁵³ In 678, Gaozong granted Peroz's request for a second *Jingjiao* monastery in Chang'an.⁵⁴ In the New

⁵¹ Payne, 199-202.

⁵² Antonino Forte, "On the So-Called Abraham from Persia: A Case of Mistaken Identity," in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, ed. Paul Pelliot and Antonino Forte (Kyoto: Scuola di studi sull'Asia orientale, 1996), 403. *Zizhi tongjian* 200.6326.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Peroz's father, Yazdegerd III, had been killed at Merv in 651. Gibb writes that in Tokharistan, Peroz was made the titular king of Persia in 655 at Balkh. H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1970), 15-16.

Record of the Two Capitals (*Liangjing xinji* 兩京新記), Wei Shu 韋述 (d. 757) writes of the Liquan Ward 醴泉坊⁵⁵ as follows:

十字街南之東波斯胡寺。儀鳳二年波斯王畢路斯請於此置波斯寺。

To the southeast of the crossroads⁵⁶ is a Persian foreign monastery. In the second year of Yifeng era [678],⁵⁷ King Bilusi [Peroz] of Persia requested that in this place be established a Persian monastery.⁵⁸

Thus, the *Jingjiao* leadership in Chang'an—and probably a high percentage of their congregants—must have been Iranians who still maintained relations close enough with Peroz that he was willing to serve as their advocate. In fact, according to the 1076 work by Song Minqiu 宋敏求, three brothers of Peroz were involved in building the monastery.⁵⁹ Of course, it is also important to note that the Persian king's relations with the emperor were significant enough that Gaozong granted the king's request.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ The Liquan Ward was catty-corner to the southeast of Yining Ward (where the original *Jingjiao* monastery stood), and it was immediately to the north of the Western Market.

⁵⁶ The crossroads facilitated movement in a ward by dividing the ward into four sections.

⁵⁷ The Yifeng era began December 18, 676, so nearly all of the second year of the era would have been in 678.

⁵⁸ *Liangjing xinji* (*Zhengjuelou congke* 正覺樓叢刻 ed.), (Wuchang: Chongwen shuju, 1890), 1.11a. Drake notes that later works (10th and 18th century) on the history of Chang'an add that the monastery was transferred one ward to the east, to Buzheng 布政坊 in Jinglong era (707-09) to make room for the construction of the mansion of Zong Chuke 宗楚客 (d. 710). Drake, "Nestorian Monasteries of the T'ang Dynasty: And the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet," 312-13.

⁵⁹ See Saeki's translation of pertinent sections of *Chang'an Topography*, vol. 10, 長安志卷十, in Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 457-58.

⁶⁰ As further indication of the importance attached to their relations, a statue of Peroz is among the sixty-four life-sized stone foreign dignitaries set standing in honor of Gaozong at his tomb. Forte, "On the So-Called Abraham from Persia: A Case of Mistaken Identity," in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, 404.

The stele text concludes its discussion of the reign of Gaozong by describing the hold that Christian doctrine had taken and the great good that flowed to all as a result.

法流十道，國富元休；寺滿百城，家殷景福。

The Doctrine spread through the Ten Circuits,⁶¹ and the state prospered and enjoyed great repose. Monasteries were built in the hundred cities,⁶² and families prospered by the blessings of *Jingjiao*.⁶³

Jingjing argues here that, as a result of *Jingjiao* spreading throughout the land, all levels of society prospered and enjoyed peace without striving. *Jingjiao* institutions probably did spread, even if just to service the Christian foreign merchants, tradespeople, and mercenaries then resident in China. The claimed rate of the organic spread of *Jingjiao*, however, is certainly hyperbolic, but that hyperbole served the rhetorical purpose of supporting the claim that *Jingjiao* played a broad and powerful role in bringing about the settled realm's peace and prosperity.

Tying Together the Severed Knot

From this note of prosperity, the stele text is silent about the woe that befell the Tang dynasty as it fell under the control of Wu Zetian 武則天 and was replaced for a time by her Zhou dynasty.

Wu Zetian (624-705) had entered the palace as one of emperor Taizong's concubines (636), became a consort of his son, emperor Gaozong, around 650, and then was promoted to be

⁶¹ The Tang dynasty's Ten Circuits, or administrative regions, were Guannei 关内, Henan 河南, Hedong 河東, Hebei 河北, Shannan 山南, Huainan 淮南, Jiangnan 江南, Longyou 隴右, Jiannan 剑南, and Lingnan 岭南. The point, however, is not the specific circuits, but that the Doctrine became widespread in China.

⁶² The number here probably is not meant to be a strict 100, but to represent "many." It does seem, however, that *Jingjiao* monasteries were primarily an urban phenomenon.

⁶³ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 15-16.

Gaozong's empress (655). When Gaozong became infirm, she began to rule from behind the throne, and then dominated two young emperors until she did away with the pretense and proclaimed herself emperor of the new Zhou dynasty (690 – 705 CE). She sought to establish a Buddhist kingdom even while she appropriated not only Buddhist divinities, but also Confucian exemplars, Daoist immortals, and goddesses of Chinese tradition as symbols to establish her legitimacy as the political and spiritual head of the Chinese state.⁶⁴

Little is known of how *Jingjiao* fared in the Zhou dynasty, but the Church suffered one harm grievous enough be mentioned in the *Jingjiao* stele.

聖曆年，釋子用壯，騰口於東周

In the Shengli years, the disciples of Sakyamuni [Buddha] flaunted their strength, rising up to speak [against *Jingjiao*] in Eastern Zhou.⁶⁵

The Shengli Era lasted less than two and a half years, from December 20, 697 to May 26, 700.

Female emperor Wu Zetian made Luoyang the capital of her Zhou dynasty, renaming the city Shendu 神度, the Divine Capital. In his text, Jingjing used neither “Luoyang” nor “Shendu,” but harked back to the Eastern Zhou (Dong Zhou) dynasty (770 – 255 BCE) which had made its capital in the place upon which Luoyang was built. It seems that Jingjing reveals something of

⁶⁴ See N. Harry Rothschild, *Wu Zhao: China's Only Woman Emperor* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008); N. Harry Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

⁶⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, line 16.

Jingjiao's experience under Wu Zetian's Buddhist empire by refusing to use "Shendu," yet he acknowledges the Zhou dynasty by referring back to a more ancient Zhou dynasty.⁶⁶

Antonino Forte suggests that *Jingjiao* may have gotten caught in a reform effort following the fall of interests that had identified Emperor Wu as the Maitreya, a millenarian Buddha. The fringe Maitreyan movement's end was marked by the burning of the *Mingtang* 明堂 on December 8, 694, followed by the murder of Huaiyi 懷義, the movement's chief proponent, on February 22, 695. Political crises accompanied these events, and more mainstream officials and Buddhist leaders sought to quiet unrest by banning spurious texts that had been used to link Wu Zetian with the Maitreya. As a result, the Great Zhou Catalog (*Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定衆經目錄) was published December 7, 695. It underwent serious revisions in 699-700, and though we do not have the full edict authorizing the revision and though the year 700 revised Great Zhou Catalog that has been preserved in Buddhist sources only lists proscribed apocryphal Buddhist texts, Forte argues that the full scope of the revision likely included some non-Buddhist texts such as the texts of *Jingjiao*.⁶⁷

Conditions did not immediately improve for *Jingjiao* upon the passing of the Zhou dynasty in 705, for the restored Tang emperors decidedly favored Daoism. Tang Ruizong (second r. July 25, 710 – September 8, 712) was a devout Daoist, as was Princess Taiping, the

⁶⁶ Tang Confucianists harbored a profound hatred toward Wu Zetian, so Jingjing certainly would not have risked offending his audience by comparing Wu Zetian's Zhou dynasty with the revered Zhou dynasty. Another possible motive for indirectly naming Luoyang and, later, Chang'an is discussed below.

⁶⁷ Antonino Forte, "Some Considerations on the Historical Value of the Great Zhou Catalogue," in *Chugoku Nihon Kyoten Shosho Mokuroku* 中國-日本經典章疏目錄 (*Catalogues of Scriptures and Their Commentaries in China and Japan*), ed. Tairyō Makita and Toshinori Ochiai (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1998).

aunt who politically dominated Ruizong. Indicating the powerful sway Daoists enjoyed under Ruizong and his aunt, T.H. Barrett notes that Princess Jinxian and Princess Yuzhen, daughters of Ruizong, were celebrated with a wildly extravagant ceremony in the tenth month of 712 to complete their ordination as Daoist nuns of the highest level. Furthermore, the great Daoist hierarch, Shi Chongxuan, through his support of Princess Taiping in the ongoing struggle for power, had garnered a number of court titles that helped him to advance Daoist causes.⁶⁸ Xuanzong had just ascended the throne and begun the Xiantian Era on September 712, but Ruizong retained power as the retired emperor until the end of July, 713. Bearing this in mind, we continue reading the monument from where we left it:

先天末，下士大笑，訕謗於西鎬

At the end of Xiantian (713), scholars of the lowest class laughed heartily, slandering and vilifying it in Xihao.⁶⁹

Jingjing's allusion to the *Daodejing* clearly yet indirectly uses the Daoists' own scripture to identify them as carrying out this persecution:

下士聞道，大笑之。

When scholars of the lowest class hear about the Dao, they laugh heartily at it.⁷⁰

The Tang emperors had moved their capital back to Chang'an, and Chang'an appears in the text as Xihao 西鎬 (Western Hao). The capital of the Western Zhou (c. 1050 – 770 BCE) had been Haojing, but the city was renamed Xihao when the Zhou capital was moved east, beginning the

⁶⁸ T. H. Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion & Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: Wellsweep Press, 1996), 47-51.

⁶⁹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 16.

⁷⁰ *Daodejing* 41.

Eastern Zhou period. The actual site of Xihao lay near and to the west of Chang'an, but "Xihao" also came to be used as a generic name for the capital of the Chinese empire. By using the Eastern Zhou names for Luoyang and for Chang'an, Jingjing both keeps the eighty- and seventy-years-prior violence against *Jingjiao* remote in time, and he avoids directly blaming either Court or any of the parties involved. By Jingjing's time, *Jingjiao* relations with Buddhists, at least, were, if not warm, at least not adversarial. As for relations with Daoists, the record is silent. It seems that Jingjing is willing to let bygones be bygones while he still honors men important to *Jingjiao*'s restoration.

Jingjiao certainly sustained damage to its real estate during this period, but Jingjing also mentions more dear injuries. The nature of these injuries required the intervention of two pious and skillful monks to overcome them:

有若僧首羅含，大德及烈；並金方貴緒，物外高僧。共振玄網，俱維絕紐。

But there were Chief Monk Luohan and Great Virtue Jilie, both of noble descent from the Western Regions, transcendent and eminent monks. Together they restored [*Jingjiao*'s] abstruse net, joining to tie together the severed knot.⁷¹

Chief Monk Luohan 羅含 probably was the abbot of the principal Chang'an monastery, but, based upon the Buddhist title from which this *Jingjiao* title is borrowed, the scope of the Chief Monk's authority might have been greater than a single monastery. Luohan and Great Virtue Jilie's noble descent likely originated in the old Persian empire, for Great Virtue Jilie 及烈 at a later point was part of a delegation sent to the Court bearing tribute from the king of Persia in

⁷¹ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 16-17.

732.⁷² These “transcendent and eminent monks” brought to bear not only the recognized authority of their ascetic spirituality, but also their political acumen and the connections that they maintained among the other Persian nobles now serving the Tang Court.

Chief Monk Luohan and Grand Virtue Jilie together wielded their spiritual and political resources to “restore the abstruse net” and to “tie together the severed knot.” In chapter seventy-three of the *Daodejing*, the “net” refers to the mysterious network or interconnectedness of Heaven’s operation.⁷³ The “abstruse net” or “mystic mainstay” (*xuangang* 玄網) presents the image of a mainstay or the major cord of a mystic net to which all other strings connect. It represents the implicit fundamental laws and moral rules that hold together human society, as if revealed (darkly) from Heaven. Such revelation or insight into Heaven comes to man through scriptures. The Daoist Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778), in 754, presented a treatise to Emperor Xuanzong entitled, “*The Mystic Mainstay*” or “*The Theory of the Mystic Mainstay*” (玄網 or 玄網論). Jan de Meyer describes Wu Yun’s purpose in *The Mystic Mainstay* as “to summarize the essence of the Three Caverns (i.e., the core of the Daoist canon . . .) and to elucidate the profundities of” the teachings of the Dao.⁷⁴ As Jingjing looks back on this period of the restoration of the *Jingjiao* Church and its teaching, he appears to be using a contemporary term or even to be alluding

⁷² “[Kaiyuan era], twentieth year: in the ninth month, the king of Persia sent Supervisor Pan Nami and Great Virtue monk Jilie bearing tribute to the Court,” [開元]二十年 . . . 九月波斯王遣首領潘那密與大德僧及烈朝貢. *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 971.10a.

⁷³ “The way of Heaven excels in overcoming though it does not contend, in responding though it does not speak, in attracting though it does not summon, in laying plans though it appears slack. The net of heaven is cast wide. Though *the mesh* is not fine, yet nothing ever slips through.” (emphasis added) Laozi and D. C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 135.

⁷⁴ Jan de Meyer, *Wu Yun's Way: Life and Works of an Eight-Century Daoist Master* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 42.

directly to an intervening Daoist work on the fundamental teachings of Daoist scriptures to show that attacks on *Jingjiao* and the subsequent damages sustained by the Church had not simply been the vandalization of monasteries, but also the destruction of *Jingjiao* scriptures or writings.

The second part of the parallelism, “tying together the severed knot,” appears to refer to restoring the ability of the *Jingjiao* church to carry out its practical role. In the *Zhuangzi*, the “knot” (*niu* 紐) was the *grounding* or *foundation* that stillness of mind provided to the actions of thearchs Yu and Shun.⁷⁵ Here, the knot once severed was the grounding of the *Jing* Church in the state apparatus that was crucial to the functioning of the Church as a participant in the state and as a contributor to Chinese society. “Tying together the severed knot” may refer to efforts to restore damage caused by the disruption in the office of Metropolitan of China that may have occurred during Wu Zetian’s Zhou dynasty, after Catholicos Isho’yahb III made Aluoben metropolitan around 650. Such a vacancy likely led Catholicos Sliba-zkha (r. 714-28) to reestablish the metropolitan province in the early eighth century.

According to another point of view, rather than seeing Luohan and Jilie here reestablishing of *Jingjiao*’s organizational and doctrinal integrity, R. Todd Godwin contends that Jingjing is here asserting the agency of *Jingjiao* in the Tang as one who plays a vital role in the restoration of the empire. Godwin describes Luohan and Jilie coming to China imbued with the charisma of Persian sovereigns (as that charisma persisted from Sasanian times and continued in some Central Asian principalities) as a result of the Church of the East’s long partnership with the Sasanian imperial enterprise. The Chinese emperor similarly bestowed upon Luohan and

⁷⁵ “This is the changing of the ten thousand things, the *bond* of Yu and Shun, the constant practice of Fu Hsi and Chi Ch’u.” (emphasis added) *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, 55.

Jilie, *Jingjiao*'s representatives, a share in his charisma as persons recognized by the court. Bearing the emperor's charismatic power, they appropriately contributed the power of their own worldly asceticism to establish and to preserve the empire. Accordingly, Godwin suggests that "the mysterious net" or "the abstruse net" (*xuanwang* 玄網) should be understood in the sense of "the imperial net." By "restoring the imperial net," Godwin argues, Luohan and Jilie reestablished *Jingjiao*'s role as an extension of the emperor to restore and preserve the Tang empire through the ascetic practice of the *Jingjiao* Church.⁷⁶

I am doubtful that this clause can bear the weight of Godwin's analysis, for the text does not link these monks to an emperor who might imbue them with his charismatic power, but they are presented only in the context of *Jingjiao*'s recovery from persecution. Godwin's idea that the Christians saw empire-preserving power in the contribution of their asceticism, however, is borne out in the following two paragraphs of the stele text that show the renewal of intimate relations between the court and *Jingjiao* to be closely linked to the restoration of the empire's grandeur under Xuanzong.

It appears that beyond restoring the internal institutional capacity of the *Jingjiao* Church, Great Virtue Jilie and the Church were also active in building relationships and promoting *Jingjiao* interests among Tang officials. The *Essential Documents and Regulations of the Tang* (*Tang huiyao* 唐會要), a digest compiled in the late eighth to mid-ninth century and then revised and updated in the tenth, records at least one such instance where a government watchdog raised an alarm over methods Jilie employed to advocate *Jingjiao*'s interests:

⁷⁶ R. Todd Godwin, *Persian Christians at the Chinese Court: The Xi'an Stele and the Early Medieval Church of the East* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 139-86.

开元二年十二月，嶺南市舶司右威衛中郎將周慶立，波斯僧及烈等，廣造奇器異巧以進，監選司殿中侍御史柳澤書諫曰...

In the twelfth month of the second year of the Kaiyuan era [between January 10 and February 8, 715], Lingnan Maritime Trade Commissioner and Awesome Guard on the Right Commandant Zhou Qingli, Persian monk Jilie, and others [in] Guang [province] made remarkable wares [that were] exceptional and ingenious, therewith to advance [in the Courts's favor]. Selection Bureau Director and Palace Censor Liu Ze wrote to protest, saying ...⁷⁷

In his role as Palace Censor, a type of auditor of state administrators, Liu Ze 柳澤 records that Zhou Qingli 周慶立, Monk Jilie, and Jilie's associates made a gift to ingratiate the Court. Zhou was an official both over maritime trade and over one of the guards responsible for defending the eastern sector of the capital city. The gift, made by *Jingjiao* artisans, was some variety of unique wares—could be implements, utensils, instruments, or vessels—that were each one somehow “exceptional and ingenious” in design. Rong Xinjiang argues that these were probably related to technologies of special value to the Tang, perhaps instruments for use in medicine or astronomy, related to the Hellenistic learning that the *Jingjiao* monks bore from Persia.⁷⁸ In his memorial to the throne, Liu goes on to ask the emperor to protect public morals by punishing Zhou Qingli and Jilie for presenting such seductive, opulent treasures.

Perhaps it was around this time that Xuanzong saw to the rebuilding of *Jingjiao*'s primary Chang'an monastery.

[] [] 玄宗至道皇帝，令寧國等五王親，臨福宇，建立壇場。法棟暫撓而更崇，道石時傾而復正。

⁷⁷ *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 62.5b.

⁷⁸ Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, "Yige Rushi Tangchaode Bosi Jingjiao Jiazu 一个入仕唐朝的波斯景教家族," in *Zhongguo Zhongguo Yu Wailai Wenming* 中古中国与外来文明 (Beijing: Shenghuo·dushu·xinzhi sanlian shudian chubanshe, 2001), 248.

The most honored Xuanzong, the Highest-Principled Emperor, directed the Prince of Ning (679 – 742) and four other princes to personally oversee the blessed precincts and the rebuilding of the sanctuary. The doctrine's ridgepole had been temporarily weakened but was again high, the Dao's stone for a season was toppled, but was again set upright.

The parallelism setting the doctrine's weakened ridgepole with the toppled stone of the Dao uses physical images to describe physical damages suffered by the monastery's structures. Though both images could be metaphors reiterating the type of ideological and organizational damages that Chief Monk Luohan and Great Virtue Jilie are credited with repairing, the context requires that they be understood closer to their literal meaning. The destruction sustained by the monastery's structures and grounds—and the magnitude of the insult—was so great that the emperor took extraordinary steps to make things right.

Xuanzong tasked Prince of Ning and four other princes to personally oversee the blessed precincts and the rebuilding of the sanctuary. Li Chengqi 李成器 (who changed his name to Li Xian 李憲 in 716) became Prince of Ning by Xuanzong's command in 719. Li Xian (679 – 742) was Xuanzong's elder brother who had advocated for Xuanzong and had relinquished his own rights in line for the throne because he felt that his younger brother was better suited for it. Xuanzong held Xian especially dear, as will be seen below. Because Xuanzong enjoyed keeping company with a tight-knit group of five princes, of whom Xian was the eldest, it is likely that the four other princes mentioned are Xuanzong's brothers, Chengyi 成義, Fan 範, and Ye 業, as well as his cousin Li Shouli 李守禮.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ See *Jiu Tangshu* 95.3011 and *Xin Tangshu* 81.3597.

Why did Xuanzong assign these favored members of the imperial clan to patronize the *Jingjiao* monastery? The monastery was still known as the “Persian monastery,” so it seems that this must have been a gambit to restore good relations with the Persians who found part of their identity there at the Persian Monastery while they contributed their prestige and expertise to the success of the Tang. At the same time, the Persian Monastery was enough of a political backwater that these “princes of the blood” (*qinwang* 親王), the closest of the emperor’s kinsmen, could be safely employed without risking to raise in them such aspirations that they might pose any threat to Xuanzong’s throne.⁸⁰

Perhaps through their patronage of the *Jing* monastery, the princes formed relationships of some degree with the *Jingjiao* monks that proved beneficial to their own persons. For example, just as Church of the East physicians had attended the kings of Persia and the Umayyad caliphs and their families, at least some of the *Jing* monks were also trained in medicine. While the Church of the East was transmitting medical knowledge under the Abbasids through their medical schools and by translating of classical Hellenic medical texts into Arabic, they likely also shared their medical knowledge with the Chinese.⁸¹ The *Jing* monk physicians must have already been known for practicing medicine at a high level, for the first recorded case dealt with the illness of the Prince of Ning, Li Xian:

⁸⁰ On Xuanzong’s innovation of sequestering *qinwang* to ensure that his close kinsmen were unable to develop into his political rivals, see David L. McMullen, “Put Not Your Trust in Princes: A Political Analysis of the Imperial Clan from 755 to 805,” *Tang Studies* 36 (2018): 16-20. According to McMullen, the sequestration of these princes would have been so strict that they would not have left the palace to visit the monastery.

⁸¹ See, for example, Louis Fu, “Hippocratic Medicine in China: Comparison with a 9th Century Chinese Manual on Bone Setting: 希波克拉醫學與中國 - 第九世紀的中國跌打手冊與希波克拉醫學文獻庫之比較: 希波克拉醫學與中國 - 第九世紀的中國跌打手冊與希波克拉醫學文獻庫之比較,” *Journal of Orthopaedics, Trauma and Rehabilitation* 18, no. 2 (2014).

二十八年冬，憲寢疾，上令中使送醫藥及珍膳，相望於路，僧崇一療憲稍瘳，上大悅，特賜緋袍魚袋，以賞異崇一。

In winter of the [Kaiyuan era's] twenty-eighth year [740], Xian became confined to bed by illness. His Highness [Emperor Xuanzong] commanded imperial commissioners to deliver medical care, medicine, and fine meals [with such frequency that the messengers were] coming face-to-face with one another on the road; Monk Chongyi treated Xian [through] a gradual recovery. His Highness was greatly pleased, [and he] specially bestowed a red robe [and] a fish bag, by this means to reward the exceptional Chongyi.⁸²

To show his pleasure with Monk Chongyi's performance, Xuanzong granted him a nobleman's rank, for the official's red robe together with the fish-decorated bag to hang from his robe's belt, holding Chongyi's new fish-shaped tally (credentials), indicated a fifth rank. Wang Zhixin 王治心 points out that Chongyi must have been a *Jingjiao* monk engaged as an official, for these would be fitting gifts for a high official, not for a Buddhist monk.⁸³

It may be that Monk Chongyi was again attending Li Xian when Xian died two years later. The record does not say so, but the stele text notes that Xuanzong made a generous gift, perhaps a show of appreciation, to the *Jing* monastery in 742, the same year that Xian died:

天寶初，令大將軍高力士，送五聖寫真，寺內安置；賜絹百疋，奉慶睿圖。龍髯雖遠，弓劍可攀；日角舒光，天顏咫尺。

At the beginning of the Tianbao Era (742 – 756), [the emperor] directed General-in-Chief Gao Lishi (684 – 762) to take faithful portraits of the Five Emperors⁸⁴ and place them in the monastery, and to bestow one hundred bolts of silk, and [the *Jing* monastery] received the emperors' portraits deferentially and with celebration. Even if the Emperors' beards

⁸² *Jiu Tangshu* 95.3012

⁸³ Wang Zhixin 王治心, *Zhongguo Jidujiao Shigang* 中国基督教史纲 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011 [1940]), 36.

⁸⁴ Emperors Gaozu (r. 618 – 626), Taizong (r. 626 – 649), Gaozong (r. 649 – 683), Ruizong (r. 684 – 690, 710 – 712), and Xuanzong (r. 712 – 756). Probably Zhongzong (r. 684, 705-710) was omitted because he was a weak ruler whose five-year reign was dominated by his wife, Empress Wei. Ruizong, himself, was not a particularly strong emperor, but he was Xuanzong's father, so one would expect Xuanzong to include him out of filial piety.

should be distant, their bows and swords are within reach; their noble foreheads diffuse light, and their imperial countenances are as close as can be.⁸⁵

The monastery rightly received the emperors' portraits "deferentially and with celebration," for their presence within the monastery both imbued worship services with state approval and reaffirmed *Jingjiao*'s place as a full participant in the state and society. As one gazed upon the portraits of the five emperors that had been installed in the monastery (probably, as before, as a fresco), even for those emperors remote in time (whose beards were distant), one could still sense their power (bows and swords at hand), and their wise countenances made the sense of them present to the observer. The vivacity of the five emperors' presence argues that they approve of *Jingjiao*, recognizing the past contribution of the Church to the welfare of the empire, and by their presence in the sanctuary rebuilt by the state along with the active involvement of the five living princes, Jingjing presses the argument that Xuanzong restored the standing of the *Jingjiao* Church as a valued contributor to the welfare of the empire.

Jingjiao's relations with the emperor ascended to yet higher heights another two years later. The stele text tells of the coming of a new bishop in 744 and of Xuanzong's installation of a *Jingjiao* shrine in the Xingqing Palace:

三載，大秦國有僧佉和，瞻星向化，望日朝尊。詔僧羅含、僧普論等一七人，與大德佉和，於興慶宮修功德。於是，天題寺榜，額戴龍書。寶裝璀璨，灼爍丹霞；睿扎宏空，騰凌激日。寵賚比南山峻極，沛澤與東海齊深。

In the third year [of Tianbao], there was, in the state of Da Qin, a Monk Jihe, who looked up to the star [the Emperor] and submitted [to his rule], turning toward the sun, he presented himself to the Court to venerate [the emperor]. An imperial order commanded Monk Luohan, Monk Pulun, and others, altogether seven persons, to assist Great Virtue Jihe in the Xingqing Palace to perform ritual services of merit. Then, His Majesty

⁸⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 17-18.

inscribed a temple name-plaque, and the placard bore the Dragon calligraphy.⁸⁶ [The placard was] decorated in gleaming bright-blue jewels on a shining vermillion cloud. The Sagacious Emperor's writing pervaded the space, rising up to challenge the sun [in splendor]. His gracious favor was like the Southern Mountains' lofty peaks;⁸⁷ his overflowing beneficence was as deep as the Eastern Sea.⁸⁸

Reading that Monk Jihe 佶和 “looked up to the star” (*zhanxing* 瞻星) in the context of the light-diffusing portraits of the Five Emperors, and in the context of Xuanzong's posthumous name, the Brilliant Emperor (Minghuang 明皇), it seems that the shining star is Xuanzong in his personal, living glory. The text's parallelism is fitting as Jihe, dispatched from the mother Church in Da Qin, “looks up to the star” and “turn[s] toward the sun” to transfer his loyalty and his service from the caliph of “Da Qin” and to become a person of Tang (*Tangren* 唐人). The image presented is also an allusion to the recognition of the virtuous king whom Confucius described: “The Master said, ‘He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.’”⁸⁹ Further evidence of Xuanzong's personal resplendence appears immediately in the following line as the emperor's handwriting on the monastery's name-plaque is seen “rising up to challenge the sun [in splendor].”

⁸⁶ The emperor's own calligraphy was inscribed on the name-placard. According to the context, this name-placard was being displayed at the new, small *Jingjiao* institution in the Xingqing Palace where it lit up the worship area as the portraits of the Five Emperors did in the Yining quarter monastery.

⁸⁷ The Southern Mountains lie south of Chang'an, part of the Qinling mountain range that forms a natural barrier between the Guanzhong plain and the Han River valley.

⁸⁸ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 18-19.

⁸⁹ *Lunyu* 2/1, trans. James Legge, *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1874), 121.

John Foster reasonably connects Jihe's arrival in 744 to the 745 edict changing the official name of *Jingjiao*'s monasteries from the "Persian Monastery" (Bosi si 波斯寺) to the "Da Qin monastery" (Da Qin si 大秦寺). He proposes that the bishop might very well have come as a member of a delegation sent to represent the Umayyad caliph.⁹⁰ That the Chinese annals do not record such a visit does not mean that a delegation did not come, and the Church of the East in Persia and then under Muslim rule saw such diplomatic missions as their natural service to the sovereign of their homeland where the Church was part of the state apparatus. As mentioned already, the context of such a Umayyad-led mission would explain nicely why the Church asked the emperor to change its name from the "Persian Religion" to the "Da Qin Religion." That the Monk Jihe was a Great Virtue (bishop) suggests that he and his Church certainly intended for him to stay on to serve the Tang Court as a high-ranking member of the Church's institution in China after the rest of the embassy returned home.

Perhaps reflecting upon the role of the Church of the East's bishops in embassies from Persia and then from the Umayyad caliphate encouraged Xuanzong to increase the channels of incorporating the nation-sustaining ascetic power of *Jingjiao*. Whether it was to add to the spiritual power of his reign or to provide for the amusement and health of the princes, the emperor commanded Great Virtue Jihe to assign seven other monks to holding "ritual services of merit," probably chanted prayer services, in the Xingqing Palace.⁹¹ The staff of seven monks was

⁹⁰ Foster, 87-88.

⁹¹ Since the net-mending and knot re-tying Chief Monk Luohan was one of two monks specifically named for this new detail, it could be that the Church of the East had sent bishop Jihe to be the metropolitan bishop, and he may have served in such a capacity, but the An Lushan Rebellion did not allow the Court sufficient time to evaluate Jihe and raise him above the title of Great Virtue.

appropriate for a minor institution, so, while smaller than the major *Jingjiao* monasteries in the Yining and Liquan wards, the Church could celebrate that there was enough high-level interest in *Jingjiao* to warrant its new presence in the Xingqing Palace. Xuanzong had the Xingqing Palace built in the old Longqing ward (隆慶坊) in 714 (and later variously expanded) as the third of Chang'an's urban palaces. It was along Chang'an's eastern wall, catty-corner (NE) to the Eastern Market, within the residential area for high officials. This was Xuanzong's favorite palace, and he made it the place of his own residence, but subsequent emperors preferred to live in the Daming 大明 Palace.⁹²

The emperor provided his own calligraphy to inscribe the Da Qin name on the new shrine's name-placard. According to the context, this name-placard was being displayed at the new, small *Jingjiao* institution in the Xingqing Palace where it lit up the worship area just as the portraits of the Five Emperors did in the Yining quarter's monastery. The calligraphy may very well have been copied for use at the newly renamed various Da Qin monasteries, but it seems that this jewel- or crystal-bedazzled placard was unique to the new institution.

Thus, in the period of the Golden Tang that ended when the An Lushan Rebellion put Xuanzong to flight from the capital and ended his reign, the Church of the East had come to China and successfully engaged the Tang court. Through the contribution of their diplomatic services, of the succor of Persian elites serving the Tang, of the blessings of national peace and family harmony wrought through the spiritual power of their asceticism, of the practical help of their medical practitioners, and through the occasional gift to an official or two, the *Jingjiao*

⁹² Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*, 97-105.

Church had proved itself a good and welcome partner to the Court. As Jingjing concludes his discussion of this period in the stele text, he looks with righteous pride upon the testimony and the promise that he has been able to record about the True Dao preached by *Jingjiao* and the Church's intimate relationship with the emperor as a valued part of the state apparatus:

道無不可，所可可名；聖無不作；所作可述。

There is nothing that the Dao cannot do, and that which it can do can be named. There is nothing that the sage-sovereign cannot accomplish, and that which he accomplishes can be recounted.⁹³

⁹³ *Jingjiao bei*, Line 19.

CHAPTER 3

THE RHETORIC OF THE *JINGJIAO BEI*

The church used the *Jingjiao bei* to tell its own history in the Tang dynasty's China and to predict the glorious future that it would enjoy together with China's wise emperors. No staid historical text, the massive monument presents a certain view of the church's identity and of its history in order to claim a legitimate and beneficial position in the empire's political and social spheres. The stele's rhetorical style and the argument it made when it was set up in 781 provide valuable insight into the church's dynamic political and social contexts in Tang China.

Jingjing, the Author

The text identifies its author by both his Chinese name and his Syriac name. In the Chinese text, he is “the Da Qin Monastery's Monk Jingjing” 大秦寺僧景淨述.¹ In the Syriac text, he is “Adam priest and country-bishop and *fapshi* of Zinistan.”² Thus, the Syriac text identifies Jingjing/Adam's place in the church hierarchy by supplying what appears to be a hierarchy of his appointments. From his appointment as a priest, the monk was raised to a country-bishop, that is, a suffragan bishop appointed to assist the bishop of a diocese or a metropolitan bishop. Jingjing's next title, that of *fapshi*, however, is not a Syriac word, and its lack of clarity has generated scholarly discussion. A.C. Moule argues that the word is a Syriac phoneticization of *fashi* 法師, the Chinese title for a Buddhist dharma master or for a Daoist ritual master. Moule bases his

¹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 2.

² *Jingjiao bei*, line 2. Translation by A.C. Moule. Moule, 35.

understanding on evidence that the Tang pronunciation of 法師 (i.e., pjop-srij) was similar to his rendering of the Syriac word.³ More persuasively, however, Samuel N.C. Lieu argues from his own visual inspection of the stele that the borrowed word written in Syriac would be best transcribed as *papsh*‘. This likely corresponds to the Latin *papa* or the Greek *παππος*, both translating to “metropolitan bishop.” Lieu reasons that the “metropolitan bishop” title fits well with the progression of titles in church hierarchy listed for Adam, but, in comparison, taking the loan word as *fashi*, “Missionary Teacher of Sinistan,” would instead downgrade Adam’s final ecclesiastical rank.⁴ Finally, the stele does not otherwise identify the metropolitan bishop—or some head of the Church in China—which would be odd for such an important monument.

Why does the Chinese text identify Jingjing as a mere monk if the Syriac text identifies him as the metropolitan bishop of China? It could be Jingjing’s device of rhetorical humility in order to focus audience’s attention on Yisi, whom Jingjing celebrates and places as a “modern day” bookend to the first great *Jingjiao* personage, Aluoben. It seems, however, that identifying the head of the *Jingjiao* Church in China really would not steal thunder from Yisi. It could be an attempt to avoid introducing confusion into the Chinese ecclesiastical titles, for the Catholicos Patriarch is introduced with the title, “Lord of Doctrine” (*fazhu* 法主).⁵ On the other hand,

³ Ibid.

⁴ Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Epigraphica Nestoriana Serica," in *Exegisti Monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams*, ed. Werner Sundermann, Almut Hintze, and Francois de Blois (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 29-30. Similarly, see Sacki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 81-83.

⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, line 31.

Aluoben is remembered by that same title both in the preface and in the verse,⁶ so it seems not to have been a great problem. Perhaps Adam was serving in that metropolitan office in a provisional capacity while the mother church was involved in the controversy that surrounded the election of Timothy I as catholicos, and the catholicos had not yet filled the vacant office in the distant metropolitanate. That may explain a possible intention to obscure in the Syriac text by using *fapshi* rather than a proper Syriac title. It may also explain why Jingjing cannot use a formal Chinese title—the emperor’s grant of title followed the Church’s nomination—so Jingjing uses his modest title of Monk rather than an official but outdated title in the Church hierarchy.

The specific occasion, if any, calling for the stele is unclear, but its content and historical context suggest that its purpose was both to present *Jingjiao* to a general audience as a worthy religion and to show to the emperor or to an official audience that support of *Jingjiao* would align with imperial interests. The monument entitled, “The Stele Commemorating the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion of Daqin,”⁷ argues that Christianity is the religion honoring the God who created the universe, saves humankind, and who blesses the kingdoms that honor Him. The stele text’s eulogy ends with a prediction that emperor Dezong’s 德宗 (r. 779 – 805) reforms would renew China’s magnificence and renew China’s example as a beacon for other nations to follow. These reforms, instituted in 781, were designed to restore to the center power that had been released to the provinces to quell the An-Shi Rebellion (755 –

⁶ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 15 and 28.

⁷ *Da Qin* was the Chinese name for Syria, the Eastern Roman Empire.

763) but had remained distributed in the hands of provincial warlords ever since. As it happened, the regional military governors (*jiedushi* 節度使) resisted the attempt to limit their power, and the reforms failed in their purpose, but at the outset, the stele text held out the hope of the *Jing* God's favor upon the realm of the emperor who honored Him and His *Jingjiao* church.

The *Bei*'s Visual Rhetoric

The capital of the stele presents the monument's title and a visual argument for *Jingjiao*'s authoritative offer of salvation, drawing on various symbols of Christian, Daoist, Buddhist, and Chinese cosmological iconography. In bold relief along the edges of the capital are two dragons, one on either side, linked at the apex by a large flaming pearl dually supported by a claw of each dragon. Within the space between the dragons are two fields. The larger field, a square shape, contains the stele's title in nine bold characters,⁸ translated as "The Stele Commemorating the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion of Daqin." The second field is in the shape of a small isosceles triangle that fills the space between the title square's top and the apex formed by the dragons' stubby arms reaching to support the flaming pearl. Etched at the center of the triangle's base is a lotus upon which stands a cross with clouds of *qi* emanating from the foot of the cross, and sprigs of greenery, possibly honeysuckle,⁹ direct the observer's eyes from the otherwise bare corners at the bottom of the triangle toward the cross in the center.

⁸ *Daqin jingjiao liuxing zhonguo bei* 大秦景教流行中國碑, written vertically in three rows, from right to left.

⁹ Parry notes that archaeological evidence of Church of the East church decorations in Syria, Palestine, and Jordan includes the use of various greenery patterns such as honeysuckle, acanthus, palm, and vines, but the plant forms "tended to lose their specific botanical identity in the process of being stylized." Parry, 145.

The dragons atop the stele are impressively depicted in bold relief to set the message of the stele within a decidedly Chinese context. By the Tang dynasty, the dragon was weighty with auspicious connotations so that it was often used in ornamentation. It symbolized “the forces of both *yang* and creation, and [the dragon] controlled the heavens and the rain.”¹⁰ The pearl, in this context, represents pure *yang* upon which the dragon feeds. The auspicious theme of “two dragons playing with a pearl” *erlong xizhu* 二龙戏珠 is common in Chinese decoration, and a review of Tang-era stela in Xi’an’s Stele Forest Museum shows that their presence atop stela is well-attested. Therefore, one can understand the *Jingjiao* stele’s auspicious “dragons playing with a pearl” as ornamentation to make the stele’s appearance beautiful and interesting, decidedly within the norm for Chinese stelae. In fact, Keevak points out that, when the stele was first excavated, its seventeenth century Chinese audience considered it a handsome monument, well executed in form and good calligraphy and well preserved, but otherwise typical of Tang dynasty stelae. However, for seventeenth century Christians, whether European or Chinese, it was the routine quality of that Chinese context that added to the surprise of finding a cross within the stele’s triangular field.¹¹

The eclectic mix of icons presented in the triangular field draw from a familiar symbolic vocabulary to state a claim of divine or cosmic authority for the Messiah that a person of Tang

¹⁰ Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London: British Museum Publications Limited, 1984), 95. Rawson explains that dragons had been used to decorate bronze ritual vessels from the early Shang (c. 1400 BCE) and had become a directional animal (Green Dragon of the East, White Tiger of the West, Black Warrior—a tortoise entwined by a snake—of the North, and the Red Bird of the South) well before the Han (beginning 202 BCE). By the Tang dynasty, the additional auspicious meanings that had accrued to the dragon and red bird or phoenix led to their common use in ornamentation while the other directional animals faded from use. Later, the dragon and phoenix would come to represent the emperor and empress (90-97).

¹¹ Keevak, 5-8.

could understand upon a glance. Clifford Geertz explains that sacred symbols combine aesthetic and ethical values with a worldview to present a normative meaning that allows the adherent to understand his or her experience of the world in the context of a plausibly constituted reality.¹² The understanding of what constitutes reality, a worldview, is a constituent part of the complex of symbols that forms a religion, so sacred symbols transposed on another culture's worldview would feel "unnatural," for they would tend to construct a variant "vision of reality."¹³ In medieval China, however, symbols intermingled in public discourse, and the religious symbols of the day were not so secluded in their own sectarian silos as today. As art historian Eugene Wang observed in a context of Buddhist and Daoist mutual borrowings of the other's symbols, "Such a mingling of religious traditions may fly in the face of our modern penchant for dogmatic taxonomy. In medieval China, it was not a problem."¹⁴ In general, the common icons provided a shared symbolic vocabulary that a religious group could draw upon to communicate that group's own ideas when their own complex of symbols was either lacking for a particular purpose or too unfamiliar to communicate an intended message within the context of a general audience's existing worldview.

¹² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 126-28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁴ Eugene Y. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 154. Wang was speaking specifically of the common practice among Tang era painters of tableaux illustrating Buddhist or Daoist scriptures to use images or references from Daoist or Buddhist texts or traditions, respectively, when those borrowed symbols supplied a meaning that filled a gap in the iconography available to the artist from the principal source text.

Medieval Chinese interdisciplinary facility proved useful in communication and for other purposes. In addition to the stele's intermingling of visual symbols, the text, for example, borrows from the verbal image of bodhisattva Guanyin rowing souls to salvation to help to explain the saving work of Christ:

棹慈航以登明宮，含靈於是乎既濟。

[The Messiah] rowed the boat of compassion, thus ascending to the Palace of Light, and those who have souls, by this means, are completely ferried across to salvation.¹⁵

Here, the most economically transferred picture of the Messiah delivering penitents from judgment to heaven was the well-known image of Guanyin helming the boat for those who call upon him to deliver them from the fate of Buddhist hell to rebirth into the Pure Land of Amitabha. In the context of healing and apotropaic practice, ritual specialists, Paul Copp studied Chinese ritual texts and their seals from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. He described these Buddhists as “bricoleurs,” for they employed the texts, chants, incantations, icons, and rituals of Buddhism, Daoism, and informal Chinese religions in their pursuit of practical healing and spiritual protection. Their practices, set in multilingual and multicultural contexts, show “that overriding interests in efficacy encouraged the mixing and matching of religious modalities and their objects with little concern for strict canonical or priestly demarcations.”¹⁶

At times, however, the intermingling of formal religion became too much, and the emperor was called upon to draw a firm line, such as when emperor Zhongzong 中宗 in 705

¹⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 7-8.

¹⁶ Paul Copp, "Manuscript Culture as Ritual Culture in Late Medieval Dunhuang: Buddhist Talisman-Seals and Their Manuals," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 193-94, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44171513>.

ordered Daoists and Buddhists to stop using images of the other's sacred figures in their own temples to win converts from among the other's adherents.¹⁷ Again, sometime between 786 and 794, emperor Dezong took a stand against an ecumenical effort at translating sacred texts. An edict reportedly condemned the risk of confusion caused by the collaboration of the stele text's author, Jingjing, and Indian Buddhist monk Prajna in translating a Buddhist sutra from Sogdian to Chinese.¹⁸

The lotus flower, arising out of the muck to bloom in a vibrant pastel, symbolized enlightenment that transcended the mundane world. Used as a throne, the lotus retained that sense of transcendence, but also gained a broader scope as a symbol of the cosmos. As Dietrich Seckel explains, the lotus throne is

the main symbol in Buddhism to denote the Buddha nature in man and all things that remained immaculate in its innermost essence, undefiled by the filth encountered in *samsara*. At the same time the lotus is an ancient Indian symbol for the cosmos, and is thus associated with the Buddha in his capacity as spiritual ruler of the world and embodiment of the Absolute.¹⁹

Typically, the Buddha or a bodhisattva was depicted atop a lotus throne; in this case, however, the Buddha is displaced atop the lotus by the cross, a symbol of the Messiah, or Christ. The observer would thus understand claims of honor, authority, and holiness for the *Jingjiao* Messiah.

¹⁷ Wang, 154. See *Jin huahu jing chi* 禁花胡經敕, *Quan Tangwen* 17.141

¹⁸ Moule, 67-69.

¹⁹ Dietrich Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, trans. Ann E. Keep (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1964), 165-66.

The cross that sits upon the lotus throne follows the typical Church of the East form with two important contextual modifications. As a typical Church of the East cross, the ends are flared and decorated with pearls. At the intersection of post and crossbar, there is a pearl in the center and one at each of the four corners formed by the intersection. The four ends of the cross are each decorated with three pearls: one at each flared corner, and one at the center point between the corners. Christoph Baumer suggests that the pearls on the cross represent the fruit of the cross as the Tree of Life, and the grouping of three pearls also represents the Trinity.²⁰

The most obvious contextual adjustment to the cross is that its two leaves are replaced by two clouds of *qi*. The leaved-cross, with a leaf springing from either side of the base and reaching upward, is frequently associated with the Church of the East. The leaved-cross is probably a combination of two symbols of the early Christian Church, the cross, representing the risen Christ, and the Tree of Life, an eschatological symbol of enjoying eternal life in the presence of God.²¹ It is not unique to that Church, but it is so common in archaeology that the leaved-cross is often called the “Persian” or the “Nestorian” cross.²² Replacing the large leaves with clouds of *qi* that arise from the base, spreading upward and outward, retains the symbol of life force, but also taps into a deep context in medieval China. Ancient Chinese cosmology relied

²⁰ Baumer, 119.

²¹ Parry, 154. According to the Bible, the Tree of Life was available to the Man and Woman in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall (Gen. 2-3), and its fruit, a symbol of everlasting life in the presence of God and of freedom from the second death (i.e., judgment for sins), and the tree’s leaves, a symbol of Christ’s healing for the nations, will again be freely available to the faithful in the future Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7; 22). Baumer links the cross as Tree of Life with the theme of Christ as the Second Adam, an important type in Church of the East’s soteriology. Baumer, 119.

²² Ken Parry notes that this is a misnomer, for the leaved-cross “occurs in fact in most of the Christian cultures of the Near East and the Caucasus and is not unknown in the Byzantine tradition.” Parry, 145.

upon *qi*, the life force that is the stuff of being. In its different modulations, whether mundane or supernatural, *qi* was believed to form all beings and all things.²³ Daoist practice, then as now, was also keenly engaged in the pursuit, conservation, and manipulation of an adept's own *qi* and whatever *qi* the adept might acquire. Thus, substituting clouds of *qi* more effectively and viscerally communicated to the people of Tang the idea of the Messiah's life-giving power.

A more visually subtle but important cultural adjustment is the placement of a flaming pearl on the crown of the cross, replacing the centermost pearl at the top of the post. A symbol often used by Daoists,²⁴ the flaming pearl at the top of the cross probably draws upon the meaning of the flaming pearl pinned to the hat of a Daoist Master (*daoshi* 道士) at his installation to his office. This important symbol in the ceremonial dress of a Daoist Master helps to place him in a cosmic position sufficient to perform the duties of his office as a bureaucrat of the numinous world. Schipper describes the Daoist Master's "sacerdotal vestments" that include

the high-soled shoes embroidered with cloud patterns that lift him up from the earth; the stomacher with the emblem of the cinnabar field (*dantian*); the large square mantle that shows a symbolic representation of the entire universe; and the crown (*guan*) with the flame-shaped golden pin on top of it that represents the flaming pearl, which illustrates the vital energy emanating from his body and creating total communication within the universe.²⁵

²³ Mario Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 170.

²⁴ Buddhists also occasionally used the flaming pearl as a symbol of wisdom or insight, sometimes depicting the bodhisattva Manjusri wearing a crown ornamented with a flaming pearl, or sometimes depicting the bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) or Ksitigarbha holding the flaming pearl. Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism: Their History and Iconography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 81, 103-11.

²⁵ Kristofer Schipper, "Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 45, no. 1 (1985): 26.

While the outflow of vital energy, *qi*, and universal authority are characteristic of the flaming pearl symbol, the symbol's essence lay in its representation of *beiji* 北極, the Northern Culmen.²⁶ The Northern Culmen is an asterism, the cup of the Little Dipper (Ursa Minor), rather than a particular star. The Earth's axial precession from Shang through Tang times (c. 1600 BCE to 907 CE) at different times made various stars within the asterism approximate pole stars while the central axis of the sky's rotation was within the asterism's void. Edward Schafer explains that the "brightest and most important star of the Northern Culmen was reddish Kochab (β Ursae minoris) which was the visible aspect of [*di* 帝, High God, or *taiyi* 太一, the Supreme One]."²⁷ The flaming pearl, as the High God or the Supreme One, represents the celestial thearch at the center of the universe, the One who releases the "Embryonic Essence" that precedes the differentiation of *yin* and *yang* and, thus, is pure creative power.²⁸ Drawing upon China's ancient tradition and Daoist iconography, the flaming pearl atop the cross thus claims for the *Jingjiao* Messiah the identity of the creator and ruler of the cosmos.

Jingjiao Transcends Culture, Blesses Society

A prose preface provides depth and context for reading the verse eulogy. The first seven lines of the preface (about thirty percent) orients its Chinese audience to the *Jing* religion by introducing

²⁶ Schipper identifies the flaming pearl with *beiji*, translating it as "the Pole Star." Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), 72, 229. *Beiji* is more precisely translated as "the Northern Culmen."

²⁷ Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'Ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 45.

²⁸ Ibid. See, also, David W. Pankenier, "A Brief History of *Beiji* 北極 (Northern Culmen), with an Excursus on the Origin of the Character *Di* 帝," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 2 (2004): 212-18.

basic Christian theology, including the Trinity, Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, and Redemption through the crucifixion, resurrection, and the ascension of the Messiah, and by explaining the most visible aspects of *Jingjiao* monastic practice. About fifty-five percent of the preface (thirteen lines) describes the relations of the *Jingjiao* church with the Chinese state from 635 to 781, and about fifteen percent (three and a half lines) praises Yisi, the high-ranking military officer who was the monument's patron.

Jingjing begins the transition from introducing Christianity to arguing for the Church's benefit to the Chinese by announcing that the church has given itself the name *Jingjiao*. However, by naming itself "*Jingjiao*," the Church argued for the religion's universal value that transcends culture. As discussed in the previous chapter, Taizong's edict of toleration had placed the Christians within the familiar frame of the *Conversion of the Barbarians*, and Jingjing used that identity in the stele text:

真常之道，妙而難名，功用昭彰，強稱景教。

The true and unchanging—this Dao—is marvelous and difficult to name, but the merit of its practice is obvious, so putting a strong effort into it, we call it "*Jingjiao*."²⁹

Reaching back with an allusion to chapter twenty-five of the *Daodejing* where Laozi does not know the name of the primordial mystery, so he struggles to find a fitting name, Jingjing begins to develop his argument that *Jingjiao* connects to a primordial Truth that transcends culture.

Nevertheless, though this Truth—the God of *Jingjiao*—transcends culture, the practice of the religion is situated within culture, so the spread of belief in *Jingjiao* is helped or hindered

²⁹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 10.

according to the emperor's policies toward religion. Accordingly, the thesis statement of the text's political argument follows:

惟道非聖不弘，聖非道不大；道聖符契，天下文明。

Verily, a Dao not associated with the sage-sovereign does not spread, and a sage-sovereign not associated with the Dao does not become great, but the Dao [bearing] the sage-sovereign's credentialing tally [brings to] the subcelestial realm culture and enlightenment.³⁰

The “credentialing tally” (*fuqi* 符契) both is an auspicious token bestowed by Heaven to show its favor and to legitimate an emperor's reign, and it is a token that an emperor can bestow to represent a charter that he has granted. Thus, Jingjing argues, harmony between the True Dao—the *Jing* God—and the emperor leads to broad prosperity. When the emperor demonstrates that harmony by allowing *Jingjiao* to flourish, the blessings brought by *Jingjiao* both cause the emperor's rule to prosper and lead to the general ennobling of the culture. This thesis that the emperor and the state prosper by the blessings coming through *Jingjiao* resonates throughout the discussion that follows of relations between the *Jingjiao* church and the Chinese state.

The text names only emperors who honored *Jingjiao*, for these were the emperors who prospered their lands. Under Emperor Taizong (r. 626 – 649),

巨唐道光，景風東扇。

The Dao of the Great Tang glows, and a *Jing* wind blows eastward to fan it.³¹

So, Taizong's court received an emissary of the Church of the East whose Chinese name was Aluoben, and the emperor himself reviewed Aluoben's scripture translations and

³⁰ *Jingjiao bei*, line 10.

³¹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 13.

問道禁闈

inquired into their teaching within the palace court.³²

As a result, the emperor was convinced that the teaching was

濟物利人，宜行天下。

helpful to other living beings and benefits the person, so it ought to be practiced in the subcelestial realm,³³

and he ordered that monasteries be built to spread the teaching. When emperor Gaozong (r. 649 – 683) followed his father on the throne, Gaozong, too, honored *Jingjiao* and reaped the benefit.

The text says,

法流十道，國富元休；寺滿百城，家殷景福。

The Doctrine spread through the Ten Circuits,³⁴ and the state prospered and enjoyed great repose. Monasteries were built in the hundred cities,³⁵ and families prospered by the blessings of *Jingjiao*.³⁶

Thus, both the state and the people benefited when the state acknowledged the *Jingjiao* church and permitted it to flourish.

The stele text handles the usurpation of Wu Zetian by complaining of persecution during a period from 683 to 713 in which China's unnamed sovereigns allowed Buddhists and then Daoists to persecute the *Jingjiao* church. As discussed in the previous chapter, with the end of

³² *Jingjiao bei*, line 11.

³³ *Jingjiao bei*, line 13.

³⁴ On the Tang dynasty's Ten Circuits, see Chapter 2, n61.

³⁵ The number here is probably not meant to be a strict 100, but to represent "many."

³⁶ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 15 – 16.

Wu Zetian's reign and the eventual ascendance of Xuanzong over his aunt, Princess Taiping, Jingjiao entered a time of recovery under the combined efforts of Chief Monk Luohan and Grand Virtue Jilie. These “transcendent and eminent monks” (物外高僧) were “both of noble descent from the Western Regions” (並金方貴緒).³⁷ While it is not clear how active a role these monks might have played in the power struggle between Xuanzong's and Princess Taiping's factions, their noble descent—even if foreign—added gravitas to *Jingjiao*'s standing in turbulent times. The land, while dishonoring *Jingjiao*, suffered through political disorder, but the text renews its positive premise by celebrating emperor Xuanzong (r. 712 – 756). This emperor, the text argues, returned *Jingjiao* to a place of honor, and so reaped a long, prosperous reign. The text records that Xuanzong directed his elder brother, the Prince of Ning, and four other princes to personally oversee the rebuilding and restoration of the *Jingjiao* monastery in Chang'an.³⁸ The emperor further showed favor to the monastery in 742 by ordering the Great General Gao Lishi to install portraits of the five Tang emperors in the monastery, thus signaling imperial approval and safeguarding the monastery from its enemies, for who among them would dare to damage an imperial image?³⁹ A monk from Da Qin with the Chinese name Jihe immigrated, becoming a person of Tang in 744, and Xuanzong appointed him bishop and authorized seven monks to regularly carry out their ritual services, probably the Eucharist, in a new shrine in the Xingqing

³⁷ *Jingjiao bei*, line 16.

³⁸ See Chapter 2, beginning around n79.

³⁹ The Five Emperors would have been Emperors Gaozu (r. 618 – 626), Taizong (r. 626 – 649), Gaozong (r. 649 – 683), Ruizong (r. 684 - 690, 710 – 712), and Xuanzong (r. 712 – 756).

Palace.⁴⁰ The final act of Xuanzong's favor recorded in the text was the emperor's gift of a shrine name-plaque, richly decorated and bearing the emperor's own calligraphy.

Stalwart *Jingjiao*

The stele text does not mention the disruption of the An-Shi Rebellion (755 – 763) that ended Xuanzong's reign, but it does credit Emperor Suzong's (r. 756 – 762) favor toward *Jingjiao* with the restoration of the Tang dynasty. Historically, when An Lushan overran Chang'an in 756, Xuanzong fled to Sichuan. Suzong forced his father's abdication as Suzong joined the Tang loyalist army in Lingwu commandery. There, he also recruited mercenaries from Khotan and Ferghana, and even Arab mercenaries from the Muslim armies that had, in 751, defeated Tang armies fighting for control of Central Asia; however, it was the Uighur mercenaries that Suzong recruited who proved to be crucial to turning the tide.⁴¹ Having thus gathered and reinforced his strength, Suzong's forces regained control of Chang'an and Luoyang in 757. The emperor at first celebrated recovery of the two capitals as the rebellion's death knell.⁴² The fighting continued, however, with Luoyang again changing hands until the rebels, then under the command of Shi Chaoyi, were finally defeated in 763, shortly after Suzong's own death. That history understood, the stele text first records that the emperor Suzong rebuilt the *Jingjiao* monastery in Lingwu and monasteries in four other commanderies, and only then, argues the text, did Heaven secure

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2, beginning around n87.

⁴¹ E. G. Pulleyblank, "The an Lu-Shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T'ang China," in *Essays on T'ang Society: The Interplay of Social, Political, and Economic Forces*, ed. John Curtis Perry and Bardwell L. Smith (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 43-44.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 44.

Suzong's throne. Having rebuilt the *Jingjiao* monasteries, the text reads, "Great benevolence abounded and then blessings and Heaven-bestowed favor began, so great favor from Heaven descended, and then the imperial succession was established."⁴³ Thus, the text argues, because Suzong honored God by rebuilding the *Jing* monasteries while yet anticipating the quelling the An-Shi Rebellion, God blessed the emperor and established his reign.

The text presents the following emperor, Daizong (r. 762 – 779), as likewise honoring the God of *Jingjiao*, and, as a result, he and his realm were blessed. Every year on his birthday, notes the text, the emperor provided incense for the monks to use in interceding with their God for him, and he feasted the *Jing* congregation. As a result of the emperor's pious practice, the text continues,

軋以美利，故能廣生；聖以體元，故能亭毒。

Heaven, by means of excellent benefits, surely is able to extend life, and the sage-emperor, by means of embodying the Celestial Principles, is able to fully form and to mature [the people].⁴⁴

The "Celestial Principles" are synonymous to the "Great Principles" introduced earlier in this text that are the teachings of Christ. These teachings are practiced in relation to others by relieving suffering and meeting others' needs.⁴⁵ When we refer to the stele text's verse eulogy, it is clear that the "Celestial Principles" that Daizong embodied were expressed in his generosity in

⁴³ *Jingjiao bei*, line 20.

⁴⁴ *Jingjiao bei*, line 21. "To fully form and to mature" 亭毒 alludes to chapter 51 of the *Daodejing*: 故道生之，德畜之；長之育之；亭之毒之；養之覆之. "Thus the way gives them life and rears them; brings them up and nurses them; *brings them to fruition and maturity*; feeds and shelters them." (emphasis added) *Trans.* Laozi and Lau, 112. The effect of this allusion is to claim that the teachings of Christ are equivalent to the *dao* (or the "way" in Lau's *Daodejing* translation).

⁴⁵ See *Jingjiao bei*, lines 7 and 22.

meeting the needs of the people.⁴⁶ Thus, because of Daizong's pious acts, the *Jing* God extended the emperor's life, and the quality of the people themselves improved through the emperor's virtuous rule and example.

The text then turns with high expectations to Tang Dezong (r. 779 – 805), who was reigning at the time that the stele was erected in 781. Dezong was attempting to institute reforms that would return Tang rule to a position similar to what it had enjoyed before the An-Shi Rebellion, and the stele text argues that his conscientious rule will be blessed by the *Jing* God. In the course of the rebellion, the central government in Chang'an and Luoyang had been overrun, and power was devolved to the provinces to prosecute the fight to restore Tang rule. As a result, warlords became provincial rulers, and provincial rulers became as warlords. The rebellion's defeat restored the undisputed place of the emperor, but that place in terms of revenues, political power, bureaucratic effectiveness, and military might was much smaller.

Dezong's reforms intended to return power from the provinces to the center, and the stele text declares the *Jingjiao* church's strong support for the emperor. Probably the church found it easier to seek favor and protection from one emperor than to face winning over the many provincial or local leaders, but the text does not say. Rather, the text hails the reforms as the restoration of the good government practices, proclaiming that Dezong

披八政以黜陟幽明；闡九疇以惟新景命。

threw open the Eight Objects [of government] in order to dismiss the incompetent and to promote the wise and able officials, and he opened to view the Nine Categories [of the Great Plan] in order to rejuvenate the Mandate of *Jing*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Jingjiao bei*, line 29.

⁴⁷ *Jingjiao bei*, line 21.

This praises Dezong for wisdom like that of the sages of China's mythical past. The *Classic of Documents* record that the Thearch Yu, as a reward for the insight that allowed him to quell the great flood, had been granted the divine revelation of the Great Plan, presented in nine categories, including the Eight Objects.⁴⁸ Confucians considered the Great Plan to be a comprehensive guide to the aims and methods of good government, and, as Michael Nylan has shown, since the Han dynasty, Chinese scholars saw an emperor's successful implementation of the Great Plan as the means for renewing the Heaven's mandate to rule.⁴⁹ Dezong's righteous reforms, the stele text argues, will affirm the "Mandate of *Jing*" for his reign. By changing the "Mandate of Heaven" to the "Mandate of *Jing*," the text argues both for the *Jing* God's active role in establishing Dezong's reign, and it claims an identity between ancient China's *Di* (High God) and *Tian* (Heaven) with the *Jing* God, at least in terms of the divine being who establishes earth's human rulers.

The righteous intention of Dezong's reforms, says the text, allowed those offering prayers for him to intercede "without any reservations of shame."⁵⁰ The allusion to the *Zuozhuan* refers

⁴⁸ When Yu stopped the Great Flood by making paths for the water to drain, *Di* (High God) rewarded his understanding of the Way by revealing to him the Nine Categories of the Grand Design, and he became one of ancient China's legendary Five Thearchs, founding the Xia dynasty. See *Shangshu* 11.3. One of the Nine Categories is the "Eight Objects" or "Eight Policies" of government, which are as follows: 一曰食, 二曰貨, 三曰祀, 四曰司空, 五曰司徒, 六曰司寇, 七曰賓, 八曰師. "the first is food, the second is material goods (commerce), the third is ceremonial sacrifice, the fourth is overseeing public works, the fifth is overseeing instruction, the sixth is overseeing criminals, the seventh is decorum toward guests [that is, foreign policy], the eighth is fielding an army" (my translation). *Shangshu* 11.10. For an excellent study on The Great Plan and how its interpretation from early times shifted in the Han dynasty and again in the Song dynasty, see Michael Nylan, *The Shifting Center: The Original "Great Plan" and Later Readings*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 1992).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 47-48.

⁵⁰ *Jingjiao bei*, line 21.

to a discussion of those praying to the “ghosts and spirits” of the ancestors on behalf of a virtuous king, as opposed to those praying for a king who is without virtue. The unfortunate intercessors for an unvirtuous king cannot speak truthfully about the king’s actions, but they must obfuscate and dissemble in prayers to the ancestors to seek their aid based upon a pretense of the king’s virtue, and so they could expect to suffer the ancestors’ wrath when the intercessors’ deception was found out.⁵¹ As it happened, despite the virtue that the stele text observed in the emperor’s reforms, the governors of the Hebei provinces arose against them in 781-786 to protect their autonomy, and the ensuing war even forced the emperor to flee Chang’an in 783. The intent of his reforms foiled, Dezong granted the rebellious governors amnesty. He remained emperor, though the power that Dezong had hoped to consolidate remained dispersed among the provinces.⁵² These events, however, played out after the stele had been erected.

The Blessing of *Jingjiao* Believers

Having argued that the *Jing* God had blessed with a settled throne and a prosperous realm the emperors who honored him, the argument of the stele text goes on to explain the root of *Jingjiao*’s benefit to the emperor and country. As one keeps the teachings of Christ, or the “Great Principles,” that person will be progressively transformed in his character and motivated to acts of mercy, which bears fruit in the phenomenal world. Thus, the text reads:

⁵¹ *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 20 (521 BCE).

⁵² Denis Crispin Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China Vol. 3, Sui and Tang China, 589-906, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 582-86.

心至於方大而虛，專靜而恕，廣慈救衆苦，善貸被羣生者：我修行之大猷，汲引之階漸也。若使風雨時，天下靜，人能理，物能清，存能昌，歿能樂，念生響應，情發目誠者：我景力能事之功用也。

A heart that attains to morally right greatness but remains humble, that is entirely placid but tolerant of others, whose generous merciful care relieves the myriad sufferings, and whose readiness to meet needs extends to all who are living—this, our practice of the Great Principles, draws us upward step by step. If the wind and rain come in season, and the subcelestial realm enjoys tranquility, if persons are amenable to reason, and living beings are capable of honesty, if those who are living are capable of prospering, and those who are dying are capable of joy, if thoughts give rise to [physically] echoed responses, and the sentiments expressed in the eyes are those which are genuine,⁵³ it is because the efficacy of our *Jing* [God's]⁵⁴ power to accomplish these matters.⁵⁵

This shows a God who is actively working in repairing the results of the Fall as it affects the emperor himself, the created world, social relations, and the hopes and fears of the people, but it is not too far distant from another part of the consensus view of the Great Plan. That is, the dominant Confucian view at that time saw the emperor as key, ordering the cosmos through ritual observances and using his sage influence to sustain harmony.⁵⁶ The mystical power of the emperor under the Great Plan was not the same as the active grace of the *Jing* God, but Jingjing, the text's author, seems to have thought that the resonance was close enough to gain traction for *Jingjiao* in the public sphere.

⁵³ There is no duplicity because people's inner thoughts and emotions are not masked, but are truly and accurately manifest in the person's physical expression.

⁵⁴ "*Jing*" appears in the text as an adjective with an implied noun. Supplying "God," as I have done, is consistent with *Jingjiao* theology, see *Jingjiao bei*, lines 7 and 8. That, however, makes a bolder theological claim than would be present if the supplied noun is "religion," as in "*Jingjiao*." If the claim were limited to the practice of the *Jing* religion cultivating righteous hearts, then the work of God is implied, but non-monotheistic outsiders could overlook the offense of that claim while foregrounding a simpler idea of the *Jing* religion as a different constellation of ritual practices. Omitting the noun in order to permit different readings by insiders and by outsiders is a cleverly subtle way for the minority religion to navigate public discourse in a way that manages potential conflicts.

⁵⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 21-22.

⁵⁶ Nylan, 48-55.

Having argued for the benefit of *Jingjiao* to the emperor and state along the lines of the mainstream Confucian view that made the emperor the proper center of virtue to suffuse the land, the rhetoric of the stele then falls back on the experience of the Church of the East to make a secondary argument by example. Jingjing presents Yisi and his civilian official, military, and religious credentials as evidence that devotion to *Jingjiao* not only benefits emperors, but also benefits the state and its people through the value contributed by faithful men like Yisi. The text does honor Yisi as a generous patron of *Jingjiao*, but it principally draws from the Church of the East's long experience as a minority religion to direct its rhetorical focus on this pious *Jingjiao* believer's unselfish contributions to the mutual benefit of China and *Jingjiao*.

Though the Church of the East influenced more territory than the Western church at this time, the Church of the East was never the official religion of any state. State sanctioned Zoroastrian clerics in Sassanid Persia occasionally persecuted the church, and later Muslim rule in the same land disadvantaged church members, but the Church of the East survived by bringing good to the people and making itself useful to the state. In Persia, the church's medical schools were renowned, and Christians served as Sassanid diplomats not only to Byzantium, but also to China. After the Sassanian empire fell to Muslim armies (651), Christians found their place providing the new Umayyad government (661 – 750) with administrative expertise, and early in the Abbasid caliphate (750 – 1258), Christians in Baghdad translated Greek texts on medicine, mathematics, physics, and astronomy into Arabic. Whether relying on the Church's practical survival experience or upon a minority religion's designed strategy for penetrating society, the stele text offers Yisi's service and influence as a secondary argument for the practical good that followers of *Jingjiao* contribute to China.

The stele text offers Yisi as an example of one who has contributed to China as an official at the highest level of the civilian and military ranks while his good character was formed through his devotion to *Jingjiao*. As Max Deeg observes the rhetorical purpose at work, the space allotted at the end of the prose text to Yisi compares with the space (and emphasis) allotted to Aluoben at the beginning of the narrative part of the prose text, and just as Aluoben and *Jingjiao* received special attention from emperor Taizong, so are the loyal servant Yisi and his *Jingjiao* church deserving of emperor Dezong's kind attentions.⁵⁷ The text introduces Yisi by his titles as follows:

大施主，金紫光祿大夫，同朔方節度副使，試殿中監，賜紫袈裟，僧伊斯，和而好惠，聞道勤行。

Our great patron, Grand Master for Splendid Happiness who wears the golden fish bag and purple robes, simultaneously Military Vice Commissioner of Shuofang and Probationary Director of the Palace Administration, conferred a purple cassock, is the monk Yisi, who is congenial and quick to show kindness, one who hears the Dao and diligently puts it into practice.⁵⁸

Yisi's civilian prestige title of "Grand Master for Splendid Happiness" meant that, at a rank of 2, lower class, he was a nobleman very near the top of the Tang nine-rank system for officials.⁵⁹ In keeping with his high rank, Yisi had been granted an official's purple robe, and a golden bag in

⁵⁷ Max Deeg, "A Belligerent Priest--Yisi and His Political Context," in *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2013), 115.

⁵⁸ *Jingjiao bei*, line 21-22.

⁵⁹ A prestige title was normally granted in relation to an official's seniority to help specify the status between officials of the same rank. Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 1186.

the shape of a fish hung from the robe's belt, holding his official's credentials.⁶⁰ In terms of active titles, at the time of the stele text's writing, he was serving in concurrent military and civilian positions. As the Military Vice Commissioner of Shuofang, he served under the military governor (*jiedushi*) for the region immediately north of Chang'an and headquartered in Ling Prefecture 靈州, formerly Lingwu Commandery 靈武郡. Yisi's recently added concurrent civilian position as Probationary Director of the Palace Administration meant that he was responsible for supervising and provisioning the imperial household.⁶¹ He was also a *Jingjiao* monk. Not only did his fellows recognize his deliberate piety, but also the emperor honored him as a monk of special favor by bestowing on him a purple cassock.⁶² This particular garment confirms that Yisi was not simply an honorary *Jingjiao* "monk" because of his high secular status and generosity toward the *Jing* church, but that he was, in fact, also an important churchman.⁶³ The key to his success, however, is his heart that is "congenial and quick to show kindness" as a result of good character formed by hearing the teachings of *Jingjiao* and diligently putting them into practice.

⁶⁰ The presence of a fish bag and the bag's color indicated the wearer's rank and honor. A pun made the fish-shape auspicious because the words for "fish" 魚 and for "plenty" 餘 are similarly pronounced.

⁶¹ "Probationary" was normally added to the title upon appointment until the period for reconsideration was successfully completed.

⁶² The emperor's gift of a purple monk's robe showed the emperor's special favor upon a cleric, for, though this gift did not grant the actual rank, the color purple was reserved for persons of the third rank and above.

⁶³ Moule, following Gueluy (1895) and Pelliot (1914), identifies Yisi as Izd-buzid, mentioned in a portion of the stele text that is written in Syriac. Moule translates the portion of the text as follows: "In the year thousand and ninety and two of the Greeks (A.D. 781) my lord Izd-buzid priest and country-bishop of Khumdan [Chang'an] the metropolis, son of the late Milis priest, from Balkh a city of Tahuristan, set up that tablet of stone." Moule, 43, 48.

Using examples from Yisi's rich secular and religious life, the stele text shows that his character-guided deeds benefited both the state and the people. Yisi came to China by his own free choice from Balkh, a center of Silk Roads trade and of religious worship and learning in Bactria.⁶⁴ Having demonstrated his loyalty in the "vermillion court" (*danting* 丹庭), or the palace of the great general and the Commander Prince of Fenyang, Guo Ziyi, Yisi gained his commission in the army and served Guo Ziyi faithfully and with humility toward others as he followed Guo through his storied career as the Military Commissioner of Shuofang.⁶⁵ The text relies on the audience to credit to Yisi the full gravity of his contribution to China's good, for the intended audience would know that Guo Ziyi was one of Tang China's most important generals, key in its survival of the An Lushan Rebellion and, later, in fending off aggression from the Tibetan empire. Furthermore, though emperor Suzong bore an abiding suspicion toward all of his leading generals and he must have been wary of Guo's tremendous popularity, nothing in the historical record suggests that Guo was anything but completely loyal to the emperor.⁶⁶ The argument of the stele wants to associate Yisi with Guo Ziyi's profound contribution and dogged loyalty.

The stele's argument then shows how Yisi's generosity benefited both the *Jingjiao* church and society in general. Yisi was not one to let his wealth pile up at home, reads the text, but he was "[p]racticed in dispersing salary and rewards" that Guo or the emperor bestowed

⁶⁴ *Jingjiao bei*, line 23. Balkh appears in this line as Wangshe 王舍. Moule provides a history of modern translators' identification of Wangshe as Balkh. Moule, 43n34.

⁶⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, line 24.

⁶⁶ Pulleyblank, "The An Lu-Shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T'ang China," in *Essays on T'ang Society: The Interplay of Social, Political, and Economic Forces*, 58.

upon him.⁶⁷ He used his wealth to restore, improve, and beautify *Jingjiao* monasteries, and he sponsored religious celebrations that both inspired the faithful and helped the needy. The text says,

餒者來而飫之，寒者來而衣之；病者療而起之，死者葬而安之。

Those who are hungry come, and he feeds them; those who are cold come, and he clothes them; those who are sick, he succors them to health; those who are dead, he buries them to rest in peace.⁶⁸

Yisi's generosity was not limited to church members, but he helped whoever was in need. At its climax, using the term, "*dat'sa*," an imported word probably referring to idolaters,⁶⁹ the text exclaims,

清節達娑，未聞斯美；白衣景士，今見其人。

The purest and most morally steadfast *dat'sa* have not yet heard of one of this quality, but the white-robed *Jing* adepts, today, see it in his person!"⁷⁰

Jingjiao, the argument goes, is superior to its rival religions because it alone can produce in a person the quality of character that blesses the whole of society.

⁶⁷ *Jingjiao bei*, line 24.

⁶⁸ *Jingjiao bei*, lines 25-26.

⁶⁹ "Dat'sa" is the medieval pronunciation of *dasuo* 達娑. Moule, following Pelliot, believes this to be a transliteration of *tarsa*, a Persian word meaning "quakers" or "those who fear," used by Eastern Christians for idolaters. Moule, 45, 216. Presenting a less likely alternative, Legge, with reservations, translates it as "Buddhists," following Pauthier's identification of 達娑 as a transliteration of as Sanskrit word, *dasarhas*, meaning "a Buddha." James Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fû in Shen-Hsi, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State* (1888; repr., New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1966), 25. On the other hand, Schlegel argues that the Persian word, *tarsa*, was intended here, meaning "God fearing," and thus is used in this text to indicate Christians. G. Schlegel, "Notes and Queries," *T'oung Pao* 6, no. 5 (1895).

⁷⁰ *Jingjiao bei*, line 26.

The Eulogy

The stele text's prose preface concluded, the text presents a verse eulogy. In eight eight-line stanzas, the poem restates the preface's argument that the *Jing* God has blessed China and its emperors who have honored *Jingjiao*, but its theological theme is yet more pronounced.

Following the pattern of the preface, the eulogy presents the *Jing* God as the eternally-existing creator of the universe who has personally involved himself in bringing salvation to the world.

The following lines provide the theme of the poem:

分身出代, His divided Godhead appeared in the world
救度無邊。 To provide salvation without limits.⁷¹

The Three-in-One God divided his Godhead, and the Messiah, as the preface calls him, appeared in the world to provide a salvation that is available to all.⁷² This active, pervasive working of the *Jing* God in the world to save it through the teachings and the redemptive work of Christ stands out even more in the eulogy's compact verse than in the preface's expanded prose.

The eulogy then comments on the six *Jing*-honoring emperors who were presented in the preface. The general pattern of each stanza employs the first two lines to honor the particular emperor and the following lines to describe the outworking of the *Jing* God's blessings on the people, whether through the actions of the emperor or of *Jingjiao* believers, or through the direct favor of the *Jing* God. The stanza for Taizong, the emperor who received Aluoben, stands out, however, as a stanza in ten lines, for it cost the poet an extra couple of lines to describe how the

⁷¹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 26.

⁷² Literally, *Meshihe*, or Messiah. *Jingjiao bei*, line 6.

fame and influence of Taizong's China spread, drawing people from far and wide, including emissaries from the Church of the East.

Having run through the list of good emperors, each stanza repeating the theme of the emperor responding to the *Jing* God's guidance and receiving blessing upon himself and the people, the eulogy concludes by praising the *Jing* God. It reads as follows:

道惟廣兮，應惟密。	Verily, the Dao is broad, the answer, verily, is near.
強名言兮，演三一。	Making a strong effort to characterize it, [We] preach the Three-in-One.
[][]主能作兮，臣能述。	What the <i>most honored</i> Lord is able to accomplish, [His] servants are able to recount.
建豐碑兮，頌元吉。	Erecting this ceremonial stele, [We] recite [His] great blessings. ⁷³

There is no record of whether Dezong responded positively, negatively, or at all to the *Jingjiao* argument. As discussed above, however, history does record that the regional military governors successfully fought to retain their autonomy, rejecting the reforms that the emperor sought to impose and which the stele text praised. After that, apart the Dezong's rebuke, also mentioned above, to Jingjing and Prajna for their collaboration to translate a Buddhist sutra, the record of *Jingjiao* activity in Chang'an is quiet. Nevertheless, recently excavated stone-engraved memorial texts from Luoyang reveal the continued faith and practice of two different Han-Sogdian blended families. These texts and their implications are the subject of the next two chapters.

⁷³ *Jingjiao bei*, line 30.

CHAPTER 4

THE MUZHIMING OF A COUPLE IN SILVER TANG LUOYANG

The *muzhiming*, or entombed epitaphs, of the Honorable Prefectural Governor Hua and of his wife, the Lady née An, are the only *muzhiming* yet found in Luoyang of *Jingjiao* faithful, and reading their epitaphs together reveals the story of a mixed Han-Sogdian family actively engaged in adjusting their self-presentation to appeal to different audiences and to achieve different goals. The stones were unearthed the eastern part of Luoyang late in 2010, and reports on them were first published in 2012.¹

¹Guo Maoyu 郭茂育 and Zhao Shuisen 趙水森, eds., *Luoyang Chutu Yuanyang Zhi Jilu* 洛阳出土鸳鸯志辑录 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2012), 53-1, 53-2. Professor Mao Yangguang of the Luoyang Normal University complained that those first-published rubbings were unclear and that the presentation of the text was problematic. He published his own article on the *muzhiming* in 2014, with his own photos of rubbings and his representation of the texts in simplified characters. Mao. Professor Li Tang of the University of Salzburg published a paper on Hua Xian's *muzhiming* in 2016. Tang, "Critical Remarks on a So-Called Newly Discovered *Jingjiao* Epitaph from Luoyang with a Preliminary English Translation," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*. Tang had gone to Luoyang, but she was disappointed in her hope to see either the *muzhiming* or rubbings of them. Because she believed that the *muzhiming* and their rubbings had disappeared, she wrote that she suspected that the earlier reports had been based upon fraudulent evidence. The results of my efforts to see the *muzhiming*, however, proved more felicitous, and I believe the stones to be authentic.

I traveled to Luoyang in June of 2016, where I met with Professor Mao and spoke him about the *muzhiming*. He explained that the *muzhiming* and their covers were privately excavated, and that they had been quietly presented to him for purchase. He initially declined, and by the time he had changed his mind, another collector had purchased them. Professor Mao knows the collector, but he did not name him or her. The pieces are now on display at the Longmen Museum, a privately-owned museum adjacent to the Longmen Grottoes. With Professor Mao's introduction, I met Wang Linghong, director of the museum, and she took me to see the cover and *muzhiming* of Hua Xian and the cover of the Lady née An's *muzhiming* on display. When I enquired after the Lady's *muzhiming*, Director Wang apologized that it was inconveniently located in the museum's storage area, so she could not show it to me, but she graciously had a rubbing of the Lady's *muzhiming* brought for me to examine. When I asked about obtaining rubbings of the items, Director Wang explained that she was not at liberty to provide those, but she suggested that I approach the unnamed collector through Professor Mao. In the end, Professor Mao helped me to obtain rubbings of the two *muzhiming* and of the cover to Hua Xian's *muzhiming*. A rubbing of the cover to the Lady's *muzhiming*, unfortunately, was unavailable before I had to return home, but Professor Mao suggested that I might have better luck on my next visit to Luoyang.

The Late Lord and Lady

Taken together, the *muzhiming* of Hua Xian (756 – 827) and his wife, Lady née An (763 – 821), present a noble family from important buffer areas west and northwest of Chang'an that protected the Tang dynasty's Western Capital from the western reaches of the empire that were wilder and more vulnerable to attack by barbarian armies. The devoutly Christian couple later made their home in the Eastern Capital, Luoyang, in its Xiushan ward, a heavily Sogdian-populated quarter which Qing dynasty official Xu Song 徐松 (1781 – 1848) tells us was also the site of a *Jingjiao* monastery.² The couple had three sons, Yingyuan 應元, Manshi 滿師, and Qiya 齊雅, and the couple's *muzhiming* are closely tied to the interests of one son in particular.

Following common practice, Her Ladyship is not identified by a personal name, but only by her family surnames. The An surname, however, indicates a “barbarian” origin. As Xin Wen has explained, the peoples of Central Asia did not use surnames, but surnames were culturally required in China if one was to escape the cultural periphery and engage in negotiating the acceptable social space of China's cultured mainstream population. Because Central Asia was ordered around oasis cities rather than by tribes, these surname-less “barbarians” in China normally took their surname from their country of origin.³ Therefore, the Lady's forbearers almost certainly originated from the Iranian people group of the An Kingdom 安国, that is, Bukhara. This city is now in Uzbekistan, but during Tang times and before the Muslim

² Xu Song 徐松, *Tang Liangjing Chengfang Kao* 唐兩京城坊考, 5.22b. This source relied upon now lost portions of Tang dynasty Wei Shu's *Liangjing xinji*. See, also, Drake, "Nestorian Monasteries of the T'ang Dynasty: And the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet," 314-16.

³ Xin Wen, "What's in a Surname? Central Asian Participation in the Culture of Naming of Medieval China," *Tang Studies* 34 (2016).

Conquest, it was one of the largest Central Asian city-states included in the Sogdiana confederation of city-states whose combined territory is included in present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The Lady née An and her natal family retained the An surname at a time when many were abandoning it for some distinctively Chinese-sounding surname. The An-Shi Rebellion (755 – 763) had catastrophically ended the golden age of the Tang dynasty, and in the years following the rebellion, many Sogdians took Chinese surnames or otherwise sought to obscure their Sogdian ancestry so to assimilate into Han culture and to avoid association with the rebellion's hated villains from the Sogdian milieu.⁴ An Lushan (c.703 – 757) came from mixed Sogdian and Turkic parentage, his general and eventual successor as emperor of their rebel state of Yan 燕, Shi Siming 史思明 (703 – 761), had “proclaimed himself simultaneously emperor of China and Sogdian noble.”⁵ Furthermore, many Sogdians who had settled in the “protected” prefecture, Lin Zhou 凜州, which was attached to You Zhou 幽州 (the area of modern Beijing), had aided the rebellion, whether fighting as soldiers or raising money for the rebellion through trade.⁶ Chinese forces exacted revenge in 761, massacring these Sogdians together with “extremely numerous” other civilians in You Zhou who were mistaken for Sogdians because of

⁴ Etienne de la Vaissiere, *Sogdian Traders: A History*, trans. James Ward, *Handbook of Oriental Studies: Central Asia* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 220-22.

⁵ Ibid., 219.

⁶ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "A Sogdian Colony in Inner Mongolia," *T'oung Pao* 41, no. 4/5 (1952): 339-41. de la Vaissiere, 217-18. Tan Qixiang 谭其骧, ed. *Zhongguo Lishi Ditu Ji* 中国历史地图集, vol. 5 (Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 1996), 48-49; de la Vaissiere.

their unfortunately high noses.⁷ Also, though most Sogdians from the Ordos colony actively supported the Tang or stayed out of the hostilities, some followed Turk Ashina Congli 阿史那從禮 in a 756 raid of Shaanxi that was put down by Uighur mercenaries.⁸ In the time of restoration that followed, many Han people, nostalgic for the peace and prosperity before the An-Shi Rebellion, murmured a general antipathy toward “foreigners” in their midst, willing to overlook that many Sogdians had yet remained loyal to the Tang. The Tang court, itself, promoted xenophobia until closer ties between the powerful Uighur empire and the Sogdians in terms of religion (Manicheanism), commerce, and borrowed culture forced the court to reconsider that policy.⁹

If not motivated by shame from a perceived family relationship with that traitor to the Tang, the family of the Lady née An neither bent to pressure to blend into the Chinese society in order to avoid the generalized antipathy and distrust directed against Sogdians in blame for the loss and hardship that the Chinese people endured in the wake of the An-Shi Rebellion. They were not alone. Etienne de la Vasserie points out that other *muzhiming* still record exceptions

⁷ de la Vaissiere, 220.

⁸ Pulleyblank, 341.

⁹ De la Vaissiere argues that Sogdian colonial elites sought out a symbiotic relationship with the Uighur empire in which the Sogdians gained the Uighurs’ protection and the nomadic and newly hegemonic Uighurs acquired from the Sogdians an adapted cultural pattern to stabilize their new position. He says, “This fusion went beyond the religions sphere: not only did the Uighurs adopt the religion of the expatriate Sogdians, they also adopted their writing, following the example of the first Turk Empire, as well as a large part of their vocabulary and urban pattern. The Sogdian influence on the Uighurs was greater even than their influence on the Turks.” de la Vaissiere, 224.

where the Sogdian person's recognized loyal contribution to the court appeared to have won a family a Sogdian surname worth keeping.¹⁰

The Lady's An family had settled in Anding Commandery, which had its administrative seat at what is the present-day city of Jingchuan 泾川, Gansu Province.¹¹ This area is in the southern end of the region known in the seventh and eighth centuries as the "Hu Park" (*huyuan* 胡苑), *hu* being a term for Sogdians.¹² In 679, the Tang established the Six *Hu* Prefectures (*liuhuzhou* 六胡州) to organize the Hu Park into regional "protected" political districts whose head administrators were Han Chinese.¹³ Though method and form of administration changed over time, the "Six Hu Prefectures" remained for a long time as the name for the colony of Sogdians.¹⁴ The Six Hu Prefectures provided troops for defense of the northern frontier,¹⁵ but its greatest and most lucrative contribution came as provider of horses to the Tang cavalries. As described by de la Vaissiere, "The breeding and trading of horses was the *raison d'être* for the settlement of these Sogdians in the Ordos. The vast pastures which were the only natural

¹⁰ Ibid., 222.

¹¹ Tan, 5:40-41. Anding Commandery 安定郡 was renamed Jing Prefecture 涇州 from 742-756, and then, in 757, the name was changed again to Baoding Commandery 保定郡. Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 2 ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1.38.

¹² de la Vaissiere, 213.

¹³ Though the precise locations of the prefectures running across the southern part of the Ordos now is unknown, they were named Lu 魯, Li 麗, Han 含, Cai 塞, Yi 依, and Qi Zhou 契州. Pulleyblank, 326.

¹⁴ Ibid., 328.

¹⁵ Ibid., 328-29.

resource of the six counties region supplied the Tang army with mounts.”¹⁶ Speaking of Yuanzhou 原州 (modern Guyuan 固原), which was on the western border of the Lady’s home, Anding Commandery, de la Vaissiere described it as “situated on the route from Gansu to the capital by way of the plain, avoiding the gorges of the Wei 渭 and Lanzhou 蘭州. Well sheltered behind a portion of the Great wall, a large part of the pastures and military stud farms were concentrated in its environs.”¹⁷ With their home on that same route to the capital, the Lady’s family probably enjoyed a position of some importance in the horse trade which afforded it the status to keep its An name. To achieve the level of the Lady’s accomplishment in music and ritual as her epitaph describes, she must have come from a family of means,¹⁸ present in China long enough for her to have received her training and to have become—if we are to believe the epitaph¹⁹—a true creature of China’s Confucian culture.

The Lady’s father, An Sheng, is named, but no title or words of praise are listed in the epitaph. His name, Sheng 晟, means “bright,” but whether the name bears a broader meaning is unclear. It might bear some relation to Christianity, the “Luminous Teaching” 景教, with its

¹⁶ de la Vaissiere, 214.

¹⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹⁸ Sogdians were renowned for their business acumen, and, like Persians, many came to China as merchants and became wealthy. “Li Shang-yin includes among ‘incongruous sayings’ of the T’ang dynasty, among others such as ‘a teacher ignorant of characters’ and ‘a butcher reciting sutras,’ the illuminating contradiction of ‘a poor Persian.’” Edward H. Schafer, “Iranian Merchants in T’ang Dynasty Tales,” *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* 11 (1951): 410.

¹⁹ As Davis cautions, the biographical materials presented in *muzhiming* “were not objective accounts of the deceased’s life but carefully crafted narratives fulfilling important social functions.” Timothy M. Davis, *Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China: A History of Early Muzhiming* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 96.

similar meaning and considering the *sheng* 晟 and *jing* 景 characters' shared *ri* 日 (sun) radical.²⁰

Many Sogdians, however, followed Manichaeism, so the name might be related to Manichaeism's gnostic hope to release trapped light from foul matter. Or the name might be without a religious association and simply represent a hopeful wish or a Chinese name similar in meaning to a Sogdian name.²¹ At any rate, no further ancestors were important enough to list, and no status-granting event or title for the Lady's father is mentioned for the *muzhiming*'s practical purpose of bolstering the status of the Lady's surviving husband and sons.

The patrilineal Hua 花 surname is an established, if not common, Chinese surname, but that cannot exclude speculation as to the family's ethnic background. Hua Xian was a military man, and Mao, surveying Sogdian *muzhiming* found in Luoyang, says that many Sogdians who had taken up permanent residence in China took military posts.²² Near historical precedents with the Hua name could go either way. On the one hand, for example, an ethnically ambiguous Tang dynasty General Hua Jingding 花驚定 (dates unknown) in Sichuan served under the command of Cui Guangyuan 崔光遠 (d. 761), metropolitan governor of Chengdu, and quieted the rebellion of Duan Zizhang 段子璋 (d. 761).²³ The great poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712 – 770) even addressed General

²⁰ The Lady was born to An Sheng in 763. It is not clear when the Church of the East in China began calling themselves *Jingjiao*. Jingjing introduces the term in the *Jingjiao Bei*, but that does not mean that use of the name only began when the stele was erected in 781. *Sheng* 晟 could have anticipated the Christian use of *jing* 景, been related to *jing*, or have had no relation to *jing*.

²¹ For example, An Lushan's Sogdian name, roxšan, meant "light" or "bright." E. G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of an Lu-Shan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955; repr., 1966), 15.

²² Mao Yangguang 毛阳光, "Xinjian Xifang Tangdai Luoyang Suturen Muzhi Kao 新见四方唐代洛阳粟特人墓志考," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 6 (2009): 79.

²³ Jiu Tang Shu 111.3331.

Hua in two poems: “A Song for Lord Hua Playfully Written” 戲作花卿歌 and “To Lord Hua” 贈花卿.²⁴ On the other hand, Sanping Chen has shown that the legendary “Chinese” female warrior, Hua Mulan, was originally a barbarian hero, probably of the Tuoba tribe.²⁵

If a person in Tang China were not ethnically Han, assimilation to a Han ethnic identity generally took a long time. Professor Mao argues that, throughout the Tang dynasty, Sogdians permanently resident in Luoyang continued to marry other ethnic Sogdians even as the successive generations increasingly followed the practices of the majority Han culture.²⁶ A non-Han person, however, might desire to speed up the process of assimilation by adopting a Chinese surname and hiding his past. Such was the case with the great poet, Bo Juyi 白居易 (772 – 846) who was from Kucha and at times enjoyed living in a steppe-style tent, yet he also found it expedient for social and political reasons to obfuscate his non-Confucian background.²⁷

It was also less common for a Han man to take a non-Han wife unless he had been sent to a peripheral area of the empire where both the availability and the social advantages of finding a Han wife were reduced. As for Hua Xian, however, his *Jingjiao* faith may have itself limited his choice of wives, even while living near the capital. There would have been fewer Han Christian

²⁴ For text, translation, and notes, see, Fu Du, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, ed. and trans. Stephen Owen (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), vol. 3, book 10. On Du Fu’s subtle criticism of General Hua, see, Hao Ji, *The Reception of Du Fu (712-770) and His Poetry in Imperial China* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 71-72.

²⁵ Sanping Chen, *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 39-59.

²⁶ Mao, “Xinjian Xifang Tangdai Luoyang Suturen Muzhi Kao 新见四方唐代洛阳粟特人墓志考,” 79.

²⁷ Chen, 157-82.

women available to him, and other Han families may have had reservations about marrying their daughter to a Christian family.

The personal names of Hua Xian and of his male ancestors have meanings that are plausibly, but not certainly, religious. His Lordship's given name, tabooed for use by later generations yet also the courtesy name that he chose for public use, was Xian 獻, meaning "to offer up [in sacrifice]" or "a worthy" (as in a person of high character). His father's name was Sulin 蘇鄰 and his paternal grandfather's name was Yishu 移恕. A potentially religious meaning of Yishu's name might be "claims forgiveness," or Mao Yangguang suggests that Yishu's name might have been a transliteration of the Syriac name for Jesus,²⁸ in which case, Yishu, then pronounced "ye-syoH," echoed "Yeshua." Regarding Sulin, Mao notes that some Chinese Manichean texts call Mani's home state "Sulin Kingdom" 蘇鄰國, and he suggests that that might indicate some link between Xian's father and Manichaeism.²⁹ Lin Wushu, however, identifies Sulin as Suristan, and he follows Henning in identifying Suristan as Babylon.³⁰ Thus, Suristan, the "country of the Syrians," lay in old Babylon in the heart of the Sassanid empire. If Hua Sulin's given name was based on a toponym, the area also encompassed the seat of the Assyrian Church of the East's Catholicos in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, so the name is just as likely to be used by a member of the Church of the East honoring his ecclesiastical head. Furthermore, it

²⁸ Mao, "Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花献及其妻安氏墓志初探," 87.

²⁹ Ibid. For a translation of the text showing this Mani birth myth to be extant in Tang times, see, G. Haloun and W. B. Henning, "The Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light," *Asia Major* N.S. 3 (1952).

³⁰ Lin, in *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, 96. See W. B. Henning, "The Book of the Giants," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 11, no. 1 (1943): 52n4.

was not until the Yuan dynasty (1271 – 1368) that Manichaeism acquired the Chinese name *Sulin Jiao*.³¹ On the other hand, *Sulin* might have been a Christian name given to mean “toward neighbors,” echoing the second greatest commandment in the Mosaic Law, to “love your neighbor as yourself.”³² Thus, for three generations, the Hua family’s men may have gone by Christian names.

Interestingly, however, the names that Hua Xian gave to his sons seem to have moved away from religion-oriented meanings to favor a more mainstream Chinese identity. The name of the eldest, Yingyuan 應元, means “worthy to be first.” The name of the middle son, Manshi 滿師 means “to complete an apprenticeship.” Qiya 齊雅, the name of the youngest, could mean “in step with the cultivated” or even “in step with what is quintessentially Chinese.”³³ Perhaps the change in naming strategy reflects caution on the part of their parents to avoid names outside of the Han mainstream tradition. If the Lady’s age was in the range of 15-35 years when she gave birth, the three boys would have been born between 778 and 798. The unsettling political and social reverberations in the aftermath of the An-Shi Rebellion (755 – 763) would have still felt fresh.³⁴ General An Lushan, a “barbarian” probably fathered by a Sogdian man with a Turkic woman, had once been a favorite of emperor Xuanzong until An Lushan began a rebellion that

³¹ Lin, in *Popular Religion and Shamanism*, 94-98.

³² Matthew 22:39.

³³ The Middle Chinese pronunciation of *ya* 雅 (ngaeX) was phonetically similar to *xia* 夏 (haeX), the name of the first Chinese dynasty, with the result that 雅 sometime stood for “what was quintessentially Chinese.” Paul W. Kroll, *Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 雅 1(c).

³⁴ On An Lushan’s rebellion, see Twitchett and Fairbank, 561-86; Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of an Lu-Shan*; Paul W. Kroll, “The Flight from the Capital and the Death of Precious Consort Yang,” *Tang Studies* 3 (1985).

nearly toppled the Tang dynasty at its very height. Making matters even more bitter for the Han Chinese, the Uighur barbarian mercenary army hired to quell the rebellion then looted the Chinese whom they had liberated. Thereafter, the Uighurs used their monopoly on China's supply of horses to gouge prices, and the Uighurs who remained in China became hated for their haughty, belligerent manners and for their avarice as loan sharks.³⁵ The political cost to the Chinese of overcoming the rebellion required shifting power and significant official expertise out from the imperial center to provincial governors and warlords, and that loss of stability produced in the people an abiding lost sense of security. In these less prosperous and more precarious times, anti-foreigner sentiment ran high among the Han Chinese who found comfort in blaming their woes on the "barbarians" living among them, so Hua Xian probably figured that his sons' prospects would be better off if they had more mainstream Chinese names.

Both epitaphs emphasize the blessedness of the couple's marriage, but her epitaph presents a hint to confirm how they were identified when it says, "Her marrying into the Hua clan's family resulted in complete felicity like that of the marriage between the Qin and Jin." The *chengyu* or idiom involved here ("the felicity of the Qin and Jin," 秦晉之好), carries the sense of a happy marriage alliance between two families. During the Spring and Autumn period, in the mid-600's BCE, the states of Qin and Jin built an unbreakable alliance based upon marriages between the ruling families. The resulting peace between otherwise rival states allowed both to prosper, and allowed the Qin state, in particular, to grow significantly in territory and strength. Though today's use of the idiom—as in a wedding toast—tends to emphasize the prosperity

³⁵ Twitchett and Fairbank, 567, 609-10, 77.

arising from uniting the advantages of two houses, the Silver Tang³⁶ historical context presents more like the original Qin-Jin historical context. As a result, this epitaph probably more emphasizes the harmony wrought and the advantage gained from uniting a Han family and a Sogdian family where some might have expected to find adversaries.

The Lady née An died of illness on May 10, 821, at the age of fifty-eight in the village of Xiushan. She was survived by her loving husband and three sons who mourned her and buried her according to long-established ritual. Tortoise shell divination along the Luo River set the place for her burial at Bairen village, Gande parish, in Luoyang district. By pointing out that the divination was conducted along the Luo River, the author of the Lady's *muzhiming* emphasizes to the reader that her husband and sons were obeying the deceased Lady's wish to be interred in an area known to be a burial ground for Sogdian immigrants. In her excellent treatment of burial divination in the Tang, Jessey Choo explains that plastronomy (reading the cracks created by heating part of a tortoise plastron) in addition to achilleomancy (divination using milfoil stalks) would be appropriate for a person of the fifth rank or higher.³⁷ Following Choo's outline and analysis of the divination ritual, we can expect that the chief mourner, Hua Xian, would have conducted the ritual at the proposed site of the Lady's grave to confirm the physical security of the site as a place where the departed could rest in peace, and, on another day, he would have conducted a second set of milfoil and tortoise shell divinations at home to set the date of the burial and thereby confirm departed Lady's approval of the entire burial plan. Hua Xian

³⁶ The Golden Age of the Tang dynasty was ended by the An-Shi Rebellion (755-763). The dynasty survived, but never recovered its prior confidence nor grandeur.

³⁷ Jessey J.C. Choo, "Shall We Profane the Service of the Dead? Burial Divinations, Untimely Burials, and Remembrance in Tang *Muzhiming*," *Tang Studies* 33 (2015).

demonstrated his affection for his late wife by honoring her wishes. His demonstration of affection is all the stronger if Hua Xian's ethnic identity were Han rather than barbarian, for burial among Sogdians would have been a significant step-down in prestige for a Han official. The choice of burial ground, however, probably also reflects a desire of the couple to identify with the community of *Jingjiao* believers who were concentrated in Luoyang's Sogdian community. The Lady was interred on November 20, 821, and there awaited her husband to join her at the end of his days.

Hua Xian, five years later, obliged her on February 7, 827, when, at the age of seventy-one, he, too, died of illness at their old home in the Xiushan neighborhood. The epitaph boasts that the three sons mourned their father as ritual propriety required, but the sincerity of their felt loss (and filial piety) took them to an extreme beyond the ritual requirement with the result that the toll on their bodies exceeded what would have been normal. As the eldest son, Yingyuan would have been the chief mourner, but Qiya's prominence in the *muzhiming* suggests that he probably bore most of the expense. At any rate, they employed tortoise shell divination to determine that the auspicious day of his burial would be March 5, 828. Accordingly, on that day, the epitaph says that the tomb already occupied by Her Ladyship was opened according to ritual, and His Lordship was jointly interred with her.

Hua Xian's epitaph lists three of his titles, showing his noble rank and high status. The first title, carrying a rank of eight, which would be high, but not yet noble, was "Military Service Section Administrator of the Left Militant Guard." The Left Militant Guard, hierarchically east of the south-facing emperor, and so of higher rank than the Right Militant Guard, was one of the Sixteen Guards that defended the empire's capital. As Military Service Section Administrator,

Hua Xian would have been head of the Left Militant Guard's office handling personnel matters. At one time, a person with that title would have been in charge of calling up recruits from Lingwu Prefecture, the area meant to support the Left Militant Guard, and he would have been responsible for assigning soldiers from the militia to tours of duty to protect the capital.³⁸ However, as Charles Hucker explains, "by 749 the Guards ceased calling up militiamen. Thereafter into the Sung the Sixteen Guards were decorative, militarily unimportant units existing almost solely to provide grandiose titles and appropriate perquisites for members of the imperial family and occasionally other favored dignitaries; and active defense of the Emperor and his palace was managed with other forces such as the late Tang Permanent Palace Guard."³⁹ Since Hua Xian was born in 756, after the actual military use of the Guards had ceased, this title of his appears to have been of an honorary nature.

Hua Xian's other titles, however, tend to suggest that he was engaged as an official in real service to the emperor at the garrison in Lingwu. Lingwu Commandery 靈武郡 included the western edge of the Ordos Plateau in modern China's Gansu Province and the Ningxia Autonomous Region.⁴⁰ Even if the Left Militant Guard had stopped calling up militiamen, S.A.M Adshead notes that the commandery remained an important military post heavily staffed by barbarian mercenary soldiers.⁴¹ As a loyal Han person with roots in Lingwu, Hua Xian would

³⁸ Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985), 385.

³⁹ Ibid., 428.

⁴⁰ Tan, 5:40-41.

⁴¹ Samuel Adrian M. Adshead, *T'ang China: The Rise of the East in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 156-57.

have been an extremely valuable official within the strategic area forming the western edge of the old *Hu* Park.⁴² The second title listed in his epitaph is the “Senior Commandant-in-Chief of Cavalry for Lingwu Commandery.” This title—which entitled Hua Xian to a fifth rank and, thus, raised him and his wife to the noble class—was earned by meritorious service, whether by some glorious episode or by seniority in service. Hua’s final and most important title, which appears on the cover to his *muzhiming*, is “The Honorable Prefectural Governor.” This is an honorific title for the head of a “superior prefecture,” one that occupied a strategic position relative to the capital, and the office is consistent with Hua Xian’s fifth rank.

Lingwu Commandery was important for the defense of the empire, and it was a significant area for the *Jingjiao* church. The *Jingjiao* stele records that emperor Gaozong (r. 649 – 683) caused the widespread founding of *Jingjiao* monasteries that must have included one in Lingwu, for, after a period of persecution by Buddhists and Daoists,⁴³ the *Jingjiao* monastery in

⁴² There was a good deal of fluidity in the circumstances of the Six Prefectures Sogdian colony. After the Six Hu Prefectures were established in 679 with Chinese officials directly over them, the second Northern Turk Empire, in 697, moved many of the Sogdian colony to join them north of the Yellow River as one of the Northern Turks’ terms for allying with the Chinese against Khitan invaders. The Six Hu Prefectures colony who remained or returned to the Ordos were combined, first into two prefectures (703) and, then into one Lanchi Prefecture 蘭池州 in 708. Pulleyblank suggests that direct Chinese administration probably ended by then. The *hu* of the Six Prefectures rebelled in 721, and the Chinese moved them to prefectures in Henan, Shannan, and Huainan Provinces, but then, in 738, the Chinese created You Prefecture 宥州 in the Ordos for Sogdians who had been pardoned or who had sneaked back to the Ordos. The You Prefecture ceased to function when Tibetan raids in 786 led to the Six Prefectures Sogdians resettling in northern Shanxi Province (in present day Shuo County 朔縣 and Datong 大同). The You Prefecture was revived in 814 to govern the Tangut people (Dangxiang 黨項) who had been living in the area alongside the Sogdians, but they had expanded to fill it in the Sogdians’ absence. Pulleyblank, 326-42.

⁴³ The *Jingjiao* stele places Buddhist persecution during the *Shengli* period (697 – 700) under emperor Wu Zetian and the Daoist persecution at the end of the Xiantian period (712 – 713) as emperor Xuanzong began his reign (712 – 756). Empress Wu Zetian, herself a Buddhist and strong supporter of the Buddhist sangha, began acting as regent when emperor Gaizong suffered a debilitating stroke in 660, and she maintained power after his death, eventually naming herself emperor of the Zhou dynasty (690 – 705). Saeki reckons the *Jingjiao* church suffered through thirty years of persecution (683 – 712) at the hands of the Buddhists under Wu Zetian and then, in the restored Tang dynasty, at the hands of ascendant

the Western Capital grew in imperial favor under emperor Xuanzong (r. 712 – 756), and emperor Suzong (r. 756 – 762) ordered the *Jingjiao* monastery in Lingwu rebuilt. The area had special meaning for Suzong. When An Lushan attacked the Western Capital and forced Xuanzong to flee Chang'an, Suzong went to Lingwu (called "Lingzhou" in Suzong's time) where he accepted his father's abdication and was proclaimed China's emperor. There, also, Suzong gathered to himself loyal Chinese armies, especially that of the great general Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697 – 781). Speculations that Duke Guo may have been a *Jingjiao* follower are dubious,⁴⁴ but it is certainly the case that Yisi, one of Guo Ziyi's inner circle, was a devout *Jingjiao* follower, for the *Jingjiao* stele so honors Yisi as a great benefactor. When the stele was erected in 781, Yisi's titles included "Military Vice Commissioner of Shuofang," a military commission (jiedushi 節度使) that was headquartered in Ling Prefecture and would have controlled military and civilian administration of multiple prefectures.⁴⁵ Hua Xian would have been twenty-five years old in 781, so, between Lingzhou's Christian and military circles, he certainly would have known of Yisi, and may even have served under him in the army, at least indirectly. Afterward, Lingwu's

Daoists who were favored by emperors Zhongzong (r. 705 – 710) and Ruizong (710 – 712). Sacki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 90-92.

⁴⁴ For attribution of early claims about Guo Ziyi's Christian faith and for a description of Guo's life and military career as well as his afterlife as a god in Chinese popular religion, see Keith Stevens, "Images on Chinese Popular Religion Altars of the Heroes Involved in the Suppression of the an Lushan Rebellion [A.D. 755 - 763]," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40 (2000): 164-65. Stevens attributes early claims of Guo Ziyi's *Jingjiao* belief to Shanghai-based missionary Timothy Richard and to Shanghai newspaper publisher William Mesny. The assertions of Richard and Mesny, however, appear to be grounded upon the mere mention of Guo Ziyi in the *Jingjiao* stele and an "it-must-be-so" hope. Given the stele's argument for *Jingjiao*'s benefit to society, it seems inconceivable that the stele text would not celebrate Duke Guo's *Jingjiao* faith if he had one. See Timothy Richard, "The Secret Sects of China," in *China Mission Hand-Book* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1896), 44; William Mesny, "Nestorian Tablet," *Mesny's Chinese Miscellany*, April 8, 1905.

⁴⁵ *Jingjiao bei*, line 23.

restored monastery remained an important *Jingjiao* monastery along with monasteries in Chang'an, and Luoyang.

Hua Xian's *muzhiming* praisingly asserts that, despite his high titles, His Lordship maintained an indifferent attitude toward his own wealth and power. With regard to Hua Xian, his father, and his grandfather, the text reads as follows:

咸嗜道優仰，浪心清閑，以榮名為怯風之花，逍遙為紺霜之竹。而乃高尚無屈仕焉，延及[] []府君，纂延素風，有位而不登。弃祿養和，不爭名於[]朝；澄心履道，嘗隱逸於市。

All of them were disposed to the Way of living in tranquility, expansive hearts spotless of worldly concerns, regarding a good name as a shrinking, windblown flower, [and regarding] being leisurely and carefree as purplish and frosted bamboo. Furthermore, [their] integrity was without yielding to serve in an official position where they were concerned, extending to the *most honored* Prefectural Governor, [who] carried forward a perpetually unaffected manner, holding a position of authority, but not [holding himself out as one] on high. [He] gave up an official salary and cultivated harmony, not vying for fame at the *honored* [imperial] Court; treading the Way with a pure heart, [he] tried to live in seclusion from the marketplace's buying and selling.⁴⁶

Hua Xian and his forefathers focused their hope on the transcendent, keeping their hearts unfettered by worldly concerns. They regarded a good reputation as a precarious thing that should be nurtured, even while realizing that it was subject to circumstances beyond one's control. His father and grandfather had not been officials, but Hua Xian, even while rising as high as the exalted position of a prefectural governor, maintained the family's long-held values, and he refused to put on airs or to lord his position of authority over others. "He gave up an official salary and cultivated harmony" in the sense that he used his salary freely for the benefit of others. This piety is like that of Yisi, the great benefactor in the *Jingjiao* stele, who was

⁴⁶ *Muzhiming of The Tang Late Honorable Prefectural Governor Hua*, 唐故花府君公墓誌銘 (*Muzhiming of Hua Xian*). See Appendix C.

能散祿賜，不積於家

practiced in dispersing salary and rewards rather than letting it accumulate in his home,⁴⁷ so that he might generously support the work of the church. Similarly, Hua Xian pursued neither political power at the emperor's court, nor economic power in the marketplace, but sought a quiet life of doing good.

Hua Xian's *muzhiming* further showcases his humble piety and concern for others by the care he showed a poor widow. The commoner had married an elder male relative of Hua Xian. Though she was left destitute by her husband's death, the widow steadfastly remained faithful to her late husband and refused to remarry. Moved by her faithfulness and perhaps by a sense of duty to his unnamed late relative, Hua Xian risked the wilds beyond the defensive wall marking China's frontier in order to bring her back to the safety and comfort of his own home. In his home, he treated the widow as his elder sister, including her in the joyful inner life of the family, and, when she died, he buried her together with her late husband in the Lingwu Hua ancestral tomb.⁴⁸ When the epitaph then describes "all the people" looking upon His Lordship's action and heaving "sighs of appreciation," they might well be impressed with his "Confucian" value of filial piety. Given the display of piety with regard to his salary and the epitaph's later emphasis

⁴⁷ *Jingjiao bei*, line 24.

⁴⁸ Mao Yangguang argues that the widow was actually Hua Xian's elder sister, in which case Hua Xian's largesse is displayed in receiving back into the family an elder sister who had been married out of his family and into the family of her husband. It seems to me, however, that the widow was not a blood relation, for she married Hua Xian's relative and was eventually jointly buried with that person in the Hua family tomb, presumably in Lingwu. Accordingly, Hua Xian is being praised for his extraordinary compassion and generosity in taking in his relative's widow and treating her as if she were his own elder sister. It also might be that she was a "sister" in the sense that she was a fellow *Jingjiao* believer. For Mao Yangguang's interpretation, see Mao, "Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花献及其妻安氏墓志初探," 87.

on Hua Xian's importance to the *Jingjiao* community, however, "all the people" likely included *Jingjiao* believers who were mindful that, as St. James says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."⁴⁹ Thus, the quality of Hua Xian's religion is proved by his care for the poor widow.

Having shown the purity of Hua Xian's faith, the epitaph then shows him unstained by the world, for he maintained personal and professional integrity that made him stand out. His dealings with his friends were always upright, and, in the professional realm, he went against common practice by refusing to flatter those who could advance his career. Yet, he had attained to a fifth rank, so he was already breathing rarified air. As Michael Dalby explains,

We know that there were two very important lines of demarcation on the long climb up the ladder to Tang officialdom: that between the fifth and the sixth rank, and that between the third and fourth rank. Those who had passed the first dividing line, in other words those who had emerged from the faceless bureaucracy to join the two thousand or so officials of the fourth and fifth ranks, could congratulate themselves on their eminently respectable success. They were admitted to the society of the capital, were permitted to attend certain court audiences, and were given distinctive financial and sumptuary privileges.⁵⁰

Though Hua Xian had status, power, and privilege, he neither craved more nor lost his humble perspective. Factional battles raged in Chang'an and radiated outward as middle and higher ranked bureaucrats strove for political power, with the struggle growing particularly intense in the 820s-830s.⁵¹ Considering that Hua Xian's burial in 828, the point is clearly made that Hua

⁴⁹ James 1:27.

⁵⁰ Twitchett and Fairbank, 641.

⁵¹ On the Niu-Li factional strife (牛李党争), see *ibid.*, 639-54.

Xian was above the brute politics of power, and Qiya, by making the point, is also protesting against that intra-class factionalism. The epitaph concludes the critique, praising Lord Hua's superior example, declaring,

是以義聲溢於天下，孝致盈於縉紳。

[his] reputation for morality, thus, filled the sub-celestial realm to overflowing, [and his] filial piety caused him to stand out among the red-silk begirded class.⁵²

So, in the professional realm and in comparing Hua Xian to the peers of his class, the epitaph reverts to the “Confucian” vocabulary of that exalted audience, praising His Lordship's morality (*yi* 義) and filial piety (*xiao* 孝).

Nevertheless, Hua Xian's *muzhiming* makes a point of celebrating both his Christian piety and his influence within Luoyang's *Jingjiao* church. The epitaph describes him as follows:

常洗心事 [] 景尊，竭奉教理，為法中之柱礎，作徒侶之笙簧。而內脩八景，外備三常，將證无元，永祇万慮。

Constantly purifying his heart and serving the *revered Jing* Honored One, [he] completely embraced the doctrines of his religion, [and he] became a pillar within the church, [so] serving as his fellow believers' piper. Ever inwardly devoting himself to the eight [principles of] *Jing*, and outwardly replete with the three constants, [he] bore witness to the Uncaused [One], forever unaffected by the myriad anxieties.⁵³

The “*Jing* Honored One” whom Hua Xian served with a pure heart is Christ. This title for Christ is familiar in *Jingjiao* literature.⁵⁴ Hua Xian's spirituality also found expression in the church

⁵² The red sash around a man's waist was a mark of social status, identifying the wearer as a literatus or a member of the gentry class.

⁵³ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian*.

⁵⁴ The title appears, for example, in the *Jingjiao* stele: “Therefore, our Three-in-One divided His Godhead, the *Jing*-Honored *Mishihe*, humbly setting aside his true majesty, appeared in the world as a man,” 於是我三一分身，景尊弥施訶，戢隱真威，同人出代. *Jingjiao bei*, line 6.

where he was a leader and likely a teacher. He was not uninformed, but knew and was committed to the doctrines of his faith. This knowledge combined with his devout practice to make him a strong lay-leader in the church to the point that he was considered a “pillar” of the church. He was not only a “pillar,” but the epitaph goes on to call Hua Xian his fellow believers’ piper—literally, he is their “reed organ.”⁵⁵ Like a musician, Hua Xian set a tone that inspired and edified his fellow believers. It may also be that Hua Xian actually played his reed organ for the church, for the eulogy portion of the epitaph laments the reed organ’s music being “forever exhausted.” His Lordship bore witness to his God, The Uncaused One,⁵⁶ by his inward devotion to the “eight principles of *Jing*” or the “Eight Luminaries,” which are the eight Beatitudes.⁵⁷ He also bore witness, the text says, by being “outwardly replete with the three constants,” which are faith, hope, and love.⁵⁸ The result of his devotion was an unshakeable peace amidst the many anxieties of life.

⁵⁵ *Shenghuang* 笙簧—a hand-held woodwind of usually seventeen bamboo pipes of different lengths.

⁵⁶ The “Uncaused” or *wu yuan* 无元 appears in the *Jingjiao bei*: “Behold! Constant in perfect stillness, at the beginning of beginnings but without cause,” 粤若，常然真寂，先先而无元 (Line 3) and “*The honored True Lord is without cause*,” [] 璿真主无元 (Line 26).

⁵⁷ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3–10).

⁵⁸ “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13).

Reconciling the Rhetoric

The explicit celebration of *Jingjiao* faith in Hua Xian's *muzhiming* presents a sharp contrast to the considered approach in the Lady's *muzhiming* to present her and the family only in the most commendably and strictly "Confucian" terms. For example, the two epitaphs are contradictory in how they laud the Lady's approach to her physical self-presentation. According to Hua Xian's epitaph, Her Ladyship

以溫恭而成粧，非粉黛為顏色。

made gentle reverence her adornment, not [finding her beauty through] face powder and eyebrow liner to augment her features and complexion.⁵⁹

Such a description would resonate with a *Jingjiao* audience, for it is consistent with a biblical admonition to wives to focus on the beauty of their character rather than on lavish external adornment.⁶⁰ The description would also resonate with a conservative Confucian audience familiar with Zhang Hua's *Nüshi zhen* 女史箴 ["Admonitions of the Female Scribe"], written in 290 CE and still popular in Tang times as an admonition that counseled women "to cultivate inner moral qualities rather than outer beauty."⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian*.

⁶⁰ "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Pt 3:3-4).

⁶¹ J. Michael Farmer, "On the Composition of Zhang Hua's 'Nüshi Zhen'," *Early Medieval China* 2004, no. 1 (2004): 152. Farmer's article, which includes his translation of the *Nüshi zhen*, shows that Zhang Hua's work must be dated earlier and intended for a different courtly audience (to Grand Empress Yang) than the conventional view (to Empress Jia Nanfeng around 300).

Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300) describes the ideal empress as “Comely and reverent, her correct place is in the residential chamber.”⁶² Thus, his concern is in limiting the courtly woman’s power and confining her to her proper place. In contrast, the biblical admonition argues for a similar self-limitation of the wife’s power over her husband so that she can demonstrate to her husband her trust in God to defend her in her submissive posture. As the biblical passage continues, the husband is commanded to treat his wife with dignity, remembering that his superior position is not by right, but because his wife has been obedient to God’s command.⁶³ In both cases, the wife exchanges her pulchritude’s seductive power over her husband for moral power alongside her husband. When Hua Xian’s epitaph employs this theme to describe the Lady, whether the appeal is to principles from the Bible or to ascetic Confucian values like those Zhang Hua commended remains vague until the presentation of further context demonstrates the clearly Christian method of presenting the late Lady in Hua Xian’s *muzhiming*.

The Lady’s epitaph, on the other hand, remembers her as

繁衍淑女，彩黛紛敷，焜耀華葉，若斯之盛也。

A woman full to overflowing in her refinement, [whose] embellished eyebrows were always well-fixed, [and who] dazzled with her magnificent appearance, such was her perfection.⁶⁴

⁶² Translation by Farmer. Ibid., 173.

⁶³ “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” 1 Pt 3:7.

⁶⁴ *Muzhiming of the Great Tang’s Late Lady née An* 大唐故夫人安氏墓志 (*Muzhiming of the Lady née An*). See Appendix B.

Thus, as station-conscious Chinese Confucians would demand, she took care in her self-presentation, splendid in both her makeup and dress, in keeping with her noble rank within Chinese society. The makeup practice of fashionable women included a face powdered white and cheeks rouged to set off the addition of a selection of codified designs applied as eyebrows (painted on after plucking the eyebrows), as forehead-centered ornaments, and as red patterns on the lips. The epitaph employs a synecdoche for all of her cosmetic accomplishment to praise the Lady whose “embellished eyebrows were always well-fixed.” Adding to this her refined dress, she “dazzled with her magnificent appearance,” with the result that the perfection of her personal appearance placed her squarely within the mainstream of cultured women. This contradiction between the two *muzhiming* reveals a difference between their rhetorical goals, but other variances in content and style help to understand why one emphasized mainstream Confucian values and one presented an honorable *Jingjiao* believer.

While both *muzhiming* extol the quality of the Lady’s demeanor, hers emphasizes careful conformity to Confucian standards of deportment, but his *muzhiming* subtly distinguishes the Lady’s exemplary choices as a free moral agent. In her own epitaph, the Lady is presented as one conforming to the Confucian stereotype’s standard of feminine beauty that is quiet and submissive, for she was

幼而韶羞，長而婉穆。

in her youth, beautiful [and shy],⁶⁵ and, in her maturity, gentle and dignified.⁶⁶

She so submitted herself to the Confucian rules for women that even her in-laws would affirm her spotless reputation. Her penchant for following the rules made her peerless, for the text declares, “as for the precepts of the worthies Ban [Zhao] and Jiang [Yuan], [the Lady’s observance of them] was beyond compare.” Ban Zhao (45 – c.116), the Han dynasty paragon, literally wrote the handbook, *Admonitions for Women* (*Nüjie* 女戒), that was used for centuries as a guide for women’s conduct.⁶⁷ Jiang Yuan 姜嫄 is the mother of dynasties, divinely impregnated with Hou Ji 后稷 (“Lord of Millet”), founding ancestor of the Ji 姬 clan that ruled the Zhou dynasty (1046 – 256 BCE).⁶⁸ Thus, the Lady’s epitaph validates her Confucian credentials by creating an identity between her and female heroes of Confucian teaching and lore.

⁶⁵ Mao Yangguang conservatively reads 夫人幼而韶□, for the last character of the phrase is obscured by damage to the stone, but, from what remains to be seen of the character and from the context, I would tentatively suggest that the missing character is 羞, meaning “shy.” Mao, “Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花献及其妻安氏墓志初探,” 86.

⁶⁶ *Muzhiming of the Lady née An.*

⁶⁷ Ban Zhao was a noblewoman who was widowed at an early age, yet never remarried—an act of loyalty to her husband that was highly prized in the Confucian value system. She was regularly called upon to advise the empress and to tutor palace women of the Han dynasty in their Confucian duties. After her brother, Ban Gu, died in 94 CE before completing the dynastic history of the Western Han (*Han shu* 漢書), the emperor called upon her to complete the work which became a model for all dynastic histories. For the *Nüjie* text, see *Hou-Hanshu* 84.2786-89.

⁶⁸ Jiang Yuan was impregnated when she stepped in the footprint left by Shangdi, God on High. Her encounter with the divine imbued her with numinous power and made her the source of the revered Zhou dynasty’s ruling family. See *Shijing* 185, 300, and Liu Xiang’s 劉向 *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 1.2a-2b. For an annotated translation of Liu Xiang’s biography in the *Lienü zhuan*, see Liu Xiang, *Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lienü Zhuan of Liu Xiang*, trans. Anne Behnke Kinney (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3-4. For more on the cult of Jiang Yuan and on female emperor Wu Zetian’s (r. 690 – 705) effort to establish her legitimacy as emperor by aligning herself with Jiang Yuan, see Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*.

Hua Xian's epitaph, however, extols his wife's demeanor not in terms of assiduous rule-following, but as person of ability consciously exercising her own moral agency. That is, she was

明潔宣慈，酌仁怡愉，

pure, intelligent and kind, [one who] chose to be humane and joyous.⁶⁹

She *chose* to define herself with regard to how she encountered others and with regard to how she faced her circumstances. In choosing to be “humane and joyous,” she activated her own internal moral guide. Her internal morality, while it must have been informed by Confucian as well as *Jingjiao* principles, amounted to more than simply binding herself to strictly regulated Confucian behavior. Thus, the *Jingjiao*-follower orientation of Hua Xian's epitaph reveals a freer conception of personal identity than the dominant culture's conception of feminine virtue that is praised in the Lady's epitaph and measured there in commitment to ancient ritual rules and precedents. Whether the value of a woman's self-directed identity might be traced back to *Jingjiao* or to Sogdian values is unclear, but Hua Xian's *muzhiming* seems clearly to celebrate more individual feminine autonomy than the Han Chinese groups typically celebrated.

Music and musicianship are reflected in the two epitaphs in ways that reflect the importance of music to the culture. Confucius, himself, said that music polished the character that had been taught by the *Odes* and trained by *Ritual*.⁷⁰ Naturally, the Lady's epitaph often uses musical metaphors to praise her. In her case, for example,

⁶⁹ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian*.

⁷⁰ “The Master said, ‘It is by the *Odes* that the mind is aroused. It is by the *Rules of propriety* that the character is established. It is from *Music* that the finish is received.’” *Lunyu* 論語 8/8. Trans. Legge, *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, 164.

金聲玉振，薜榮蘭茂

the cymbals clanged and the jade [chimes] resonated, [proclaiming that] the Rose of Sharon and the thoroughwort were in full flower.⁷¹

This *chengyu* or idiom of the cymbals and jade chimes (金聲玉振) carries the sense of a tune played in its entirety, a story fully told, a reputation that is clear and widespread; thus, as the corresponding part of the parallelism clarifies, the Lady née An was well known for her elegant pulchritude (Rose of Sharon) and virtue (thoroughwort). In the case of their marriage, the harmony between His Lordship and Her Ladyship is

如琴如瑟，若塤若篴

like the zither and the zithern or as [a duet of] the xun and the bamboo flute.⁷²

The sounds of these instruments, zither with zithern and xun⁷³ with bamboo flute, complemented each other so that they were normally paired in performance, giving rise to their use as metaphors for a harmonious marriage. Yet, despite employing these musical images, her epitaph does not ascribe musical ability to the Lady.

Hua Xian's epitaph, however, particularly praises the Lady's musical abilities and links them to her outstanding "ceremonial form." His epitaph thus describes her:

好音韻，為絲竹，宮唱商和，禮翔樂優

⁷¹ *Muzhiming of the Lady née An.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ The xun is an egg-shaped wind instrument made of clay or ceramic.

Fond of music and rhyme, accomplished playing stringed and woodwind musical instruments, [with] the first note, singing the lead, [and on] the last note harmonizing, [the Lady's] ceremonial form soared [and her] music was superlative.⁷⁴

While Hua Xian's epitaph praises His Lordship's musicianship in the context of his contribution to the *Jingjiao* church, there is not an explicit link between Her Ladyship's music and the church. Perhaps her musical taste followed Central Asian popular music, the likes of which had so seduced Chinese tastes for the exotic in the empire's golden era before the An Lushan Rebellion but fell into disrepute afterward with the rise of a defensive nativism.⁷⁵ At any rate, it seems likely that the Lady's epitaph, true to its focus on promoting Her Ladyship as a true "Confucian," fails to mention her musicianship because her music was not oriented toward traditional Chinese music.

The literary style of the Lady's *muzhiming* helps to construct her Confucian identity. The Lady's epitaph is erudite, full of allusions to classical texts such as the *Classic of Rites*, *Classic of Poetry*, *Zuozhuan*, *The Analects*, and *Mengzi*. The Lady is also compared with or said to emulate paragons of female virtue from the Confucian tradition, namely, Jiang Yuan, Ban Zhao, and the mother of Mengzi. The text is beautified by at least five idioms, usually based on classical literature that enrich and heighten the complexity of the rhetoric by drawing on deeper cultural knowledge.

⁷⁴ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian*.

⁷⁵ "Hu entertainers represented a wildness that was associated with danger, cosmopolitan decadence, and the lifestyle of the frontier bravo, so they were tinged with an air of arbitrary violence and insecurity." Marc S. Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 21. Also, Chen notes that Central Asian singers, actresses, and musicians—especially those playing the music of Kucha—greatly influenced Tang culture, yet the mainstream Confucian literati considered them to be of the same social class as house slaves and prostitutes. Chen, 169-70.

The literary style of Hua Xian's epitaph, on the other hand, is more plain-spoken, employing only one notable idiom in praise for young Qiya who, alone among his brothers, attained to an official position. In fact, though Hua Xian's epitaph does take care to show that the family observed Confucian ritual, its simpler allusions tend toward popular lore rather than classical literature. The comparison of the "Dragon Sword" to the reunion of His Lordship and Her Ladyship in death, for example, probably refers to *Ganjiang* and *Moye*, male and female interlocking swords of mythical quality whose legend passed through several adaptations, and certainly would have appealed to a military man.⁷⁶ The literary styles of the two *muzhiming* are so different that one might not expect that they were written by the same person. But they were.

The Buddhist monk Wenjian, who wrote both *muzhiming*, came from Shengshan Temple 聖善寺. Luoyang's Shengshan Temple was completed in 706 or 707 by order of emperor Zhongzong (r. 684, 705 – 710) at the urging of the Indian monk Huifan 惠範 (d. 713).⁷⁷ During the Tang, there was a "significant presence" of Esoteric Buddhist practice at Shengshan

⁷⁶ For the development of the legend, see Lionello Lanciotti, "Notes on Ancient Chinese Metallurgy: Sword Casting and Related Legends in China," *East and West* 6, no. 2 (1955). and Lionello Lanciotti, "Sword Casting and Related Legends in China (Ii)- the Transformation of Ch'ih Pi's Legend," *East and West* 6, no. 4 (1956). See, also, Olivia Milburn, "The Weapons of Kings: A New Perspective on Southern Sword Legends in Early China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008).

⁷⁷ For the intrigues of monk Huifan and the related story of Shengshan Temple, see Jinhua Chen, "A Complicated Figure with Complex Relationships: The Monk Huifan and the Early Tang Samgha-State Interactions," in *The Middle Kingdom and the Dharma Wheel: Aspects of the Relationship between the Buddhist Samgha and the State in Chinese History*, ed. Thomas Jülch (Boston: Brill, 2016).

Temple.⁷⁸ The temple was in the Zhongshan ward 章善坊.⁷⁹ The Zhongshan neighborhood was located at the southeast corner of the South Market, separated only by the Jiashan neighborhood 嘉善坊 from Hua Xian's Xiushan neighborhood at the southwest corner of the South Market. Professor Xiong compares the South Market area's allure for foreign residents from the westward regions to that of Chang'an's Western Market.⁸⁰ Luoyang's Sogdian community heavily populated the area around the South Market, and the literary monks of the Shengshan Temple appear to have supplied a number of Sogdian clients with the writing talent for *muzhiming*. As Professor Mao details, Shengshan Temple's monk Wenjiao 文皎, seven to nine years before monk Wenjian's work began for the Hua family, composed *muzhiming* for two of Luoyang's Sogdian women. One was the wife (d. 813) of He Cheng 河澄, who had lived in the Jiashan ward. Another of Wenjiao's Sogdian clients was Madam née Bian 边氏夫人 (d. c.815) from the Yucai ward 毓财坊 north of the river.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Jinhua Chen, "Esoteric Buddhism and Monastic Institutions," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras of East Asia*, ed. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sorensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2016), 286. Victor Cunrui Xiong succinctly describes Esoteric Buddhism: "Different from both Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism was characterized by its focus on a body of esoteric texts called Tantras and by its use of mantras (mystic formulas), mudras (ritual gestures), and mandalas (mystic diagrams of the spiritual universe)" *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 Bce to 938 Ce*, 218.

⁷⁹ Mao, "Xinjian Xifang Tangdai Luoyang Suturen Muzhi Kao 新见四方唐代洛阳粟特人墓志考," 77.

⁸⁰ Xiong, *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 Bce to 938 Ce*, 183.

⁸¹ Mao, "Xinjian Xifang Tangdai Luoyang Suturen Muzhi Kao 新见四方唐代洛阳粟特人墓志考."

Families hoped that, by commissioning “literary gentlemen” to write the epitaph of a dear departed one, the specialist’s refined writing would “burnish” the reputation, not only of the departed one, but also of his or her family and friends.⁸² While monk Wenjian claims in Hua Xian’s epitaph to have had a warm friendship with His Lordship, such a claim cannot support a firm conclusion of especially cordial relations between the men. It could be that the monk’s contact with Hua Xian was limited to contacts necessary for the production of the Lady’s epitaph. Wenjian’s claim of warm ties with Hua Xian could have been more related to rhetorical posturing, and the monk’s relations with the Hua family may have rested along business lines.

Monk Wenjian wrote both of the Hua family’s epitaphs on commission. The Lady’s epitaph reveals clearly that it is commissioned:

邀余誌之，刊石作紀。文簡不方者，沐恩頗深，敢不課愚。

Upon request, I am recording this in writing, carving this stone to make an account. [I,] Wenjian, one who is without skill, [have been] favored with a kindness considerably profound, so to dare not to discharge [this honor would be] dim-witted.⁸³

The “considerably profound” kindness with which the monk was favored was not the honor of authorship, but it involved some other form of apparently generous consideration. It is as if the monk is trying to signal that he is writing what he has been commissioned to write, so the reader is advised to take it with a grain of salt. In contrast, Wenjian appears prominently in Hua Xian’s epitaph where, following His Lordship’s list of titles, the prose preface of the epitaph is introduced with,

⁸² Alexei Ditter, "The Commerce of Commemoration: Commissioned Muzhiming in the Mid- to Late Tang," *Tang Studies* 32 (2014): 34.

⁸³ *Muzhiming of the Lady née An*.

洛陽聖善寺沙門文簡撰

Monk Wenjian of Luoyang's Shengshan Temple takes [brush] in hand.⁸⁴

Then, when introducing the verse eulogy of the epitaph, the monk assures the reader of the deep affection between himself and His Lordship:

文簡久承顧眄，眷撫情逾，邀誌之。

Wenjian will long acknowledge [His Lordship's] consideration and tender feelings toward [him], [with the result that] pangs of affection grip [his] feelings even more, [and he has] endeavored to set them down in writing.⁸⁵

The monk provides no hint of compensation, but one might almost believe that, on this occasion, he was providing his services out of affection for the late official. It may be that this monk of an important Buddhist monastery fostered good relations with the old provincial governor but was unacquainted with the Lady, for a proper noble woman in Tang times would have maintained her social life in her home, seldom venturing into the male-dominated wider world. Nevertheless, because the credibility of commissioned *muzhiming* had been so weakened by the practice of stretching or downright fabricating the truth in order to make a *muzhiming*'s subject appear virtuous, personal relations between the author and the deceased were often played up to lend more credibility to a commissioned *muzhiming*.⁸⁶ Here, we have a plainly admitted commissioned epitaph describing an obviously Sogdian-Chinese woman in the most glowing Confucian terms, but the same author writes of his honored friend in terms that are not without

⁸⁴ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian*.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ditter, 35-42.

Confucian appeal, but that goes into some detail about His Lordship's *Jingjiao* faith and practice.

Monk Wenjian clearly cared more that Hua Xian's epitaph be taken as true.

The sponsor of the two *muzhiming* is revealed by how the Lord and Lady's sons are described. The earlier epitaph, belonging to the Lady, says,

長子應元、次子滿師皆幼而不祿，苗而不秀。

The eldest son, Yingyuan, and the second son, Manshi, both without official salary, are tender plants that failed to blossom.⁸⁷

To be “without official salary” (不祿) can be a euphemism for a worthy person who died young, but, since these sons are described in Hua Xian's epitaph as alive at the time of their father's burial, five years hence, it here is meant as a slight that they failed to obtain an official office. Despite the advantages that they enjoyed, they failed to live up to their potential. Their father's epitaph confirms that Yingyuan and Manshi still have not attained an official position, but softens the appraisal of them somewhat, saying,

皆為人傑，不及時祿，芳而不榮，具在前誌。

Both conduct themselves with distinction but have not attained to the lot of an official salary, fragrant but not glorious, [their matters] are treated comprehensively earlier in this inscription.⁸⁸

Their praise, however, is damning by its faintness. If we can look back in the text beyond the “distinction” and “fragrance” of this sentence to find details of Yingyuan and Manshi's quality, Wenjian is content to leave it to the reader's imagination to consider those qualities already ascribed to the two sons' ancestors.

⁸⁷ *Muzhiming of the Lady née An.*

⁸⁸ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian.*

Both epitaphs, however, heap praise upon Qiya. His mother's epitaph effuses,

幼子齊雅，克己復禮

The youngest son, Qiya, is self-restrained and observes propriety.⁸⁹

This allusion to Confucius raises Qiya's virtue to the highest level, for Confucius said, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him."⁹⁰ Confucius also said of the person one rank below an "officer" of the king, that "his fellow-villagers and neighbours pronounce [him] to be fraternal."⁹¹ Accordingly, the Lady's epitaph affirms that Qiya's

鄉黨稱善，友朋敬之。

fellow villagers speak approvingly [of him], and friends respect him.⁹²

Thus, a good Confucian reader of the Lady's epitaph might well, reading of young Qiya's virtue, sit back and sigh.

Reading about Qiya in Hua Xian's epitaph, however, evokes one's admiration by delighting the senses. Appealing to the tropes of natural aesthetics, Qiya's "moral conduct and personal integrity [are as long-lived and hardy as] pine and bamboo" (行操松筠).⁹³ Appealing to the allure of the banquet table's delicacies, Qiya, in a subtle comparison to his brothers, is

⁸⁹ *Muzhiming of the Lady née An.*

⁹⁰ *Lunyu* 12/1. Trans. Legge, *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, 190-91.

⁹¹ *Lunyu* 13/20. Trans. Legge, *ibid.*, 205.

⁹² *Muzhiming of the Lady née An.*

⁹³ *Muzhiming of Hua Xian.*

“considered the banquet’s choice dish” (為席之珍).⁹⁴ Qiya is choice because he alone among his brothers attained an official position. The monk does not name the office, but Qiya humbly admires his fellows—even while, Wenjian assures, Qiya possesses

江海之心，罕議儔疋。

a heart like the river and the sea [that is] seldom found among his peers.⁹⁵

Whatever office Qiya holds now, his virtue should cause him to advance.

Following the prose preface, a eulogy in verse of four stanzas completes the text of the Lady née An’s epitaph by recapitulating the preface’s argument that she is a paragon of “Confucian” virtue, and it argues that she rightfully belongs among the long and exalted line of Luoyang’s worthies. The first stanza provides the Lady’s natal and marital clans, praises her moral character and integrity, celebrates her roles in keeping family ritual and in managing her husband’s household, and remembers the felicity of their marriage. The second stanza describes her as a paragon of motherhood and notes her sons’ deep grief upon her death. The third stanza presents verdant Luoyang as enjoying an exalted position as a “crown” of the universe. It is an *axis mundi*, a point of communication between Heaven and earth, as demonstrated both by its natural fecundity and by the moral force of having produced the exemplars of virtue, the Zhou dynasty’s Ji clan, as well as the emperors and nobles down to the “present” day who have followed in the Ji clan’s virtuous tradition over Luoyang’s long history as a capital and an important imperial city. The Lady’s spirit has descended to this region’s netherworld, and her

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

reputation for virtue makes her at home there. In the final stanza, her extraordinary virtue in life earned this woman official status in this netherworld, and its august denizens have received the Lady as one of them.

The eulogy of Hua Xian's *muzhiming* in five stanzas follows a more traditionally secular form than his preface, with praise and honor for Hua Xian, the Lady, and for the Hua clan and only a passing mention of *Jingjiao* faith. The first stanza celebrates the Hua clan's virtue and its attunement with the course of Heaven. The second stanza finds comfort in the reuniting of Hua Xian and the Lady while feeling the loss to their surviving community. In this stanza, a line reads, "*The Jing monastery has lost a voice*" 景寺遺聲, providing the only reference to Hua Xian's religion in the eulogy. The third stanza celebrates Hua Xian's great virtue. The fourth stanza situates a person's death within the normal flow of the universe, so, while it makes us sad, death is a natural part of "Heaven's Way." The final stanza reunites Hua Xian and the Lady née An in a joint tomb and professes the lasting grief and devotion of their heirs.

The third and fourth stanzas of Hua Xian's eulogy raise questions. Professor Li Tang has noted that the third stanza is lifted, with some small changes, from a *muzhiming* authored by Zhang Yue 張說 (667-730), a high official and acclaimed literary talent.⁹⁶ The fourth stanza, too, Tang has noted, is lifted with minor changes from another *muzhiming* of Zhang Yue.⁹⁷ Though Tang argues that these instances of "plagiarism" tend to confirm her argument that Hua Xian's

⁹⁶ Zhang Yue's work is *Changzhou cishi Pingjun shendaobei* 常州刺史平君神道碑 in *Quan Tangwen* 229.15a. Tang, "Critical Remarks on a So-Called Newly Discovered *Jingjiao* Epitaph from Luoyang with a Preliminary English Translation," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 38.

⁹⁷ *Tang gu Liangzhou zhangshi Yuanjun shizhuming* 唐故涼州長史元君石柱銘 in *Quan Tangwen* 232.9b *ibid.*

muzhiming is fraudulent, her argument ignores the tradition of learning from masters by memorizing and imitating their work. Monk Wenjian's work demonstrates that he himself did not rank as a great literary talent—inferior even to Monk Wenjiao, his near contemporary of the same monastery. That Wenjian followed patterns established by a poet of the stature of Zhang Yue is not so shocking, and Wenjian's patron might have found in it a pleasingly familiar sound and association. The association with a poet of high Confucian values may well have served the purpose of Hua Xian's *muzhiming* to connect a devout Christian with Confucian values. It could also be that Wenjian and Qiya agreed to using high-level familiar material as a cost-saving measure, for it appears that the authors of *muzhiming* texts normally were paid by the word.⁹⁸ Hua Xian's *muzhiming* text (850 characters) exceeds the Lady's text (535 characters) by three hundred fifteen characters, including twenty-four characters for a eulogy of five stanzas rather than four. Since the eulogy was the most important part of the *muzhiming* text, perhaps the parties came to an understanding that personalizing a couple stanzas from *muzhiming* eulogies that had already been acclaimed for their high literary quality might both assure the literary quality of Hua Xian's eulogy and help Qiya to realize an acceptable reduction in expense. Young Qiya's office was not yet high enough to warrant being named in the *muzhiming*, so his salary likely limited his budget, especially when his position as third son probably limited his access to his father's fortune.

Since the same monk Wenjian wrote both epitaphs for the same sponsor, what accounts for their widely different approaches in argument and style? It seems that part had to do with the

⁹⁸ Ditter, 28.

ethnic difference between the Lady and Hua Xian, and part had to do with whether Qiya was aspiring to an official position or holding an office. Where the Lady née An was clearly of Sogdian origins, there was an advantage to the family, especially to Qiya, to remember her and to have her remembered as a woman wholly committed to Confucian ideals. Regardless of her family's roots in a barbarian land, she belonged in China and fit in with the revered forebears of Luoyang. This constructed Chinese identity could have helped the family to parry anti-barbarian sentiment resonating in the insecurity following the An Lushan Rebellion or in the new insecurities stirred up by rising eunuch power in the transition from emperor Xianzong (r. 805 – 820) to emperor Muzong 穆宗 (r. 820 – 824). By shoring up his family's Chinese identity and by subtly siding with the "Confucian" officials against the disorder resulting from rising eunuch power, Qiya was also positioning himself for a bid for an official position. Candidates commonly provided examiners with example compositions ahead of the imperial exams to alert them to the candidate's literary talent, and examiners always took into account the candidate's family and other connections.⁹⁹ Hua Xian must have been complicit in this strategy, for he must have approved his wife's *muzhiming* and financed Qiya's education and career aspirations. By the time of Hua Xian's death, Qiya had already attained to an official position, so the hard-sell of the family's Confucian roots is no longer so vital. The family is still presented as paying attention to ritual and in terms that a Confucian audience would appreciate, but there is a new freedom in Hua Xian's *muzhiming* to celebrate his *Jingjiao* faith and his contribution to the *Jingjiao* community. Part of this freedom also lies in Hua Xian's Chinese identity from having been born

⁹⁹ Twitchett and Fairbank, 641.

from a Han family. As a Han person, Hua Xian could have the personal security to identify himself with a religion often dismissed by the Han mainstream as a “barbarian religion.” By virtue of his high rank, the detail of Hua Xian’s *Jingjiao* faith also would have amounted to a type of celebrity endorsement of *Jingjiao* to other Han Chinese and to those influenced by Han Chinese. That Qiya found it proper to so clearly celebrate and argue from his father’s *Jingjiao* faith suggests that Qiya, himself, most probably shared that faith.

CHAPTER 5

SURVIVORS AND THE END OF *JINGJIAO*

The An-Shi Rebellion tarnished Luoyang's luster, leaving it ever after less politically important, less prosperous, less safe, and more martial than in the Tang's Golden Age. The course of the rebellion devastated Luoyang's population, institutions, structures, and stores of wealth. An Lushan captured Luoyang on January 18, 756, and made it his own capital until his son and successor, An Qingxu 安慶緒, lost Luoyang to Tang forces in the tenth month of 757. Then, rather than defend it against a counter-attack, Tang General Li Guangbi 李光弼 evacuated Luoyang, and the rebel army, now under Shi Siming, reclaimed the city in 758. Finally, in the tenth month of 762, Tang forces joined by Uighur cavalry met and destroyed the rebel army in the suburbs of Luoyang. The years of fighting had ravaged all the land within a wide radius of Luoyang, and the city's population was considerably reduced. Then during the final battle, men and women of Luoyang had gathered for safety in Shengshan and Baima Monasteries, but Uighur forces burned the structures where they had taken refuge and massacred the people.¹ Damage to the city's structures was extensive after successive campaigns. When evaluating the damage to Luoyang's imperial structures, Guo Ziyi said, "In the Eastern Zhou area (Luoyang), which has been in the hands of the rebels for long, the palace structures and houses have been subject to fire, and no less than one tenth of them are left standing."² Even by the early tenth

¹ Xiong, *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 BCE to 938 CE*, 150-53. See *Zizhi tongjian* 222.7135.

² *Ibid.*, 153. See *Jiu Tangshu* 120.3457

century, Luoyang's estimated population was less than a tenth of what it had been in its pre-Rebellion heyday.³

After the Rebellion, Luoyang clung to the memory of its former status as a secondary capital of the Tang, even as it declined in stature and security. The dynasty had survived by distributing power from the center to the regional military commanders (*jiedushi* 節度使) in the prefectures. They resisted returning their power to the emperor, sometimes fighting for control of more territory or going so far as to proclaim their independence. Under Dezong (r. 779-805), Luoyang became a base for “counter-insurgency operations.”⁴ Emperor Xianzong (r. 805-820) reasserted a powerful central government, resulting in peace in Luoyang. The city enjoyed something of a renaissance as a number of distinguished literati, at least for a time, made their homes there, including Han Yu, Pei Du 裴度, Yuan Zhen 元稹, Bai Juyi 白居易, and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫.⁵ However, Xianzong's son and grandson who followed him on the throne, Muzong (r. 820-824) and, Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 824-827), were less capable, and central government again lost power to the warlords in the provinces. The palace and infrastructure of Luoyang went neglected, and, while warlords in Hebei, east Henan, and Huaixi presented a near threat, regional military commanders along the Grand Canal sometimes squeezed Luoyang's supply of southern grain.⁶

³ Ibid., 200.

⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁵ Ibid., 212-14.

⁶ Ibid., 155-56.

When Jingzong announced his intent to visit Luoyang, high-ranking officials aligned to dissuade him, and Chief Minister Pei Du finally managed to put him off, saying,

The state initially set up the two capitals in order to serve the emperor on his tours of inspection. After much unrest had taken place, that arrangement was abandoned. Nowadays, palace structures, barracks, government office buildings are all defunct. If Your Majesty wants to go, the office in charge should be ordered to gradually complete the repair in a short period of time.⁷

In fact, from the time that Xuanzong returned to Chang'an from a 734-736 stay in Luoyang, no reigning Tang emperor stayed there again until Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852 – 912) moved the throne of the figurehead Tang emperor, Zhaozong 昭宗 (r. 888-904) to Luoyang in 903.⁸

Hua Xian had lived and served on the frontier before retiring to a militarized Luoyang, yet at least one of his sons found his path into the official bureaucracy through Luoyang. There is another Han-Sogdian family of *Jingjiao* believers, contemporaries of the Hua family but whose most celebrated son had found his path to success through the military and the palace guards of Luoyang. Their story is better known among scholars, for its relative availability to scholars has garnered it more of their attention. Their story, however, is less completely known because of the *dharani* pillar genre that preserved it and because of damage done to that pillar.

The Luoyang *Jingchuang*

In 2006, a stone pillar grave monument from the 815 interment of the Grand Lady née An came to the attention of scholars and authorities when it began changing hands in search of a collector of antiquities. The pillar was reported as stolen to the National Office for Cultural Heritage

⁷ Ibid., 155. See *Zizhi tongjian* 243.7848-9.

⁸ Ibid., 161.

(*Guojia wenwu ju* 国家文物局), who worked with police to recover it from a secret location in Wuxi, Jiangsu on September 14, 2006.⁹ The pillar is now on display at the Luoyang Museum, though, when I visited in June 2016, in its place stood a poster of a rubbing of the pillar with a notice that the artifact was presently on tour in Europe. According to interviews conducted by researchers after the pillar's recovery, the pillar was actually uncovered by farmers digging a well in 1976. Local informants helped researchers to trace that site to "a flat area situated one kilometer south-east of Qi village, Lilou township, Luolong district, Luoyang city," an area found to correspond to Gande township of Sui-Tang times.¹⁰ At first, informants said, the artifact was kept at a threshing floor near the village, then under the eaves of a storehouse at the threshing floor. Around 2000, it was put to the side of the area's main road until being moved to a primary school for safer keeping; eventually, though, it was stolen.¹¹ The theft and recovery brought the piece to the attention of scholars.

The limestone pillar's shaft is about forty centimeters in diameter, has eight facets, each about fourteen centimeters wide, and what remains of the pillar includes a height of eighty-four centimeters.¹² The shaft has been bisected at a diagonal—cleanly cut with a tool—and the lower portion is lost. Text is carved into the facets, varying from two to six columns on a facet, and

⁹ Matteo Nicolini-Zani, "The Tang Christian Pillar from Luoyang and Its Jingjiao Inscription: A Preliminary Study," *Monumenta Serica* 57 (2009): 102-03.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 103-04.

¹² Zhang Naizhu 張乃翥, "Ba Luoyang Xin Chutude Yijian Tangdai Jingjiao Shike 跋洛陽新出土的一件唐代景教石刻," in *Jingjiao Yizhen—Luoyang Xinchu Tangdai Jingjiao Jingchuang Yanjiu 景教遺珍—洛陽新出唐代景教經幢研究*, ed. Ge Chengyong 葛承雍 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2009), 5.

some text has been lost from every facet as a result of the shaft's bisection. Scoring on the facet that contains the list of family signatories and of dignitaries from Luoyang's *Jingjiao* monastery suggest that there may have been another attempt to deface the pillar, but neither the scoring nor the bisection can be dated. At the top of each facet, above the text, is a space that is approximately square. Two squares contain a cross, beside each cross's square is a square on another facet with an angel facing the cross, and a facet with a blank square (two in total) separates the angels that face away from each other to look toward their cross. Above these squares is a squat, rounded capital with a tenon to fit into the mortise of a stone finial that is lost. As for the crosses, they are similar, but not identical; both are in the familiar style of the Church of the East cross, with flared ends, three pearls on each end and a large pearl at the center. The post and crossbar are of equal lengths to better fill the square field. Similar to the smaller etching on the *Jinjiao bei*, each cross stands atop the center of a lotus blossom, and tufts of *qi* cloud rise up alongside the cross. The angels attending each cross appear to ride upon or to fly over clouds in their squares. Their motion is displayed through billowing robes and fluttering scarves, very much like depictions of flying Apsaras and Gandharva (*feitian* 飛天) in Buddhist art of the times.¹³ This form of representation must have felt natural for Christians in China, for similarly styled angels attending crosses are carved on gravestones of an uncertain date, probably in the

¹³ Apsaras and Gandharva were female and male, respectively, minor divinities who served and entertained important Buddhist and Hindu gods. They are usually depicted singly or in pairs, in flight beside a major god. Herbert Härtel and Marianne Yaldiz, *Along the Ancient Silk Routes: Central Asian Art from the West Berlin State Museums: An Exhibition Lent by the Museum Für Indische Kunst, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany*, trans. Ian Robson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1982), 122-23. See, also, Tan Chung, "Sino-Indian Intercultural Internalisation: An Aspect of the Dunhuang Visual Tradition," *China Report* 28, no. 2 (1992).

Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), at the Fujian province port city of Quanzhou.¹⁴ On the pillar, the angels attending one of the crosses appear to be offering gifts to the cross. One offers a flower, the other offers what may be a flaming pearl.¹⁵

The pillar celebrates a Christian burial using the form of a Buddhist *dharani* pillar. According to Angela Howard, the *dharani* pillar is a Chinese adaptation based on an Indian Buddhist ritual cloth banner (*dhvaja*) with an image of the Buddha or a bodhisattva that was to lead a dead person's soul to salvation. In 683, the Kashmiri monk, Buddhapali, translated *The Honored and Victorious Dharani Buddha's Usnisa* (*Foding zunsheng duoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經) which contains an incantation to overcome a soul's moral defilements and bad karmas, ensuring its happy transmigration. Thereafter and through the Song dynasty, with earliest examples found in Shaanxi and Sichuan, Buddhists in China began placing octagonal stone pillars engraved with this incantation outside the spirit passageways of tombs. Historical information and excerpts from other sutras were sometimes also inscribed on the pillar. It usually had lions and dragons at the base, and it was often capped with a finial of a *cintamani* on a lotus flower.¹⁶

¹⁴ John Foster, "Crosses from the Walls of Zaitun," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1/2 (1954). The Church of the East returned to China in the Yuan dynasty primarily through Christian Mongols. Then, the Church of the East in China was known as *Yelikewen* 也里可溫 rather than *Jingjiao*. When the native Ming dynasty overthrew the Mongol Yuan dynasty, anti-foreigner sentiment ran hot, and the new regime used these gravestones in building a new wall to protect Quanzhou. The gravestones were recovered from that damaged wall after World War II.

¹⁵ For the color photos and rubbings upon which this description is based, see Ge.

¹⁶ Angela F. Howard, "The Dhāraṇī Pillar of Kunming, Yunnan: A Legacy of Esoteric Buddhism and Burial Rites of the Bai People in the Kingdom of Dali (937-1253)," *Artibus Asiae* 57, no. 1/2 (1997): 34-35.

The pillar's presentation of an incantation in easily readable regular script calligraphy (*kaishu* 楷書) as opposed to writing in Sanskrit or an abstruse spiritual script such as that used with Daoist talismans shows that the pillar's incantation was meant to be read aloud by a broad audience, to be performed.¹⁷ The performance of a chant or a reading of the holy text was preserved by engraving it in stone. Though that performance is now alien to us, a little imagination can suggest a sense of that community of faith. As William Graham argues,

By paying scant attention to the vocal dimensions of sacred texts, we have missed something essential both to the understanding of scripture and to better comprehension of religious sensibility and praxis. A focus on the written text has encouraged us to look at scripture in isolation from its community of faith or else to concentrate far too exclusively upon its interpretation and use in doctrinal matters.¹⁸

Whether the faith community is Buddhist or Christian, vocalization of sacred texts raises the texts' propositions to sensual as well as intellectual levels. Bearing in mind the important role of chant in Church of the East liturgy, and considering the close contact that *Jingjiao* believers had with the Buddhist majority, that a family of *Jingjiao* believers adapted this Buddhist form, substituting *Jingjiao* text and images, need not be considered a syncretic blending of Buddhism; instead, it can be seen as a creative adaptation of Christian practice to a local cultural form. These *Jingjiao* believers were engaged in navigating the currents of mainstream culture rather

¹⁷ For an examination of the ritual of utterance, that is, the spoken incantation of *The Honored and Victorious Dharani Buddha's Usnisa*, or, as he has translated the title, the *Dhanani of the Glory of the Buddha's Crown*, see Paul Copp, "Anointing Phrases and Narrative Power: A Tang Bhuddhist Poetics of Incantation," *History of Religions* 52, no. 2 (2012), accessed December 22, 2018. In comparison, on the performative aspect of Daoist talismans and holy texts, see Robinet, 99. On Tang and Song dynasty *Lingbao* burial ritual using inscribed stones, see Morgan Carole, "Inscribed Stones: A Note on a Tang and Song Dynasty Burial Rite," *T'oung Pao* 82, no. 4/5 (1996).

¹⁸ William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 164.

than seeing themselves as an endangered minority who must completely detach themselves from the mainstream to preserve a fragile spiritual potency.

The text of the pillar includes the text of the *Jingjiao of Da Qin's Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* together with an account of the pillar. The *Origin of Origins* was already known to us, having been preserved in partial form among the documents from Dunhuang. Zhang Naizhu figures that the original *Origin of Origins* was likely composed of about 887 characters, and the copy from Dunhuang, now kept at the Haneda Toru Memorial Hall of Kyoto University records fifty-five percent of those characters, while the edition on the pillar preserves forty-eight percent of the total characters.¹⁹ It presents God who created all things and transcends all, and it presents the Messiah who provided the salvation that people could not gain on their own, and who taught people how to live. The prose account that follows the *Origin of Origins* is briefer than the prose preface of a *muzhiming*, but it does contain some similar elements. Reading the pillar's text is made more challenging because the base portion and its text are missing; despite some persistent ambiguities, however, enough text remains to get some of the memorialized story of the deceased lady's family.

The account of the pillar begins with a meditation on the God of *Jingjiao*. The God without origin created all things, and he feeds the creatures of land and sea with the same wonderful magnificence with which he maintains the heavens that provide us light and warmth

¹⁹ Zhang Naizhu 張乃翥, in *Jingjiao Yizhen—Luoyang Xinchu Tangdai Jingjiao Jingchuang Yanjiu* 景教遺珍—洛陽新出唐代景教經幢研究, 8. For collations of Dunhuang text with the text from the pillar to make a more complete *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* text and English translations, see Nicolini-Zani; Li Tang, "A Preliminary Study on the *Jingjiao* Inscription of Luoyang: Text Analysis, Commentary, and English Translation," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. D.W. Winkler and L. Tang (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2009).

and that mark the seasons. The text reflects on the mortality of mankind and looks to the judgment to come. The Trinity is present in the Most Holy one who became manifest (the Son), God who is sustaining all things (the Father), and the Spirit receives worship for his life-giving power. This meditation's purpose is not didactic, but pastoral, the type of guided contemplation that one would expect to give comfort to the faithful, reminding that both the deceased and her survivors are safely within the plan and power of their God. Li Tang is probably correct in her intuition that this section likely is adapted from some *Jingjiao* liturgy.²⁰ The meditation concludes with an evangelistic response:

道不名，子不語，世莫得而也。喜 □ /
無始未來之境，則我匠帝阿羅訶也。 /

If the Dao is not named [and if] the subject is not talked about, then later generations will not know about it. Good ... /
... without limitations of beginning or future, this is the standard of our Creator-God Aluohe. ... /²¹

Though the missing text obscures the full thought, it is clear that the speaker for the community felt a responsibility to following generations to communicate to them the conviction of their faith and the worship of the Creator-God Aluohe.

The monument marked the grave holding the remains of the Grand Lady née An. If the text once told us how or when she died, that part is now missing; her interment, however, took place January 22, 815. It seems that she is being buried by her son, for the pillar is being placed to

²⁰ Tang, "A Preliminary Study on the *Jingjiao* Inscription of Luoyang: Text Analysis, Commentary, and English Translation," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 130.

²¹ *Jingchuang of the Grand Lady née An (Jingchuang)*, lines 5-6.

慰亡妣安國安氏太夫人神道及亡師伯和 □ . . . /

... placate the spirit passageway [of the grave of my] late mother²² Grand Lady née An of the state of An together with the late master, paternal uncle He ... /²³

Thus, the Grand Lady is being buried in a family grave along with (or very near) her husband's elder brother. The name of her husband is missing, but it is clear that he was ethnically Han. His elder brother was of the He 和 clan (a Han name), and the son mentions that the persons named on the pillar are

中外親族

members of the same clan from the Central Plains and from the border regions.²⁴

That is, some of the clan were Han people from China, and some were from ethnicities originating outside of China. Her Han husband must have been a person of social standing, for her title “Grand Lady” (*taifuren* 太夫人) indicates that her husband was of a noble or gentry class. That her husband is not also in this tomb—he is not mentioned among the living—is odd, but, as we will see, their son is a military officer. Perhaps the lady's husband was also in the military and fell in battle so that he could not be interred with her? If he had been a military officer stationed in a frontier area, that might also help to explain a limited availability of Han women that led him to choose a Sogdian woman for a wife—much like Hua Xian's experience. The Grand Lady was herself an immigrant from Bukhara (the state of An) as compared with Hua

²² *Bi* 妣 is a deceased woman relative. Usually, she is one's mother, but the term could also refer to one's grandmother, or to a female relative of the generation of one's grandmother.

²³ *Jingchuang*, line 10.

²⁴ *Jingchuang*, line 18.

Xian's wife, the Lady née An, whose *muzhiming* describes her ancestors, originally from Bukhara, as having settled themselves in Anding Commandery, a place within the Six Hu Prefectures. Yet the Grand Lady's diverse family remained close and harmonious enough that she was buried near her brother-in-law, and the names of clan members inscribed on the pillar include Han, Sogdian, and mixed persons.

The name of the Grand Lady's son is lost, but it appears that he was a military officer stationed in the southern suburbs of Luoyang. Specifically, he had been appointed

東都右羽林軍押衙陪戎校尉守左威衛汝州梁川府 . . . /

Chief Fang of the Eastern Capital's (Luoyang) Forest of Plumes Army, Commandant Tending the Western Frontier of the Right Awesome Guard at the Liangchuan military garrison of Ruzhou ...

He served in the Left Awesome Guard, stationed at the Liangchuan military garrison of Ruzhou, where their mission was to defend Luoyang. Ruzhou was south, southeast of Luoyang on the Ru River, at the site of present day Linru 臨汝.²⁵ Within that guard, he served in the Right Forest of Plumes Army where he was on the general's personal detail as Chief Fang,²⁶ leading the general's bodyguard which also kept the flag that identified the location of the general. The son's prestige title, Commandant Tending the Western Frontier, indicates that he held a ninth rank. The son's approach to his duties toward his mother emphasize his proper Confucian virtue in fulfilling them. As the text describes,

²⁵ Tan, 5:44-45 (16, 11).

²⁶ According to the *Hanyu da cidian*, the *yaya* 押衙 was also written 押牙 in Tang times. I have used the alternative rendering, "chief fang" 押牙, because the English of "chief of the forecourt" 押衙 seems too easily confused with a title for a basketball player. A Song dynasty use of the title of *yaya* 押衙 is translated as "lackey," for a hired hand for menial work, but this usage is late and inappropriate here.

承家嗣嫡。恨未展孝誠，奄違庭訓。高堂 □□ . . . /
森沉感因，卑情蓬心

... the family inheritance follows after the line of decent. [I] regret being too late in demonstrating filial devotion, having wholly turned away from my what my father taught me. [My] honored parents²⁷ ... /
Owing to a deep-felt somber gloom, [my] coarse thoughts left [my] heart in disarray.²⁸

The son humbly admits the great good that flowed to him from his parents, especially as their eldest son and heir, and he praises their own high standards by lamenting that he has not lived up to them despite his father's sincere effort to teach him. He proves his great love for his mother through the profound distress that he experiences in her absence. Though no doubt heartfelt, these are the same type of formulaic sentiments that one would expect to find in *muzhiming*.

At this point of transition in the text, it is interesting that the pillar text leaves its reader so poorly informed about the Grand Lady née An. That she had no name accords with custom, just as the wife of Hua Xian had no personal name. However, the text tells nothing of her family background, her personality, her bearing, her accomplishments, her conduct of relationships, or even the place or date of her death. Some of these details may have been lost with the partial destruction of the pillar, but it is curious that the pillar presumably set up to honor the Grand Lady does not celebrate her.

The next few lines of the text include another part of the formula familiar to *muzhiming*, but with a Christian twist. These lines both serve their intended purpose and nicely encapsulate

²⁷ Literally, "the great hall," which, as their fine home, represents the honored parents.

²⁸ *Jingchuang*, lines 8-9.

the state of the ongoing process of a *Jingjiao* believer's living out his faith by mixing and adapting cultural elements to make sense of his own context. The pillar text continues:

建茲幢記，鑄經刻石，用 □ /
慰亡妣安國安氏太夫人神道及亡師伯和 □ /
願景日長懸，朗明閭府，真姓不迷，即景性也。夫求 □ /
幽魂見在，支屬亦願無諸障難，命等松筠，長幼 □ /

[I] set up this stone pillar record, carving a scripture on the engraved stone, using ... /
... placate the spirit passageway [of the grave of my] late mother Grand Lady née An of the state of An together with the late master, paternal uncle He ... /
May the *Jing*/brilliant sun long hang, shining over [this] dark dwelling place; the true name is not lost—this is precisely what is meant by the nature of *Jing*.²⁹ In any respect, seeking ... /
... the spirits of the dead remain, the descendants, for their part, hope that there are no cases of barriers or difficulties [for themselves], living lives compared to [the steadfastness and longevity of] cypress and bamboo, the old and the young ... /³⁰

The son has borrowed the form of a Buddhist *dharani* pillar, but he inscribed on it a Christian text rather than a Buddhist sutra. He placed the pillar in the spirit passageway, the tomb's physical doorway which served as the passage between the world of the living and the dead world within the tomb. The pillar has been imbued with spiritual power by the images the cross and its angel attendants and by the text carved into it so that it can project the comfort of Christ and the hope of the resurrection into the tomb's world of the dead. The text employs the verbal

²⁹ Though the “nature of *Jing*” (*jingxing* 景性) appears of its face like the “nature of the Buddha” (*foxing* 佛性), they are different upon closer examination. The nature of the Buddha is the element of Buddha-mind in all sentient beings that is inactive before enlightenment, but it makes present the potential for cultivating the living being's enlightenment. Based on the context available to us, however, the nature of *Jing* has to do with the persistence of personhood so distinct as to remain identifiable by name. The person's relations with God persist after death—the *Jing* sun shining into the darkness of the grave. The completed thought probably has to do with resurrection to re-embody the person.

³⁰ *Jingchuang*, lines 9-12.

image of the hanging “*Jing*/brilliant sun” to invoke the presence of Christ and the efficacy of the cross. This same image was used earlier in the *Jingjiao bei*:

懸景日以破暗府

Suspending the *Jing*/brilliant sun to smash darkened principalities, [and] the Devil’s lies were thus altogether demolished.³¹

There, the Crucifixion of Christ, the suspended *Jing* sun, overthrows the darkened spiritual power structure of the Devil by negating the power of sin, and it restores the cleavage that the Devil’s lies had cut between God and man, though the final fulfillment of this outcome is eschatological. Here, in the pillar text, the power of the Crucifixion also is eschatological, the promise of the resurrection from the dead. By this power and comfort, the Grand Lady’s son hopes to convince his dead mother to rest peacefully in the tomb rather than coming out to cause trouble for her loving kin. In this way, the son has creatively combined common Confucian burial practices, a Buddhist commemorative practice, Christian cosmology, soteriology and eschatology, and a worldview tenet, certainly Chinese but also widely held, in which the dead ought to be encouraged to lie quiet in the grave—to rest in peace.

The account then sets out a record of the burial process to show that protocols were followed and carried out properly. It reads,

次叙立塋買兆之由，所管即洛養縣感德鄉柏仁（村）．．．／
之始，即元和九年十二月八日，於崔行本處買，保人．．．／
戚，歲時奠酌，天地志同。買南山之石，磨龕瑩澈，刻勒書經，．．．／

Then, to relate setting up the grave and purchasing the plot from the beginning, that plot was under the administration of Bairen village, Chengde township, in Luoyang district ...

³¹ *Jingjiao bei*, line 7.

...its beginning, in the ninth year of Yuanhe, on the eight day of the twelfth month, the site was purchased from Cui Xingben, the guarantor³² ...

...relatives. At the proper time, libations were poured out, and Heaven and Earth were of one accord. Purchasing a stone cut from Nanshan [the Southern Mount], [the stone] was polished to make it clean and bright. It was inscribed with the text of a scripture ...³³

Chengde township had grown in the southeast outside of Luoyang's city wall to meet the needs of foreign traders who had come to the end of the Silk Road in Luoyang to do their business in the South Market.³⁴ During the reign of Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820), the burial plot was purchased on January 22, 815, in the cemetery at Bairen village from a man named Cui Xingben. Bairen village in Chengde township was outside of Luoyang's city wall, near to the eastern wall's Jianchun Gate, south of the Luo River.³⁵ This Bairen village is the same place where Hua Xian's wife, the Lady née An was buried in 821, and Hua Xian was jointly interred with her in 828.³⁶

The son observed proper Chinese burial practices so that Heaven and earth would be of one accord. These would have included divinations of the place of burial and the time of burial. Also, offerings of liquor and food induced the Spirit of the Earth to protect the gravesite.³⁷ The son purchased a stone from Nanshan, and he had it dressed and inscribed. However, unlike a

³² Another possible reading (without the comma) is, "a guarantor was contracted from Cui Xingbenchu," where the Cui firm must be something like a mortgage provider.

³³ *Jingchuang*, lines 13-15.

³⁴ Naizhu Zhang, "The Luoyang Nestorian Pillar and the Gande Township: A Settlement of Foreigners in the Luoyang Area During the Tang Dynasty," in *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2013), 195-96.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁶ For their epitaphs, see Appendix B and C.

³⁷ See Choo.

muzhiming which would have been placed in the tomb with the Grand Lady, he had made a pillar that would stand outside of her tomb.

Since, as noted above, the pillar does not celebrate the Grand Lady, what was the motivation behind it? The pillar text does celebrate, if in formulaic terms, the Confucian virtue of the son and, by extension, the other signatories to the text. However, a good portion of the account includes a meditation on the *Jing* God. Taken together with the inscribed text of the *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins*, their combined consumption of the pillar's writing surface demand that an expression of *Jingjiao* piety must have been the dominant purpose. The line of the pillar text that immediately follows the meditation provides some insight into the son's pious hope. It reads,

有能諷持者，皆獲景福，況書寫於幢銘 □ . . . /

... there is one who is able to chant and to bear in mind [the principles], in all cases gaining the blessings of *Jing*, even more to write fully and completely on a stone pillar inscription ...³⁸

The phrase, “to chant and to bear in mind,” is *fengchi* 諷持, a contraction of the typically Buddhist phrase *fengsong xiuchi* 諷誦修持, which involves chanting and then bearing the chanted words in mind in one's practice. Though it is difficult to have high confidence when dealing with fragmented text, it appears that this *Jingjiao* believer expected to gain for the deceased, for himself, and/or for the community, the “blessings of *Jing*.” Perhaps these blessings flowed by holding a memorial mass (chanting and bearing in mind to practice those teachings), but there must also have been some blessing—or karmic merit—to gain from the ascetic penance

³⁸ *Jingchuang*, line 7.

enacted by inscribing the *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* on the Grand Lady's grave monument pillar. In addition, the use of *fengchi* anticipates the use and function of inscribing the scripture on the pillar. The Buddhist compound word, *zongchi* 總持 (the Chinese translation for the Sanskrit *dharani*), involves invoking a magical power by collecting and holding in mind or concentrating on an incantation or mantra. It seems this *Jingjiao* family had incorporated a widespread Buddhist memorial practice, and, whether or not they appreciated the full implications, that the "remembrance" included the hymn carved on the stone pillar monument to make a Christian *dharani* pillar.

The signatories to the pillar themselves gain honor as they place their names to participate in honoring the late Grand Lady, and they reveal a diverse and well-connected family. Having already discussed the military rank and station of the Grand Lady's son, we move to the names of the clan who were inscribed on the pillar.

中外親族，題字如後：弟景僧清素，從兄少誠，舅安少連 /

Members of the same clan from the Central Plains and from the border regions inscribe [their] names as follows: younger brother and *Jing* monk Qingsu, elder cousin Shaocheng, maternal uncle An Shaolian ...³⁹

The younger brother, monk Qingsu, probably lived at the *Jing* monastery in Luoyang. Shaocheng was a cousin on the father's side, perhaps the son of the uncle He with whom the Grand Lady shared a tomb. This Han cousin was yet older than the lady's martial eldest son, but Shaocheng had no rank or title. Also without rank or title was uncle An Shaolian from the mother's Sogdian side of the family. Appearing in the next line of the list, the eldest son's adoptive uncle, whose

³⁹ *Jingchuang*, line 18.

name is also lost with the missing part of the pillar, bears a title that indicates inactive status after similarly high standing in the guards of the imperial capital.⁴⁰

Taking together the experiences of this family and of Hua Xian's family, the sons of well-off Han Chinese men and their ethnically Sogdian wives had a wide range of professional options available to them in Luoyang. We know that Hua Xian and his wife were devout *Jingjiao* believers, and we might reasonably suppose the same of the Grand Lady and her husband based upon the religious choices of their children and the list of Luoyang *Jingjiao* church dignitaries yet to be discussed who attached their names to the Grand Lady's *jingchuang*. The sons of these couples held to their Christian faith, devout enough to themselves join a monastery or to celebrate the *Jing* faith in a public remembrance of their parents. Further, though some of these offspring proceeded without titles, neither the *Jing* faith nor their ethnically mixed blood proved insurmountable obstacles to advancement in Luoyang. One went on to a successful military career, and another, admittedly after downplaying his non-Han heritage and failing to mention his *Jing* faith, was able to be open about both once he had obtained a position as a civil official. It appears that in the route to the civil bureaucracy, one had to prove philosophically capable of and committed to operating within the Confucian system to get past its gatekeepers, but there may have been some limited space available once in the system to express some religious preferences, so long as they were consistent with maintaining Tang order. Whether in the civil service or in the military, however, it also appears from the examples of the *jingchuang* and the

⁴⁰ His title is "Supernumerary General of the Left Militant as Dragons Army at the Supreme Capital (Chang'an), concurrently Chief Fang for the Pacifying the Remote Regions General, Acting Grand General of the Left Militant Guard established as a Supplementary Official ..." 上都左龍武軍散將兼押衙寧遠將軍守左武衛大將軍置同政 (正) 員 / *Jingchuang*, line 19.

two *muzhiming* that it was crucially important to place one's public expression of *Jing* faith within a context of conduct that expressed proper Confucian values, especially the value of filial piety.

Having listed the clan representatives, the pillar text then lists the clerical leaders of the *Jingjiao* church in Luoyang:

大秦寺 [] 寺主法和玄應，俗姓米；[] 威儀大德玄慶，俗姓米；[] [] 九階大德志通，俗姓康；... /

[The dignitaries of the] Da Qin Monastery: *honored* abbot Fahe Xuanying whose secular name is Mi, *honored* Disciplinarian Great Virtue Xuanqing whose secular name is Mi, *most honored* Ninth-Rank Great Virtue Zhitong whose secular name is Kang, ...⁴¹

All of these leaders are of Sogdian origin, for their family names are among the Nine Surnames of Sogdiana (*zhaowu jiuxing* 昭武九姓) where each name indicated one of Sogdiana's city-states. The Kang family name is typically used for people from Samarkand, and the Church of the East had made a metropolitan province in Samarkand.⁴² The Mi 米 family name is typically used for people from Maymurgh.⁴³ In fact, Maymurgh had a history of sending Christian men of status to China. According to the *muzhiming* of Mi Jifen 米繼芬 (713-805), his father, from the ruling family of Maymurgh, had come to China as a hostage (*zhizi* 質子). Jifen inherited that role, serving in Chang'an to keep good relations between the two states and serving gloriously in army to defend the Tang in the An-Shi Rebellion. His family were *Jingjiao* believers, and at the

⁴¹ *Jingchuang*, line 20.

⁴² Colless.

⁴³ Ge identifies modern day Panjikent, Tajikistan with Boxide 鉢息德, the capital of Maymurgh. Ge Chengyong and Matteo Nicolini-Zani, "The Christian Faith of a Sogdian Family in Chang'an During the Tang Dynasty," *Annali: Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 64 (2004): 186.

time that he was buried in 806 in Chang'an—just nine years before the Grand Lady née An in Luoyang—his second son, Siyuan 思圓, was living as a monk in Chang'an's *Jing* monastery.⁴⁴

The abbot's personal name presents issues that point out the limitations of our knowledge. His name appears to express his scholastic-ascetic values, for the name that he chose for himself, Fahe Xuanying, means "Doctrine attuned with mystic response." On the other hand, *fahe* may instead be a title of some sort. The relationship between the abbot and the bishop is not clear. In the Church of the East's homeland, a monastery was under the authority of the local bishop unless the monastery was put under the authority of the catholicos. In China, however, the whole of the church appears to have been centered in monasteries, and how that might have affected the Church's authority structure is not clear. The titles of the bishops (great virtues) employ prestige titles to distinguish their rank. The "disciplinarian" modifier indicates that Great Virtue Xuanqing was of a low rank or unranked. On the other hand, Ninth-Rank Great Virtue Zhitong clearly enjoys a higher rank equal in status to the eldest son's military rank. The *que*, or blank space, before the men's titles on the pillar text confirm that Zhitong, preceded by a larger space, enjoyed greater honor. Therefore, in clerical terms, Zhitong was probably the bishop of the Luoyang diocese, and Xuanqing was the country-bishop, a suffragan bishop who assisted the Zhitong in the administration of the diocese.

On the other hand, Matteo Nicolini-Zani offers a different view that merits mention. Rather than looking to official prestige titles to explain title-modifiers, he looks only to possible Buddhist terms that *Jingjiao* might have borrowed for the naming system of its own monks. In

⁴⁴ Ibid.

his view, the abbot's name is simply Xuanying, and *fahe* probably is a title borrowed from Chan monks, used here to indicate that the abbot was the highest *Jingjiao* authority in the area.⁴⁵ He takes Great Virtue, not to mean bishop, but as an honorific, such as “Eminence,” awarded to a monk who somehow earned the emperor's favor.⁴⁶ Then, he takes *weiyi* 威儀, not as “disciplinarian,” but as Buddhist title, “respect-inspiring deportment.” Though admitting that no record shows the title being applied to a Buddhist monk, he suggests that Eminence Xuanqing might have been in charge of holding his fellow monks to the discipline of their rule, or he might have been in charge of liturgy at the monastery.⁴⁷ As for the “ninth-rank” in Zhitong's title, Nicolini-Zani sees the nine grades (九品) of development toward reaching the Pure Land's Amitabha. In that case, Eminence Zhitong would have been responsible for the spiritual development of his fellow monks.⁴⁸ This reading would find the *Jing* monastery's dignitaries listed highest rank first and in descending order, which would seem reasonable; however, the previous lines demonstrate a different preference in this text, listing family members in ascending order of honor as follows: younger brother, elder cousin, maternal uncle, and titled adoptive uncle.⁴⁹ While my bias toward an understanding that *Jingjiao* positioned itself,

⁴⁵ Matteo Nicolini-Zani, "Luminous Ministers of the Da Qin Monastery: A Study of the Christian Clergy Mentioned in the Jingjiao Pillar from Luoyang," in *From the Oxus River to Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2013), 145-47.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 148-49.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 149-50. Nicolini-Zani offers in the alternative that “ninth-rank” might have referred to the bottom rank of positions in the Church of the East hierarchy, such as a “singer,” but then why the emperor might have recognized such a low-ranking person as a Great Virtue becomes problematic.

⁴⁹ *Jingchuang*, lines 18-19.

particularly within China's restrictive social space, as part of the state apparatus leads me to disfavor Nicolini-Zani's reading, his own qualification is apt: "at the present state of research, no direct correspondence can be traced between the Chinese and Syriac titles attested in the Syriac Christian literature."⁵⁰

The *Jingjiao* and Buddhist churches must have been on good terms in Luoyang. The *Jingjiao* leaders sent by the Church of the East from Central Asia would have come from a Church well accustomed to living among the Buddhists and Zoroastrians of Central Asia, so an ability to get along while maintaining their distinctiveness is not surprising. The actions of these *Jingjiao* families in times of loss and transition, though, provide telling evidence of the intimacy of their interactions. Hua Xian and his son, Qiya, hired a Buddhist monk to write the text of the *muzhiming* for Hua Xian and for the wife who predeceased him. It appears that the son of the Grand Lady née An wrote his own account of the monument for her, but he borrowed the form of a Buddhist *dharani* pillar as his memorial's medium. If the two churches had been acrimonious toward each other, surely the Grand Lady's son's use of a medium so identified with Buddhism would have attracted the criticism of the Luoyang *Jingjiao* church's clerical leaders rather than their consent to include their names on the pillar. At least this once, the leaders of the *Jingjiao* church in Luoyang found no difficulty in appropriating a Buddhist commemorative form—both the physical form and the formula for the inscription that included a scripture text and an account.

⁵⁰ Nicolini-Zani, "Luminous Ministers of the Da Qin Monastery: A Study of the Christian Clergy Mentioned in the Jingjiao Pillar from Luoyang," in *From the Oxus River to Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 154.

Because the Buddhist population was so great, generally maintaining good relations with Buddhists would have been a useful survival strategy for the relatively small *Jingjiao* church. However, when imperial favor turned against the Buddhist giant, the little *Jingjiao* church could not help but be swept away along with it.

Whelming Currents Doom *Jingjiao*

Intellectual currents within the halls of imperial power would present real challenges to the survival of both religions. The landscape for intellectuals in the central government changed radically after the An-Shi Rebellion, and they adjusted their thinking to make sense of it. Weaker central authority led to a reduced number of official positions, and even within the center, much power once belonging to the officials had been lost to the eunuchs or, in fiscal matters, to the new Department of Public Revenue. The *jinshi*, the “presented scholars” who passed the highest levels of exams on the Confucian Classics and, thus, were the pool of talent from which high officials would be drawn, relied upon their deep training in literature to respond.⁵¹

The literati were convinced that a return to moral government would restore the dynasty to its previous grandeur. The germ of such moral standards was present in the Confucian Classics. The sages of antiquity had wisely discerned the natural patterns that lie beneath Heaven, earth, and man, and therefore ultimately unified the cosmos.⁵² They had recorded in the Classics their experience in recognizing these patterns and forming a balancing response, but the qualities of “firmness” and “suppleness” both within the pattern and within the balancing response vary

⁵¹ Anthony DeBlasi, *Reform in the Balance: The Defense of Literary Culture in Mid-Tang China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). at 7-13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20.

according to the circumstances of the time.⁵³ This sensing and balancing for the people's good was the basis of morality, and the *jinshi*'s extensive training in the Classics uniquely qualified him to spot a new day's patterns and to craft a uniquely appropriate balancing response, presented in a literary work perfectly fit to the moment in order to persuade the emperor and men to do the right thing.⁵⁴

The mainstream intellectual, as Anthony DeBlaisi explains, began from a firm grounding the Confucian Classics, but was also open to broad learning—including, for example, the relatively recent Daoist and Buddhist traditions—to identify patterns and to offer to the emperor a policy solution for today.⁵⁵ In terms of *Jingjiao*'s relations with the state, the literary argument that Jingjing addressed to emperor Dezong in the *Jingjiao bei* fits within this stream, or at least attempts to.

A marginal subset of the literati (whose successors would become the Neo-Confucianists of the Song dynasty) advocated a bottom-up approach, influencing the morality of society by first developing one's own morality. These men, who included such luminaries as Han Yu (768-824), also argued that a narrow focus on *guwen*, the literary culture of antiquity, best taught the intellectual how to become moral.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 115. Han Yu lived in Luoyang 807-811 when he was appointed a teacher at the Luoyang branch of the National University (*guozhi xue*) and he also served as magistrate of Henan county. Xiong, *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 BCE to 938 CE*, 212-13.

In his essay, “Essentials of the Moral Way” (*Yuan Dao* 原道), Han Yu argues that both Buddhism and Daoism misdirect the people to forsake what the ancient sages taught them of the way to live and grow together.⁵⁷ The wisdom of the Chinese sages recorded in the Classics already teach a spirituality of an inner power (*de*) that combines a heart of “humaneness” (*ren*) with “right” (*yi*) actions according to a moral way (*dao*). As a result, the cultivated person may experience an ordered and prosperous present while properly maintaining the various social and political relations. The people’s welfare rests in obeying their ruler’s commands to engage in economically productive, life-sustaining activity, and in maintaining their proper place in society’s web of relationships. However, Han Yu argues, both Buddhism and Daoism divert the people’s attention to a quest for some novel idea of purity and the afterlife, thereby driving the people to escape the here-and-now and to deny the family and the state. Had Daoism and Buddhism been around in the ancient days, the sages themselves would have suppressed those doctrines rather than allow them to disrupt the very fabric of Chinese society. In this case, argues Han Yu, regardless of its origins in China, Daoism is just as “barbarian” as Buddhism, for it advocates action contrary to the established custom of the sages, the creators and sole arbiters of Chinese culture.

Han Yu concludes his essay with a call to suppress both Buddhism and Daoism so that the uninhibited wisdom of the sages, the true Dao, might flourish to the practical benefit of all:

Block them or nothing will flow; stop them or nothing will move. Make humans of these people, burn their books, make homes of their dwellings, make clear the way of the

⁵⁷ Han Yu, “Essentials of the Moral Way,” in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, ed. Wm. Theodore deBarry and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

former kings to guide them, and “the widowers, the widows, the orphans, the childless, and the diseased all shall have care.” This can be done.⁵⁸

The danger of these religions of salvation was their propensity to distract the people from proper duties and thus compounding misery by confusing the social order—they disrupt the flow of the original Dao. Therefore, the general welfare would be better served by laicizing Buddhist and Daoist priests, monks, and nuns, eradicating their scriptures, turning temples and monasteries into regular housing, and returning to the unadulterated teachings of the ancient sages.

At least in Han Yu’s advocacy for *guwen*, he is not concerned with raising ethnic or foreign identity concerns against his opponents. As Charles Holcombe argues, Han Yu’s equating of Daoism and Buddhism shows that he was concerned with fidelity to Confucian ideology rather than expressing xenophobic prejudice.⁵⁹ In fact, though Han Yu, himself, was of Chinese lineage from a locally prominent clan whose provincial base was just northeast of Luoyang,⁶⁰ he does open the door to claiming that a gentleman of foreign birth who adopted Confucian ritual and ideology should be considered Chinese. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how anyone claiming

⁵⁸ Ibid., 573. In his translator’s note on this excerpt, Charles Hartman says that “[t]his final quotation is from the ‘Evolution of Rites,’ *Record of Rites*, where Confucius characterizes the utopian age of Grand Commonalty (*Datong*) as one where even persons without family were cared for. The quotation implies that ‘this can be done’ by following the ‘great moral Way’ that Han Yu has outlined in his text. There may also be a more subtle implication. Buddhist monasteries managed most charitable works in the Tang and provided economic subsistence to those left without resources by the established social order. Han Yu argues that the realization of the ‘Grand Commonalty’ of ancient times will reform this social order so as to provide for the welfare of these people.”

⁵⁹ Charles Holcombe, "Immigrants and Strangers: From Cosmopolitanism to Confucian Universalism in Tang China," *T'ang Studies*, no. 20-21 (2002): 104.

⁶⁰ Charles Hartman, *Han Yu and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 18-19.

any religious faith might comply with Han Yu's demand for a single-minded devotion to realizing the Dao of the Sages through *guwen*.⁶¹

While the literati, whether mainstream or the *guwen* fringe, were seeking to apply the wisdom of the Sages, Emperor Wuzong (r. 840-846) adapted their arguments to attack the Buddhist church. He initiated a time of religious persecution, known as the Huichang Persecution, for the Huichang reign period (841-846) which it spanned. The regulation of Buddhist institutions began in 841 and it culminated in 845 when the emperor issued an edict suppressing Buddhism and banning other foreign religions from China.⁶² Except that the edict attacks foreign influences rather than post-Sage ideology—and, thus, spares Daoism—its primary arguments sound reminiscent of Han Yu's "Essentials of the Moral Way." The *guwen* movement yet remained a minority view of Confucianism;⁶³ however, the arguments that Han Yu used proved useful with a little retooling.

The edict characterizes Buddhism as foreign invasive religion, a fast-growing parasite. As a result, it argues, the customs of the nation are being poisoned and men's minds are being beguiled and confounded. The practices of Buddhist teachers taking on disciples and of Buddhist temples taking on monks and nuns upset social order and harm Confucian morality. Such

⁶¹ For example, Han Yu's younger friend, Li Ao 李翱 (772-841) was neither Buddhist nor Daoist, but he used language on inner life that they had appropriated and rectified the terms' original Confucian sense in his quest for self-cultivation to attain the Dao of the Sages. Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 138; T. H. Barrett, *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist, or Neo-Confucian?* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶² For a translation by Burton Watson of the edict, see Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, 2d ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 585-86. For the source text, see *Jiu Tangshu*, 18A:14b-15a.

⁶³ Twitchett and Fairbank, 668.

practices interfere with proper relations between men and their lords, between men and their parents, and even between husband and wife. They impoverish society by siphoning off materials and productive labor to build opulent temples, furnished, the edict argues, by pilfering the people's wealth. The state also suffers grievously from tax revenue lost through tax exemptions for monks and nuns, for their servants, and for their lands. The edict claims to be excluding polluting foreign influences so that that China's ancient values and customs might again prevail. With the people's customs unified, the state might guide the people in stillness and purity. Consequently, a *wuwei* government might free the nation to prosper and thus to become a beacon of hope to the foreign multitudes. Describing the limitations already imposed and the gains for the stability of the state, the edict continues,

The [Buddhist] temples of the empire that have been demolished number more than 4,600; 260,500 monks and nuns have been returned to lay life and enrolled as subject to the Twice-a-Year Tax; more than 40,000 privately established temples have been destroyed, releasing 30 or 40 million *qing* of fertile, top-grade land and 150,000 male and female servants who will become subject to the Twice-a-Year Tax. Monks and nuns have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Director of Aliens to make it perfectly clear that this is a foreign religion. Finally, We have ordered more than 3,000 men of the Nestorian and Mazdean religions to return to lay life and to cease polluting the customs of China.

Alas, what had not been carried out in the past seemed to have been waiting for this opportunity. If Buddhism is not completely abolished now, who will say that the action is not timely? Already more than 100,000 idle and unproductive Buddhist followers have been expelled, and countless of their gaudy, useless buildings destroyed. Henceforth We may guide the people in stillness and purity, cherish the principle of doing nothing, order Our government with simplicity and ease, and achieve a unification of customs so that the multitudes of all realms will find their destination in Our august rule.⁶⁴

In this way, *Jingjiao* and the Zoroastrian church alike, a pittance in comparison, were swept away with a vast the number of Buddhist monks, nuns, and institutions.

⁶⁴ de Bary and Bloom, 586.

It appears that the emperor's edict was primarily motivated by concerns about the economic and fiscal stresses on the state. A great deal of precious metal, accumulated over hundreds of years, was being tied up in the idols and ornamentation of Buddhist temples when the metals were desperately needed for circulation as coinage.⁶⁵ In addition to the loss of economically productive labor from monks and nuns, the edict also expressly mentions the stress of the shelter from taxation of people and land. Monks and nuns had long escaped liability under the two-tax system by their ordination while the state's attempts to impose regulation on ordinations had proved ineffectual. Some monasteries had amassed large estates of land that would be perpetually free of taxation. Furthermore, some monasteries used their resources to engage in commercial activity that further increased their stores of wealth free of taxation. As a result of the Buddhist church's concentration of economic power, many officials saw the confiscations and forced laicizations as the only way for the state to retain control over the empire's economic destiny.⁶⁶

A religious motive has also been attributed to emperor Wuzong. He was a devout Daoist—so devout and earnest in his quest for immortality that an alchemical elixir ended (or transformed) his mortal life the next year, in 846.⁶⁷ Zhao Guizhen 趙歸真, the Daoist priest who would be executed for providing Wuzong the faulty elixir, urged on the emperor in persecuting Buddhism, for he blamed Buddhism's pernicious influence with preventing them from

⁶⁵ Twitchett and Fairbank, 667.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 666-67.

⁶⁷ Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion & Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History*, 87.

promoting Wuzong's immortality.⁶⁸ Chief minister Li Deyu 李德裕 (787-850) also was a Daoist who would suffer from his alchemical experimentation in his last years, and he certainly repurposed confiscated funds and properties for imperial use and had other plausible motives, but the record does not show how closely he may have been involved in orchestrating the suppression of Buddhism.⁶⁹

The single sentence of the edict that dispatches the remaining two of the Three Foreign Religions (*san yijiao*) only addresses the culture-polluting harm of *Jingjiao* and Zoroastrianism. Although fairness or logical consistency might have justified sweeping them away under the economic reasoning for suppressing Buddhism, their trifling sizes relative to the number of Buddhists made negligible the impact of the economic drag that they produced. Yet extending the economic argument against *Jingjiao* and Zoroastrianism might also have logically threatened the Daoist church. Therefore, maintaining consistency in a Daoist campaign against foreign-originated religions must have demanded that they, too, be suppressed. Lin Wushu, however, rejects any Daoist-driven motivation, so he concludes that the suppression of *Jingjiao* and Zoroastrianism must have been motivated by a broad-based “anti-foreign and revanchist psychology” arising from the senses of frustration and loss among native Chinese after the An-Shi Rebellion.⁷⁰ Lin suggests that movement against the Manichean church may have been an early demonstration of that mindset.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Twitchett and Fairbank, 663, 68-69.

⁷⁰ Lin Wushu 林悟殊, "A General Discussion of the Tang Policy Towards Three Persian Religions: Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Zoroastrianism," *China Archaeology and Art Digest* 4, no. 1 (Dec. 2000): 113-14.

The Chinese had broken the Manichean church in a rage two years prior, in 843. Though Manichaeism had been declared heretical in a 732 edict and Chinese were forbidden to maintain faith in Mani, that church was more widespread and influential across the empire than either *Jingjiao* or the Zoroastrian church.⁷¹ The religion originally came to China via Persian and Tocharian merchants, but Uighurs had become the most prominent patrons of Manichaeism in the years following the An-Shi Rebellion. Since then, the Manichaean church had spread in China because of its Uighur support.⁷² Manichean temples also served the faithful—mostly Uighurs, but all foreigners—as places to keep wealth safely stored, much like banks.⁷³ Meanwhile, the Uighurs, themselves, had made themselves odious to the Chinese, not just for their brutality against Chinese noncombatants when putting down the Rebellion, but also for the disrespect of their bullying and proud conduct among both high and low Chinese since.

When Uighur strength faltered, the Chinese state cathartically unleashed the popular rage against the Uighurs for past Uighur atrocities committed against the Chinese people. In 841, the Kirghiz defeated the Uighurs in Mongolia, killing the khan, and forcing them to find a new territory.⁷⁴ A portion of them, around one hundred thousand, migrated to an area in modern Inner Mongolia along the Yellow River with the intention to remain in Chinese border territory. The Chinese provided them with food in order to buy time to prepare their own forces, and then

⁷¹ Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*, 239-40.

⁷² Lin, "A General Discussion of the Tang Policy Towards Three Persian Religions: Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Zoroastrianism," 111.

⁷³ Ch'en, 228-29.

⁷⁴ Lin, "A General Discussion of the Tang Policy Towards Three Persian Religions: Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Zoroastrianism," 112.

crushed the Uighurs in early 843, slaying ten thousand of them in the south Gobi at what became known as “Killing the Hu Mountain” (*shahu shan* 殺胡山).⁷⁵ Previously, in 821, Emperor Muzong had given his sister, the Ding'an 定安 Princess, to the powerful Uighur khan in a marriage alliance between the two states. Now, she took her opportunity to flee, and the Japanese monk Ennin, then living at a monastery in Chang'an, records that, on March 30, 843, the princess was received in the capital.⁷⁶ The Chinese felt new power with regard to the Uighurs, and they took it out on their proxy, the Manichaeans. Ennin records that in early May,

An imperial edict was issued [ordering] the Manichaean priests of the empire to be killed. Their heads are to be shaved, and they are to be dressed in Buddhist scarves and made to look like Buddhist Shamans and are to be killed. The Manichaean priests are highly respected by the Uighurs.⁷⁷

The edict was executed, including publicly burning Manichaean books and statues. According to Xiong, “[i]n Chang'an alone seventy-two female believers were killed. Survivors were banished to remote provinces, but most of them perished before reaching their destinations.”⁷⁸

The violent end of the Manicheans, however, stands out in degree compared to the fate of *Jingjiao* and the Zoroastrian church.⁷⁹ The Manichean church's grievous fate had to do with their predominantly Uighur association, demonstrating that the most powerful anti-foreigner animosities were not generalized, but were particularized to certain ethnic groups in response to

⁷⁵ Twitchett and Fairbank, 664-65.

⁷⁶ Ennin, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*, trans. Edwin O. Reischauer (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1955), 326-27.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 327.

⁷⁸ Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*, 240.

⁷⁹ We know that many Buddhist monks and nuns were killed or injured, and presumably so also were *Jingjiao* and Zoroastrian clerics. Twitchett and Fairbank, 666.

specific grievances and festering grudges. Nevertheless, it appears that there was a level of ambient “anti-foreigner” sentiment fueled by frustration with the disorder and diminution of post-Rebellion Tang society. That sentiment was strong enough to dim the glamour of the exotic and it gave a negative sense to things classed as “foreign.”

These times were analogous to another time about a hundred and fifty years earlier, beginning at the end of Wuzetian’s Zhou dynasty. As N. Harry Rothschild explains in his study of the matter, the popularity in Chang’an and Luoyang of raucous Sogdian water-splashing plays to call forth the cold of winter raised rebukes from Confucian officials in ever-increasing proximity to the emperor over a period from 705 to 713. When the Confucians argued that the Chinese sages had already established rituals to usher in seasons at their proper time, they were taking a stand against the encroachment of cultural practices of the “other” within Chinese society. The Tang had suffered for its cultural broadmindedness, they held, reaping an ideologically muddled populace, ruthless women in powerful positions, and a usurper’s government centered around an invasive foreign religion. The precariousness of the Tang restoration after Wuzetian demanded a cultural retrenchment to a pure Confucianism that was decidedly Han Chinese in identity, the conservatives argued, for indulging the wild and primitive festivals, entertainments, and religions of the barbarians was the road to national debauchery and dissipation. Though Xuanzong had enjoyed watching the merry spectacle from the palace walls as a young prince—and been criticized for it—he acceded to his critics’ conservative arguments as a newly reigning emperor. He banned the uncouth dramas in December 713, and he finished

off all residual infernal celebrations by edict in January 715, forbidding the barbarian practice of praying for cold.⁸⁰

It seems that Wuzong and his court took a similar view of *Jingjiao* as the creeping foreign “other” who made inroads into the native Han culture, yet remained stubbornly distinctive. The leaders of *Jingjiao* institutions, so far as we can tell, were invariably Persian or Sogdian. There may have been Han Chinese believers like Hua Xian and the husband of the Luoyang *jingchuang*’s Grand Lady nee An in the *Jingjiao* congregation, but these Han Christians could not both express their faith and remain faithful to Confucian values in a way that could satisfy conservative Confucians. In fact, their miscegenation opened the way for accusations against them of causing the type of cultural drift that had led to the decline of the hallowed Zhou dynasty through intermarriage with the Quan and Rong barbarians.⁸¹

Jingjiao had been a useful partner to the Tang state earlier in foreign diplomacy or in supplying needed technologies, but the factions and struggles for power at Court probably pushed the institutions of *Jingjiao* to the political sidelines. The Sweet Dew incident of 835 in Chang’an, for example, demonstrates the dangers within the halls of power. Emperor Wenzong plotted with some unaffiliated officials to break the power of the palace eunuchs and the factions of court officials, but when the attempt to catch leading eunuchs in a murderous trap failed, the eunuchs retaliated by ordering the slaughter of the plotting officials and their families, and the

⁸⁰ N. Harry Rothschild, "Why Is It Necessary for Naked Savages to Drum and Dance? Early Tang Imperial Responses to a Sogdian Hibernial Festival," *Fudan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2015).

⁸¹ Ibid., 67.

eunuchs retained their grip on Court power.⁸² The course of such violent internal intrigues probably left little space for *Jingjiao* leaders to form active partnerships with the state. In such circumstances, neither their current contributions nor their store of goodwill was able to withstand the zeal amassed against the deep-rooted Buddhist church. Even if the vitriol against Buddhism was motivated primarily by economic concerns, the accompanying wind of the habitual “foreign origins” criticism of Buddhism was sufficient to blow away the relatively slight institutions of *Jingjiao*.

⁸² “In the government quarter alone, the soldiers reportedly killed more than a thousand people and destroyed many seals, documents and records. For weeks afterwards the troops rounded up not merely the chief conspirators and their underlings, but their entire families and many other people who were wholly innocent. Confessions of treason were exacted by torture. Three chief ministers and their families were executed publicly in Ch’ang-an’s western market place. The eunuchs permitted the bloodbath to continue until an amnesty and limitation of further prosecution was proclaimed early in 836.” Twitchett and Fairbank, 657.

CONCLUSION

The confiscations and forced laicizations of the Huichang Persecution built up to the edict of 845, and the persecutions subsided in 846 when emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846-859) ascended the throne and introduced a more commodious policy toward Buddhism. The *Jingjiao* leaders in Chang'an probably took warning of the instability of the times under Wuzong and moved the *Jingjiao bei* to a place where they could bury the monument to preserve it until times were safer. Less mobile monuments, like the Luoyang *jingchuang*, likely were cut down during this time by persons less well-intentioned in order to deface the objects that represented a “foreign” religion in China. Whatever happened in the course of the Persecution, the days of *Jingjiao* as a partnering institution of the Tang court were over.

What happened to the *Jingjiao* community? The Tibetan empire by this time had largely cut off China's land route to the west,⁸³ but some monks may have filtered out to the *Jingjiao* monasteries at the Turfan oasis or northward to the Christian tribes among the Mongolian peoples.⁸⁴ If they would not or could not stay put and blend in, they likely went by choice or by force to southern China to leave by ship or to blend in among the foreign merchants resident there. As the *Jingjiao* community swelled in Guangzhou, the laicized churchmen probably turned

⁸³ On the history of the Tibetan empire, see, Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁸⁴ See, Gillman and Klimkeit, 225-34.

to teaching or practicing medicine, and some tested and joined the ranks of the bureaucrat officials.⁸⁵

Lo Hsiang-lin has identified an example of a *Jingjiao* believer who went to the South and became a *jinshi* official and literatus of note. Liu Shui 劉蛻 was living in Chang'an with his son, Liu Zuan 劉纂, at the time of the 845 edict banning Buddhism.⁸⁶ Because this Liu family is noted in the records as one which made a point of not worshipping their ancestors, historian Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 concluded that they must have been of foreign origin, and Lo argues further that they must have been *Jingjiao* believers.⁸⁷ Having left Chang'an, Liu Shui wrote a letter in 846 to the new head of the southern circuit to seek help attaining an official position, but the letter was unsuccessful, so he went to Sichuan where he buried his literary writings—2,180 sheets—in the ground at the Tusita monastery. Based on Liu Shui's description of his process for producing those writings,⁸⁸ and based on the fact that he buried them in the ground rather than, as unappreciated Chinese literati often did, hiding them in some famous mountain for a worthy person to find and care for them, Lo reasons that these texts must have been translations of religious documents that had come under a ban ordering that such books be burned.⁸⁹ After

⁸⁵ Lo Hsiang-lin 羅香林, "Spread of Nestorianism in Kwangtung Province," *Chu Hai Journal* 珠海學報 8 (1975): 221-22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 224. Lo gives only an English title for Chen's treatise: *Liu Shui's Works and His Not Sacrificing to His Ancestry*. I have not yet been able to locate this work.

⁸⁸ Lo quotes from the inscription that Liu Shui left at the Tusita monastery on the grave where he buried his papers: "When I was writing I dared not sneeze, I dared not cough, I dared not spit, and I was reverent and awesome as if I were standing before God. ..." *Ibid.*, 228.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

living in Canton for some time, Liu Shui found success in the exams.⁹⁰ While receiving recognition for his literary accomplishments, he rose as high in the bureaucracy as the secretary to the cabinet council, and son Li Zuan later became a minister attached to the Board of Rituals.⁹¹

In an 850s or 860s essay entitled “the Chinese Heart” (*Hua xin* 華心), Chen An 陳黯 used the case of Li Yansheng 李彥升 to make a point that I will discuss below.⁹² The military governor of Daliang 大梁, modern Kaifeng 開封, had spotted Li Yansheng’s talent and recommended him for the civil service exam in the early Dazhong reign period (847-860). Though Li was a man of Dashi 大食, he succeeded to the highest level and became a *jinshi*. Marc Abramson points out that Dashi then referred to the Abbasid caliphate, and he suggests that the Li surname probably indicates that the man was Iranian rather than Arab.⁹³ The sources say nothing about his religion, so he may well have been Muslim, but, given the timing, Li Yansheng instead may have been a Christian monk, now laicized, previously sent by the Church of the East from the Abbasid caliphate.

More than thirty years after the 845 edict, self-identified Christians yet remained in an identifiable community in the south. According to reports of Muslim traveler to China, the siege in 264 AH (877/8 CE) of Guangzhou by a rebel leader named Huang Chao 黃巢 (known as

⁹⁰ Ibid., 226.

⁹¹ Ibid., 224.

⁹² *Quan Tangwen* 767.3538b.

⁹³ Abramson, 221.

Bansu in Muslim sources) led to a great slaughter. The number of Chinese dead was not known, but because foreigners were recorded for a poll tax to which they were subject, the traveler reliably heard that the Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians known to have been killed totaled about 120,000.⁹⁴ Thus, it appears that *Jingjiao* was openly present among the foreign merchant community in the south, but those believers who remained faithful while engaging Chinese society kept their faith quietly.

From “Subject-Partner” to “Polluter”

The experience of the *Jingjiao* church during the Tang dynasty followed a varied course through the ebb and flow of historical and political pressures on Chinese society, and sometimes *Jingjiao* was better suited to navigate the course than other times. In the success and confidence of the Golden Tang, the empire had the confidence to receive outsiders and to enjoy the exotic offerings of their cultures. The Tang saw the interest of others as proof of Tang cultural superiority. The accustomed political role of the Church of the East representing a religious minority as a subject-partner within the state apparatus further suited *Jingjiao* to enter China at that moment. The Church’s relationship as a contributor to the Persian empire and then to the Umayyad and Abbasid empires served both practical and symbolic purposes as the Tang afforded a similar political space to *Jingjiao*.

Jingjing, in the rhetoric of the *Jingjiao bei*, sought to persuade the imperial court that continuing the arrangement would help to restore the Chinese empire’s stability and prosperity after the An-Shi Rebellion. He argued that the practical good *Jingjiao* brought to the empire

⁹⁴ Moule, 77; Lo, 222.

through the service of its members as well as through the blessings of God on those who acknowledge him made *Jingjiao* worthy of continued imperial patronage. However, the Chinese angst of the weaker central government struggling to exert authority over the provinces' military governors, let alone to collect taxes from them, was exacerbated by struggles for power at court among factions of officials with palace eunuchs also in the mix. Reaction to these pressures built to a crescendo in the Huichang Persecution. In such times, the majority found it easier to shift blame for problems onto foreigners or outsiders rather than to do the hard work of critical self-examination that might find some personal responsibility or (moral) fault in the culture's indigenous bad actors or wayward institutions. Their point, however was not a simple resort to racism. In an argument similar to that of the Lady nee An's *muzhiming*, Chen An argues in "The Chinese Heart" that behavior conforming to propriety, righteousness, and justice made one Chinese, regardless of one's ethnic heritage or place of birth. Conversely, Chen argues that, regardless of his Han or barbarian physical form, anyone who flouts Confucian norms must be considered a barbarian.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the argument of the conservative Confucians that foreign contacts were "polluting the customs of China" was necessarily true, at least to some extent. Understanding culture as composed of a collective worldview that establishes what is real, together with the systems of values, rules, and institutions by which a people live in the world according to their understanding of reality, no culture can be static, for it must make adjustments to fit changing circumstances, whatever the origin of the changes. Even the advocates of *guwen*, in seeking to

⁹⁵ For a translation of "The Chinese Heart," see Abramson, 180.

conserve Confucian values, injected a dynamic force into the culture that would bear fruit in the Song dynasty innovation of neo-Confucianism. Similarly, *Jingjiao* believers, as they are represented in the *Jingjiao bei*, the Luoyang *jingchuang*, and the *muzhiming* of Hua Xian, sought to identify themselves with Confucian values and social systems even as they upheld the innovative reality claims of a universal three-in-one God who created all things and the Messiah who taught the *dao* of a new life.

For the conservative Confucians, *Jingjiao*'s innovative reality claims, even if they did lead to the types of behavior of which they approved, were too transgressive, and they amounted to foreign pollution of Confucian tradition. Considering this type of conflict from the perspective of an anthropologist, Mary Douglas looked at those things that failed to fit the symbolic classifications of society's social structure or those things that threatened to smudge or blur the line between categories, and she found dirt. In *Purity and Danger*, she argues that society uses taboo to keep categories clear and distinct—free of dirt. She says, "Taboo protects the local consensus on how the world is organized. It shores up wavering certainty. It reduces intellectual and social disorder."⁹⁶ The disorder threatened by novel *Jingjiao* teachings was limited because of the small size of the *Jingjiao* church, but it was a symbolically important threat. In the terms of analysis developed by Bruce Lincoln, the majority group used the authority of the myth of the ancient Confucian consensus to "re-present the constituent categories of society and their hierarchic order as if these were something natural, necessary, traditional, normal, and/or divinely ordained," and the sentiments that they aroused in the people joined with the force of

⁹⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), ix.

law to reconstitute society in a way that classified *Jingjiao* as irredeemably “foreign,” and excluded it.⁹⁷

Protestant missiologist Andrew Walls argues that a healthy indigenous Christian church must live in tension with the culture to which it belongs—or doesn’t. On the one hand, Walls says, the truly indigenous church must be a place where one feels at home and is able to live their faith while remaining a full member of their community. On the other hand, the supra-cultural, universal aspect of Christianity’s transcendent God and eschatological hope of a resurrection in Paradise put the Christian out of step with his or her own culture, making the Christian into a “pilgrim,” for no society exists “which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system,” and the Christian will feel “rubs and frictions” with his own culture arising “from the transformation of his mind to that of Christ.”⁹⁸ Explaining Walls’s understanding of culture, anthropologist Sherwood Lingenfelter argues that culture is not neutral, but is infused with sin so that its structures favor the powerful and disadvantage the weak. If culture were to be described as a tool, he says, it is not a neutral wrench or screwdriver, but a Las Vegas slot machine designed to favor the house.⁹⁹ As a result, a church that is indigenous but not connected to the supra-cultural universal Church and the Scriptures will die as it succumbs to the pressures imposed by its host culture. A vibrant church, on the other hand, holds in tension the

⁹⁷ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xv.

⁹⁸ Walls, in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 8.

⁹⁹ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 16.

“indigenization principle” and the “pilgrim principle” so that it is fully at home in its community while yet being transformed by God to transcend the prison of fallen culture.

While the *Jingjiao* lived experience of the “pilgrim principle” alone may have proved an insurmountable objection for Tang conservative Confucians, it may be that the Church of the East’s structure further hindered the indigenization of *Jingjiao*. As a normal practice, Church of the East patriarchs appointed familiar men from the Church’s Mesopotamian heartland to provide reliable leadership of the outer provinces. So far as we can tell, Iranian men, whether Persian or Sogdian, always held the leadership positions at *Jingjiao*’s highest levels and in the monasteries. It seems that the governance structure made it difficult for any Chinese to rise to a leadership position in China. Yet, as Walls argues, Christian missionaries principally understand their own faith in the terms and systems of their home culture. As a result, they risk passing along mere cultural preferences as elements of faith.¹⁰⁰ Without Chinese in clerical leadership, the *Jingjiao* church forever felt foreign, not at home. Limited in its structure to a state-partner model and cut off with weak indigenous support, the universal, supra-cultural part of church life failed to grow deep indigenous roots, so the church withered when state support became state opposition and the rise of Tibetan Empire crippled land-based communication with the catholicos.

The research of Henrietta Harrison provides a valuable counterpoint. In *The Missionary’s Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village*, Harrison traces the history of a remote Catholic village in Shanxi province from the seventeenth century to the present day. Heads of the

¹⁰⁰ Walls, “Culture and Conversion in Christian History,” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*; Lingenfelter, 18-19.

principal families converted to Catholicism through the influence of Jesuit priests when the men were in Beijing for business reasons during the Ming dynasty. When they returned home to Cave Gully village in Shanxi, they invited a priest to defy the emperor's prohibition and secretly join them as a priest to them, their families, and eventually to the village. Franciscans took over the missionary role in the village with the result that most of the missionaries who ever went to Cave Gully were Franciscans from southern Italy. Harrison notes that there were similarities between the religious culture of southern Italy at the time and Chinese religious culture, and those came to be incorporated into the village's practice of Catholicism.¹⁰¹ As this Shanxi village deepened in its Catholicism, the universal or worldwide aspect of the Catholic church empowered a Chinese priest from the village, himself educated in Rome, to appeal to the Pope when foreign missionary priests abused their authority over the local priests, and the universal or supra-cultural element Catholic Christianity gave the Chinese believers assurance to resist in the face of attacks by Boxers or when the Party tried to suppress their faith during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, argues Harrison, the pull of the village's "global connections" in the Catholic church have proved stronger than the "process of acculturation." She says,

People tend to adopt local practices over time, but as members of a world religion Catholics also share in the practices of the worldwide church, so that the processes of localization and globalization are in constant tension. However, it is the forces of globalization that have come to dominate, as inland Chinese villages like Cave Gully have become more closely linked to the outside world over the centuries.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Henrietta Harrison, *The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 9.

In view of the three hundred years of history of Catholicism in this isolated Chinese village when the imperial government and Communist government often were antagonistic to the church, one wonders if *Jingjiao*'s trajectory might have been different if, in *Jingjiao*'s approximately two hundred years in the cosmopolitan Tang dynasty, the Church of the East had developed and incorporated more Han Chinese church leaders.

Next Steps

This study has identified some Han people among the *Jingjiao* believers. While we have not studied the names merely listed on the *Jingjiao bei*, the Han believers whom we have studied all had frontier exposure. The Luoyang *jingchuang* and the two *muzhiming* that we have from *Jingjiao* families are both from families with Han military fathers and Sogdian mothers. Is it a sampling error, or does it show that Han Christians were trying to Christianize Chinese commemorative culture, but non-Han Christians generally saw it as an unnecessary innovation? Was the phenomenon unique to Luoyang? While we do have the *muzhiming* of Persian and Sogdian *Jingjiao* believers, respectively, Li Su (741-817)¹⁰³ and Mi Jifen (714-805),¹⁰⁴ both of whom were high-ranking men in Chang'an, is their use of *muzhiming* exceptional because both were *zhizi*, "hostage" descendants of client-kingdoms' ruling families and so had close ties with the Tang court? These are questions worth investigating further.

Also beyond the scope of this study but warranting further investigation is another look at *Jingjiao* spirituality and teaching as it is expressed in the *Jingjiao* texts from Dunhuang,

¹⁰³ See Rong, in *Zhongguo Zhongguo Yu Wailai Wenming* 中古中国与外来文明.

¹⁰⁴ See Ge and Nicolini-Zani.

especially in light of more recent information about the Chinese context and the Church of the East's theological and cultural background. Similarly, a new study of the cross and its shifting rhetorical use in *Jingjiao* literature and visual arts would be helpful for understanding how *Jingjiao* sought to indigenize its spirituality and theology. Further study on structure of *Jingjiao* in China and the meaning of *Jingjiao* titles awaits the discovery of new primary source material.

APPENDIX A

STELE COMMEMORATING THE PROPAGATION IN CHINA OF *JINGJIAO* OF DA QIN

大秦景教流行中國碑

Stele Commemorating the Propagation in China of *Jingjiao* of Da Qin¹

[1] 大秦景教流行中國碑頌并序

The preface and eulogy of the stele commemorating the propagation of *Jingjiao* of Da Qin in China

[2] 大秦寺僧景淨述 [Followed by text in Syriac]

The Da Qin Monastery's Monk² Jingjing recounts: [In Syriac:] Adam priest and country-bishop³ and *fapshi* of Zinistan⁴

¹ Da Qin 大秦 was the Chinese name for Syria or the Eastern Roman Empire. See *Tongdian* 193.11. Barrett argues that *Jingjiao*'s proponents reaped a windfall in 745 when Xuanzong issued an edict rectifying the official names of all *Jingjiao* monasteries from "The Persian Monastery" Bōsī sī 波斯寺 to "The Roman Monastery" Da Qin sī 大秦寺 because Daoist lore had made Da Qin into a distant land that the Lord Laozi had visited after leaving China and preached a version of Daoism, converting the barbarian land into a sort of Daoist utopia. Now rhetorically situated within the popular Daoist trope of *The Conversion of the Barbarians*, *Jingjiao* was better positioned to assert its legitimacy in Tang social space. Barrett, "Buddhism, Taoism and the Eighth-Century Chinese Term for Christianity: A Response to Recent Work by A. Forte and Others."

² Why does the Chinese text identify Jingjing as a mere monk if, as argued in the footnote below, the Syriac text identifies him as the metropolitan bishop of China? It could be move of rhetorical humility in order to focus "present day" readers' attention on Yisi, who is celebrated to serve as a "modern day" bookend to the first great *Jingjiao* personage, Aluoben. It seems, however, that identifying the head of the *Jingjiao* Church in China really would not steal thunder from Yisi. Perhaps Adam was serving in that office in a provisional capacity while the mother church was involved in the controversy that surrounded the election of Timothy I as catholicos, and the catholicos had not yet filled the vacant office in the distant metropolitanate. That may explain why the Syriac text used *fapshi* rather than a proper Syriac title. It may also explain why Jingjing cannot use a formal Chinese title—Aluoben, when metropolitan bishop, bore the Chinese title of Defender Lord of Doctrine—so Jingjing uses his modest title of Monk.

³ A country-bishop is a suffragan bishop, or a bishop appointed to assist the bishop of a diocese.

⁴ Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Adam's third title is written in Syriac, but it is not a Syriac word. Moule transliterates it as *fapshi*, which he argues is a Syriac phoneticization of *fashi* 法師, the Chinese title for a Buddhist dharma master or for a Daoist ritual master. Moule bases his understanding on evidence that the Tang pronunciation of 法師 was similar to his rendering of the Syriac word. Moule, 35. More persuasively, however, Samuel N.C. Lieu argues from his own visual inspection of the stele that the borrowed word written in Syriac would be best transcribed as *papsh*'. This likely corresponds to the Latin *papa* or the Greek *παππος*, both translating to "metropolitan bishop." Lieu reasons that the "metropolitan bishop" title fits well with the progression of titles in church hierarchy listed for Adam, but,

- [3] 粵若，常然真寂，先先而無元；窅然靈虛，後後而妙有。惣玄樞而造化，妙衆聖以元尊者；其唯我三一妙身，无元真主阿羅訶歟？判十字以定四方，鼓元風而生

Behold! Constant in perfect stillness, at the beginning of beginnings but without cause; inscrutable in the spiritual void, at the end of the ends yet marvelously existing. Commanding the mysterious casting-up to fashion change, the marvelous various sages [fashioned] by means of the Primal Honored one; Is not he alone our Three-in-One Mysterious Person, the unoriginated True Lord God?⁵ [He] passed judgment on the cross therewith to settle the four quarters,⁶ and beat the primal wind to give birth to

- [4] 二氣；暗空易而天地開，日月運而晝夜作。匠成斥物，然立初人，別賜良和，令鎮化海；渾元之性，虛而不盈，素蕩之心，卒無希嗜。泊乎娑殫施妄，鈿飾純精；閒平大於

the two elemental forces.⁷ (He) transformed dark emptiness to unfold heaven and earth, and, revolving the sun and moon, put in order day and night. Having crafted and fashioned the myriad things, yet [he] established the first person, distinctively bestowing on him a good and harmonious disposition, and gave him dominion over the transformed seas. The Man's original nature was unoccupied and orderly, a heart innocent of

in comparison, taking the loan word as *fashi* 法師 (Missionary Teacher of Sinistan) would instead step-down Adam's final ecclesiastical rank. Lieu, in *Exegisti Monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams*, 229-30. Similarly, see Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 81-83.

⁵ Lieu notes that *Aluohe* 阿羅訶, translated here as "God," is a phonetic rendering of the Syriac word for "God," *Alaha*, which, as used in the Peshitta, corresponds to θεος in the Greek text. *Alaha* comes from a different root than the personal name of God, YHWH (*Jehovah* or *Yahweh*), which appears in the modern Chinese Bible as 耶和華 *Yehehua*. Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Lost in Transcription?—the Theological Vocabulary of Christian Texts in Central Asia and China," in *Winds of Jingjiao*, ed. Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2016), 355 - 56.

⁶ The cross of Christ (*shizi* 十字), here as in line 8, is God's means for bringing salvation and peace to humanity and to the created order—even from the outset of creation. Foster aptly observed here a reiteration of Saint Basil the Great's commentary on Isaiah 11:12. Foster, *The Church of the T'ang Dynasty*, 135. Saint Basil (c. 330-379), Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, argued that the cross of Christ was the sign to the nations that would bring back lost Israel and dispersed Judah from the four corners of the earth. He wrote, "The parts of the cross are divided into four, so that one is turned towards each of the four parts of the world. Therefore death through the cross was preferred either in order that all parts of the world should be accommodated for salvation through the four parts of the cross, or because before the wooden cross some intelligible cross was established in the whole world, with the four parts of everything being joined together in the centre, and the power that is in the centre passing to the four ends." Saint Basil the Great, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. Nikolai A. Lipatov (Mandelbachtal: edition cicero, 2001), 308. Christoph Baumer, however, sees the presentation of the cross here not as the cross that represents the centrality of Christ's death and resurrection, but he sees this cross as a cosmic sign of the omnipotence of God. Baumer, 189-90.

⁷ *Yin and yang*.

willfulness, a character without covetous desires,⁸ until Sadan⁹ spread lies, using intricate ornamentation to obscure the purest essence,¹⁰ being at ease with [the idea of] equality with the Great [One] in

- [5] 此是之中，隲冥同於彼非之內。是以三百六十五種，肩隨結轍，竟織法羅；或指物以託宗，或空有以淪二，或禱祀以邀福，或伐善以矯人。智慮營營，恩情役役，茫然

these among whom [the idea] is held to be true, and opening a crack to a dullness of conformity with those among whom [the idea of equality with God] is denied.¹¹

⁸ Baumer notes that this depiction of human nature would resonate with both Buddhist and Daoist views. Specifically elaborating on the Daoist view of “the original man,” Baumer explains that he “knew no desires, [but] lived in perfect accord with the Tao.” Baumer, 190.

⁹ Satan. The first character, 娑 *suo*, was pronounced “sa” in Medieval Chinese. Lieu figures that Sadan 娑殫 is probably an phonetic transliteration from the Sogdian term for “Satan,” whereas the 娑多那 (pronounced “sa-ta-naX” in medieval times) that is used in the “Discourse on Monotheism,” a document from Dunhuang, is probably a transcription of the Aramaic for Satan. Lieu, “Lost in Transcription?—the Theological Vocabulary of Christian Texts in Central Asia and China,” in *Winds of Jingjiao*, 362.

¹⁰ Baumer notes that the notion of sin as something that obscures the apprehension of reality would resonate with one trained in Buddhist thought. He says, “Qing Qing interprets sin as an error regarding the essence of existence, a false priority, an illusion. In this way he agrees with the Buddhists, who deduce the illusory character of our life from a fundamental delusion, from our ignorance.” Baumer, 190.

¹¹ The translation of this parallelism is difficult—and different in every translation that I have consulted—but I believe that I have correctly translated the sense that the result of Satan’s deception was to spread among the deceived the sinful idea that man is equal with God, and even among those who keep an orthodox view (that man is subject to God), Satan’s deception has introduced errors that disrupt a unanimous understanding of the truth of God’s goodness and of his sovereignty over man. *Compare*, the biblical account of the serpent’s intimation that God was withholding from mankind the opportunity to be God’s equal, the lie that led to the Fall in Genesis 3:4-5: “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (ESV). Writing in 1298, Mar Odisho thus describes consequences for Adam and Eve of believing Satan’s lie and the continuing scheme of the devil to deceive mankind into believing that we can be equals with God: “Because of this, they became debtors to death and fell under subjection to the devil, and were shorn of their glory, and put on shame, and were removed from the companionship of angels, and were cast into a land of curses. Their children also, because they walked in the selfsame way of transgression, [bound] more tightly to the yoke of the devil, and of death, on their necks, and these forgot their Creator, and walked after their own hearts’ lust, and the desires of their own minds, and nourished iniquity, and strengthened rebellion.” Mar O’Dishoo, *The Book of Marganitha (the Pearl) on the Truth of Christianity*, trans. Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII (Ernakulam, Kerala, India: Mar Themotheus Memorial Printing & Publishing House Limited, 1965), 15. As Baumer points out, the Church of the East rejected Augustine’s doctrine of “original sin” and instead followed Theodore of Mopsuestia’s teaching that sin weakens the fundamental goodness of human nature, leaving it more susceptible to the deceitfulness of sin, but all are guilty for their own sin, not first for the imputed sin of Adam and Eve. Baumer, 115-17. The best alternative reading of the stele text, by Moule—with advice from Pelliot—finds in the second part of the parallelism a criticism of Buddhist theory, so that his translation of the parallelism reads as follows: “He insinuated [the idea of] equal greatness [with God] into the original

Consequently, the 365 sects took up crisscrossing one another's wagon tracks, competing to weave doctrinal nets to ensnare the flocks of sheep.¹² Some set up material objects for worship; some set up non-existence and existence as a lapsing duality; some offer up prayers and sacrifices in order to gain blessings; and some boast of their own goodness in order to gain power over others. Conspiracies run hither and thither, and feelings of affection are shopped around to curry favor and personal gain. Blindly lost

- [6] 無得，煎迫轉燒；積昧亡途，久迷休復。於是我三一分身，景尊弥施訶，戢隱真威，同人出代；神天宣慶，室女誕聖於大秦，景宿告祥，波斯覩耀以來貢。圓廿四聖，

and falling short, the burning of their compulsion became the very spit on which they were roasted. In deepening darkness, at a loss for the road ahead, [they were] for a long time misled and resigned from starting over.

Therefore, our Three-in-One divided His Godhead,¹³ the *Jing-Honored Mishihe*,¹⁴ humbly setting aside his true majesty, appeared in the world as a man. Angels proclaimed the glad tidings, and a virgin gave birth to the holy one in Da Qin. A bright star announced the propitious event, and Persians saw the splendor and brought tribute.¹⁵ Fulfilling the twenty-four sages

- [7] 有說之舊法，理家國於大猷；設三一淨風無言之新教，陶良用於正信。制八境之度，鍊塵成真，啟三常之門，開生滅死。懸景日以破暗府，魔妄於是乎悉摧；棹慈

good; he introduced [the theory of] the mysterious identity [of being and not-being] into the evil that resulted.” Moule, 35-56.

¹² In the “365 sects” or “365 seeds [to germinate and develop],” the number is probably a euphemism indicating a large number and variety, as in “as many sects as there are days in a year.” Saeki, however, translates “three hundred sixty-five (spiritual beings) with different seeds (of error),” and he understands this to be a reference to the Gnostic term, *Abraxas*, from which Saeki concludes that Jingjing “was well versed in Gnosticism—both Alexandrian and Syrian—as he was well versed in Buddhism and Taoism.” *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 54, 46-47. James Montgomery explains that *Abraxas* was a collective name used in pagan magical incantations borrowing from Judaic, Christian, and various pagan traditions to represent the individual names of the 365 (many) angels or deities, in order to exercise power over them by the use of their name. *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur, University of Pennsylvania, the Museum, Publications of the Babylonian Section* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913), 57-59.

¹³ For a study on approaches to translating this phrase, see, Suter.

¹⁴ *Mishihe* 弥施訶 is a transliteration of the Syriac form of Messiah, which sounds like *m^ešihā’*.

¹⁵ According to Church of the East tradition, Persians were the “wise men from the East” who followed the star to Jerusalem (where King Herod directed them to Bethlehem) to find the one born king of the Jews so that they might honor him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mt 2:1-12).

that hold the discourses of the Old Law,¹⁶ he brought order to families and to states by his Great Principles. [He] put on display the Three-in-One Holy Spirit's new teaching that is without words, cultivating goodness by means of a heart set on genuine morality and justice.¹⁷ He instituted the eight domains of consummate virtue,¹⁸ purging worldly dross to realize the authentic, and he expounded the gateway of the three constants,¹⁹ proclaiming life and abolishing death. Suspending a *Jing*/brilliant sun to smash darkened principalities,²⁰ the Devil's lies were thus altogether demolished. [The Messiah] rowed

[8] 航以登明宮，含靈於是乎既濟。能事斯畢，亭午昇真。經留廿七部，張元化以發靈開。法浴水風，滌浮華而潔虛白；印持十字，融四照以合無拘。擊木震仁惠之音；東

¹⁶ The Hebrew Bible canon contains twenty-four books, though later Christian practice reorganized the "Old Testament" into thirty-nine books or more, depending on the branch of the Christian church. The Old Testament Peshitta, a Syriac translation based on the Hebrew scriptures, dates from the second century CE.

¹⁷ This difficult passage seems to focus on the Christ's revelation or introduction of the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. In describing Church of the East doctrine of the Trinity in his 1298 handbook on Christian theology and practice, Abdisho bar Berika (Mar Odisho), Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisbin) and Armenia, described the three "co-essential properties" of the one God as Mind, Wisdom, and Life, whom we also call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "proceeds" or is "put forth" from the Godhead without being separated from the Godhead. Mar O'Dishoo, 9-11. The Messiah's life demonstrated the power to live a life of holistic goodness. Where the Messiah, as a person of the Three-in-One, inherently possessed this divine power, the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer makes this power available to the believer. The Holy Spirit is presented here in the stele text as working silently within the believer, teaching without words, to cultivate goodness and to renew the heart that was deceived and darkened by sin. The teaching is "new" in that the Holy Spirit's permanent indwelling of believers began at Pentecost. For scriptural context, see, John 16.4-15, and Acts 2. On the Fall's effect on the heart, see, Lines 4-6, above. I have translated *she* 設 as "[he] put on display" to match the silence of the "new teaching that is without words," but it might also be translated as "[he] instituted" or "[he] established." That alternative, however, also seems less likely because it would remove mention of the Messiah's exemplary role—an important aspect of Church of the East Christology—and focus solely on his agency in sending the Holy Spirit. On *Jingjiao* authors' translation choices for the third person of the Trinity in addition to *jingfeng* 淨風, see Lieu, "Lost in Transcription?—the Theological Vocabulary of Christian Texts in Central Asia and China," in *Winds of Jingjiao*, 360.

¹⁸ The eight Beatitudes comprise the eight domains of consummate virtue: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3–10).

¹⁹ The three constants are faith, hope, and love: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Co 13:13).

²⁰ Moule is probably correct in suggesting that this references the Crucifixion. Moule, 37.

the boat of compassion, thus ascending to the Palace of Light, and those who have souls, by this means, are completely ferried across to salvation.²¹ Having brought matters thus to completion, at midday [he] ascended to [his] true [position in heaven].²²

The scriptures he left behind are twenty-seven books,²³ setting forth the epochal transformation in order to enlighten souls.²⁴ The ordinance of baptism by water and by Spirit purifies of superficial concerns and cleanses the heart of evil desires.²⁵ The sign of holding the cross permeates and illuminates the four directions by bringing unity without distortions.²⁶ Striking the wood²⁷ arouses [monks] with the sound of fellow-kindness and forbearance;

- [9] 礼，趣生榮之路。存鬚所以有外行，削頂所以無內情。不畜臧獲，均貴賤於人；不聚貨財，示罄遺於我。齋以伏識而成，戒以靜慎為固。七時礼讚，大庇存亡；七日一薦

²¹ To help to explain the saving work of the Messiah, the text borrows the well-known image of Guanyin helming the boat that delivered those who call upon him from the fate of Buddhist hell to rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha.

²² Or, “at midday [he] ascended to the perfected [realm].” This alternative translation would draw on the Daoist idea of the “perfected,” or one who had actualized or brought to completion his inherent qualities, where the “perfected realm” would be the heaven for such beings. Such a syncretistic description of Christ’s Incarnation, however, carries a heretical implication (a loss of divinity rather than “humbly setting aside his true majesty”) that is not otherwise warranted by the text and that contradicts the Church of the East’s Christology emphasizing Christ’s two distinct natures, divine and human, united in one person.

²³ The twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The Peshitta, a standardized Syriac text of the Bible was universally used in Syriac-speaking churches of the Persian and Roman Empires by the sixth century. The Peshitta text “almost completely matched the text in use in the eastern Roman Empire.” Wilmshurst, 44.

²⁴ The “epochal transformation” is the death and resurrection of Christ.

²⁵ According to the Church of the East’s theology, the ordinance of baptism by immersion in water “is received, through the Holy Spirit, for the gift of adoption of sons, for the resurrection from the dead, and for everlasting life; which is ‘the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.’” Mar O’Dishoo, 51-52. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is a metaphor for the Christian believer’s receiving the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

²⁶ Holding the cross declares the presence of God, the Savior, who provides the remission of sins and the renewal of creation. Mar Odisio writes, “The cross is the name of Christ, being equivalent to our saying the killed the worshipped, and does not designate wood, silver, or brass. Now the great foundation of Christianity is the confession that through the Cross renewal and universal salvation were obtained for all, and that Cross which we use is the same sign of our Lord as is to appear in the heavens before His advent, as He Himself has foretold.” Ibid., 67.

²⁷ The common practice in the Church of the East was to strike a *simandron*, a wooden plank hanging from ropes, to call the faithful to worship. Baumer, 125.

ritually turning east,²⁸ they press onward on the path of life and glory. They preserve their beards to show that they have outward works to do, and they shave the crowns of their heads to indicate that they are without inner lusts. They do not keep chattel and wenches,²⁹ but hold to the equality of the high and the lowly as persons. They do not amass wealth and property, but model self-sacrifice and self-denial for us. They fulfill the purification of mind and body using seclusion and meditation, and they sanctify themselves using quietness and vigilance to become steadfast. Seven times a day they worship by offering praises [to God], greatly protecting the living and the dead.³⁰ Once every seven days, they make a sacrificial offering

[10] 洗心反素。真常之道，妙而難名，功用昭彰，強稱景教。惟道非聖不弘，聖非道不大；道聖符契，天下文明。[[[] 太宗文皇帝，光華啓運，明聖臨人，大秦國有上德，曰阿

to purify the heart and to regain purity.³¹

²⁸ Mar Odisho explains that “The rule of worshipping toward the east is an apostolic canon” that anticipates the return of Christ, for according Mt. 24:27, Christ will appear in the East when he returns at the End of the Age to judge the world. Devotionally, the worshipper is encouraged to avoid sin, mindful of the judgment to come at the End of the Age, and to repent of sin, remembering the judgment of sin in the Garden of Eden which was situated in the East. Mar_O’Dishoo, 64-66.

²⁹ These terms for male and female slaves are pejorative, reflecting the Church’s position against slaveholding.

³⁰ Baumer, noting that the essence of the Church of the East’s liturgy dates from the fifth century, describes the symbolic liturgy for the dead thus: “The mass is not celebrated on the day of the burial, which normally occurs on the same day or the day after the death and for which just a prayer is sung in the church. The funeral mass takes place on the third day. As Christ rose on the third day, the deceased, on the third day after his or her death, participates through the Eucharistic celebration in the resurrection of Christ.” Baumer, 126.

³¹ Legge assures that the service refers to the Eucharist. Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsü-an Fû in Shen-Hsü, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State*, 9. Moule concurs, translating 薦jian as “‘a sacrifice without the animal’ (i.e., a bloodless sacrifice).” Moule, 56. This description of monkish practice includes four of the mysteries or sacraments that the Church of the East has acknowledged—baptism, the sacrifice or eucharist, the sign of the cross, and consecration to monastic life—but, as Winkler points out, the Church of the East has discussed its mysteries while being less concerned than the Western Church with enumerating the mysteries, with the result that the first known authoritative enumeration postdates this stele by almost 500 years. Dietmar W. Winkler, “Theological Transfer: How Did Monks from China Influence East Syriac Sacramental Theology?,” in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. Li Tang and Dietmar W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2016).

The true and unchanging—this Dao—is marvelous and difficult to name, but the merit of its practice is obvious, so putting a strong effort into it,³² we call it “*Jingjiao*.”³³ Verily, a Dao not associated with the sage-sovereign does not spread, and a sage-sovereign not associated with the Dao does not become great, but the Dao [bearing] the sage-sovereign’s credentialing tally [brings to] the subcelestial realm culture and enlightenment.

The *honored*³⁴ Taizong, the Cultured Emperor (r. 626 – 649), as his glory began its turn of destiny, with insight and wisdom presided over the people, and in the kingdom of Da Qin there was a Highest Virtue³⁵ named

- [11] 羅本。占青雲而載真經，望風律以馳艱險。貞觀九祀，至於長安。帝使宰臣房公玄齡，惣仗西郊，賓迎入內。翻經書殿，問道禁闈；深知正真，特令傳授。貞觀十有二

Aluoben.³⁶ Holding [ambitions as high as] a cloud in the blue sky and with carts loaded with the true scriptures, he looked to [his monastic] Rule for guidance, and by this means sped through [the journey’s] difficulties and perils. In the ninth year of the Zhenguan Era

³² Legge sees in the “strong effort” here an allusion to Chapter 25 of the *Daodejing*, where Laozi does not know the name of the primordial system, so he “give[s] it the designation of the Tao (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great” Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fû in Shen-Hsi, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State*, 9. For Legge’s translation of the *Daodejing* text, see Legge, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism*, 67.

³³ Literally, “The Luminous Religion.” This name may refer to the idea in the Church of the East’s scholastic tradition that Christianity is a form of learning, and the mind illumined by God can use its rational faculties to discern the mysterious image of the transcendent God. See Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, 180-81.

³⁴ This term verbally represents the non-verbal honorific present in the text in the form of a space or *que* before the emperor’s name. Presented, thus, in italics, but without note hereafter.

³⁵ A “Highest Virtue” (*shangde* 上德) is probably a superlative rank for a bishop, here anticipating the high rank (metropolitan bishop) that Gaozong grants Aluoben in Line 15. Used elsewhere in this text, a “Great Virtue” (*dade* 大德) is the Chinese term for the Sanskrit *bhadanta*, a Buddhist term of respect for a monk (especially of the Hinayana school). This title appears to distinguish rank, as from the lesser rank of “monk” (*seng* 僧) also used elsewhere in the text. A “Great Virtue” is the *Jingjiao* title for a bishop. Foster, *The Church of the T’ang Dynasty*, 43; Lieu, “Epigraphica Nestoriana Serica,” in *Exegisti Monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams*, 233-34. The emperor granted or ratified the “Great Virtue” title of state. Forte, “The Edict of 638 Allowing the Diffusion Christianity in China,” in *L’inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, 356.

³⁶ Aluoben 阿羅本 may be a transcription of the Syriac name, “Yahballaha.” Wilmshurst notes a similarity in meaning between the names, translating the Syriac as “God has given,” and suggesting “God is my origin” for the Chinese. Wilmshurst, 122.

[635 CE], he reached Chang'an. The emperor dispatched the prime minister, Duke Fang Xuanling (579 – 648), to lead an honor guard to the western suburbs where the visitor was received and conducted to the palace.³⁷ [Aluoben] translated scriptures in the imperial library, and [the emperor] inquired into their teaching within the palace court. With his profound understanding of the upright and pure, [the emperor] specially commanded [that the teaching] should be taught to others.

In the Zhenguan Era's twelfth

[12] 年，秋七月，詔曰：「道無常名，聖無常體；隨方設教，密濟群生。大秦國大德阿羅本，遠將經像，來獻上京。詳其教旨，玄妙無為；觀其元宗，生成立要。詞無繁說，理有忘筌；

year, the seventh month [638 CE, between August 15 and September 12] in the fall season, the imperial proclamation read as follows:

The Dao does not have a constant name; the sage does not have a constant incarnation. As religions are established to suit their regions, they combine to succor all peoples. The kingdom of Da Qin's Great Virtue *Aluoben* from that distant place brought along scriptures and images, and came to present them at Our high capital. Having carefully examined this religion's meaning, it is mysterious, marvelous, and conforming to the principle of non-action (*wu-wei*). Considering its fundamental ideals, they engender, mature, and establish what is essential. Its expression is without voluminous discourse, and its truth persists [in practice] even after the words are forgotten.³⁸

³⁷ According to *Honored Persons and Sacred Books* (Zunjing 尊經), a *Jingjiao* text found in the Mogao Grottoes' "library cave" near Dunhuang, Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng (580 – 643) together presented to the emperor a memorial requesting that the scriptures brought by Aluoben be translated. For a recent translation of that text, see Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and Its Literature in Chinese: Together with a New English Translation of the Dunhuang Nestorian Documents*, 184-88. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 was an early advisor to Taizong, even prior to Taizong ascending the throne, and he was considered to be a model chancellor in service to the emperor, see *Jiu Tangshu* 66.2459-67, and *Xin Tangshu* 96.3853-58. Wei Zheng 魏徵 had served on the staff of crown prince Li Jiancheng, Taizong's brother and rival for the throne, where Wei had been critical of Taizong, but emperor Taizong valued the criticism that Wei ever remained faithful to give, and so kept him on as an official—even as a chancellor, see *Jiu Tangshu* 71.2545-63, *Xin Tangshu* 97.3867-85.

³⁸ "After the words are forgotten," literally, "forgetting the fish trap," *wang quan* 忘筌, is an allusion to the *Zhuangzi*: "The fish trap exits because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exits because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?" *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, 140. *Zhuangzi* 莊子 9. Zapian 雜篇, section 26.

- [13] 濟物利人，宜行天下。所司即於京義寧坊，造大秦寺一所，度僧廿一人。」宗周德喪，青駕西昇；巨唐道光，景風東扇。旋令有司，將帝寫真，轉摸寺壁。天姿汎彩，英朗

It is helpful to other living beings and benefits the person, so it ought to be practiced in the subcelestial realm. Let there be appointed officials immediately in the capital's Yining ward to construct a Da Qin monastery and to ordain twenty-one persons as monks.

The virtue of the Zhou ancestors died away, and the dark carriage's driver³⁹ has ascended in the west. The Dao of the Great Tang glows, and a *Jing* wind blows eastward to fan it.⁴⁰

Immediately following the decree, officials took in hand a portrait of the emperor and transposed it to make a fresco on a wall of the monastery. The [Son of] Heaven's figure floated in colorful hues, its nobility resonant in the

- [14] 景門；聖迹騰祥，永輝法界。案《西域圖記》及漢魏史策，大秦國，南統珊瑚之海，北極衆寶之山；西望仙境花林，東接長風弱水。其土出火綃布，返覓香，明月珠，夜光璧。

Jing [monastery's] entrance [hall], so the Sage-sovereign's traces piled up auspiciousness, forever radiant in the congregation.

According to *The Illustrated Record of the Western Region*⁴¹ and the historical records of the Han and of the Wei dynasties, the kingdom of Da Qin to its south connects with the Coral Sea, to the north reaches to the Manifold Jewels Mountains, to its west looks toward the transcendently beautiful region of the Florescent Forest, and to its east meets strong winds and weak waters. Its land produces asbestos cloth, soul-restoring incense, bright-moon pearls, and night-shining gems.

³⁹ Laozi is said to have left China riding a dark ox or driving a carriage drawn by a dark ox.

⁴⁰ Where the quotation of the emperor's decree ends is not clear. As Moule observes, Wylie includes these two sentences in the quotation, but these lines seem to me more like a *Jingjiao* editorial comment on the edict than the emperor's assessment of the newcomer religion. Furthermore, the *jing* in "a *Jing* wind" *jingfeng* 景風 is the distinctively written *jing* of *Jingjiao* 景教 (topped with a *kou* 口 rather than a *ri* 日), and official government writings never adopted the "*Jingjiao*" name. Therefore, I have followed Moule, Pelliot, and the *Tang huiyao*. Still, the likes of Legge and Saeki end the decree and resume the narrative even earlier with the building of the monastery in the Yining ward. See Moule, 39.

⁴¹ The *Tongdian* 通典, an encyclopedic administrative history written by Du You 杜佑 in 801, cites from this text in its descriptions of Kucha (龜茲 Qiuci), Ferghana (大宛 Dayuan), and Tocharia (吐火羅 Tuhuoluo). *Tongdian* 191.20b, 192.11a, and 195.24a

- [15] 俗無寇盜，人有樂康。法非景不行，主非德不立；土宇廣潤，文物昌明。[[[高宗大帝，克恭纘祖，潤色真宗；而於諸州各置景寺，仍崇阿羅本，為鎮國大法主。法流十

The commoners are without bandits and thieves, and persons enjoy happiness and peace of mind. Religions other than *Jingjiao* are not practiced, and rulers who are not virtuous rulers are not established. Its territory is extensive, and its culture is flourishing and enlightened.

The most honored Gaozong, the Great Emperor (r. 649 – 683), succeeding in reverently following in the line of his ancestors, embellished the luster of the True Religion. So, in each of the various prefectures, a *Jing* monastery was established, and at the same time, [His Majesty] elevated Aluoben to become Defender Lord of the Great Doctrine.⁴² The Doctrine spread through the Ten

- [16] 道，國富元休；寺滿百城，家殷景福。聖曆年，釋子用壯，騰口於東周；先天末，下士大笑，訕謗於西鎬。有若僧首羅含，大德及烈；並金方貴緒，物外高僧。共振玄網，俱維

Circuits,⁴³ and the state prospered and enjoyed great repose. Monasteries were built in the hundred cities,⁴⁴ and families prospered by the blessings of *Jingjiao*.

In the Shengli years (c. 698 – 700), the disciples of Sakyamuni [Buddha] flaunted their strength, rising up to speak [against *Jingjiao*] in Eastern Zhou [Luoyang].⁴⁵ At the

⁴² John Foster argues that this title is equivalent to “Metropolitan of China.” Aluoben probably was elevated by Catholicos Isho‘yahb III (r. 649–59), and Tang Gaozong so appointed Aluoben in the public sphere of the state. Foster, *The Church of the T'ang Dynasty*, 62-64. However, Wilmshurst points out that Abdisho of Nisibis (d. 1318) says that Catholicos Sliba-zkha (r. 714-28) raised China from a diocese to metropolitan status. Wilmshurst, 123-24. Supporting Foster, Young reasons that two distant “metropolitans in the East” whom Isho‘yahb III mentions but does not identify in a letter (c. 651) are most likely metropolitans in China and Samarkand. He argues that the best explanation for harmonizing evidence from Isho‘yahb’s letter to the monks of Qatar and Abdisho’s record of Sliba-zkha’s action is that the metropolinate of China was first created by Isho‘yahb III, but that the office sometime during the ensuing sixty-plus years went vacant until it was reestablished by Sliba-zkha. Young, 91-92. Whatever the ecclesiastical title may have been, it seems that Gaozong granted Aluoben a state title as head of the Church of the East in China.

⁴³ The Tang dynasty’s Ten Circuits, or administrative regions, were Guannei 关内, Henan 河南, Hedong 河東, Hebei 河北, Shannan 山南, Huainan 淮南, Jiangnan 江南, Longyou 隴右, Jiannan 剑南, and Lingnan 岭南. The point, however, is not the specific circuits, but that the Doctrine became widespread in China.

⁴⁴ The number here probably is not meant to be a strict 100, but to represent “many.” It does seem, however, that *Jingjiao* monasteries were primarily an urban phenomenon.

⁴⁵ The Shengli Era lasted less than 2 ½ years (December 20, 697 to May 26, 700), during the reign of Wu Zetian (r. ended 705 CE). The sites of persecution are named somewhat obliquely within the text’s parallel structure. Luoyang appears as Dong Zhou 東周. Wu Zetian had entered the palace as one of emperor Taizong’s concubines (636), became a consort of his son, emperor Gaozong, around 650, and then was promoted to be Gaozong’s empress (655). She later proclaimed herself emperor of the new Zhou

end of Xiantian (713), scholars of the lowest class laughed heartily, slandering and vilifying it in Xihao [Chang'an].⁴⁶ But there were Chief Monk⁴⁷ Luohan and Great Virtue Jilie,⁴⁸ both of noble descent from the Western Regions, transcendent and eminent monks. Together they restored [*Jingjiao*'s] abstruse net,⁴⁹ joining to tie together

dynasty (690 – 705 CE), making Luoyang her capital and renaming it Shendu 神都, the Divine Capital. Jingjing used neither “Luoyang” nor “Shendu,” but harked back to the Eastern Zhou (Dong Zhou) dynasty (770 – 255 BCE) which had made its capital in the place upon which Luoyang was built. Antonino Forte suggests that *Jingjiao* may have gotten caught in a reform effort following the fall of interests that had identified Emperor Wu as the Maitreya, a millenarian Buddha. The fringe Maitreyan movement's end was marked by the burning of the *Mingtang* 明堂 on December 8, 694, followed by the murder of Huaiyi 懷義, the movement's chief proponent, on February 22, 695. Political crises accompanied these events, and more mainstream officials and Buddhist leaders sought to quiet unrest by banning spurious texts that had been used to link Wu Zetian with the Maitreya. As a result, the Great Zhou Catalog (Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu 大周刊定衆經目錄) was published December 7, 695. It underwent serious revisions in 699-700, and though we do not have the full edict authorizing the revision and though the year 700 revised Great Zhou Catalog that has been preserved in Buddhist sources only lists proscribed apocryphal Buddhist texts, Forte argues that the full scope of the revision likely included some non-Buddhist texts such as the texts of *Jingjiao*. Forte, "Some Considerations on the Historical Value of the Great Zhou Catalogue," in *Chugoku Nihon Kyoten Shosho Mokuroku* 中國-日本經典章疏目錄 (*Catalogues of Scriptures and Their Commentaries in China and Japan*).

⁴⁶ Tang Ruizong (second r. July 25, 710 – September 8, 712) was a devout Daoist, as was Princess Taiping, the aunt who politically dominated Ruizong. Xuanzong had just ascended the throne and begun the Xiantian Era in September 712, but Ruizong retained power as the retired emperor until the end of July, 713. The allusion to Chapter 41 of the *Daodejing* indicates that these persecutors of *Jingjiao* were Daoists: 下士聞道，大笑之。“When scholars of the lowest class hear about the Dao, they laugh heartily at it.” Chang'an appears in the text as Xihao 西鎬 (Western Hao). The capital of the Western Zhou (c. 1050 – 770 BCE) had been Haojing, but the city was renamed Xihao when the Zhou capital was moved east, beginning the Eastern Zhou period. The actual site of Xihao lay near and to the west of Chang'an, but “Xihao” also came to be used as a generic name for the capital of the Chinese empire.

⁴⁷ Probably the abbot of the Chang'an monastery, but, based upon the Buddhist title from which this *Jingjiao* title is borrowed, the scope of the Chief Monk's authority might have been greater than a single monastery.

⁴⁸ Great Virtue Jilie was also part of a delegation sent by the king of Persia in 732, recorded in the *Cefu yuangui* as follows: “[Kaiyuan era], twentieth year: in the ninth month, the king of Persia sent Supervisor Pan Nami and Great Virtue monk Jilie bearing tribute to the Court,” [開元]二十年 . . . 九月波斯王遣首領潘那密與大德僧及烈朝貢. *Cefu yuangui* 971.10a.

⁴⁹ See *Daodejing* 73. The “abstruse net” or “mystic mainstay” (*xuangang* 玄網) presents the image of a mainstay or the major cord of a mystic net to which connects all other strings. It represents the implicit fundamental laws and moral rules that hold together human society, as if revealed (darkly) from Heaven. The Daoist Wu Yun 吳筠 (d. 778), in 754, presented a treatise to Emperor Xuanzong entitled, “*The Mystic Mainstay*” or “*The Theory of the Mystic Mainstay*” (玄網 or 玄網論). Jan de Meyer describes Wu Yun's purpose in *The Mystic Mainstay* as “to summarize the essence of the Three Caverns (i.e., the core of the Daoist canon . . .) and to elucidate the profundities of” the teachings of the Dao. de Meyer, 42. As Jingjing looks back on this period of the restoration of the *Jingjiao* Church and its teaching, he appears to be using a contemporary term or even to be alluding directly to an intervening Daoist work on the fundamental teachings of Daoist scriptures to show that attacks on *Jingjiao* and the

[17] 絕紐。[] [] 玄宗至道皇帝，令寧國等五王親，臨福宇，建立壇場。法棟暫撓而更崇，道石時傾而復正。天寶初，令大將軍高力士，送五聖寫真，寺內安置；賜絹百 the severed knot.⁵⁰

The most honored Xuanzong, the Highest-Principled Emperor (r. 712 – 756), directed the Prince of Ning (679 – 742) and four other princes to personally oversee the blessed precincts and the rebuilding of the sanctuary.⁵¹ The doctrine's ridgepole had been temporarily weakened but was again high, the Dao's stone for a season was toppled, but was again set upright. At the beginning of the Tianbao Era (742 – 756), [the emperor] directed General-in-Chief Gao Lishi (684 – 762) to take faithful portraits of the Five Emperors⁵² and place them in the monastery, and to bestow one hundred bolts of silk,

subsequent damages sustained by the Church had not simply been the vandalization of monasteries, but also the destruction of *Jingjiao* scriptures or writings.

⁵⁰This apparently refers to efforts to restore damage caused by the disruption in the office of Metropolitan of China that may have occurred during Wu Zetian's Zhou dynasty, after Catholicos Isho'yahb III made Aluoben metropolitan around 650. The vacancy led to Catholicos Sliba-zkha (r. 714-28) reestablishing the metropolitan province in the early eighth century as discussed in note 42, above. According to another point of view, rather than seeing Luohan and Jilie here reestablishing of *Jingjiao*'s organizational and doctrinal integrity, R. Todd Godwin contends that Jingjing is here asserting the agency of *Jingjiao* in the Tang as one who plays a vital role in the restoration of the empire. Godwin describes Luohan and Jilie coming to China imbued with the charisma of Persian sovereigns (as that charisma persisted from Sasanian times and continued in some Central Asian principalities) as a result of the Church of the East's long partnership with the Sasanian imperial enterprise. The Chinese emperor similarly bestowed upon Luohan and Jilie, *Jingjiao*'s representatives, a share in his charisma as persons or as an institution recognized by the court. Bearing the emperor's charismatic power, they/the Church appropriately contributed the power of their own worldly asceticism to establish and to preserve the empire. Accordingly, Godwin suggests that "the mysterious net" or "the abstruse net" (*xuanwang* 玄網) should be understood in the sense of "the imperial net." By "restoring the imperial net," Godwin argues, Luohan and Jilie reestablished *Jingjiao*'s role as an extension of the emperor to restore and preserve the Tang empire through the ascetic practice of the *Jingjiao* Church. Godwin, 139-86. I am not sure that this clause can bear the weight of Godwin's analysis, for the text does not link these monks to an emperor who might have imbued them with his charismatic power, but they are presented only in the context of *Jingjiao*'s recovery from persecution. Godwin's idea that the Christians saw empire-preserving power in the contribution of their asceticism, however, is born out in the following two paragraphs that show the renewal of intimate relations between the court and *Jingjiao* to be closely linked to the restoration of the empire's grandeur under Xuanzong.

⁵¹ Xuanzong's dear elder brother, Li Chengqi—name changed to Li Xian in 716—was made Prince of Ning in 719. Xuanzong enjoyed keeping company with a tight-knit group of five princes, of whom Xian was the eldest. The four other princes mentioned are Xuanzong's brothers, Chengyi, Fan, and Ye, as well as his cousin Shouli. See *Jiu Tangshu* 95.3011 and *Xin Tangshu* 81.3597.

⁵² Emperors Gaozu (r. 618 – 626), Taizong (r. 626 – 649), Gaozong (r. 649 – 683), Ruizong (r. 684 – 690, 710 – 712), and Xuanzong (r. 712 – 756). Probably Zhongzong (r. 684, 705-710) was omitted because he was a weak ruler whose five-year reign was dominated by his wife, Empress Wei. Ruizong, himself, was not a particularly strong emperor, but he was Xuanzong's father.

[18] 足，奉慶睿圖。龍髯雖遠，弓劒可攀；日角舒光，天顏咫尺。三載，大秦國有僧佉和，瞻星向化，望日朝尊。詔僧羅含、僧普論等一七人，與大德佉和，於興慶宮修功德。於

and [the *Jing* monastery] received the emperors' portraits deferentially and with celebration. Even if the Emperors' beards should be distant, their bows and swords are within reach; their noble foreheads diffuse light, and their imperial countenances are as close as can be.⁵³

In the third year [of Tianbao] (744 CE), there was, in the state of Da Qin, a Monk Jihe, who looked up to the star [the Emperor] and submitted [to his rule],⁵⁴ turning toward the sun, he presented himself to the Court to venerate [the emperor].⁵⁵ An imperial order commanded Monk Luohan, Monk Pulun,⁵⁶ and others, altogether seven

⁵³ As one gazed upon the portraits of the five emperors that had been installed in the monastery (probably, as before, as a fresco), even for those emperors remote in time (whose beards were distant), one could still sense their power (bows and swords at hand), and their wise countenances made the sense of them present to the observer. The vivacity of the five emperors' presence argues that they approve of *Jingjiao*, recognizing the past contribution of the Church to the welfare of the empire, and by their presence in the sanctuary rebuilt by the state along with the active involvement of the five living princes, Jingjing presses the argument that Xuanzong restored the standing of the *Jingjiao* Church as a valued contributor to the welfare of the empire.

⁵⁴ Jihe sought repose under the emperor's protection and rule. Reading "looked up to the star" (瞻星) in the context of the light-diffusing portraits of the Five Emperors, it seems that the shining star is Xuanzong in his personal, living glory. Indeed, Xuanzong's posthumous name was the "Brilliant Emperor" (*Minghuang* 明皇). This makes for a nice parallelism as Jihe "looks up to the star" and "turn[s] toward the sun" to change his loyalty from the Umayyad caliph and to become a person of Tang (*Tangren* 唐人) upon his dispatch from the mother Church in Da Qin. Further evidence of Xuanzong's resplendence appears immediately in the following line as the emperor's handwriting on the monastery's name-plaque is seen "rising up to challenge the sun [in splendor]." John Foster is probably correct in suggesting that Jihe came as part of an embassy from the Umayyad caliph, and this served as the occasion prompting the 745 edict changing the name of the Persian Monastery to the Da Qin Monastery. Foster, *The Church of the Tang Dynasty*, 87-89. Not only was Da Qin (Syria) more accurate as to the origins of Christianity, but also the seat of the Umayyad caliph was in Syria.

⁵⁵ An allusion to the *Lunyu* 2/1: "The Master said, 'He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.'" Trans. Legge, *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, 121.

⁵⁶ While Chief Monk Luohan was one of the monks of noble-heritage who led in reestablishing *Jingjiao* after difficult times (line 16), Monk Pulun is mentioned only here.

persons, to assist Great Virtue Jihe in the Xingqing Palace⁵⁷ to perform ritual services of merit.⁵⁸

[19] 是，天題寺榜，額戴龍書。寶裝璀璨，灼爍丹霞；睿扎宏空，騰凌激日。寵賚比南山峻極，沛澤與東海齊深。道無不可，所可可名；聖無不作；所作可述。[][] 肅宗文明皇

Then, His Majesty inscribed a temple name-plaque, and the placard bore the Dragon calligraphy.⁵⁹ [The placard was] decorated in gleaming bright-blue jewels on a shining vermillion cloud. The Sagacious Emperor's writing pervaded the space, rising up to challenge the sun [in splendor]. His gracious favor was like the Southern Mountains' lofty peaks,⁶⁰ his overflowing beneficence was as deep as the Eastern Sea. There is nothing that the Dao cannot do, and that which it can do can be named. There is nothing that the sage-sovereign cannot accomplish, and that which he accomplishes can be recounted.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Xuanzong had the Xingqing Palace built in the old Longqing ward (隆慶坊) in 714 (and later variously expanded) as the third of Chang'an's urban palaces. It was along Chang'an's eastern wall, catty-corner (NE) to the Eastern Market, within the residential area for high officials. This was Xuanzong's favorite palace, and he made it the place of his own residence, but subsequent emperors preferred to live in the Daming 大明 Palace. Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History of Medieval China*, 97-105. Seven monks were usually assigned to a small institution, such as a shrine. Forte, "The Edict of 638 Allowing the Diffusion Christianity in China," in *L'inscription Nestorienne De Si-Ngan-Fou*, 358-59.

⁵⁸ That the monk Jihe was also a "great virtue" or bishop further suggests that he was sent by the Church to the Tang court to be a high-ranking member of the Church institution in China. Perhaps Xuanzong reflected upon the value that the Church had added to the Persian empire and to the Umayyad caliphate with the result that those rulers included Church leaders in their embassies to the Tang court, and so Xuanzong decided to open another channel for incorporating the nation-sustaining ascetic power of *Jingjiao*. Thus, he assigned Jihe to leading the other monks in holding "ritual services of merit," probably chanted prayer services, in the Xingqing Palace. The staff of seven monks was appropriate for a minor institution, so, while smaller than the major *Jingjiao* monastery in the Yining ward, the Church could celebrate that there was enough high-level interest in *Jingjiao* to warrant its new presence in the Xingqing Palace. For more on the argument that this line in the stele text indicates that a new, permanent *Jingjiao* institution was installed in the Xingqing Palace, see Drake, "Nestorian Monasteries of the T'ang Dynasty: And the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet," 305-07.

⁵⁹ The emperor's own calligraphy was inscribed on the name-placard. According to the context, this name-placard was being displayed at the new, small *Jingjiao* institution in the Xingqing Palace where it lit up the worship area just as the portraits of the Five Emperors did in the Yining quarter monastery.

⁶⁰ The Southern Mountains lie south of Chang'an, part of the Qinling mountain range that forms a natural barrier between the Guanzhong plain and the Han River valley.

⁶¹ These parallel lines connect the omnipotent Dao to the all-achieving sage-sovereign, both of whose exploits can be reported. It makes a claim of intimate and mutually beneficial relations between Xuanzong (and his family) and *Jingjiao* as the true God's representative, and this tandem blesses mankind. The preceding report of the personal attentions of the emperor and of his dear kin, including the

The most honored Suzong, the Refined and Intelligent Emperor (r. 756 – 762),

- [20] 帝，於靈武等五郡，重立景寺。元善資而福祚開，大慶臨而皇業建。[[[代宗文武皇帝，恢張聖運，從事無為。每於降誕之辰，錫天香以告成功；頒御饌以光景衆。且

rebuilt the *Jing* monasteries at Lingwu commandery⁶² and others totaling five commanderies.⁶³ Great benevolence abounded and then blessings and Heaven-bestowed favor began, so great favor from Heaven descended, and then the imperial succession was established.⁶⁴

The most honored Daizong, the Refined and Martial Emperor (r. 762 -779), extended and stretched the imperial destiny, handling affairs by non-action (*wuwei*). Every [year] at the time of [his] birthday, [he] gave celestial incense for use in reporting to Heaven his meritorious accomplishments, and he gave a feast thereby to honor the *Jing* congregation. Furthermore,

- [21] 軋以美利，故能廣生；聖以體元，故能亨壽。[[[我建中聖神文武皇帝，披八政以黜陟幽明；闡九疇以惟新景命。化通玄理，祝無愧。心至於方大而虛，專靜而恕，廣

restoration of the original *Jingjiao* monastery and the founding of a shrine in the Xingqing Palace are proof of their close relations.

⁶² Lingwu Commandery 靈武郡 includes part of the western edge of the Ordos Plateau in modern Gansu Province and the Ningxia Autonomous Region (Tan, 5:40-41.). Sui dynasty Lingwu Commandery was renamed Ling Prefecture (*Lingzhou*) from the beginning of the Tang in 618 until 742 when its name was returned to Lingwu Commandery until 758, when the name again reverted to *Ling* Prefecture. Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 374-5.

⁶³ Saeki argues that 於靈武等五郡 should instead be translated “at Lingwu and Wujun.” He bases this translation on evidence in poetry and archaeological evidence that a *Jingjiao* monastery stood beside a place called Wujun in the district of Zhouzhi 豳州 near Chang’an. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 100, 362-85, 90-98. Saeki’s argument, however, ignores the normal grammatical use of *deng* 等 and the use of *deng* in line 18, above, which follows standard usage. The *Jingjiao* monastery at Wujun may well have been one of the four unspecified monasteries that Suzong rebuilt, but Jingjing had a sufficient command of Chinese to have used *wujun* 五郡 as a specific place name if he had wanted. For a more complete discussion of Saeki’s argument, see Drake, “Nestorian Monasteries of the T’ang Dynasty: And the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet,” 316-25.

⁶⁴ Jingjing argues that because Suzong honored God by rebuilding the *Jing* monasteries even before the final quelling of the An-Shi Rebellion (755 – 763), God blessed the emperor and established his reign. Suzong, however, may have been acting in the belief that the rebellion was practically over, for, as Pulleyblank notes, many at the time saw the retaking of Chang’an and Luoyang in 757 as the death knell for the rebellion. Pulleyblank, “The an Lu-Shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T’ang China,” in *Essays on T’ang Society: The Interplay of Social, Political, and Economic Forces*, 44.

Heaven, by means of excellent benefits, surely is able to extend life, and the sage-emperor, by means of embodying the Celestial Principles, is able to fully form and to mature [the people].⁶⁵

Our *most honored* Jianzhong era sage-emperor,⁶⁶ the Divinely Refined and Martial Emperor,⁶⁷ threw open the Eight Objects [of government]⁶⁸ in order to dismiss the incompetent and to promote the wise and able officials, and he opened to view the Nine Categories [of the Grand Design]⁶⁹ in order to rejuvenate the Mandate of *Jing*.⁷⁰ His reforms penetrate the mysterious principles, and those offering prayers [for him] are without any reservations of shame.⁷¹

⁶⁵ “To fully form and to mature” 亭毒 alludes to chapter 51 of the *Daodejing*: 故道生之，德畜之；長之育之；亭之毒之；養之覆之。 “Thus the way gives them life and rears them; brings them up and nurses them; *brings them to fruition and maturity*; feeds and shelters them.” (emphasis added) *Trans.* Laozi and Lau, 112.

⁶⁶ Jianzhong era (780 – 783)

⁶⁷ Dezong (r. 779 – 805).

⁶⁸ The “Eight Objects” or “Eight Policies” of government represent the administration of good government. According to *Book of Documents*, “The eight objects are as follows: the first is food, the second is material goods, the third is ceremonial sacrifice, the fourth is overseeing public works, the fifth is overseeing instruction, the sixth is overseeing criminals, the seventh is decorum toward guests [foreign policy], the eighth is fielding an army” 八政：一曰食，二曰貨，三曰祀，四曰司空，五曰司徒，六曰司寇，七曰賓，八曰師。 *Shangshu* 尚書 11. *Zhoushu*: hongfan 周書：洪範，section 5. According to the *Classic of Rites*, “The eight objects are as follows: food and drink, clothing, employment, making distinctions, measures of length, measures of capacity, numbering amounts, and regulating activity” 八政：飲食、衣服、事為、異別、度、量、數、制。 *Liji* 禮記 11. wangzi 王制，section 71.

⁶⁹ The Nine Categories of the Grand Design, of which the Eight Objects makes up one category, represents wise and righteous rule. When Yu stopped the flood by making paths for the water to drain, *Di* (High God) revealed to him the Nine Categories of the Grand Design, and Yu became one of ancient China’s legendary Five Thearchs, founding the Xia dynasty. See *Shangshu* 11. *Zhoushu*: hongfan.

⁷⁰ Jingjing here prefers “Mandate of *Jing*” 景令 to “Mandate of Heaven” 天令 in order to complete his argument that, as Suzong and Daizong experienced, Dezong’s rule is granted by the *Jing* God and will be blessed as the emperor honors God. By nesting the *Jing* God within allusions and appeals to these ancient, classical notions of Heaven ordained good government, Jingjing is claiming an identity of the *Jing* God with the *Di* and *Tian* of the ancient Chinese.

⁷¹ Those praying for the emperor and for the state are free from shame because the emperor’s virtue allows them to speak honestly with regard to the facts, for there are no dishonorable deeds that must be glossed over, leading to the shame of dissembling in one’s prayers. This is an allusion to Mr. Zuo’s commentary on Duke Zhao’s twentieth year: 若有德之君，外內不廢，上下無怨，動無違事，其祝史薦信，無愧心矣，是以鬼神用饗，國受其福，祝史與焉，其所以蕃祉老壽者，為信君使也，其言忠信於鬼神，其適遇淫君，... 其祝史薦信，是言罪也，其蓋失數美，是矯誣也，進退無辭，則虛以求媚，是以鬼神不饗其國以禍之，祝史與焉； “In the case of a ruler who has virtue, outside the palace and within it no one is lax in their duties, superiors and inferiors have no complaints, in no action does he violate duties, and the invocators and scribes set forth the truth. They have no cause to feel shame. For this reason the ghosts and spirits consume the offerings and the domain receives the blessings, and the invocators and scribes have their part in these blessings. The reason they enjoy blessings and longevity is that they are representatives of a ruler who shows good faith, and in their words they have shown loyalty and good faith to the ghosts and spirits. But it may happen that they encounter a

A heart that attains to morally right greatness but remains humble, that is entirely placid but tolerant of others, whose generous

- [22] 慈救衆苦，善貸被羣生者：我修行之大猷，汲引之階漸也。若使風雨時，天下靜，人能理，物能清，存能昌，歿能樂，念生響應，情發目誠者：我景力能事之功用也。大施

merciful care relieves the myriad sufferings, and whose readiness to meet needs extends to all who are living—this, our practice of the Great Principles, draws us upward step by step.⁷² If the wind and rain come in season, and the subcelestial realm enjoys tranquility, if persons are amenable to reason, and living beings are capable of honesty, if those who are living are capable of prospering, and those who are dying are capable of joy, if thoughts give rise to [physically] echoed responses, and the sentiments expressed in the eyes are those which are genuine,⁷³ it is because the efficacy of our *Jing* [God's] power to accomplish these matters.⁷⁴

- [23] 主，金紫光祿大夫，同朔方節度副使，試殿中監，賜紫袈裟，僧伊斯，和而好惠，聞道勤行。遠自王舍之城，聿來中夏。術高三代，藝博十全。始効節於丹庭，乃策名於王

profligate ruler . . . If his invocators and scribes set forth the truth, it is tantamount to bringing an indictment against him. But if they cover up his failures and enumerate his better points, it is tantamount to lying. For advancing and withdrawing alike they have no words of justification, and so with empty words they curry favor. For this reason the ghosts and spirits do not consume the domain's sacrifices but bring calamity down upon it, and the invocators and scribes have their part in this calamity." *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 20 (521 BCE). Trans. from Stephen W. Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1583.

⁷² The Great Principles are the teachings of Christ. See line 7 of this text. The upward progress could refer to the *Jing* disciple's progressive sanctification, or it could refer to his advancing up the political ladder as a result of pious moral virtue. The context favors the former.

⁷³ There is no duplicity because people's inner thoughts and emotions are not masked, but are truly and accurately manifest in the person's physical expression.

⁷⁴ "*Jing*" appears in the text as an adjective with an implied noun. Supplying "God," as I have done, is consistent with *Jing* theology, see lines 7 and 8 of this text. That, however, makes a bolder theological claim than would be present if the supplied noun is "religion." If the claim were limited to the practice of the *Jing* religion cultivating righteous hearts, then the work of God is implied, but non-monotheistic outsiders could overlook the offense of that claim while foregrounding a simpler idea of the *Jing* religion as a different constellation of ritual practices. Omitting the noun in order to permit different readings by insiders and by outsiders is a cleverly subtle way for the minority religion to navigate public discourse in a way that manages potential conflicts.

Our great patron, Grand Master for Splendid Happiness⁷⁵ who wears the golden fish bag and purple robes,⁷⁶ simultaneously Military Vice Commissioner of Shuofang⁷⁷ and Probationary Director of the Palace Administration,⁷⁸ conferred a purple cassock,⁷⁹ is the monk Yisi,⁸⁰ who is congenial and quick to show kindness, one who hears the Dao and diligently puts it into practice. He freely came to Zhongxia⁸¹ from the distant city of Wangshe.⁸² His craft is higher than that of the Three Dynasties,⁸³ and his skillfulness is as

⁷⁵ A Grand Master of Splendid Happiness was a civilian official enjoying a rank of 2b.

⁷⁶ Yisi had been granted both an official's purple robe and, as will be seen, a clerical purple robe. A golden bag in the shape of a fish that hung from the robe's belt, holding the official's credentials, and a purple robe were indicia of high office.

⁷⁷ Shuofang Jiedushi was the name of the military commission immediately north of Chang'an and headquartered in Ling Prefecture 靈州. On Ling Prefecture, formerly Lingwu Commandery, see note 61, above.

⁷⁸ A Director of the Palace Administration was responsible for supervising and provisioning the imperial household, and "Probationary" was normally added to the title upon appointment until the period for reconsideration was successfully completed.

⁷⁹ The emperor's gift of a purple monk's robe showed the emperor's special favor upon a cleric, for, though this gift did not grant the actual rank, the color purple was reserved for persons of the third rank and above.

⁸⁰ Moule notes that Yisi has been identified as Izd-buzid, who is listed in the Syriac portion of the stele text, and Moule credits the identification to Gueluy in 1895 and then independently to Pelliot in 1914. Moule, 43n34.

⁸¹ Zhongxia is an ancient name for China. For the history of Wangshe's identification, see *ibid.*

⁸² Wangshe is Balkh, a center of Silk Roads trade and of religious worship and learning in Bactria. There had been Christians in Bactria since the third century, and the Church of the East created a diocese there in 549. Wilmschurst, 77-78. Balkh lay within the area of Khurasan, and the Arab conquerors of that Persian province had stationed a garrison in Balkh since around the 720s while keeping the province's capital in Merv, but they moved the provincial capital to Balkh in 736 (118 AH) in anticipation of a greater military conflict with the Turgesh in Transoxania. Shaban, 121-24. Thus, it seems likely that Yisi gained his orientation to military life or perhaps even his military training from his contact with Muslim troops in Balkh.

⁸³ The "Three Dynasties" are ancient China's three dynasties, the Xia (c. 2070–c. 1600 BCE), the Shang (c. 1600-1046 BCE), and the Zhou (1046-256 BCE).

broad as perfection.⁸⁴ First [pledging] utmost loyalty to the vermillion court, then he put his name in the prince's register.⁸⁵

- [24] 帳。中書令汾陽郡王郭公子儀，初惣戎於朔方也。[] [] 肅宗俾之從邁。雖見親於卧內，不自異於行間。為公爪牙，作軍耳目。能散祿賜，不積於家；獻臨恩之頗黎，布

When it was the case that Duke Guo Ziyi, Secretariat Director and Commandery Prince of Fenyang, was first made Regional Commander for Shuofang [756], *the most honored* Suzong had this [Yisi] attached to the new command.⁸⁶ Although [Yisi] had personal access to the [Duke's] private quarters, he did not consider himself exceptional from the rank and file. He became the Duke's talons and fangs, and [he] acted as the army's ears and eyes.⁸⁷ Practiced in dispersing salary and rewards rather than letting it accumulate in his home, [he] made an offering [to the *Jing* monastery] of the crystal gems that came from his superior's largesse,

- [25] 辭憇之金闕。或仍其舊寺，或重廣法堂；崇飾廊宇，如翬斯飛。更効景門，依仁施利。每歲集四寺僧徒，虔事精供備諸五旬。餒者來而飫之，寒者來而衣之；病者療而

⁸⁴ This could be in praise of a vastly accomplished person, but the term “craft” (*shu* 術) might include special knowledge in technical, divinatory, or medical methods, and “perfection” (*shiquan* 十全) also might indicate that Yisi possessed advanced skills in the healing arts. Max Deeg argues that a contextual reading should conclude that “*shu* refers to areas such as astronomy, algebra and geometry and their application in prognostics—for which the first dynasties were well-known—, and *yi* [藝, ‘skillfulness’] should refer to diagnostics and the art of healing as such.” Deeg, “A Belligerent Priest--Yisi and His Political Context,” in *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 113-14.

⁸⁵ Yisi gained his commission, first pledging to the emperor (the vermillion court) loyalty unto death, then signing the prince's register. The prince in question is Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 (697 – 781), titled Commandery Prince of Fenyang (汾陽郡王).

⁸⁶ Guo Ziyi was one of Tang China's most important generals. He played a key role in ending the An Lushan Rebellion and, later, in fending off the Tibetan empire. See *Jiu Tangshu* 120.3449-75 and *Xin Tangshu* 137.4599-4614. Fenyang is in modern Shanxi province. Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, 5:46-47.

⁸⁷ According to the *Hanyu da cidian*, the metaphor, “talons and fangs,” could mean a bodyguard or a valiant warrior, and the metaphor, “ears and eyes,” could mean a trusted assistant or a scout for the army. Given that Yisi gained his commission (entered his name on the prince's register) through his faithful service in the prince's personal residence (the vermillion court), it is most likely that Yisi served as Duke Guo Ziyi's bodyguard and trusted assistant.

and of the woolen fabric interwoven with gold that he received when he took his leave to retire.⁸⁸ Sometimes restoring its old monasteries, sometimes doubling the size of a preaching hall, [he had] the eaves of the porticoes raised and adorned like koklass pheasants, all in flight.⁸⁹ Further taking *Jing* teaching as his model, he made “benevolence” the standard of his words and actions by donating his wealth. Every year, he gathers the monks of the four monasteries⁹⁰ to reverently devote themselves to purest offerings and devotions for all of fifty days.⁹¹ Those who are hungry come, and he feeds them; those who are cold come, and he clothes them; those who are sick, he succors them to health;

[26] 起之，死者葬而安之。清節達娑，未聞斯美；白衣景士，今見其人。願刻洪碑，以揚休烈。詞曰：

⁸⁸ The translation of this sentence is difficult. The *Tongdian* records that India was known for producing such fabric, though we cannot know this item’s origin. *Tongdian* 193.8a.

⁸⁹ The koklass pheasant in flight has on display all of its colorful plumage. Legge notes the allusion to the *Sigan* ode (Mao no. 189) in the *Classic of Odes* that praises the new palace and blesses the king who lives in it: “Like a man on tip-toe, in reverent expectation / Like an arrow, flying rapidly / Like a bird which has changed its feathers / *Like a pheasant on flying wings* / Is the [hall] which our noble lord will ascend” (trans. by Legge, emphasis added). Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsî-an Fû in Shen-Hsî, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State*, 25, note 1. James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes*, vol. IV (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970), 305.

⁹⁰ Moule is probably correct to see “the four monasteries,” not in the literal sense, but as “the surrounding monasteries.” Moule, 44.

⁹¹ This fifty-day period of special observances was likely a celebration Lent and of Holy Week, culminating in Easter. Since the Synod of Seleucia in 410, the Church of the East had fixed its Fast of Lent at forty days. Young, 28. On the early history of Lent, see Tanya Gulevich, *Lent, Encyclopedia of Easter, Carnival, and Lent* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2002).

those who are dead, he buries them to rest in peace. The purest and most morally steadfast *dat'sa* have not yet heard of one of this quality,⁹² but the white-robed *Jing* adepts,⁹³ today, see it in his person!

Wishing to carve an inscription on a great stone monument in order to diffuse the robust aroma of meritorious service and blessings, the lyrics are as follows:

[] 真主无元, *The honored True Lord is without origin,*

湛寂常然。 *Profound stillness eternally thus,*

權輿匠化, *Initiating and fashioning transformations,*

起地立天。 *Calling forth the earth and establishing the heavens.*

分身出代, *His divided Godhead appeared in the world*

救度無邊。 *To provide salvation without limits.*

[27] 日昇暗滅, *As the sun rises and darkness is extinguished,*

咸證真玄。 *All attest to the true mysterious principle.*

赫赫文皇, *The glorious Cultured Emperor⁹⁴*

道冠前王 ; *Whose Dao excelled the former princes*

乘時撥亂, *Mastered the times to bring order to chaos*

⁹² “Dat’sa” is the medieval pronunciation of *dasuo* 達娑. Moule, following Pelliot, believes this to be a transliteration of *tarsa*, a Persian word meaning “quakers” or “those who fear,” used by Eastern Christians for idolaters. Moule, 45, 216. Taking a different route to a similar end, Legge, with reservations, translates it as “Buddhists,” following Pauthier’s identification of 達娑 as a transliteration of as Sanskrit word, *dasarhas*, meaning “a Buddha.” Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fû in Shen-Hsi, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State*, 25. On the other hand, Schlegel argues that the Persian word, *tarsa*, was used for “God-fearers,” and in this text is referring to Christians. Schlegel.

⁹³ Probably the *Jingjiao* priests, whose ecclesiastical vestments were white. See, e.g., Saint Adai, Saint Mari, and Bishop of Mopsuestia Theodore, *The Syriac Liturgies of the Apostles Mâr Adâi and Mâr Mârî: Of the Seventy, Mâr Theodorus, of Mopsuestia, and Mâr Nestorus in Use among the Christians of Assyria, Commonly Called "Nestorians"*, trans. George Percy Badger (London: Rivingtons, 1875), x. We know that bishops and metropolitans were not to wear white, for this was an objectionable practice in Fars that Catholicos Timothy I (r. 780-823) labored to end. Wilmshurst, 143-44.

⁹⁴ Taizong

軋廓坤張。 So heaven grew more broad and earth more vast.⁹⁵
 明明景教, A wise person of *Jingjiao*,
 言歸我唐。 [His] doctrine found its home in our Tang.
 翻經建寺, Translating scriptures and building monasteries,
 存歿舟航。 Their boat-bridge serviced the living and the dead.⁹⁶
 百福偕作, The hundred blessings worked in harmony,
 萬邦之康。 And the myriad states enjoyed well-being.

高宗纂祖, Gaozong succeeded to his forefathers,
 更築精宇。 Once more constructing the finest of domains.
 和宮敞朗, Harmonious palaces, spacious and bright,
 [28] 遍滿中土。 Suffused the Central Plains.⁹⁷
 真道宣明, The true Dao was publicly proclaimed,
 式封法主。 An ordinance bestowed a title on the Lord of Doctrine.⁹⁸
 人有樂康, The people enjoyed peace and happiness,
 物無灾苦。 The living beings were without calamity or distress.

玄宗啓聖, Xuanzong began his sage-sovereign reign,
 克修真正。 He was able to restore the true and proper order of public and political affairs.
 御榜揚輝, The imperial presence of the monastery name-plaque radiated out glory

⁹⁵ The fame of Taizong's China spread, drawing people from far and wide.

⁹⁶ The bridge made of floating boats lashed together (舟航) is a metaphor for the good brought to society by *Jingjiao* believers.

⁹⁷ The "harmonious palaces" are *Jingjiao* monasteries. The Central Plains is a euphemism for China. The "harmonious palace" represents Gaozong's administration of good government.

⁹⁸ The title awarded to Aluoben. See line 15, above.

天書蔚映。 With Heavenly calligraphy of dazzling elegance.⁹⁹
 皇圖璀璨, The imperial portraits were grand and glorious,¹⁰⁰
 率土高敬。 All within the realm paid high reverence.
 庶績咸熙, All the works were fully performed,¹⁰¹
 人賴其慶。 Persons took confidence in their favor from Heaven.¹⁰²

肅宗來復, Suzong came to restore,¹⁰³
 [29] 天威引駕。 Heaven's might guided the carriage.¹⁰⁴
 聖日舒晶, The sage-sovereign's day spread out brilliance,
 祥風掃夜。 A propitious wind swept away the nighttime.
 祚歸皇室, Celestial favor returned to the imperial house,
 祲氛永謝。 The baleful miasma was forever dispelled.
 止沸之塵, [It] stopped the churning and settled the dust,
 造我區夏。 Building our land of the Xia.¹⁰⁵

代宗孝義, Daizong was filial and upright,
 德合天地。 His virtue brought harmony between Heaven and earth.

⁹⁹ The bejeweled name-plaque with the emperor's own calligraphy was installed on the Chang'an monastery's gate. See line 19, above.

¹⁰⁰ Xuanzong had portraits of the five emperors installed in the monastery. See, lines 17-18, above.

¹⁰¹ This line is taken from the *Classic of Documents* where, as a result of Thearch Yao's fixing the calendar and establishing how to read the seasons from the stars, all the officials of his government could then perform their duties at the proper time. *Shangshu* 1. Yaodian 堯典, section 2.

¹⁰² Good government and the prosperity enjoyed by the people were the blessings of God.

¹⁰³ The state needed restoration from the An-Shi Rebellion.

¹⁰⁴ Emperor Suzong represented "Heaven" to those under Heaven, and he guided the carriage of the state according to the power invested in him by Heaven.

¹⁰⁵ The "land of the Xia" is China.

開貸生成， Extending absolution to the people,
 物資美利。 The living beings were supplied with excellent benefits.¹⁰⁶
 香以報功， Offering incense to report his deeds,¹⁰⁷
 仁以作施。 His benevolence was employed in acts of charity.
 暘谷來威， The sun is arisen from its valley awesomely,
 月窟畢萃。 The moon is already gathered to its cave.¹⁰⁸

[30] [丱]建中統極 *The most honored Jianzhong era's [emperor] succeeding to the highest point,*¹⁰⁹

聿修明德。 Carries on developing the illustrious virtue of his ancestors.
 武肅四溟， Martial, he imposes new order within the four seas,¹¹⁰
 文清萬域。 Cultured, he purifies the myriad precincts.¹¹¹
 燭臨人隱， [Heaven] shines light downward to reveal the people's suffering,¹¹²
 鏡觀物色。 Reflecting the perspective of the living beings' kinds.
 六合昭蘇， The area within six directions comes back to life,¹¹³
 百蠻取則。 The hundred barbarian nations will follow [China's] example.

¹⁰⁶ The source of the “excellent benefits” 美利 is Heaven. See line 21, above.

¹⁰⁷ See line 20, above.

¹⁰⁸ According to ancient fables, the sun remained in a valley until it arose each day, and the moon spent the daytime lodged in a cave.

¹⁰⁹ Dezong (r. 779 – 805).

¹¹⁰ The “four seas” is a euphemism for the whole country.

¹¹¹ The “myriad precincts” together make up the whole country.

¹¹² The subject is ambiguous. I have supplied “Heaven” as it makes sense, and it is consistent with the theological theme of divine intervention to bless that is established in the preceding stanzas. Here, the argument goes, Dezong is instituting reforms in a righteous response, for the compassionate *Jing* God has caused him to apprehend the suffering of the people.

¹¹³ The six directions are north, south, east, west, the below (earth), and the above (heaven). Here, they represent Dezong's realm.

道惟廣兮， Verily, the Dao is broad,
 應惟密。 Verily, the answer is near.¹¹⁴
 強名言兮， Making a strong effort to characterize it,
 演三一。 [We] preach the Three-in-One.¹¹⁵
 []主能作兮， What the *most honored* Lord is able to accomplish,
 臣能述。 [His] servants are able to recount.
 建豐碑兮， Erecting this ceremonial stele,
 頌元吉。 [We] recite [His] great blessings.

[31] 大唐建中二年，歲在作噩，太族月，七日，大耀森
 文曰，建立。[]時法主僧寧恕，知東方之景衆也。 [Followed by text in Syriac]

Set up the second year of the Jianzhong era of the Great Tang, as Jupiter is in *zuo 'e*,¹¹⁶ in the first month, on the seventh day, the Great *Yaosenwen* Day¹¹⁷ [Sunday, February 4, 781]. This in the [honored] time while the Lord of Doctrine Monk Ningshu¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ This appears to be the churchman's allusion to Deuteronomy 30:9-14, that God will bless those who follow and obey him, and this way is near, revealed in the scriptures, for those who will heed it.

¹¹⁵ See line 10, above, for the preface's allusion to the *Daodejing* on the difficulty of naming the Dao that is true and unchanging.

¹¹⁶ Jupiter, the "year star," traversed one of twelve stations each year to complete a full orbit of the heavens in twelve years. *Zuo 'e* is the tenth of the twelve Earthly Branches, making the year the Year of the Cock.

¹¹⁷ In Tang times, *yaosenwen* 耀森文 would have been pronounced *yewH-srim-mjun*. Moule cites the consensus of numerous authoritative scholars that this is probably a transliteration of the Persian word *yaksambah*, meaning "first day." Moule, 47n42. Building upon Legge's suggestion that "The Great Yaosenwen Day" probably identifies the beginning of some liturgical festival, perhaps that festival might have been Lent? Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsî-an Fû in Shen-Hsî, China, Relating to the Diffusion of Christianity in China in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries; with the Chinese Text of the Inscription, a Translation, and Notes, and a Lecture on the Monument with a Sketch of Subsequent Christian Missions in China and Their Present State*, 29n4.

¹¹⁸ Catholicos Hnanisho II (r. 774-779). In fact, Hnanisho had died in 779 and his successor, Timothy I, was appointed in May of 780. Max Deeg points out that the nine-month interim between the appointment of Timothy I and the erection of the stele was more than enough time for such important news to travel to China. He argues that Adam's naming of the late catholicos instead of the newly elected one reveals that the opposition to Timothy's selection voiced by Joseph, bishop of Merv, must have been shared by Yisi and Jingjing, and perhaps others in the metropolinate of China. Deeg suggests that Timothy appointed as metropolitan of China a monk David, who trained in the monastery of Beth Abhe,

superintends the Eastern region of the *Jing* congregation. [in Syriac:] In the days of the father of fathers Mar Hananishu Catholicos Patriarch.¹¹⁹

[32] 朝議郎，前行台州司士參軍，呂秀巖書。

The calligraphy of Lu Xiuyan, Gentleman for Court Discussion, formerly Acting Manager of Requisitioned Labor for Taizhou.¹²⁰

[At the foot of the stele, below the foregoing text, reading columns from left to right]

[In Syriac except where characters are shown:] In the year thousand and ninety and two of the Greeks (781 CE) my lord Izd-buzid priest and country-bishop of Khumdan the metropolis, son of the late Milis priest, from Balkh a city of Tahuristan, set up that tablet of stone. The things which

perhaps as a move by the catholicos to reign in dissent in the Church of the East's Chinese precincts. Max Deeg, "An Anachronism in the Stele of Xi'an — Why Hananisho?," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. L. Tang and D.W. Winkler (Zurich: LIT, 2016). According to Wilmshurst, Timothy was the bishop of a rural suffragan diocese in the metropolitan province of Adiabene when he stood for election as catholicos. The field of nominees was narrowed when one nominee died suddenly, and another withdrew upon Timothy's offer to appoint him Metropolitan of Adiabene instead. Now a favorite in the election, Timothy showed the voting bishops sacks that appeared to be full of gold, offering them a share if they voted for him. Once elected, Timothy's sacks proved to be full of rocks, and he rebuked the greedy bishops that "The priesthood is not sold for money." Metropolitans Ephrem of Elam and Joseph of Merv then arose in opposition, forming a party to set aside Timothy's election and to elect Ephrem as catholicos. When conflict between the two factions led to rioting in the streets of Baghdad and several Christians killed, the caliph's Church of the East physician, Isa bar Quraysh, intervened, and the Church confirmed Timothy's election. Caliph al-Mahdi appointed him catholicos, and Timothy was consecrated in May 780. His designs frustrated, Joseph of Merv converted to Islam, and Joseph tried to take advantage of his new status as a Muslim to undermine Catholicos Timothy. Joseph's attempts, however, only succeeded in ruining his own credibility before the caliph and court, and Joseph ended his days disgraced, an exile in Byzantine territory. Wilmshurst, 140-42. Perhaps less suspicious of underlying drama to the name carved on the stele, Erica Hunter suggests that news of Timothy's appointment might have reached China after the stone had been carved, and practical expediency took precedence over synchronic accuracy, or, in the alternative, perhaps the decision to name Hananisho was made on purpose to avoid risking making public the color of instability in the Church of the East while the insiders knew of movements within the Church still active in pursuing the installation of a different catholicos. Erica C.D. Hunter, "The Persian Contribution to Christianity in China: Reflections in the Xi'an Fu Syriac Inscriptions," in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, ed. D.W. Winkler and L. Tang (Berlin: LIT, 2009), 74-75.

¹¹⁹ Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Moule, 47.

¹²⁰ "Gentleman for Court Discussion" was a prestige title for officials; they enjoyed a rank of 6a1. Taizhou (Tai prefecture) lay on the east coast, in modern day Zhejiang province. Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, 5:55-56 (7,6).

are written on it [are] the law of him our Saviour and the preaching of them our fathers to the kings of the Zinaye. 僧靈寶 [Monk Lingbao] Adam minister son of Izd-buzid country-bishop.¹²¹

[In Syriac:] Mar Sargis priest and country-bishop¹²²

檢校建立碑僧行通 [Followed by text in Syriac]

Supervising the erection of the stele, Monk Xingtong, [in Syriac:] Sabransishu priest¹²³

[In Syriac:] Gabriel priest and archdeacon and head of the church of Khumdan and of Sarag¹²⁴

助檢校，試太常卿，賜紫袈裟，寺主僧業利。

Assistant supervisor [for erecting the stele], Probationary Chamberlain for Ceremonials¹²⁵ [who has been] granted the purple cassock, Abbot Monk Yeli.

¹²¹ Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Moule, 48.

¹²² Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Ibid.

¹²³ Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Ibid.

¹²⁴ Syriac translation by A. C. Moule. Ibid. Khumdan and Sarag are Chang'an and Luoyang, respectively.

¹²⁵ The Chamberlain for Ceremonials, according to Hucker, was "in charge of great state sacrificial ceremonies, especially at the imperial Ancestral Temple [*zongmiao*, *taimiao*] and at imperial mausolea [*ling*]," Hucker, 476.

APPENDIX B

EPITAPH OF THE GREAT TANG'S LATE LADY NÉE AN

大唐故夫人安氏墓志 [盖]

唐故安氏夫人墓志銘

夫人安氏苗裔安定郡人也。世 [] 祖諱晟之女也。繁衍淑女，彩黛紛敷，焜耀華葉，若斯之盛也。[] 夫人幼而韶[羞]，長而婉穆。金聲玉振，蕙榮蘭茂。恭守箴誡，昭彰六姻，則賢班、姜，無以比也。適花氏之門，實秦晉之好。如琴如瑟，若墳若篴。和鳴鏘鏘，有偕老之譽。保金石齊固，宜享椿鬆之壽。豈期素無乖違之疾，奄傾西泉之駕。時長慶元年四月五日終於脩善之裡，春秋五十八。奈何運有數極，脩短分定。金之堅不可腐，鬆之貞不可不折。巷失規矩，宗傾母儀。夫哭氣填其胸，男哭血灑其地。古之常制，不可久留。卜兆川原，以為窆窆之所。用其年十月廿二日葬於洛陽縣感德鄉柏仁村，不祔 [] 先塋，別立鬆柏。南瞻萬安，北背洛汭。長子應元、次子滿師皆幼而不祿，苗而不秀。幼子齊雅，克己復禮，鄉黨稱善，友朋敬之。徒跣茹蓼，折肝隕心。扶杖侍 [] 棺，叫絕道路。屬時多難，慮谷遷于陵。邀余誌之，刊石作紀。文簡不方者，沐恩頗深，敢不課愚。抽毫敘事，乃為銘云：

安氏之女，花氏之妻。蘭馨芝茂，如璋如珪。鳳桐半折，孤鸞獨栖。其一。孟母其萎，珠沉漢浦。精粹苞蘿，參銜萬古。奚為奇靈，長夜盤暮。其二。伊洛之郊，土地豐饒。周姬之[下]，宇宙之標。神歸其下，德音不遙。其三。冊石刊日，封乎枝葉。誌其坤房，北邙相接。地久天長，子孫昌業。

Epitaph of the Great Tang's Late Lady née An [cover text]

The Entombed Epitaph of the Late Lady née An of the Tang Dynasty.

The Lady was born of the An clan, who are descendants of persons of Anding Commandery.¹

This generation's *honored*² maternal grandfather, his taboo name is "Sheng."³ A woman full to overflowing in her refinement, [whose] embellished eyebrows were always well-fixed, [and who] dazzled with her magnificent appearance, such was her perfection.⁴ The *honored* Lady, in her youth, was beautiful [and shy],⁵ and, in her maturity, gentle and dignified. [For her,] the cymbals clanged and the jade [chimes] resonated, [proclaiming that] the Rose of Sharon and the thoroughwort were in full flower.⁶ How she respectfully observed the admonitions and injunctions was well known among all her relatives,⁷ and as for the precepts of the worthies Ban

¹ The administrative seat of Anding Commandery was located at present-day Jingchuan 泾川, Gansu. Tan, 5:40-41 (5, 8). Anding Commandery was renamed Jing Prefecture 涇州 from 742-756, and then, in 757, the name was changed again to Baoding Commandery 保定郡. Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 1.38.

² A preceding space, as an indication of respect, sets off 祖, "grandfather," in the stone's text. Here and in subsequent instances, I have translated this visual cue as "*honored*."

³ An Sheng is the Lady's father, and he is grandfather to her sons, the generation that is preparing this epitaph.

⁴ The Lady took care in her self-presentation, splendid in both her makeup and dress.

⁵ Mao Yangguang conservatively reads 夫人幼而韶□, for the last character of the phrase is obscured by damage to the stone, but, from what remains to be seen of the character and from the context, I would tentatively suggest that the missing character is *xiu* 羞, meaning "shy" or "modest."

⁶ This *chengyu* or idiom of the cymbals and jade chimes (金聲玉振) carries the sense of a tune played in its entirety, a story fully told, a reputation that is clear and widespread; thus, as the corresponding part of the parallelism clarifies, Lady née An was well known for her elegant pulchritude (Rose of Sharon) and virtue (thoroughwort).

⁷ The term here translated "all her relatives" (*liu yin* 六姻) is a feminine version of *liu qin* 六親, thus, the six relations of a wife in her husband's family: father-in-law, mother-in-law, elder brothers-in-law, younger brothers-in-law, husband, and children. The Tang poet, Liu Zhangqing 劉長卿 (726 – 788), used the term in his poem, "Sending Off the Li Family's Girl" 別李氏女子: "... *Approaching that fork in*

[Zhao]⁸ and Jiang [Yuan],⁹ [the Lady's observance of them] was beyond compare. Her marrying into the Hua clan's family resulted in complete felicity like that of the marriage between the Qin and Jin.¹⁰ [Their marriage was harmonious] like the zither and the zithern or as [a duet of] the xun and the bamboo flute.¹¹ [A male and female phoenix] calling and echoing one another's sing-song, in such terms, how they grew old together was praised.¹² As the steadfastness metal and stone completes the stronghold, so it would have been fitting [if she had] enjoyed the longevity of a fragrant cedar or of a pine tree. How could we expect an unblemished [life]

the path, moral instruction will guide / Which prizes harmony in the six relations by marriage . . . 臨岐方教誨，所貴和六姻。 *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 148.118.

⁸ Ban Zhao (45 – c.116) was a noblewoman who was widowed at an early age, yet never remarried—an act of loyalty to her husband that was highly prized in the “Confucian” value system. She was regularly called upon to advise the empress and to tutor palace women of the Han dynasty in their “Confucian” duties, and her handbook, *Admonitions for Women* (*Nu jie* 女戒), was used for centuries as a guide for women's conduct. After her brother, Ban Gu, died in 94 CE before completing the dynastic history of the Western Han (*Han shu* 漢書), the emperor called upon her to complete the work which became a model for all dynastic histories.

⁹ Jiang Yuan 姜嫄 was the mother of Hou Ji 后稷 (“Lord of Millet”), founding ancestor of the Ji 姬 clan, the ruling family of the Zhou dynasty (1046 – 256 BCE). See *Shijing* 185, 300, and Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Sibu beiyao ed.), 1.2a-2b. For Kinney's annotated translation of Liu Xiang's biography in the *Lienü zhuan*, see Liu Xiang, 3-4. For more on the cult of Jiang Yuan and on female emperor Wu Zetian's (r. 690 – 705) effort to establish her legitimacy as emperor by aligning herself with Jiang Yuan, see N. Harry Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

¹⁰ This *chengyu* or idiom (秦晉之好) carries the sense of a happy marriage alliance between two families. In the Spring and Autumn period, the states of Qin and Jin built an unbreakable alliance based on marriage between the ruling families. Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (d. 621 BCE) married Muji 穆姬, daughter of Duke Xian of Jin 晉獻公 (d. 651 BCE), and Duke Mu gave his daughter, Huaiying 懷嬴, in marriage to Crown Prince Yu 圉 (d. 637 BCE) and then to Chong'er 重耳 (d. 628 BCE), sons of Duke Xian. See *Zuozhuan*, Zhuang 28 (665 BCE); Xi 23 (636 BCE).

¹¹ The *xun* is an egg-shaped wind instrument made of clay or ceramic. These instruments, zither with zithern and xun with bamboo flute, complemented each other so that they were normally paired in performance, giving rise to their use as metaphors for a harmonious marriage.

¹² The phrase, 和鳴鏘鏘, comes from the *Zuo Zhuan*'s account of the twenty-second year of Duke Zhuang (670 BCE) where the auspicious indication from a tortoise shell divination regarding a proposed marriage reads, “The male and female phoenix fly together / calling and echoing one another's sing-song” 是謂鳳皇于飛，和鳴鏘鏘。

without the perverse offense of illness? For suddenly [she was] lost to the Western Spring's cortege.¹³ In the time of the Changqing era's first year, fourth month, and fifth day,¹⁴ [she] met her days' end in the Xiushan neighborhood, [having known] fifty-eight spring and autumn seasons. What is the explanation for a destiny with such a limited endpoint, the long and short divided and decided? Though metal's hardness should not decay, the pine tree's steadfastness must be cut short. The lane has lost its compass and L-square,¹⁵ the family has lost its mother of ritual observances. [Her] husband sobbed with a heaving breast, and [her] sons wept tears as grievous as if of blood, washing the floor beneath them. [According to] the time-honored constraint of old, no one can long remain. Turtle shell divination at the river was used to determine her place of burial. Accordingly, on the twenty-second day of the tenth month that year,¹⁶ she was buried at Bairen village, Gande parish, Luoyang district, not jointly buried in the *honored* ancestral grave, for another pine and cypress¹⁷ remained standing. [Her tomb] to the south looks up to Wan'an [Mountain],¹⁸ and to the north backs against the Luo River. The eldest son, Yingyuan, and the second son, Manshi, both without official salary,¹⁹ are tender plants that

¹³ The Western Springs or the Yellow Springs was the subterranean realm of the dead.

¹⁴ May 10, 821.

¹⁵ The Lady née An set the standard in her community for social etiquette and manners.

¹⁶ November 20, 821.

¹⁷ The other "pine and cypress" is Hua Xian, her husband and the sons' father.

¹⁸ Wan'an Mountain is a 937m peak, situated in modern Luoyang's Yibin district, east of the Yi River.

¹⁹ "Without official salary" (不祿) can be a euphemism for a worthy person who died young, but, since these sons are described in Hua Xian's epitaph as alive at the time of their father's burial, five years hence, it must here simply mean (and criticize them for it) that they failed to obtain an official office.

failed to blossom.²⁰ The youngest son, Qiya, is self-restrained and observes propriety²¹; fellow villagers speak approvingly [of him], and friends respect him.²² [The Lady's sons are] going barefoot and swallowing knotweed, [with their] livers crushed [and their] hearts languishing.²³ [The one who] leans on his staff attends the *honored* coffin, calling out the excellency of [her life's] journey.²⁴ Belonging to a period of much distress, anxieties about the valley improve at the grave mound.²⁵

²⁰ This *chengyu* or idiom (苗而不秀) carries the sense of showing great potentialities, but failing to fulfill them.

²¹ This idiom (克己復禮), used to present Qiya's virtue in superlative terms, comes from the *Lunyu* 12/1. "Yen Yuen asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, 'To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him.'" Trans. Legge in *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, 190-1.

²² Confucius said of the person one rank below an "officer" of the king, that "his fellow-villagers and neighbours pronounce [him] to be fraternal." *Lunyu* 13/20.2. Trans. Legge, *ibid.*, 205.

²³ Going barefoot is part of ritual mourning at the death of one's parent—from the Book of Rites: "Immediately after [one's] parent dies, tie up the hair and go barefoot, pull up the front skirt of [one's] robe, and wail with hands folded at one's breast." 親始死雞斯徒跣板上衽交手哭. *Liji* 禮記, Wensang 問喪, section 1. "Swallowing knotweed" is a metaphor for enduring bitter difficulties. The mourning sons' inner feelings (in the liver) have been crushed, and their thoughts and emotions (in the heart) are failing from grief. Their deep feeling was virtuous, for, according to Confucius, "In the ceremonies of mourning it is better that there be deep sorrow than a minute attention to observances," *Lunyu* 3/4. Trans. Legge, *ibid.*, 128.

²⁴ This sentence describes the role of Hua Xian, the Lady's husband, in ritual mourning. The staff signifies both rank and the depth of a mourner's distress, distress physically presenting as weakness that now requires the aid of a staff in walking. *Liji*, Sangfu sizhi 喪服四制, section 8. According to the Book of Rites, the father would have been the presiding mourner for the household (*Liji*, Bensang 奔喪, section 25), and it would have been improper for the Lady's sons to have used staves, themselves, while their father was still living (*Liji*, Wensang, section 9).

²⁵ "Anxieties about the valley" concern the goings on in Luoyang. This "period of much distress," quieted only by the grave, could refer to the period of political and social unrest around the death of Emperor Xianzong and the early reign of Emperor Muzong. Tang Xianzong (r. 805 – 820) established reforms that provided stability as they returned much power from the provinces to the emperor, with the result that his reign was the nearest the late Tang came to reclaiming the glory of founding Emperor Taizong's court (r. 626 – 649), but Xianzong died in February of 820 under mysterious circumstances. He may have been murdered by palace eunuchs, or he may have died from drugs taken in an unsuccessful attempt at attaining immortality through Daoist alchemy. His son, Emperor Muzong (r. 820-824), came to the throne before other princes through the successful intervention of one faction of eunuchs. Muzong was reportedly given to moral laxity expressed through wretched excess in leisure, drink, and taking pleasure in women, so that, under weak leadership, corruption and court factionalism flourished during

Upon request, I am recording this in writing, carving this stone to make an account. [I,]
Wenjian, one who is without skill, [have been] favored with a kindness considerably profound,
so to dare not to discharge [this honor would be] dim-witted. Taking out a writing brush to
recount these matters, thus [I] make this verse inscription, saying:

安氏之女, *A woman of the An clan,*

花氏之妻。 *A wife of the Hua clan.*

蘭馨芝茂, *The wafting scent of lan and zhi in full bloom,*²⁶

如璋如珪。 *This jade baton, this jade scepter,*²⁷

鳳桐半折, *The phoenix's tree is broken in half,*

孤鸞獨栖。 *The solitary simurgh roosts alone.*²⁸

其一。 First:²⁹

孟母其萎, *Mengzi's mother,*³⁰ *she has withered and fallen,*

his reign. His reign marked the beginning of a roughly twenty-year period of political dominance by eunuchs. See Twitchett and Fairbank, 537-38, 634-42.

²⁶ These flowers, *lan* 馨 (thoroughwort) and *zhi* 芝 (Chinese angelica), together represent a person of outstanding moral character and integrity, and the flowers' redolence is Lady née An's reputation as a righteous person.

²⁷ Traditionally half the length of a jade scepter, the jade baton was used in ritual performance. A ruler might give a jade scepter to a trusted minister. This line praises Lady née An's roles in keeping family ritual and in managing her husband's household.

²⁸ The phoenix and simurgh together represent a happily married couple. The mythical Chinese "phoenix" and "simurgh" are related magnificent feathered beasts, similarly auspicious, but not the same as the Greek self-immolating "phoenix" and the Persian bird-beast "simurgh."

²⁹ On the stone, the stanzas of the poem are separated by numbers rather than being visually separated by spacing.

³⁰ The Lady née An is as the mother of Mengzi (Mencius), the foremost of mothers who, widowed, moved three times to ensure that her son was reared in the best possible society and who sacrificed to pay for the best possible education for Mengzi.

珠沉漢浦。 *A pearl has dropped beneath the surface of the Han River.*³¹

精粹苞蘿， *[Memory of her clings,] the essence of dense twining vines,*

參銜萬古。 *The three [sons] will hold [her] in their hearts forever.*

奚為奇靈 *Why should this extraordinary spirit*

長夜盤暮。 *Be swallowed up in the nightfall of endless night?*

其二。 Second:

伊洛之郊， *The Yi-Luo River basin's countryside,*³²

土地豐饒。 *The soil of this land so rich and fertile!*

周姬之_下， *[From] the Zhou dynasty Ji family [on down],*³³

宇宙之標。 *The eaves and ridgepole's crown.*³⁴

神歸其下， *[The Lady's] spiritual essence resorts [here], it descends,*

³¹This literary expression is attested in the prose portion of an earlier *muzhiming*, *Da Tang gu chushi tianjun muzhiming* 大唐故處士田君墓志銘, which includes the following line: “At the time of victory, a fine jade shattered into small pieces on a thorn-covered mountain, a pearl sank beneath the surface of the Han River, in the third year of the Longshuo era, the sixtieth year of the sixty-year cycle, the fourth month, the twenty-seventh day (June 8, 663), he died at his private residence, having known sixty-four springs and autumns.” 豈期玉碎荆嶺，珠沉漢浦，以龍朔三年歲次癸亥四月廿七日卒於私第，春秋六十有四。Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Zhao Chao 趙超, eds., *Tangdai Muzhi Huibian* 唐代墓志匯編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 1.376.

³² The Yi and Luo rivers converge at Luoyang and flow on to meet the Yellow River

³³ The Ji clan was the ruling family of the Zhou dynasty. I have supplied 下 for the obscured character as my best guess based upon 1) the size of the space on the stone occupied by the obscured character, 2) what appears to be a *shu* (a vertical stroke) centered and descending from the completely obscured area, 3) the context, and 4) the end rhyme scheme: *kaew / nyew / [haeX] / pew / haeX / yew*. That the stanza's fifth line clearly ends with 下 raises the question of whether the poet was likely to repeat an end-word in this manner, but the small space that the character occupies on the stone requires a simply written character.

³⁴ The “eaves and ridgepole” is a euphemism for heaven and earth, that is, the universe. For the poet, verdant Luoyang enjoys an exalted position as a “crown” of the universe. It is an *axis mundi*, a point of communication between Heaven and earth, as demonstrated both by its natural fecundity and by the moral force of having produced the exemplars of virtue, the Zhou dynasty's Ji clan, as well as the emperors and nobles down to the “present” day who have followed in their virtuous tradition over Luoyang's long history as a capital and an important imperial city.

德音不遙。 *The good reputation does not stray.*³⁵

其三。 Third:

冊石刊日， *Imperial patents of nobility are carved on steles daily,*

封乎枝葉。 *Enfeoffing various officials.*

誌其坤房， *Documentation of her netherworld office,*

北邙相接。 *The Northern Mang [Mountain] accepts [it].*³⁶

地久天長， *For as enduring as the earth and as lasting as Heaven,*

子孫昌業。 *[Her] sons and grandchildren follow in [her] glorious legacy.*

³⁵ The spirit of the late Lady has descended into the netherworld beneath Luoyang, where she will be known by the same reputation for virtue that she earned in life.

³⁶ The hills north of Luoyang are the site of many royal tombs from the Han, Wei, and Jin dynasties. Lady née An, as attested in this inscription, is so worthy that she certainly must be recognized and received as a noble woman in the world of the dead beneath Luoyang. As noble status is conferred on a daily basis among the living, so it should not be unusual that her meritorious life earned her noble status among the dead.

APPENDIX C

EPITAPH OF THE TANG LATE HONORABLE PREFECTURAL GOVERNOR HUA

唐故花府君公墓誌銘 [盖]

唐故左武衛兵曹參軍上騎都尉靈武郡花府君公神道誌銘
洛陽聖善寺沙門文簡撰

公諱獻，字獻，靈武郡人也。祖諱[]移恕，考諱[]蘇鄰。咸嗜道偃仰，浪心清閑，以榮名為怯風之花，逍遙為紺霜之竹。而乃高尚無屈仕焉，延及[][]府君，纂延素風，有位而不登。弃祿養和，不爭名於[]朝；澄心履道，嘗隱逸於市。布人信於戚屬者，[]公不顧嶮艱，迎孀婦於砂塞之外、侍之中堂，聚食歡笑。累歲傾歿，祔葬[]先塋，哭泣過制，人皆嗟焉。敷言行於朋從，守直道以度時。不邪諂以矯媚，是以義聲溢於天下，孝致盈於縉紳。常洗心事[]景尊，竭奉教理，為法中之柱礎，作徒侶之笙簧。而內脩八景，外備三常，將證无元，永祇万慮。於戲，日居月諸，否來奉往。忽邁微疾，未越一句，有加無瘳，色沮神淬。召醫上藥，拱手無所施。方知利劍先缺，甘泉先竭，軋道變衰，而精魂歸乎北斗。以寶曆三年正月八日終於河南縣脩善里之私第，享年七十一。夫人安定郡安氏，明潔宣慈，酌仁怡愉。好音韻，為絲竹，宮唱商和，禮翔樂優。以溫恭而成粧，非粉黛為顏色。故穰穰百福，蓁蓁成陰。坤儀禍生，先歸泉戶，以長慶元年夏四月五日終於舊里。孕子三人，長曰應元，次曰滿師。皆為人傑，不及時祿，芳而不榮，具在前誌。季子齊雅，行操松筠，為席之珍。招賢納士，響慕從風，江海之心，罕議儔疋。泣血絕漿，有終天之恨，哭無常聲，毀形過制。龜兆從吉，即以大和二年二月十六日歸葬於洛陽縣感德鄉栢仁村，啟[]夫人故墳禮及合祔。則龍劍合於下泉，琴瑟永沉蒿里。終天之義，從古如斯。南顧萬安，北背洛涘。左瞻少室孤峰，右占土圭之墅。文簡久承顧盼，眷撫情逾，邀誌之。性多拙直，恐叙事不精，握管抽毫，記刻貞石，用虞陵谷之變。其詞曰：

靈武之氏，代不乏賢。謚物化洽，與時為天。□其葉□，松明竹鮮。劍合重泉，琴瑟初掩。永殄笙簧，世歿餘念。景寺遺聲，芳塵罷占。峨峨淵¹德，克生休命。履義蹈忠，含清體正。如玉之潔，如金之鏡。三光西沒，百川東度。天道運迴，人隨代故。倏忽嗟歎，淒涼薤露。安氏夫人，祔葬終也。水合蛟龍，墳同松檟。千載九原，嗣子淚下。

¹ Mao Yangguang reads 淑 rather than 淵.

The Tang Late Honorable Prefectural Governor Hua's Entombed Epitaph [cover text]

The Tang late Military Service Section Administrator of the Left Militant Guard,² the Senior Commandant-in-Chief of Cavalry for Lingwu Commandery,³ The Honorable Prefectural Governor⁴ Hua's spirit passageway epitaph⁵

Monk Wenjian of Luoyang's Shengshan Temple⁶ takes [brush] in hand:

² The Left Militant Guard (there was also a Right Militant Guard) was one of the Sixteen Guards that defended the dynastic capital. As Military Service Section Administrator, Hua Xian would have been head of the Left Militant Guard's office handling personnel matters, and he would have been entitled to an eighth rank in the Tang hierarchy of officials. However, as Charles Hucker explains, "by 749 the Guards ceased calling up militiamen. Thereafter into the Song the Sixteen Guards were decorative, militarily unimportant units existing almost solely to provide grandiose titles and appropriate perquisites for members of the imperial family and occasionally other favored dignitaries; and active defense of the Emperor and his palace was managed with other forces such as the late Tang Permanent Palace Guard." Hucker, 428.

³ This title was earned by meritorious service, but that might include seniority in service. It entitled Hua Xian to a fifth rank, raising him and his wife to the noble class.

⁴ This title is an honorific title for the head of a "superior prefecture," one that occupied a strategic position relative to the capital, and it is consistent with Hua Xian's fifth rank.

⁵ The "spirit passageway" was the tomb's passageway from the world of the living into the room(s) of the tomb where the human remains and any grave goods were placed.

⁶ Luoyang's *Shengshan si* 聖善寺 (Holy Benevolence Temple) was ordered built by emperor Zhongzong (r. 684, 705 – 710) at the urging of the Indian or Central Asian monk Huifan 惠範 (d. 713). During the Tang, there was a "significant presence" of esoteric Buddhist practice at *Shengshan si*. Chen, "Esoteric Buddhism and Monastic Institutions," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras of East Asia*, 286.

His Lordship's taboo name was Xian, courtesy name Xian, a person of Lingwu commandery.⁷ [His] paternal grandfather's taboo name was *the honored*⁸ Yishu, [and his] late father's taboo name was *the honored* Sulin. All of them were disposed to the *Dao* of living in tranquility, expansive hearts spotless of worldly concerns, regarding a good name as a shrinking, windblown flower,⁹ [and regarding] being leisurely and carefree as purplish and frosted bamboo.¹⁰ Furthermore, [their] integrity was without yielding to serve in an official position where they were concerned, extending to the *most honored*¹¹ Prefectural Governor, [who] carried forward a perpetually unaffected manner, holding a position of authority, but not [holding himself out as one] on high. [He] gave up an official salary and cultivated harmony, not vying for fame at *the honored* [imperial] Court; treading the Way with a pure heart, [he] tried to live in seclusion from the marketplace's buying and selling. A cloth-clothed person¹² was faithful to one who was a relative,¹³ [but] His *honored* Lordship paid no attention to the danger and difficulty, [and he]

⁷ *Lingwu* Commandery 靈武郡 includes part of the western edge of the Ordos Plateau in modern Gansu Province and the Ningxia Autonomous Region (Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, 5:40-41.). Sui dynasty *Lingwu* Commandery was renamed *Ling* Prefecture (*Ling Zhou*) from the beginning of the Tang in 618 until 742 when its name was returned to *Lingwu* Commandery until 758, when the name again reverted to *Ling* Prefecture. Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 374-5.

⁸ A preceding space, as an indication of respect, sets off the names Yishu and Shulin in the stone's text. Here and in subsequent instances where a space is used, I have translated this visual cue as "*honored*" or "*revered*."

⁹ Hua Xian regarded a good reputation as a precarious thing that should be nurtured, even while realizing that it was subject to circumstances beyond one's control.

¹⁰ Peaceful leisure is fleeting before hardship just as normally evergreen bamboo can be crippled for a season by severe winter weather.

¹¹ The space on the stone's text is doubled, the size of two characters, indicating double honor.

¹² That is, a commoner.

¹³ The woman was being faithful to Hua Xian's relative by remaining unmarried after the relative's death.

welcomed the widow elder sister¹⁴ from the sand shore beyond the frontier wall,¹⁵ attending her in the inner hall, gathering together for meals and joyful laughter.¹⁶ Heaped up years toppled in death, jointly interred [with her late husband] in the *honored* ancestral tomb, sobs and tears beyond restraint, all the people heaved sighs of appreciation in regard to [His Lordship's virtue]. All around, [His Lordship's] words and conduct with regard to friends kept to the upright *Dao* according to the measure of [his] seasons. Not a pernicious sycophant using affected flattery, [his] reputation for propriety, thus, filled the sub-celestial realm to overflowing, [and his] filial piety caused him to stand out among the red-silk begirded class.¹⁷ Constantly purifying his heart and serving the *revered Jing-Honored One*,¹⁸ [he] completely embraced the doctrines of his religion, [and he] became a pillar within the church, [so] serving as his fellow believers' piper.¹⁹

¹⁴ Mao Yangguang understands that the widow was actually Hua Xian's elder sister, in which case Hua Xian's largesse is displayed in receiving back into the family an elder sister who had been married out of his family and into the family of her husband. It seems to me, however, that the widow was not a blood relation, for she married Hua Xian's relative and was eventually jointly buried with that person in the Lingwu Hua family tomb. Accordingly, Hua Xian is being praised for his extraordinary compassion and generosity in taking in his relative's widow and treating her as if she were his own elder sister. For Mao Yangguang's interpretation, see "Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花献及其妻安氏墓志初探," 87.

¹⁵ "The sandshore beyond the frontier wall" probably refers to some place in the part of Lingwu Commandery along the Yellow River as it continues flowing northward beyond a segment of the Great Wall. Hua Xian "paid no attention to the danger and difficulty" in that he went into this barbarian wild to bring the elderly widow to the safety and comfort of his home.

¹⁶ Though the widow was a commoner related only by marriage to an unnamed relative, Hua Xian demonstrated his filial piety toward the elder relative and his unaffected humility toward one well beneath his class by bringing the widow into his home, attending her as his elder within the family quarters, and extending genuine companionship to her.

¹⁷ The red sash around a man's waist was a mark of official or social status, identifying the wearer as a literatus or a member of the gentry class.

¹⁸ The "*Jing-Honored One*" is Christ. The title appears, for example, in the *Jingjiao bei*, line 6: "Therefore, our Three-in-One divided His Godhead, the *Jing-Honored Mishihe*, humbly setting aside his true majesty, appeared in the world as a man," 於是我三一分身，景尊弥施訶，戢隱真威，同人出代。

¹⁹ Like a musician, Hua Xian set a tone that inspired and edified his fellow believers. Literally, Hua Xian was his fellow believers' "reed organ" 笙簧—which Paul Kroll describes as a "musical

Ever inwardly devoting himself to the eight [principles of] *Jing*,²⁰ and outwardly replete with the three constants,²¹ [he] bore witness to the Uncaused [One],²² forever unaffected by the myriad anxieties. Alas! [As] the sun and moon [marking time], adversity comes and one highly esteemed goes. All of a sudden, [he] contracted a minor illness, but before ten days had passed, [he] had become increasingly ill, [and his] countenance became listless and [his] spirit was extinguished. A doctor was summoned to administer medicine, but [His Lordship] was beyond help and [the medicine] was without any effect. Only then [did we] know that the keen sword was doomed to break, [that] the sweet spring water was doomed to exhaustion; [His Lordship's] virile manner

instrument usu. of 17 (originally 13) bamboo pipes of different lengths, each with a bronze or metal reed and a hole near the base for stopping with the fingers, bound around a wooden resonance chamber; when blown, produces continuous chords." Paul W. Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese. Rev. Ed* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2017). It may also be that Hua Xian actually played his reed organ for the church, for the eulogy below laments, "The reed organ's music forever exhausted."

²⁰ The "eight principles of *Jing*" or the "Eight Luminaries" are probably the eight Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3–10). There is a Daoist idea of 八景 as "Eight Effulgences," but that seems not to apply here because, first, the *jing* 景 in this text is written in form of the distinctive *jing* of *Jingjiao*, and, second, because the *Jingjiao* stele text uses a similar phrase (medieval 八景 and 八境 had the same pronunciation) in describing the Beatitudes among the teachings of the Messiah: "He instituted the eight domains of consummate virtue, purging worldly dross to realize the authentic," 制八境之度，鍊塵成真. *Jingjiao bei*, line 7.

²¹ The "three constants" probably refer to faith, hope, and love: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Co 13:13). This term is similarly used of faith, hope, and love in the *Jingjiao* stele's description of the teachings of the Messiah: "he expounded the gateway of the three constants, proclaiming life and abolishing death," 啟三常之門，開生滅死 (*Jingjiao bei*, line 7).

²² The "Uncaused" or *wu yuan* 无元 appears in other *Jingjiao* texts' descriptions of the *Jing* God, such as in the *Jingjiao bei*: "Behold! Constant in perfect stillness, at the beginning of beginnings but without cause," 粵若，常然真寂，先先而无元, (line 3) and "The honored True Lord is without origin," []真主无元, (line 26).

suddenly withered away, and then [his] animating soul returned home to the Northern Dipper. In this way, in the Baoli era's third year, first month and eighth day,²³ [he] met his end at his personal residence in Xiushan neighborhood of Henan district, dying at the age of seventy-one.²⁴ His Lordship's wife, of the An clan of Anding Commandery, was pure, intelligent and kind, [one who] chose to be humane and joyous. Fond of music and rhyme, accomplished playing stringed and woodwind musical instruments, [with] the first note, singing the lead, [and on] the last note harmonizing, [the Lady's] ceremonial form soared [and her] music was superlative. [She] made gentle reverence her adornment, not [finding her beauty through] face powder and eyebrow liner to augment her features and complexion.²⁵ For this reason [she reaped] a rich harvest of one hundred blessings, and [her] luxuriance became a shelter. [But, suddenly, her] appearance suffered calamity,²⁶ [and she] preceded [His Lordship] to the door of the Springs²⁷ in the summer

²³ February 7, 827.

²⁴ Xiushan quarter lay at the southwest corner of the South Market 南市 in Henan district, the portion of Luoyang that lay south of the Luo River. For a map, see Xiong, *Capital Cities and Urban Form in Pre-Modern China: Luoyang, 1038 BCE to 938 CE*, 165.

²⁵ This sentence explicitly contradicts the Lady's *muzhiming* in which she was praised for her attention to the refinement of her dress and make-up, but it is consistent with the Biblical admonition to wives in 1 Pt 3:3-4: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." It is also consistent with a line of conservative Confucian argument represented by Zhang Hua (232-300) that remained popular in the Tang dynasty. In his *Nüshi zhen* 女史箴 ["Admonitions of the Female Scribe"], written in 290 CE, Zhang Hua says, "All people know how to ornament their [outward] appearances, but none know how to ornament their [inner] nature. Not ornamenting one's [inner] nature is a crime against ritual uprightness. By chopping and embellishing oneself, one can overcome desires and become a sage" (trans. by Farmer). *Wen xuan* 56.2403-06; Farmer, 174.

²⁶ In contrast to the personal beauty and the blessings that she enjoyed as a result of her virtue, a final illness ravaged her appearance.

²⁷ "The Springs" is the subterranean place of the dead, often the "Yellow Springs" or the "Western Springs."

of the first year of the Changqing reign period, on the fifth day of the fourth month, meeting her end in [their] old [Xiushan] neighborhood.²⁸ [She had] borne the master three persons, the eldest was called Yingyuan, and the second was called Manshi. Both conduct themselves with distinction but have not attained to the lot of an official salary, fragrant but not glorious, [their matters] are treated comprehensively earlier in this inscription.²⁹ The youngest son, Qiya, [whose] moral conduct and personal integrity [are as long-lived and hardy as] pine and bamboo, [is] considered the banquet's choice dish.³⁰ [When the Emperor] invited the talented and called the valorous,³¹ [Qiya] admired and emulated those who answered the call,³² [though he possesses] a heart like the river and the sea [that is] seldom found among his peers. [The sons]³³ weeping blood especially thick,³⁴ hold eternal regret, lamenting without a steady voice, the toll

²⁸ The Lady died on May 10, 821.

²⁹ This contrasts with the Lady's *muzhiming* which characterizes Yingyuan and Manshi as sons who, despite receiving the best of educations, turned out as disappointments. Monk Wenjian's praise for them, however, is damning by its faintness. If we can look back beyond this sentence to find details of Yingyuan and Manshi's quality, Wenjian is content to let the reader use her imagination as she considers those already ascribed to Hua Yishu, Sulin, and Xian and to the Lady.

³⁰ Of the three dishes (sons) that the Lady served at Hua Xian's banquet, Qiya was the finest, the most choice. While Hua Xian's *muzhiming* contrasts with the Lady's by at least faintly praising Yingyuan and Manshi rather than proclaiming them disappointments, his *muzhiming* is consistent with hers in clearly presenting Qiya as the favorite and most worthy son. By this time, Qiya has proved himself the banquet's choice dish because he alone attained to an official position.

³¹ This idiom (招賢納士) means "to seek out able men." The person seeking talent on a large scale in the late Tang could have been a regional governor or warlord, but, in Luoyang, it would certainly be the emperor, probably using the mechanism of the civil service examination.

³² Qiya gained his official position through success in the civil service exam.

³³ The subject here is ambiguous. It certainly includes Qiya, and reason suggests that it would include Yingyuan and Manshi as well. It is possible, however, that monk Wenjian intended to focus his praise on the filial piety of the more influential Qiya by singling out his pious mourning.

³⁴ The expression pictures one weeping to the point that water tears have been exhausted and are replaced by tears of blood, and, in this particularly extreme case, by a heavy flow of blood tears.

on [their] bodies exceeding the ritual norm.³⁵ [Employing] tortoise shell divination to adhere to the auspicious, precisely upon the Dahe era's second year, second month and sixteenth day,³⁶ [his] corpse was returned to Luoyang district, Chengde parish, Bairen village, opening the *honored* Lady's old tomb [according to] proper ritual when [they were] together jointly entombed. Conforming to the Dragon Sword,³⁷ [they are] united at the lower [Yellow] Springs, zither and zithern³⁸ forever down in the land of the dead. Life-long righteousness, from ancient times, thus, [it must be honored]. [Their tomb] to the south looks up to Wanan [Mountain],³⁹ and

³⁵ The sincerity of the sons' mourning was manifest in the physical harm that their bodies suffered as a result of ritual mourning practices taken to the extreme.

³⁶ March 5, 828.

³⁷ This probably refers to one of the famous swords of ancient China that was actually two interlocking swords, one male and one female, made by Gan Jiang 干將 and his wife, Mo Ye 莫耶, for Helü 闔閭, the King of Wu (r. 514 – 496 BCE), during the Spring and Autumn Period. *Ganjiang*, the sword, was a "dragon sword" in the sense that its magic conferred kingship on the one who possessed it, whether Helü, Gan Jiang's son, or the nameless assassin who avenged Gan Jiang and his son by killing Helü. Their story first appears in *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋(4.1b.10-3b.1) and the legend develops in *Lieyizhuan* 列異傳 6 (*Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 343), *Soushenji* 搜神記 11.4, and *Shiyiji* 拾遺記 10.8b. For the development of the legend, see Lionello Lanciotti. "Notes on Ancient Chinese Metallurgy: Sword Casting and Related Legends in China." *East and West* 6, no. 2 (1955): 106-14; and "Sword Casting and Related Legends in China (II)- the Transformation of Ch'ih Pi's Legend." *East and West* 6, no. 4 (1956): 316-22. See, also, Olivia Milburn, "The Weapons of Kings: A New Perspective on Southern Sword Legends in Early China." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008): 423-37.

³⁸ The zither and zithern were musical instruments usually paired together because of their complementarity. The literary pairing is often used as a euphemism for marital harmony.

³⁹ Wan'an Mountain is a 937m peak, situated in modern Luoyang's Yibin district, east of the Yi River.

to the north backs against the Luo riverbank.⁴⁰ To the left, look toward Shaoshi's solitary peak;⁴¹ to the right, watch over the sundial's hut.⁴² Wenjian⁴³ will long acknowledge [His Lordship's] consideration and tender feelings toward [him], [with the result that] pangs of affection grip [his] feelings even more, [and he has] endeavored to set them down in writing. [Possessed of] a predisposition indeed clumsily straightforward, it may be that this recounting is not refined, [but he] takes hold of the writing brush and writes, writes down by carving in hard stone, availing himself of the chance of a catastrophe of the hills and valleys [that might someday reveal this epitaph]. His verse says:

靈武之氏，	dzyeX	<i>A clan of Lingwu,</i>
代不乏賢。	hen	<i>A generation with no lack of virtue,</i>
謚物化洽，	heap	<i>At harmony with the peaceful transformation of things,</i>
與時為天。	then	<i>Pursuing the opportune moment contrived by Heaven.</i>
□ 其葉□，		<i>XX its leaves XX</i>
松明竹鮮。	sjen	<i>Bright as the [steadfast] pine and vital as bamboo.⁴⁴</i>

⁴⁰ This line repeats the corresponding line in the Lady's *muzhiming* with one character's difference: "Luo riverbank" here replaces "Luo River" (洛溪 v. 洛汭). The further description that follows concerning a sundial's hut perhaps reflects the development of the surroundings as a graveyard in the six years since the Lady's demise.

⁴¹ As the tomb faces southward, to the left (East) is Mount Shaoshi, the central of the seven peaks of Mount Song. Tan, 5:44-45 (16, 11). Mount Song is one of the Five Marchmounts, sacred mountains in China at each point of the compass, with Mount Song at the center point.

⁴² Still facing southward, to the right (West) is the humbler sight of a hut that somehow serviced a sundial.

⁴³ Wenjian is the Buddhist monk writing this epitaph.

⁴⁴ Known for its longevity, the pine here symbolizes constancy. Straight and ever-green bamboo symbolizes virtue that persists through hardships.

劍合重泉, dzjwen	<i>The swords united⁴⁵ [as he] followed to the Springs,⁴⁶</i>
琴瑟初掩。‘jemX	<i>The zither and zithern earlier obstructed.⁴⁷</i>
永殄笙簧, huang	<i>Forever ended, the reed organ’s music,⁴⁸</i>
世歿餘念。nemH	<i>A generation has come to its end, and those who remain miss it.</i>
景寺遺聲, syeng	<i>The Jing monastery has lost a voice,⁴⁹</i>
芳塵罷占。tsyem	<i>The fragrant reputation has ceased its presence.</i>
峨峨淵 ⁵⁰ 德, tok	<i>High, how high, [his] deeply profound virtue!⁵¹</i>
克生休命。mjaengH	<i>[He] lifelong attained to the good and beautiful will of Heaven.</i>
履義蹈忠, trjuwng	<i>Treading the path of righteousness and stepping to the rhythm of sincerity,</i>

⁴⁵ A euphemism for being reunited.

⁴⁶ The Yellow Springs or the Western Springs is the subterranean place of the dead.

⁴⁷ The “zither and zithern” is a metaphor for the husband and wife, resonant with marital harmony.

⁴⁸ Hua Xian was his fellow believers’ reed organ (see text and note at footnote 19).

⁴⁹ Mao Yangguang argues that since the Jingjiao monastery and Hua Xian’s home were both situated in Luoyang’s Xiushan quarter, his voice was a familiar sound in the monastery that, now, was never to be heard again. Mao, “Luoyang Xin Chutu Tangdai Jingjiaotu Hua Xian Ji Qiqi Anshi Muzhi Chutan 洛阳新出土唐代景教徒花猷及其妻安氏墓志初探,” 88. Perhaps through playing the reed organ and singing, he played a role in the liturgy? Perhaps his “voice” was as a powerful advocate for *Jingjiao* and the *Jingjiao* community in Luoyang?

⁵⁰ This character on the stone appears either to have had some strokes worn away or it was written in a non-standard form. The nearest character is 淵 *yuan*, meaning “an abyss; deep or profound.” The next nearest possibility is 湫, a non-classical character that does appear in a seventeenth century Chinese character dictionary, *Zihui* 字彙, with the same meaning as 淑 *shu*, meaning “pure or clear.” Mao Yangguang reads this character as 淑 rather than 淵.

⁵¹ Li Tang has noticed that this stanza is lifted word for word (except for one character in the first and another in the third lines) from a *muzhiming* written by high official and acclaimed literary talent Zhang Yue 張說 (667-730): *Changzhou cishi Pingjun shendaobei* 常州刺史平君神道碑 in *Quan Tangwen* 229.15a. Tang, “Critical Remarks on a So-Called Newly Discovered *Jingjiao* Epitaph from Luoyang with a Preliminary English Translation,” in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 38. The different original lines are as follows: 峨峨淑德, . . . 履孝蹈忠 . . . *High, how high, [his] pure virtue! / / Treading the path of filial piety and stepping to the rhythm of sincerity, . . .*

含清體正。 tsyengH	<i>[He] embodied honesty and proper etiquette</i>
如玉之潔, ket	<i>According to jade's spotless character,</i>
如金之鏡。 kjaengH	<i>According to the bronze's mirror reflection.</i> ⁵²
三光西沒, mwot	<i>The Three Luminaries</i> ⁵³ <i>sink in the west,</i> ⁵⁴
百川東度。 duH	<i>The hundred rivers cross to the east,</i> ⁵⁵
天道運迴, hwoj	<i>Heaven's Way turns a rotation,</i>
人隨代故。 kuH	<i>A person follows the old succession [of life].</i>
倏忽嗟歎, thanH	<i>Swift and sudden, "Oh no!" [we] gasp,</i>
淒涼薤露。 luH	<i>Desolate [sounds] "The Dew on the Shallots."</i> ⁵⁶

⁵² The qualities of these physical objects are analogous to Hua Xian's spotless and unblemished character.

⁵³ The sun, moon, and stars.

⁵⁴ Professor Tang has noticed that this stanza is lifted, with changes in the last two lines, from another *muzhiming* by Zhang Yue: *Tang gu Liangzhou zhangshi Yuanjun shizhuming* 唐故涼州長史元君石柱銘 in *Quan Tangwen* 232.9b. Tang, "Critical Remarks on a So-Called Newly Discovered *Jingjiao* Epitaph from Luoyang with a Preliminary English Translation," in *Winds of Jingjiao: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 38. In Zhang Shuo's text, the stanza's last two lines read: . . . 倏忽三紀, 悲涼千露。 / *In a flash and a flicker, three dozen years / The desolation of a thousand dews* [dew represents the transience of life].

⁵⁵ The rivers of China flow eastward to the sea. These lines describe water and heavenly bodies following their natural course, and, as the next lines argue, death is simply part of the normal flow of the universe.

⁵⁶ A coffin-bearers' song. "Dew on the Shallots" was first sung by the entourage of Tian Hong, as they carried his corpse to emperor Han Gaozu (r. 202 – 195 BCE). Tian Hong, former Prince of Qi and rival of Liu Bang for the throne, had been summoned by the victorious founder of the Han dynasty, but Tian Hong committed suicide before arriving rather than humiliate himself before his former rival. His men carried his body to answer the emperor's summons, and they sang the mournful song that they had composed so as not to weep before the emperor. In the song, life is transient, like morning dew evaporating under the rising sun, but a person's life is precious, for, though dew will reappear on the shallot the next morning, a person's death is final. "Dew on the Shallots" survived as a dirge, but it also became a generic term for songs sung while carrying a corpse to its grave. Thomas Watters, *Essays on the Chinese Language* (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1889), 320-21.

安氏夫人， nyin	<i>[With] the Lady née An,</i>
祔葬終也。 yaeX	<i>[Their] burial in a joint tomb is concluded.</i>
水合蛟龍， ljowng	<i>Water unites with a flood dragon,</i>
墳同松檟。 kaeX	<i>The burial mound together with the pine and catalpa trees.⁵⁷</i>
千載九原， ngjwon	<i>[Though the Lord and Lady lie] a thousand years in the grave,</i>
嗣子淚下。 hacX	<i>The heirs are shedding tears.</i>

⁵⁷ Pine and catalpa trees were often planted in front of tombs. These images of the water with the flood dragon and the grave with the appropriate trees are pairings of complementary things as they should be, like Hua Xian and the Lady, paired forever in their final resting place.

APPENDIX D

THE ACCOUNT OF THE STONE PILLAR INSCRIBED WITH THE *JINGJIAO* OF DA QIN'S *SCRIPTURE PROCLAIMING THE ORIGIN OF ORIGINS*

- 1 大秦景教宣元至本經幢記 /
Account of the stone pillar [inscribed with] the *Jingjiao* of Da Qin's *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins*:
- 2 夫至聖應現，利洽無方。我無元真主匠帝 □ /
The Most Holy One became manifest, blessing spreading without limits. Our Creator-God, the True Lord without beginning . . . /
- 3 海而畜衆類，日月輝照，五星運行，即 /
. . . sea yet [he] feeds the many kinds. The sun and moon shine brightly, the Five Stars¹ move along their course, exactly . . . /
- 4 散，有終亡者，通靈伏識，子會無遺，咸超淨 □ /
. . . scattered, those whose end is death comprehend the Spirit [and] prostrate themselves in recognition [of His power]. The remainder gathered together without omission, everyone transcending to the pure . . . /
- 5 海，窅窅冥冥。道不名，子不語，世莫得而也。喜 □ /
. . . sea, [in the] dark and dim.² If the Dao is not named [and if] the subject is not talked about, then later generations will not know about it. Good . . . /
- 6 無始未來之境，則我 [] 匠帝阿羅訶也。 /
. . . without limitations of beginning or future, this is the standard of our *honored* Creator-God Aluohe. . . \
- 7 有能諷持者，皆獲景福，況書寫於幢銘 □ /

¹ The Five Stars are the five visible planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter.

² The “dark and dim” may refer to the netherworld, thus completing a section on humankind's end in death (or at the return of Christ) to face God's reward or judgment.

... there is one who is able to chant and to bear in mind [the principles], in all cases gaining the blessings of *Jing*, even more to write fully and completely on a stone pillar inscription³ ... /

8 承家嗣嫡。恨未展孝誠，奄違庭訓。高堂 □ /

... the family inheritance follows after the line of descent. [I] regret being too late in demonstrating filial devotion, having wholly turned away from my what my father taught me. [My] honored parents⁴ ... /

9 森沉感因，卑情蓬心，建茲幢記，鐫經刻石，用 /

Owing to a deep-felt somber gloom, [my] coarse thoughts left [my] heart in disarray. [I] set up this stone pillar record, carving a scripture on the engraved stone, using ... /

10 慰亡妣安國安氏太夫人神道及亡師伯和 /

... placate the spirit passageway⁵ [of the grave of my] late mother⁶ Grand Lady née An of the state of An⁷ together with the late master, paternal uncle He ... /

11 願景日長懸，朗明閭府，真姓不迷，即景性也。夫求 /

³ The phrase, “to chant and to bear in mind” is *fengchi* 諷持, a contraction of the typically Buddhist phrase *fengsong xiuchi* 諷誦修持, which means chanting and then bearing the chanted words in mind in one’s practice. Though dealing with fragmented text requires that inferences be tentative, it appears that this *Jingjiao* believer expected to gain for the deceased, for himself, and/or for the community, the “blessings of *Jing*.” Perhaps these blessings flowed by holding a memorial mass (chanting and bearing in mind to practice those teachings), but there must also have been some blessing—or karmic merit—to gain from the ascetic penance enacted by inscribing the *Scripture Proclaiming the Origin of Origins* on the Grand Lady’s grave monument pillar. In addition, the use of *fengchi* anticipates the use and function of inscribing the scripture on the pillar. The Buddhist compound word, *zongchi* 總持 (the Chinese translation for the Sanskrit *dharani*), involves invoking a magical power by collecting and holding in mind or concentrating on an incantation or mantra. It seems this *Jingjiao* family had incorporated a widespread Buddhist memorial practice, and, whether or not they appreciated the full implications, that the “remembrance” included the hymn carved on the stone pillar monument, a Christian *dharani* pillar. On the efficacy of Buddhist incantations carved on *jingchuang* 經幢, literally “scripture pillars,” or commonly called “*dharani* pillars,” see Copp, “Anointing Phrases and Narrative Power: A Tang Buddhist Poetics of Incantation.”

⁴ Literally, “the great hall,” which, as their fine home, represents the honored parents.

⁵ The spirit passageway was the tomb’s physical doorway, the passage between the world of the living and the dead world within the tomb.

⁶ *Bi* 妣 is a deceased woman relative. Usually, she is one’s mother, but the term could also refer to one’s grandmother, or to a female relative of the generation of one’s grandmother.

⁷ The State of An is Bukhara in Sogdiana (Central Asia).

May the *Jing*/brilliant sun long hang,⁸ shining over [this] dark dwelling place; the true name is not lost—this is precisely what is meant by the nature of *Jing*.⁹ In any respect, seeking ...
/

- 12 幽魂見在，支屬亦願無諸障難，命等松筠，長幼 /
... the spirits of the dead remain, the descendants, for their part, hope that there are no cases of barriers or difficulties [for themselves], living lives compared to [the steadfastness and longevity of] cypress and bamboo, the old and the young¹⁰ ... /
- 13 次叙立塋買兆之由，所管即洛養縣感德鄉柏仁（村） /
Then, to relate setting up the grave and purchasing the plot from the beginning, that plot was under the administration of Bairen village, Chengde township, in Luoyang district ...
- 14 之始，即元和九年十二月八日，於崔行本處買，保人 /
...its beginning, in the ninth year of Yuanhe, on the eighth day of the twelfth month (January 22, 815),¹¹ the site was purchased from Cui Xingben, the guarantor¹² ...
- 15 戚，歲時奠酌，天地志同。買南山之石，磨龔瑩澈，刻勒書經， /

⁸ In the *Jingjiao bei*, probably referring to the Crucifixion, the “*Jing*/brilliant sun” was hung “to smash darkened principalities, [and] the Devil’s lies were thus altogether demolished,” 懸景日以破暗府. *Jingjiao bei*, line 7. Here, the Crucifixion is also a promise of the resurrection from the dead.

⁹ Though the “nature of *Jing*” (*jingxing* 景性) appears of its face like the “nature of the Buddha” (*foxing* 佛性), they are different upon closer examination. The nature of the Buddha is the element of Buddha-mind in all sentient beings that is inactive before enlightenment, but it makes present the potential for cultivating the living being’s enlightenment. Based on the context available to us, however, the nature of *Jing* has to do with the persistence of personhood so distinct as to remain identifiable by name. The person’s relations with God persist after death—the *Jing* sun shining into the darkness of the grave. The completed thought probably has to do with resurrection to re-embody the person.

¹⁰ This line appears to be similar to one of the standard elements of the *muzhiming* (entombed epitaph) genre in which ancestors are asked to remain quiet in their graves.

¹¹ During the reign of Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820).

¹² Another possible reading (without the comma) is, “a guarantor was contracted from Cui Xingbenchu,” where the Cui firm must be something like a mortgage provider.

...relatives. At the proper time, libations were poured out, and Heaven and Earth were of one accord.¹³ Purchasing a stone cut from Nanshan [the Southern Mount], [the stone] was polished to make it clean and bright. It was inscribed with the text of a scripture ...

- 16 於陵。文翼自慚猥拙，抽毫述文，將來君子，無見哂焉。時 /
...at the tumulus.¹⁴ [My] prose style makes me ashamed of its inferiority, but I take out my writing brush to narrate this account. May future gentlemen not ridicule it. At the time ...
- 17 敕東都右羽林軍押衙陪戎校尉守左威衛汝州梁川府 /
... appointed Chief Fang¹⁵ of the Eastern Capital's (Luoyang) Forest of Plumes Army, Commandant Tending the Western Frontier¹⁶ of the Right Awesome Guard at the Liangchuan military garrison of Ruzhou¹⁷ ...
- 18 中外親族，題字如後：弟景僧清素，[]從兄少誠，[]舅安少連 /
Members of the same clan from the Central Plains and from the border regions inscribe [their] names as follows: younger brother and *Jing* monk Qingsu, *honored* elder cousin¹⁸ Shaocheng, *honored* maternal uncle An Shaolian ...
- 19 義叔上都左龍武軍散將兼押衙寧遠將軍守左武衛大將軍置同政（正）員 /
...adoptive uncle Supernumerary General of the Left Militant as Dragons Army at the Supreme Capital (Chang'an), concurrently Chief Fang for the Pacifying the Remote Regions

¹³ Traditional Chinese burial practices were observed. These would have included divinations of the place of burial and the time of burial. Also, offerings of liquor and food induced the Spirit of the Earth to protect the gravesite. See, Choo.

¹⁴ One might expect the missing text of the previous line to anticipate the prepared monument being installed "at the tumulus," but some, rejecting any connection between the two lines, take *yuling* 於陵 as the name of the/a author. See Yin Xiaoping 殷小平 and Lin Wushu 林悟殊, "Chuangji Ruogan Wenti Kaoshi 幢記 若干問題考釋," *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, no. 90 (2008): 275-76.

¹⁵ According to the *Hanyu da cidian*, the *yaya* 押衙, also written 押牙, in Tang times led the bodyguard who also kept the flag that identified the location of the general. I have used the alternative rendering "chief fang" 押牙 because the English of "chief of the forecourt" 押衙 sounds too easily confused with a title for a basketball player. A Song dynasty use of the title of *yaya* 押衙 is translated as "lackey," for a hired hand for menial work, but this usage is late and inappropriate here.

¹⁶ This prestige title for military officers indicates that the adoptive uncle held a ninth rank.

¹⁷ Ruzhou was south, southeast of Luoyang, the site of present day Linru 臨汝. Tan, 5:44-45 (16, 11).

¹⁸ Male, on the paternal side.

General, Acting Grand General of the Left Militant Guard established as a Supplementary Official ...

- 20 大秦寺 [] 寺主法和玄應，俗姓米；[] 威儀大德玄慶，俗姓米；[] [] 九階大德志通，俗姓康；... /

[The dignitaries of the] Da Qin Monastery: *honored* abbot Fahe Xuanying¹⁹ whose secular family name is Mi, *honored* Disciplinary Great Virtue²⁰ Xuanqing whose secular family name is Mi, *most honored* Ninth-Rank Great Virtue²¹ Zhitong whose secular family name is Kang, ...

- 21 檢校塋及莊家人昌兒。故題記之。 /

Inspector of Graves and landed farmer Chang Er. Thus, this is inscribed.

- 22 其大和三年二月十六日壬寅遷舉大事。²²

This third year of Dahe, on the sixteenth day of the second month (March 24, 829),²³ the Renyin year,²⁴ the great matter of relocating [the grave] was undertaken.²⁵

¹⁹ This name means “Doctrine attuned with mystic response.” While such a name would be a mouthful, it conceivably comports with Church of the East scholastic asceticism. On the other hand, *fahe* 法和 may be a title that is simply unfamiliar. One view, offered by Nicolini-Zani, sees *fahe* as an honorific borrowed from Chan Buddhists, used here to indicate that Xuanying enjoyed primacy of *Jingjiao* authority in the Luoyang area. Nicolini-Zani, “Luminous Ministers of the Da Qin Monastery: A Study of the Christian Clergy Mentioned in the Jingjiao Pillar from Luoyang,” in *From the Oxus River to Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 146-47.

²⁰ The “disciplinary” modifier indicates that this bishop or Great Virtue was of a low rank or unranked. Perhaps this was the Chinese title for what the Church of the East called a country-bishop, a suffragan bishop who assisted the bishop of a diocese.

²¹ The *que*, or blank space, preceding Zhitong’s title is larger than for the preceding dignitaries of the monastery, indicating greater honor. The “ninth-rank” designates the rank of the bishop’s prestige title. Perhaps the rank of the bishop of the diocese. For a different take on the titles and relations of these *Jingjiao* leaders in Luoyang that refers to Buddhist titles rather than to Tang official titles, see, Nicolini-Zani, “Luminous Ministers of the Da Qin Monastery: A Study of the Christian Clergy Mentioned in the Jingjiao Pillar from Luoyang,” in *From the Oxus River to Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, 145-50.

²² This text appears in a square blank space at the top of the pillar that corresponds to another blank space on the opposite side and to images on six of the eight sides of the pillar.

²³ During the reign of Wenzong 文宗 (r. 826 – 840).

²⁴ The thirty-ninth year of the sexagenary cycle.

²⁵ This was inscribed later, after the original inscription. It appears above the columns of text in the blank square that corresponds with graphic squares on other facets of the shaft.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ken Morrow attended Baylor University where he majored in economics and earned a BBA in 1989. He next attended The University of Texas Law School, earning his JD in 1992. He was admitted to the State Bar of Texas in 1992, and he practiced law in Dallas for about ten years. During that time, he taught the principles of international trade at the East China Shipbuilding Institute (now Jiangsu University of Science and Technology), Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, China (Fall 1994) and at the Tianjin Foreign Languages University, Tianjin, China (Spring 1995). He also carved out time to attend Dallas Theological Seminary, earning a MA in biblical studies in 1997. About the time his growing estate planning practice showed Ken the need to deepen his expertise in the tax code, he was presented with an opportunity to return to China. He closed his practice and moved to Beijing in 2003. He first studied Chinese and then he coached expatriates in acquiring Chinese language and culture, and also crafted business plans and advised business start-ups. Together with his lovely wife, they founded a community center offering educational and cultural enrichment opportunities and activities for children and adults in Beijing.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

- 2019 PhD University of Texas at Dallas, History of Ideas**
Dissertation: “Negotiating Belonging: The Church of the East’s Contested Identity in Tang China”
Committee: J. Michael Farmer (chair), Rosemary Admiral, Peter Park, Monica Rankin, and Frederick Turner
Qualifying Exam Fields:
The thought and culture of medieval China
Pre-modern Islamic history
(Re)bridging cultures through myth, ritual, and religion
- 1992 JD The University of Texas Law School**
- 1997 MA Dallas Theological Seminary, Biblical Studies, *cum laude***
- 1989 BBA Baylor University, Economics, *cum laude***

AWARDS, GRANTS, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2018** T’ang Studies Society Travel Grant
- 2018** The University of Texas at Dallas School of Arts & Humanities Travel Grant
- 2016** Reed Institute Travel Subvention
- 2015** T’ang Studies Society Travel Grant
- 2015** University of Kansas East Asian Library Travel Grant
- 2014** Betty and Gifford Harris Travel Grant (by the UTD Graduate Studies Committee)
- 2014-16** Teaching Assistantship

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Association for Asian Studies

T'ang Studies Society
American Academy of Religion

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2018** “Navigating Religious and Ethnic Prejudice: Reading the *Muzhiming* of a Late Tang Couple”
American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting
Denver, Colorado, November 17-20
- 2018** “Forming ‘Chinese’ Memories to Advance a Cause: Reading the *Muzhiming* of a Late Tang Couple”
CU Boulder Asian Studies Graduate Student Association Conference
Boulder, Colorado, February 23-24
- 2017** “My ‘Chinese’ is Better than Yours: Shifting Constructions of Chinese Identity in the Entombed Epitaphs of a Late Tang Couple”
Association for Asian Studies SWCAS – WCAAS Joint Regional Conference
Dallas, Texas, November 17-18
- 2014** “Repurposing History: *The Three Kingdoms* Adapted in John Woo’s *Red Cliff*”
Association for Asian Studies MCAA & SWCAS Joint Regional Conference
Lawrence, Kansas, October 3-5
- 2014** “The Battle of Red Cliff and the Tales of History”
Northeast Texas Regional Phi Alpha Theta History Conference
Denton, Texas, April 5
- 2014** “John Woo’s *Red Cliff* in the Cycle of Adapting the *Three Kingdoms*”
RAW Graduate Student Symposium of The University of Texas at Dallas
Dallas, Texas, March 22
- 2013** “The Defining Power of the Humanities in Tang China: How the Church of the East Experienced the Opening and Closing of Chinese Identity”
RAW Graduate Student Symposium of The University of Texas at Dallas,
Dallas, Texas, March 23
- 2013** “The Church of the East and the Reformation of Identity in Tang China”
University of North Texas Graduate & Undergraduate History Conference
Denton, March 9

CAMPUS TALKS

- 2019** Guest lecture: “Muslim-Christian relations in the early Islamic period,” Rosemary Admiral’s undergraduate class, Medieval Islamic World, February 6
- 2018** Guest lecture: “The *Jingjiao* Stele,” J. Michael Farmer’s undergraduate class, Tang Dynasty China, April 2
- 2018** Panelist: “Preparing for Your Field Exams,” UTD Arts and Humanities GSA, February 6
- 2017** Guest lecture: “What stone inscriptions reveal of Christianity in Tang China,” J. Michael Farmer’s graduate class, Silk Roads, March 20
- 2016** Panelist: “Doing Research Abroad,” UTD Phi Alpha Theta, November 3

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of North Texas, Denton (Adjunct)

History of Imperial China (F 2016)

History of Modern China (S 2017)

The University of Texas at Dallas (Rhetoric TA—Instructor of Record)

Rhetoric (F 2014, S 2015, F 2015, S 2016)

Graduate Teaching Certificate, UTD Center for Teaching and Learning (2016)

East China Shipbuilding Institute (now **Jiangsu Univ. of Science and Technology**), Zhenjiang

Business and legal principles of international trade (F 1994)

Tianjin Foreign Languages University, Tianjin, China

Business and legal principles of international trade (S 1995)

NON-ACADEMIC WORK

2003 - 2010 **Consultant** in culture acquisition and international business, Beijing, China

1992 - 2002 **Lawyer** in private practice, Dallas, Texas

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2016 **Search committee**—Islamic history assistant professor (grad student rep)

2016 – 2019 **Phi Alpha Theta** officer