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**Studies on Nestorian Iconology in China and
part of Central Asia during the 13th and 14th Centuries**

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INTRODUCTION	1
1. NESTORIANISM AND ITS “HERESY”	1
1.1 <i>The origin of Nestorianism</i>	1
1.2 <i>The “heresy” of Nestorianism</i>	2
2. ON THE TERMS OF NESTORIANISM, JINGJIAO, YELIKEWEN AND CHURCH OF THE EAST	3
2.1 <i>Jingjiao</i>	3
2.2 <i>Yelikewen</i>	4
2.3 <i>Nestorianism and Church of the East</i>	6
1. NESTORIAN CHRISTIANS AMONG CENTRAL ASIAN TRIBES AND CHINA DURING THE MONGOL ERA.....	8
1.1 IN THE NORTHERN STEPPE AREA	8
1.1.1 <i>The Öngüt</i>	9
1.1.2 <i>The Kerait</i>	12
1.1.3 <i>The Naiman</i>	15
1.1.4 <i>The Merkit</i>	16
1.1.5 <i>The Uighur</i>	17
1.2 IN SOUTHEAST CHINA.....	18
2. HISTORICAL LITERARY SOURCES ON NESTORIANISM OF THE MONGOL ERA.....	23
2.1 CHINESE SOURCES.....	23
2.1.1 <i>Official History</i>	23
2.1.2 <i>Local Gazetteer</i>	24
2.1.3 <i>Folk Literature</i>	24
2.2 SYRIAC, SOGDIAN AND UYGHUR SOURCES.....	25
2.2.1 <i>Syriac, Sogdian and Old Uyghur Manuscripts from Turfan</i>	25
2.2.2 <i>Christian manuscript fragments from Dunhuang</i>	26
2.2.3 <i>Christian manuscript fragments from Khara-Khoto</i>	27
2.2.4 <i>Syriac manuscript hymns from Beijing</i>	28
2.3 MEDIEVAL TRAVELLERS AND THEIR TRAVELOGUES.....	29
3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES OF NESTORIAN PRESENCE IN PART OF CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA.....	32
3.1 SEMIRECHYE IN CENTRAL ASIA.....	32
3.1.1 <i>The found of Nestorian tombstones in Semirechye</i>	32
3.1.2 <i>The collection and protection of the tombstones</i>	34
3.2 ALMALIQ IN XINJIANG.....	37
3.3 INNER MONGOLIA.....	38
3.3.1 <i>Darhan Muminggan Lianhe (United) Banner</i>	40
3.3.1.1 <i>Olon Sume</i>	40
3.3.1.2 <i>Muqur Suburghan cemetery</i>	42
3.3.1.3 <i>Biqigetuaolai cemetery</i>	42
3.3.2 <i>Wangmuliang Cemetery of Dorbod Banner</i>	43
3.3.3 <i>Chifeng</i>	44
3.3.4 <i>Ordos</i>	44

3.4 SHIZHUZILIANG	45
3.5 NESTORIAN SITES IN BEIJING.....	47
3.6 YANGZHOU	49
3.7 QUANZHOU	50
3.7.1 <i>The Port City of Quanzhou</i>	50
3.7.2 <i>The Discovery and Protection of Nestorian Relics</i>	51
3.7.3 <i>The shape and structure of Nestorian tombs</i>	53
4. RESEARCH ON THE MOTIFS OF NESTORIAN IMAGES.....	57
4.1 THE MOTIF OF CROSS	57
4.1.1 <i>The Different Types of Nestorian Crosses in Central Asia and China</i>	57
4.1.1.1 Nestorian Cross pattée and Maltese cross.....	58
4.1.1.2 Nestorian Greek Cross.....	60
4.1.2 <i>Discussion on Nestorian “plain cross”</i>	65
4.1.2.1 The reasons for choosing “plain cross”	65
4.1.2.1.1 The doctrine of Christ suffering.....	65
4.1.2.1.2 Controversies over the “plain cross” and the image of Christ crucified	70
4.1.2.2 The Interpretation of Nestorian “plain cross”	72
4.1.2.2.1 The cosmic meaning.....	72
4.1.2.2.2 The strong amulet and magical symbol.....	75
4.1.2.3 Conclusion	79
4.1.3 <i>Further discussion</i>	81
4.1.3.1 The decoration of small spheres.....	81
4.1.3.1.1 Two decorative styles.....	81
4.1.3.1.2 The symbolic meaning.....	82
4.1.3.1.3 Two cases	84
4.1.3.2 The steps (or triangle) where the cross stands.....	86
4.1.4 <i>Crosses in the art of Manichaeism</i>	88
4.1.5 <i>Crosses in the manuscripts kept in the Berlin Turfan-Sammlung</i>	93
4.2 THE CROSS-LOTUS MOTIF	97
4.2.1 <i>An overview of the cross-lotus pattern in different regions</i>	97
4.2.2 <i>The combination of cross-lotus (cross) and different elements</i>	99
4.2.2.1 Cross-lotus (cross) with censer.....	99
4.2.2.1.1 Cross-censer in Shizhuziliang	99
4.2.2.1.2 Cross-lotus with the censer in Quanzhou	103
4.2.2.1.3 Incense and censer in Nestorian Christianity.....	105
4.2.2.2 Cross-lotus with clouds and cross-cloud (flame).....	107
4.2.2.3 Cross-lotus with parasol.....	111
4.2.3 <i>Similar cross-lotus patterns before the Mongol era</i>	113
4.2.3.1 The cross-lotus pattern in China during the 8th and 9th centuries.....	113
4.2.3.2 Crosses in Tibet and its neighbouring regions	120
4.2.3.3 St. Thomas Christian Crosses in India.....	122
4.2.3.4 Conclusion	124
4.2.4 <i>Discussion on the lotus as a decorative motif</i>	124
4.2.4.1 The mainstream concept.....	124

4.2.4.2 The debate.....	126
4.3 THE “ANGELS” MOTIF	130
4.3.1 <i>An overview of “angels” in different regions</i>	131
4.3.1.1 Xinjiang	131
4.3.1.2 Yangzhou	132
4.3.1.3 Quanzhou	136
4.3.2 <i>The clothes, accessories and decorations of “angels” in Quanzhou</i>	143
4.3.2.1 The Crown	143
4.3.2.2 The Bun	148
4.3.2.3 The Keyūra	149
4.3.2.4 The Cloud Collar	151
4.3.2.5 The Shawls.....	152
4.3.2.6 The Humen	152
4.3.3 <i>Angels as described in Nestorian literature</i>	154
4.3.4 <i>The winged Nestorian “angels”</i>	157
4.3.4.1 The early winged celestial beings.....	158
4.3.4.1.1 Early Buddhist art in India.....	158
4.3.4.1.2 The cultural circles in Central Asia influenced by Gandhara art.....	159
4.3.4.1.3 The examples from Midwest China	168
4.3.4.1.4 Conclusion.....	170
4.3.4.2 The four-winged “angels”	172
4.3.5 <i>Further discussion</i>	174
4.4 ORDOS BRONZE CROSSES	179
4.4.1 <i>The collection and classification</i>	179
4.4.2 <i>The debate</i>	180
4.4.2.1 Bird-shaped objects.....	182
4.4.2.2 The symbol of swastika 卐.....	184
4.4.2.3 The cross-shaped bronze item in Dunhuang and seals in Jiuquan Museum.....	185
5. CONCLUSION	189
APPENDICES	192
1. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES FOUND IN SEMIRECHYE.....	192
2. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES FOUND IN ALMALIQ	215
3. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES FOUND IN OLON-SUME.....	225
4. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES (RELICS) FOUND IN MUQUR-SUBURGHAN CEMETERY.....	244
5. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES (RELICS) FOUND IN BIQIGETUHAOLAI CEMETERY	251
6. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES (RELICS) FOUND IN DORBOD BANNER	260
7. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN RELICS FOUND IN CHIFENG	284
8. “NESTORIAN BRONZE CROSSES” FOUND IN ORDOS.....	286
9. CATALOGUE OF OTHER NESTORIAN RELICS FOUND IN INNER MONGOLIA	298
10. CATALOGUE OF CHRISTIAN TOMBSTONES FOUND IN SHIZHUZILIANG	322
11. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN RELICS FOUND IN BEIJING.....	327
12. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN RELICS FOUND IN YANGZHOU	331
13. CATALOGUE OF NESTORIAN TOMBSTONES (RELICS) FOUND IN QUANZHOU.....	334

BIBLIOGRAPHY 381

Introduction

1. Nestorianism and its “heresy”

1.1 The origin of Nestorianism

Nestorianism is a Christian religious movement initiated in Antioch by Nestorius (386–450)¹, the most famous student of Theodore the Interpreter (350–428)² and the Archbishop of Constantinople (now Istanbul) from 10 April 428 to August 431.³

Nestorius developed his Christological views as an attempt to understand and explain rationally the incarnation of the divine and the nature of the Virgin Mary. Qualben argues: “Nestorianism is the doctrine supposedly held by Nestorius that there are two separate persons in the Incarnate Christ, the one divine and the other human, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine that the Incarnate Christ was a single person”.⁴ Nestorius attributed some of the deeds of Jesus to his divinity, and others to his humanity. However, this distinction easily made people deny the absolute value of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nestorians rejected the concept that it was God who was crucified, and they insisted that it was the humanity of Christ who suffered.⁵

Also, Nestorius believed that the Virgin Mary was a person rather than a divine. The mother of Jesus can only be the mother of the human (Christotokos⁶, man-bearing), but not the mother of God (Theotokos⁷, God-bearing).⁸ He believed that God cannot have a mother, and he was convinced that human beings couldn’t nurture God. Nestorianism opposed the veneration of Mary.

Nestorius’s views suffered fierce opposition especially from Cyril of Alexandria (376–444)⁹ and the conflict of the two gradually became more strident in tone. Then Emperor Theodosius II (401–450) tried to summon the Council of Ephesus (the Third Ecumenical Council, in 431) to solve the dispute. However, the council was convoked

¹ According to Zhu Qianzhi, Nestorius still survived during 440-450 and may die in 454. The place where he died is not clear, and no relevant literature has been recorded, see Zhu, 1997:33; According to Wang Meixiu, etc., it was recorded as 381-451, see Wang & Duan & Wen & Le, 2008:55.

² Theodore the Interpreter was bishop of Mopsuestia (as Theodore II) from 392 to 428, also known as Theodore of Antioch.

³ Qualben, 1947.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Cross & Livingstone, 1997:1139.

⁶ Christotokos is the Greek title of Mary. Its literal English translations include Christ-bearer and the one who gives birth to Christ, see Hall, 2002:8-9.

⁷ Theotokos is a title of Mary, mother of God, used especially in Eastern Christianity. see Bethune-Baker, 1998:58.

⁸ Qualben, 1947.

⁹ Cyril of Alexandria was the Patriarch of Alexandria from 412 to 444. He was a central figure in the Council of Ephesus in 431, which led to the deposition of Nestorius as Patriarch of Constantinople.

before Nestorius's supporters had arrived from Antioch and Syria, thus Nestorius refused to attend. Finally, the Council declared Nestorius' theory was heresy and exiled him outside.¹⁰ Then, an independent Christian church¹¹ was established around 498¹² in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of Persia at that time.¹³ Gradually, Nestorianism spread from Persia to the east.¹⁴

1.2 The “heresy” of Nestorianism

As time goes by, the term Nestorianism became synonymous with heresy and was rapidly used to attack the Church of the East and at times to condemn dissenting Christian traditions.¹⁵

In 1539, Martin Luther talked about the Council of Ephesus in his book *Von den Konzilli und Kirchen* and mentioned Nestorianism. Luther believed that Nestorius' views were the same as the original belief of the Ecumenical council, and Nestorius was not at all a reason for being heretical. The fact that Nestorius' theory set to be heresy was entirely caused by the political ambition of Cyril.¹⁶

Friedrich Loofs (1858–1928), a Protestant theologian, also stated that Nestorian's concept was more in line with the early Christian doctrine.¹⁷

James Bethune-Baker (1861–1951) of the University of Cambridge proposed that the declaration of Nestorius formed at the Ephesus Congress was never a fair and effective judgment both in form and in substance.¹⁸

Zhu Qianzhi argued that Nestorius was the representative of enlightenment in Christianity at that time, and his dismissal of heresy was the result of political struggle. It was the dispute between the Alexander School and the Antioch School and the status of the Roman and the Patriarch of Constantinople that promoted the formation of this “defamation”.¹⁹

¹⁰ Wang, 2008:55-56.

¹¹ According to Tang, the church is called Chaldean Church or Assyrian Church, see Tang, 2015:42; According to Yao, the church is called Persian Church, see Yao, 2013:316.

¹² According to Zhu, the church was established under the protection of the Sasanian emperor Peroz I (the eighteenth king of the Sasanian Empire), but the ruling time of Peroz I was from 459-484, so the church may be built earlier than 498, see Zhu, 1997:39.

¹³ Tang, 2015:42.

¹⁴ Stewart, 1961; Zhu, 1997.

¹⁵ Brock, 1996:23-35.

¹⁶ Zhu, 1997:26-27; Sun & Zhong, 2004:29.

¹⁷ Loofs, 1905; Loofs, 1914.

¹⁸ Bethune-Baker, 1908; Sun & Zhong, 2004:30; Zhu, 1997:37; Weng, 1996:7.

¹⁹ Zhu, 1997:37-38.

Besides, Nestorius' *The Bazaar of Heracleides*²⁰ was a Statement of Defense for himself, in which, he denied the accusation of the Ecumenical council and defended his theory. After the repeated study of Nestorius' work, scholars believed that the difference between his theory and the opinions of Ecumenical council was only in theological phraseology.²¹

Pope Paul VI (1897–1978)²² also said: “In the past, there was a cursing controversy about the person [Nestorius, Zhou] and the creed, and today the sacredness of the Lord made us realize that most of the differences in the past was due to misunderstandings.”²³

In sum, the assertion of Nestorianism as heretic is overstated, he is at best a victim of political struggles within the church.

2. On the terms of Nestorianism, Jingjiao, Yelikewen and Church of the East

Nestorianism, Jingjiao 景教, Yelikewen 也里可温 and Church of the East are the terms found from time to time in the literature and sources associated with the study of the Nestorian presence in China and Central Asia and have caused some debate regarding their proper usage. I will briefly discuss these terms and select the one which serves my study best.

2.1 Jingjiao

The name “Jingjiao” was firstly present on the inscription of Nestorian stele (also named “Xi’an stele” or “Nestorian stele”), erected by the monk Jingjing in Changan (now Xi’an) in 781, titled Daqin Jingjiao liuxing zhongguo bei 大秦景教流行中国碑 [The Stele on the Propagation of the Jingjiao of Daqin in China]. The main part of the inscription was written in Chinese. The part written in Syriac contains 82 names (77 Syrian Christian names) of the clergy.²⁴

The sentence containing the word “Jingjiao” from the inscription is:

“真常之道，妙而难名，功用昭彰，强称景教。” [The real truth is difficult to explain, for highlighting, it is most suitable to be called Jingjiao.]

Li Zhizao (1571–1630) has interpreted the word Jing as: “景者大也，炤，光明也。”²⁵ [Jing is wide, obvious and luminous].

²⁰ It was found by American missionaries in the library of the Nestorian patriarch in the mountains at Konak, Hakkari in 1895; Driver & Hodgson, 1925; Wu, 2006.

²¹ Dowley, 2004; Sun & Zhong, 2004:30.

²² Pope Saint Paul VI was head of the Catholic Church And sovereign of the Vatican City State from 21 June 1963 to his death in 1978.

²³ Xu, 2016 (4).

²⁴ Lin & Yin, 2009 (1).

²⁵ Li, 1965

The faith was also called Daqin Jingjiao [Luminous Religion of Daqin] and Bosijiao [Persian Teaching]²⁶, Daqin jiao [Daqin teaching]²⁷, Qingjiao [Qin teaching] and was always confused with Zoroastrianism or Manichaeism in the Tang Dynasty. The term “Daqin” has long been used to indicate the western classical world of Rome and Greece in Chinese historical sources. The name Qinjiao appeared also on a bi-lingual inscription from Quanzhou in southern China in the Yuan Dynasty.²⁸ (see Appendix 13, **Quan-9**)

Jingjiao was considered as Nestorianism during the Tang Dynasty, for example:

“景教者，基督旧教之聂斯托利教派也。”²⁹ [JingJiao, Old Christ, is Nestorianism.]

“景教者基督旧教之聂斯托利派也。据碑……”³⁰ [JingJiao, Old Christ, is a Nestorian sect, according to The Stele on the Propagation of the Jingjiao of Daqin in China...]

The word Jing from Jingjiao 景教 was used comprehensively in Nestorian Church of the Tang period, for example, the Nestorian church was called Jingsi 景寺, the Nestorian missionary was called Jingseng 景僧 and the religion itself was called Jingjiao.³¹

Yelikewen, which will be discussed below is due to the second rise of Christianity in China in the Yuan Dynasty. Although JingJiao and Yelikewen do not have a direct inheritance relationship, they should all belong to the unified faction, for which scholars regarded the two as a whole in the past reserch.³²

Because the term Jingjiao is limited both chronologically and geographically, I will use this term only when mentioning Christians in China during the Tang Dynasty.

2.2 Yelikewen

Yelikewen³³ is the main term for the Christians in China during the Yuan Dynasty, used firstly in official sources such as the *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of the Yuan Dynasty]

²⁶ Zhu, 1997:16.

²⁷ Barret, 2006:45-53.

²⁸ Tang, 2011:61; Lieu, 2006:277-291.

²⁹ Qian shan, 1981.

³⁰ Hong, 1986.

³¹ Yin, 2009:305 - 319.

³² Saeki, 1935; Saeki, 1943; Pelliot, 1914 (14): 623-644; Luo, 1966; Zhu, 1997.

³³ For more explanations about Yelikewen, see Chen, 1923; Moule, Hao Trans. 1984:245-270; Wuen, 2001(1):15-17; Halbertsma, 2008:21-25.

and various stele inscriptions.³⁴ Christianity in China faded away after the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty in 1368.

Before the Mongols ruled the Central Plains, Christians were always called “Diexie 迭屑” or “Tersa”, and the term “Tersa” was found from the inscription of the Nestorian Stele, possibly a Chinese transcription of the Persian word *tarsâ*.³⁵

The origin and the connotation of Yelikewen are so obscure that today’s academia does not have a clear conclusion about it.

According to Pelliot (1878–1945), the most primitive source of Yelikewen is the Greek word “Arkhon”.³⁶ Then it is translated into Chinese as Yelikewen through the intermediate forms of Persian “*ärkävün*”, Armenian “*arkhaun*” and Uyghur language “*ärkägün*”.³⁷

Tang Xiaofeng argues that this term mainly refers to Nestorianism and its believers. There is no evidence that Yelikewen also includes other Christian denominations. Moreover, there are some indirect pieces of evidence implying that other groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, does not belong to Yelikewen.³⁸

Nicolas Standaret states: “In summary, there were about four Christian sects who were active in Mongolian China: Nestorian Christians, Armenian, Byzantine and Jacobite Christians, Roman Catholic Christians. In the Yuan Dynasty, they were collectively known as Yelikewen.”³⁹

Van Mechelen identifies two connotations for the term “Yelikewen”. Firstly, the word refers to Christian clergy in monasteries in official sources. Secondly, it concerns the people of Yelikewen, non-Han Chinese.⁴⁰ When referring to clergy, the term does not distinguish the Nestorian Christianity from Roman Catholicism.⁴¹

I will use this term in the connotations identified by most scholars—it is frequently used in China for the identification of Nestorian Christians as well as people of non-Han Chinese descents.

³⁴ Moule, Hao Trans, 1984.

³⁵ Standaert, 2001:45.

³⁶ Pelliot, 1959: 49.

³⁷ Yin, 2013 (2): 51-59

³⁸ Tang, 2015: 40-41.

³⁹ Standaret, 2001:63.

⁴⁰ Mechelen, 2001:91.

⁴¹ Chen, 1966.

2.3 Nestorianism and Church of the East

The term “Nestorian Church” has been inappropriately employed in West theological and church-historical literature to label the Church of the East. However, the Church of the East had existed long before Nestorianism, dating back to the first century. It established beyond the Roman imperial boundaries, more specifically in Mesopotamia, where it had spread in scattered points throughout the East: Iran, southern India, Turkestan, and China⁴², and achieved the greatest geographical scope of any Christian church until the Middle Ages.

“Apostolic Church of the East”, “East Syriac Church”, “Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East” and “Ancient Church of the East” are all equally correct terms for the Church of the East.⁴³

Although Church of the East venerates Nestorius as one of the “Three Greek Doctors” who are commemorated in the liturgical Calendar⁴⁴, “Nestorius did not found the Church of the East that would become so much associated with his name nor did this church practice Nestorius’ ideas.”⁴⁵ In the course of the eight synods held by the Church of the East between 486 and 612, the name of Nestorius never once occurs. It was Theodore who was held up as an authority on doctrinal matters and as a model for orthodox belief on several occasions.⁴⁶ Thus, Brock states: “If one wanted to characterize the Church of the East in this way, it would be much more appropriate to call it ‘Theodoran’, rather than ‘Nestorian’”.

Dennis Hickley proposes: “It is true that the Eastern Church has gradually become the Antioch school, especially the followers of Theodore’s theological views, and in this school, Nestorius has become the most influential apprentice, his theological views were condemned in the Council of Ephesus in 431 ... In any case, the Eastern Church does not agree that they are ‘Nestorian sects’ and do not use this word to describe themselves.”⁴⁷

Being aware of the controversy involved, in the summer of 2003, scholars at the first international conference⁴⁸ in Salzburg proposed: “The term ‘Nestorianism’...was

⁴² Bacci, 2005 (36): 337-372.

⁴³ Baum & Winkler, 2003:1-5.

⁴⁴ Brock, 1996:23-35.

⁴⁵ Halbertsma, 2008:21.

⁴⁶ Brock, 1996:23-35.

⁴⁷ Dennis, 1980:3.

⁴⁸ This conference was sponsored by the University of Salzburg in Austria, *The Monumenta Serica* in Germany and the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna. It has been held continuously for five times since 2003, and Salzburg is always the venue. For the first meeting of the Nestorian Conference, see Geng, 2003 (3); for the second meeting see Winkler

at the very least misleading and could hardly be considered to be a translation of Jingjiao or Yelikewen...” However, the scholars decided to still use “Nestorianism” “because with this term we could be sure that everybody knew what was spoken about.”⁴⁹

In 2006, on the second conference in Salzburg, the participants used the term “Church of the East”, which could cover the whole field of research.⁵⁰ The organisers published the conference proceedings as *Hidden Treasures and the Intercultural Encounters: Studies on the East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, avoiding successfully the term “Nestorianism”.

For this study, I tend to continue to use the “lamentable misnomer”⁵¹ – “Nestorianism”, mainly based on the following reasons.

- (1) In the travel notes of medieval explorers who encountered Christians in the Far East, such as William of Rubruck, Franciscan Montecorvino, they always used the terms “Nestorianism” or “Nestorius”;
- (2) Nestorianism is also a commonly used term in Chinese historical literature;⁵²
- (3) The believers of Yelikewen in the Mongolian period considered that they belonged to the Nestorian sect. For example:“马氏之先，出西域聂思脱里贵族。” [The ancestors of Ma Clan are originated from the nobles of the Western Regions...]⁵³
- (4) On the tombstones in Almaliq, there are inscriptions go like this: “In Alexander calendar 1613 (1310/1302), they were gone, away from the Nestorian world. He was the interpreter of the *Bible* and the praiseworthy son of Karia”⁵⁴, which proves that the Christians in Central Asia at the time also considered themselves as Nestorian sect.

To conclude, for lack of a better adjective or term, in Chinese or otherwise, I think the terminology “Nestorianism” will serve the purpose of the present study best and be more in line with my research objects.

& Tang (eds.), 2009; For the third session, see Niu, 2009 (3); For the fourth session, see Yin, 2013, 34 (3): 146-149.

⁴⁹ Halbertsma, 2008: 21.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Brock, 1996:23-35.

⁵² See Qian shan, 1981, Hong, 1986, Li, 1931.

⁵³ Yang, 1984:43; Zhang, 1930:290-293.

⁵⁴ Niu, 2008:65-66.

1. Nestorian Christians among Central Asian tribes and China during the Mongol era

1.1 In the northern steppe area

Because of the religious persecution under the Emperor Wuzong (reign 840–846) in 845, the adherents of Jingjiao were expelled from Central Plains. However, the command of banning foreign religions did not affect Nestorian Christians living outside the ruling area of the Tang dynasty. In the 13th century, as the Mongols conquered China, the grassland tribes were conquered by Chinggis Khan and his descendent became citizens of the Mongol Empire. The Mongols practiced a pragmatic policy of religious tolerance that allowed Nestorian Christianity to further develop and spread throughout the empire.

As Dawson said: “They opened up a broad road from one end of Asia to the other. After their army passed, they opened this avenue to businessmen and missionaries, making the economic and spiritual exchanges between the East and the West become possible.”⁵⁵

However, Nestorianism entered a period of rapid decline beginning in the 14th century. In Central Asia, many Mongols in Central Asia converted to Islam as the Muslim Turco-Mongol forces raised in this region. In China, since most of the Nestorian Christians were non-Han people, as the Ming Dynasty overthrew the rule of the Yuan Dynasty, Nestorian faith also lost its former prosperity.

The following Figure shows the distribution of different tribes in the northern grasslands which converted to Nestorianism before or during the Mongol era.

⁵⁵ Dawson, Lü & Zhou Trans., 1983:29.

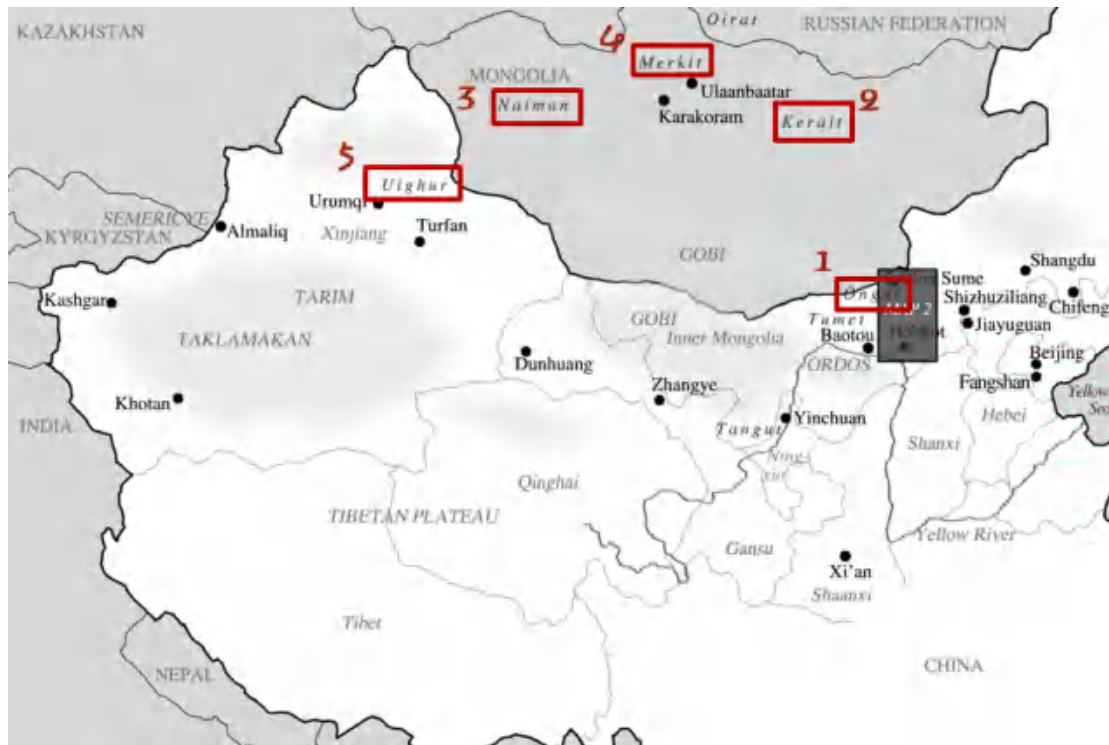


Figure 1⁵⁶

1.1.1 The Öngüt

Most of the Nestorian heritage discussed and presented in this study comes from Nestorian Christians among the Öngüt tribe. There is a saying that the Öngüt are of Turkic origin and belong to the so-called Shatuo Turks,⁵⁷ however, another saying is, “with the Turkic origin sphere, opinions are divided as to whether they are part of the Uighur or Shatuo tribe.”⁵⁸

The ethnic origin of Öngüt has always been a controversial topic. Gai Shanlin (1936-2020) combines the opinions of many scholars and concludes that the ethnic origin of Öngüt can be summarized into four viewpoints.

- (1) Öngüt belongs to the Turkic, part of the Uighur or Shatuo tribe;
- (2) Öngüt belongs to the Mongolian tribe;
- (3) Öngüt belongs to the 羌 Qiang tribe;
- (4) Öngüt belongs to the “complex consortium of several small tribal countries, meaning the name of a group of small tribes, and remaining the characteristics of these tribes respectively.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:13, map 1.

⁵⁷ Halbertsma, 2008: 9.

⁵⁸ Tang, 2011: 41; Gai, 1991:16-18.

⁵⁹ Similar views see Wei & Zhang, 2013 (2).

Besides, Gai explores its ethnic origins from four large Clans of Öngüt, i.e., Öngüt Clan living in the Blackwater New Town, represented by Alaqši Digid Quri,⁶⁰ Ma Clan living in Jingzhou, Tianshan Mountain; Ma Clan living inside and outside the Great Wall; Yelü Clan living in Dorbod Banner, the valley of Xar Moron River. Gai believes that all of the four Clans belong to Turkic language tribe and coexist with other ethnic groups such as Mongolian, Han, Tatar in the Öngüt ministry.⁶¹ And the four clans were all Nestorian Christians.⁶²

During the Song Dynasty, the Öngüt on the southern border of the sandy Gobi Desert was named the “White Tartar” while the other Mongol tribes north of the Gobi Desert were called the “Black Tartar”. In the 12th century, the Öngüt officials were requested by the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) rulers to guard the Great Wall.⁶³

The rise of the Öngüt was much associated with the Mongol’s conquest of the Naiman. At the time of Chinggis Khan, the head of the Öngüt, Alaqši Digid Quri sided with Chinggis Khan to conquer the Naiman.

Chinggis installed the young Boyaohai as the local king of the Öngüt and married his daughter Alagaibagi (1191–1230)⁶⁴ to the Öngüt rulers. According to the records, Alagaibagi may marry Alaqši Digid Quri, Zhenguo (nephew of Alaqši Digid Quri), Buyanxiban (eldest son of Alaqši Digid Quri), Boyaohe (youngest son of Alaqši Digid Quri). However, she remained childless. The princess was highly praised in the *Yuanshi* 元史 [History of the Yuan Dynasty] for her abilities to govern.

Boyaohe received three sons from a concubine, and all of them have Turkic names: Künbuqa (Kunbuga), Aybuqa (Aibuga) and Yliobuqa.⁶⁵ The residence of Boyaohe and Alagaibagi is also known as Zhaowangcheng, that is today’s Olon-Sume which will be discussed later.

The intermarriage of Öngüt rulers and Mongol imperial family meant that an established Nestorian tribe had now entered the inner circles of the Mongol rule. The intermarriage between the Öngüt and the ruling Mongols continued for several generations.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ In Chinese 阿剌兀思剔吉忽里

⁶¹ Gai, 1991:16-31.

⁶² Gai, 1991:283-315.

⁶³ Tang, 2011:41.

⁶⁴ In Chinese 阿剌海别吉.

⁶⁵ In Chinese 拙里不花, 爱不花, 君不花

⁶⁶ Chen, 1938: 254.

Following the tradition, both Kunbuga and Aibuga had married members of the Mongol imperial family. Kunbuga married the eldest daughter of Guyuk Khan (reign 1246–1248). Aibuga married the youngest daughter of Kubilai Khan (reign 1260–1294). Historical data proves that 16 princesses of Genghis Khan family have married the head of the Öngüt.⁶⁷

The imperial connection also meant that the Öngüt kings were obliged to serve in the Khan's military campaigns. Aibuga ultimately died during a campaign in the northwest, leaving four sons and three daughters. One of these sons was known in the western world as the Nestorian King George, the first Roman Catholic convert in China and mentioned by Marco polo (1254–1324) and Montecorvino (1247–1328).

According to the Mongol-Yuan classification of peoples, the Öngüt were viewed as the second class “Semuren”, i.e., those who originated from the Western Regions and were below the Mongols but above the Han Chinese. Based on such a hierarchy, the daughters of the Genghis Khan family can marry the leaders of Öngüt, but the queen of Mongol royal court can only be the Mongolian woman. However, there are several concubines of Mongol court from Öngüt.

Korguz (grandson of Kublai Khan, eldest son of Aibuqa, died in 1242), was the leader of the Öngüt in the Yuan Dynasty. He was a Nestorian believer at first. In 1293, the Roman Catholic Pope sent the Franciscan Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247–1328) to preach in China. Korguz was persuaded successfully by Montecorvino, and then he led his people to convert to Catholicism and even established two great Catholic churches in his domain.⁶⁸ However, after the death of Korguz, his tribes converted to Nestorianism again.⁶⁹ Korguz's sister, Yeliwan has written a Gospel in the ancient Syrian language. She should also be a Nestorian.⁷⁰

It is not clear when the first Öngüt family converted to Nestorianism, but the conversion dates from well before the rise of Chinggis Khan. Importantly, the Nestorian faith was adopted by the tribe's rulers, judging from the many Nestorian gravestones encountered in Inner Mongolia.

⁶⁷ Zhou, 1979 (2): 30-41.

⁶⁸ Pelliot, 2011: 109.

⁶⁹ Wei & Zhang, 2013 (2).

⁷⁰ Gai, 1991:305.

Generally speaking, the tombs of Biqigetuhaolai cemetery, the northeast of the ancient city of Olon-Sume, and the ancient city of Muqur-Suburghan, all belong to the Alaḡši Clan-Öngüt; the tombs of Dorbod Banner may belong to Yelü clan-Öngüt.⁷¹

Besides, Buddhism, Taoist and Islamic beliefs coexisted in the Öngüt area at the time, especially Buddhism, should be the second important religion. The relics of Buddhist temples and tombs have proved this. In general, most of the people in Öngüt area believed in Nestorianism, while Han Chinese and other ethnic groups believed in Buddhism, Taoism or Islam.⁷²

1.1.2 The Kerait

Kerait is located in the region of Tula River⁷³, Orkhon Valley⁷⁴ and Khangai Mountains.⁷⁵ It has ever been the strongest tribe in the Mobei Plateau during the Liao and Jin Dynasties. They are kinds of Mongolian, but they have absorbed a large number of Turkic people.⁷⁶ The word Kerait has many forms, such as Kereit, Khereid, Giray, meaning “blackfish”.

In 1203, this tribe was defeated by Genghis Khan and became influential in the rise of the Mongol Empire and were gradually absorbed into the succeeding Turco-Mongol khanates during the 13th century.

Among the peoples of the steppe region between northern China and Mongolia, the Kerait were the first to convert to Nestorian Christianity. Rashid ad-Din recorded that the Kerait were Nestorian Christians.⁷⁷

In 1009, the Archbishop ‘Abdishō’ described in a report to Archbishop John that 200,000 Turks and Mongols turned to Christianity, and the Kerait tribes were included.⁷⁸

According to D’Ohsson, as early as the head of the Kerait led the public to believe in Nestorianism in the early 11th century, there were Nestorian merchant activities among the tribe. D’Ohsson also said in *Mongolian History*: “the people of this tribe are

⁷¹ Gai, 1991:199; Wei & Zhang, 2013 (2).

⁷² Gai, 1991:315-325.

⁷³ The Tuul River or Tula River is a river in central and northern Mongolia..

⁷⁴ Orkhon River is a river in Mongolia. It rises in the Khangai Mountains in the Tsenkher sum of Arkhangai aimag at the foot of the Suvarga Khairkhan mountain.

⁷⁵ In Chinese 杭爱山. The Khangai Mountains are old mountain ranges in central Mongolia, some 400 kilometres west of Ulaanbaatar.

⁷⁶ Qiu, 2002, 23(2): 46-49.

⁷⁷ Tang, 2011:83.

⁷⁸ Zhu,1997:172; Mingana, Niu, Wang Hongmei & Wangfei, 2004 (1):84-127.

Christian. In the early years of the eleventh century, Nestorian priests have ever preached here.”⁷⁹

The name of Toghrul’s (reign 1165–1194)⁸⁰ grandfather in *Liao Shi* 辽史 [History of the Liao Dynasty] was “Mogusi”⁸¹, a phonetic translation of “Marghuz”, which corresponded to Rashid ad-Din’s record that Ong Khan’s grandfather was Marghuz.⁸² Marghuz was a Christian name. The eldest son of Marghuz (the father of Toghrul), called Quriagus (Aishan Khan), was also a Christian name.⁸³

Like the Öngüt, the political-marriage relationship between the Kerait and the Genghis Khan family has a direct impact on the attitude of the Mongolian ruling class towards Christianity.

Several Kerait individuals reached great prominence in the Mongol court and the Mongol khans frequently married Nestorian Kerait princesses. In their contacts with other Central and Inner Asian peoples, the Kerait must have spread their Nestorian beliefs. Toghrul’s younger brother has four daughters, and three of them married to the Genghis Khan family. The eldest daughter married Genghis Khan, the second daughter, namely the famous Sorghaghtani Beki (1190–1252)⁸⁴, married to Tolui (1191–1232)⁸⁵ and the third daughter married Jochi (1182–1227)⁸⁶, the eldest son of Genghis Khan.

Sorghaghtani Beki was a devout Nestorian. Her four sons all became leaders and kings: Möngke Khan (1209–1259)⁸⁷, Hulagu Khan (1218–1265)⁸⁸, Ariq Böke, and Kublai Khan (1215–1294). Sorghaghtani Beki is the Seroctan that described in the book *Traveling in Mongolia* by Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (1180–1252). Haworth records: “Hulagu Khan had ever whispered to Vardan ‘My mother is also a Christian. The one I love most is Christian.’”⁸⁹ As a believer, Sorghaghtani Beki is undoubtedly the protector of Christians in the Mongol Empire, and she has made far-reaching implications for the religious policies of the Mongol Khans.

⁷⁹ D’Ohsson, 1936:44.

⁸⁰ Toghrul (1130–1203), also known as Wang Khan or Ong Khan was a khan of the Keraites. He was the anda (blood brother) of the Mongol chief Yesugei and served as an important early patron and ally to Yesugei’s son Temüjin, later known as Genghis Khan.

⁸¹ In Chinese 磨古斯

⁸² Tang, 2011:25.

⁸³ Tang, 2011:28.

⁸⁴ In Chinese 唆鲁禾帖尼. Sorghaghtani Beki was a Kerait princess and daughter-in-law of Genghis Khan.

⁸⁵ In Chinese 拖雷, the fourth and youngest son of Genghis Khan.

⁸⁶ In Chinese 朮赤.

⁸⁷ Möngke (in Chinese: 蒙哥) was the fourth khagan of the Mongol Empire, ruling from July 1, 1251, to August 11, 1259.

⁸⁸ In Chinese 旭烈兀. He was a Mongol ruler who conquered much of Western Asia, grandson of Genghis Khan.

⁸⁹ Haworth, 1940

Also, Sorghaghtani Beki was worshipped in the Cross Temple of Jinggong Fang, site of Dadu (the capital of the Yuan Dynasty, today's Beijing), near Di'anmen.⁹⁰ The book *XiJin zhi* 析津志 [Annals of Xijin (now Beijing)]⁹¹ records: “唐妃娘娘阿吉刺, 也里可温寺, 靖恭坊内, 世祖亲母。” [Queen Tangfei Sorghaghtani Beki, the temple of Yelikewen, inside Jinggong Fang, the dear mother of the Emperor Shizu of Yuan (Kublai Khan)]. Here Queen Tangfei refers to Sorghaghtani Beki. Besides, she was worshipped in a Cross Temple in Zhangye, Gansu.⁹² The sacrifice for her was often carried by Yelikewen followers, indicating the close relationship between her and Yelikewen.⁹³

The wife of Hulagu Khan, named Doquz Khatun⁹⁴ (also spelt Dokuz Khatun, – 1265), was also a Christian. At first, she was betrothed to Tolui, later Tolui died before the marriage, and then she married Hulagu Khan according to the Mongolian customs.⁹⁵ In the Battle of Baghdad in 1258, the Mongolian army slaughtered tens of thousands of local people, thanks to her Nestorian belief, Christians were free from the massacre.⁹⁶

It is clearly stated that in the Mongol history many Kerait Nestorian Christians served in the Mongol court, e.g. Zhen Hai (also Cinqai), who was the most famous among Genghis Khan's ministers.⁹⁷ In the literature of Islam, he was often mistaken for the Uighur. During the period from 1221 to 1224, he had travelled with Qiu Chuji (1148–1227)⁹⁸ from the east of China to the Amu Darya by the call of Genghis Khan. At the beginning of the founding of Mongolia, Zhen Hai and Yelü Chucai (1190–1244)⁹⁹ were important ministers. Later, Zhen Hai was killed because he refused to surrender to Möngke Khan. The descendants of Zhen Hai were also government officials. His three sons were given Christian names, i.e., Josep, Bacchus and Georges. As Pelliot's statement, despite Zhen Hai and Qadaq opposed Möngke Khan, Nestorian Christians were not abused because the mother of Möngke Khan was

⁹⁰ Di'anmen, or Bei'anmen was an imperial gate in Beijing, China. The gate was first built in the Yongle period of the Ming dynasty and served as the main gate to the Imperial City (the southern gate is the much more famed Tiananmen).

⁹¹ Xiong, 1983. *Xijin zhi* also is known as “*Xijin Zhidian*”, “*Yanjingzhi*”, a total of 34 volumes, written by Xiong Mengxiang of the Yuan Dynasty, is the earliest local chronicle of XiJin (now Beijing).

⁹² Song, 1976: 826.

⁹³ Niu, 2010:28; Moule, Hao Trans., 1984:254

⁹⁴ In Chinese 脱古思可敦.

⁹⁵ Zhu, 1997:172-173; Chen & Erkeun, 2006, Vol.6: 59-91

⁹⁶ Runciman, 1975.

⁹⁷ Tang, 2011:28.

⁹⁸ Qiu Chuji, also known by his Taoist name Master Changchun, was a Taoist disciple of Wang Chongyang. He was the most famous among the Seven True Taoists of the North.

⁹⁹ Yelü Chucai was a statesman of Khitan ethnicity with royal family lineage to the Liao Dynasty, who became a vigorous adviser and administrator of the early Mongol Empire in the Confucian tradition.

Nestorian. Moreover, Möngke Khan's closest minister Bolghai was also a Nestorian believer.

1.1.3 The Naiman

One of the neighbours of the Kerait tribe to the west was the powerful Naiman. The two tribes frequently clashed over territory. The Naiman, a large tribe of Turkic origin whose name derives from the Mongol word for "eight", occupied the region east of the Altai mountain¹⁰⁰ range towards the Selenge river¹⁰¹ of present western Mongolia.

Naiman shared the same fate as the Kerait and were overthrown by the powerful Mongol forces of Chinggis Khan in 1204. The ruler Tayan Khan (?–1204) were killed. Several Nestorian Naiman entered into the service of the Mongol empire.

Upon its conquest, Chinggis Khan took Tayan Khan's wife as his. After the defeat, Tayan's son Kuchlug (?–1218) managed to escape with some forces and joined the Merkit. Kuchlug, himself a Nestorian Christian, subsequently took over the reign of the territory of the Kara Kitai, or Western Liao, and married the Princess Hunhu, the daughter of Yelü Zhilugu (?–1213)¹⁰² and Juerbiesu (?–1213).¹⁰³ In 1211, Kuchlug stole the power and became the Khan of Kara Kitai.

On the request of his newlywed Buddhist wife, the Nestorian Kuchlug became a Buddhist.¹⁰⁴ Atâ-Malek Juvayni (1226–1283), the Persian historian of the 13th century, recorded: "The Naiman were for the most part Christian, but this maiden persuaded him to turn idolater like herself and to abjure his Christianity."¹⁰⁵ The maiden mentioned by Juvayni refers to the Princess Hunhu.

Kuchlug nevertheless seems to have remained sympathetic towards his former Christian beliefs. Indeed, after his conquest of Khotan, Kuchlug forced the Muslim either to become Christians or put on the garb of Cathayans.¹⁰⁶ Such behaviour sparked dissatisfaction among Islamists. In 1218, when the mighty Mongolian Army arrived,

¹⁰⁰ The Altai Mountains, also spelt Altay Mountains, are mountain ranges in Central and East Asia.

¹⁰¹ The Selenga River is a major river in Mongolia and Buryatia, Russia. Its source rivers are the Ider River and the Delgermörön river.

¹⁰² In Chinese 耶律直魯古 was the third emperor of the Western Liao dynasty, ruling from 1177 to 1211. As the final ruler from the House of Yelü, he is considered by traditional Chinese sources to be the last monarch of the Western Liao dynasty.

¹⁰³ Empress Dowager Juerbiesu was an empress of Qara Khitai. She was with Yelü Zhilugu during his capture by Kuchlug in 1211. She was later honoured as Empress Dowager by Kuchlug.

¹⁰⁴ Gillman & Klimkeit, 1999:229.

¹⁰⁵ Juvaini, He, Trans.,1980:72.

¹⁰⁶ Rachewiltz, 1971:49-50. Cathayan, a native or inhabitant of Cathay. Cathay is the Anglicized version of "Catai" and an alternative name for China in English in middle Ages. It originates from the word Khitan.

Kuchlug was quickly defeated and killed. Then the tribe gradually became Mongolized Turkic.

As any other nomadic people on the Steppe, the Naiman once practised Shamanism as their primal religion. However, most historians insisted that the Naiman believed in Nestorianism,¹⁰⁷ or these two religions coexisted among the tribe.

William of Rubruck (1210–1270) who travelled to the Mongol capital of Karakorum in the middle of the 13th century reported that in a certain plain among those mountains dwelt a certain Nestorian who was a mighty shepherd and lord over the people called Naiman, who were Nestorian Christians.¹⁰⁸

We also know that Kashgar, the city along the Silk Road at the western end of Chinese Turkistan has ever been a Nestorian metropolitan in 1180. Archbishop Elijah (1176–1190) appointed John as the bishop of Kashgar. After John died, the successor was Sabriho.¹⁰⁹ Kashgar was conquered by Yelü Dashi (1094–1143) in 1134, the Emperor Dezong of Liao.¹¹⁰ The increase of Naiman Christian was attributable to his great number of Christians in Kashgar. However, in the 13th century, it was almost destroyed by hunger and war. When the priests Rabban Bar Sauma and Markos came here for pilgrimage, they saw it was all deserted.¹¹¹

1.1.4 The Merkit

The Merkit were also known as Uduyut as described by Rashid ad-Din. The Mongols named them as Märkit or Märtrit,¹¹² meaning “wise” and “skillful marksperson”. They camped in the basins of the Selenga and lower Orkhon River during the time of Genghis Khan. The Merkit were also nomadic people of Turkish stock, with a possible infusion of Mongol blood.¹¹³

There were feuds between the Merkit and the family of Genghis Khan. As Rashid ad-Din’s records, “The Merkit was a type of Mongol. They fought battles with Genghis Khan and Ong Khan.”¹¹⁴

Temüjin (later Genghis Khan)’s mother Hoelun (1142–1221) was kidnapped by Temüjin’s father Yesugei (1134–1171) on her way back to the Merkit camp after her

¹⁰⁷ Zhou & Gu, 2003:26

¹⁰⁸ Wyngaert, 1929: 206.

¹⁰⁹ Mingana, Niu, Wang Hongmei & Wangfei, 2004 (1), 84-127.

¹¹⁰ He & Li, 2011(3):39 - 45.

¹¹¹ Mingana, Niu, Wang Hongmei & Wangfei, 2004 (1), 84-127.

¹¹² Juvaini, Boyle Trans., 1997:66; Rachewiltz, 1971:52.

¹¹³ Tang, 2011:47.

¹¹⁴ Juvaini, Boyle Trans. 1997:66; Rachewiltz,1971:52.

wedding with the Merkit chief Yehe Chiledu around 1159. In turn, almost 20 years later, Temüjin's new wife Börte (1161–1236) was abducted by Merkit around 1181 and given to the younger brother of Yehe Chiledu. Then Ong Khan, Jamukha (1161–1204)¹¹⁵ and Temüjin combined forces against the Merkits and rescued Börte successfully.¹¹⁶

Little information on the religious adherence of the Merkit is available. Rubruck referred to the Merkit as Nestorian Christians, but their lord had abandoned the Christian faith and worshipped idols.¹¹⁷ Anyway, Nestorianism has more or less spread among this tribe.

1.1.5 The Uighur

In the middle of the 9th century, after the collapse of Uyghur Khaganate, some of the Uighurs moved west to the eastern part of the Tianshan Mountains. They united with other local Turkic tribes and established a new country with the Gaochang area as the core. In the history books of the Song Dynasty, it was called Gaochang Uighur.

Almost at the same time, the adherents of Jingjiao were expelled from Central Plains to the Western region because of the religious persecution in 845. Thus, the Nestorian forces developed largely among Gaochang Uighur.

The Uighurs, usually said to be Manichean or Buddhist, submitted early to Chinggis Khan and made a great cultural impact on the Mongols. Several Uighurs, including Nestorian Christians, took prominent positions at the Mongol court, especially after the Mongols adopted the Uighur script.¹¹⁸

The specific time when the Uighur began to contact Nestorianism is still unknown. In 1905 and 1906, the Germans led the second and third investigation in Turpan,¹¹⁹ during which, two Nestorian sites of 9th–10th were excavated.¹²⁰ Thus, we infer that Jingjiao may be introduced into this region earlier than the 9th century.

In 981, 'Ali Arslan Khan (?–998) of the Gaochang Kingdom paid tribute to the Emperor Taizong of Song (reign 976–997), and then Taizong sent Wang Yande (939–1006) to return a visit to Gaochang with more than 100 retinues. Wang Yande recorded: “复有摩尼寺、波斯僧各持其法……” [Manichaeism and Persian monks follow their

¹¹⁵ Jamukha was the leader of Jadaran tribe and an anda (means “childhood friend”) and a blood brother to Temüjin.

¹¹⁶ Onon ed. and Trans., 1990:39.

¹¹⁷ Jackson, 1990:123; Anastasius Wyngaert, 1929: 207.

¹¹⁸ Brose, 2005:396-435.

¹¹⁹ The four expeditions to Turfan in Xinjiang, China, were initiated by Albert Grünwedel, a former director at the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, and organized by Albert von Le Coq.

¹²⁰ Wang, 2003 (3):121.

teachings separately...] Yu Taishan judged that the “Persian monks” here may refer to the Nestorian Christians.¹²¹

Rubruck also recorded: “There are Nestorians and Saracens¹²² in all Uighur towns, and the former was scattered in the city of Saracens facing Persia.”¹²³

The widespread of Nestorianism among the Uighur came after the Mongols’ entering the Central Plains. Mongolian officials have adopted a very inclusive policy for businessmen and missionaries and provided convenience for them everywhere. Thus, Nestorianism expanded to many areas around, including Kashgar, Yeerdi, Hami, Turpan, Urumqi, Hetian, Kuche, Tianlikun and even South China.¹²⁴

P. Zieme believed that Uighur was an important intermediary for the spread of Nestorianism to the east in the Yuan Dynasty. At that time, the popular word Yelikewen was first written in Uighur, and then in Phagspa script.¹²⁵

From the perspective of the ethnic group and the birthplaces, many Nestorian Christians originated from the Uighur. i.e., Rabban Bar Sauma, Sarghis (maybe the transliteration of a Nestorian name)¹²⁶, Melda¹²⁷, Yelü Zicheng¹²⁸, Wustik·Tashan¹²⁹, Ma Clan (Nestorian nobleman).¹³⁰ The inscriptions on the tombstone **Q-3** in Quanzhou goes like this, “...the son of Tukmixi·Ata·Aier, came to Quanzhou from Gaochang...” showing that the deceased might be Uighur.

1.2 In Southeast China

A large number of Nestorian tombstones discovered in Quanzhou indicate that Nestorianism once enjoyed a boom on the southeast coast during the Mongol era. However, how and when Nestorianism was introduced to Quanzhou is always a matter of debate.

Egami Namio argues that Nestorianism may have spread to Quanzhou in the Northern Song Dynasty.¹³¹ Xie Bizhen comes up with a bolder idea: “The exchange of religious culture and the development of overseas transportation are consistent. As far

¹²¹ Yu, 1996:256.

¹²² Saracen was a term widely used among Christian writers in Europe during the Middle Ages to refer to Arabs and Muslims.

¹²³ Dawson, 1983:155.

¹²⁴ Yang, 1989 (3):35.

¹²⁵ Zieme, 2009:167-180.

¹²⁶ Nobleman of Uighur, Mongolian official; Qian, vol. 2, 1997:142.

¹²⁷ Niu, 2003 (2); Hamilton & Niu, 1995:270-281; Niu, 2008:156-158; Zhu, 1997, pl. 5. Appendix.

¹²⁸ Gai, 1991.

¹²⁹ Wustik·Tashan was the son of Tukmixi·Ata·Aier, came to Quanzhou from Gaochang, died in 1301. Wu, 1957:28, plate 76/1, 76/2; Niu, 2008:124-127; Zhu, 1997, pl. 6.

¹³⁰ Pelliot, 1995:48-53; Wang, 1999:634-686,687-712; Zhou, 1980:101-118; Gai, 1986:143-155.

¹³¹ Namio, 1980:14: 46-47.

as the development of maritime traffic in Fujian in the Tang Dynasty, Jingjiao should have been introduced and developed in Quanzhou before and after the Tang Dynasty... In the Song Dynasty, various religions took root in Quanzhou, including Nestorianism...Nestorianism flourished in the Song and Yuan Dynasties.”¹³² Yang Qinzhang disputes this and insists that it was introduced at the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty.¹³³

As to the path of the spread, there are also different opinions.

Yang Qinzhang proposes that the tombstones are probable the relics of the Persian businessmen who believed in Nestorian religion. These businessmen came to Quanzhou by sea. At the same time, there is also the possibility of spreading from land.¹³⁴

Niu Ruji proposes that the religions of Quanzhou in the Yuan Dynasty have closely relationship with the people from the Central Asia because most of the inscriptions on the tombstones indicate the owners are Uighurs. Also, he concludes that the only route of disseminating is through land.¹³⁵

The similar view is from Tian Zhifu. He refutes some of Yang Qinzhang’s statements and believes that Nestorians have insufficient motivation to overcome the difficulties to cross the sea to preach in Quanzhou.¹³⁶

Yin Xiaoping argues: “The origin of Christians (Yelikewen) in Jiangnan¹³⁷ had much to do with Christians from Alains, Kipchak armies, and so on. The paper brings forward a concept of ‘martial immigrant’, which differed from Tang Jingjiao and Catholicism in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, to sum up, the missionary pattern of the Yuan Dynasty.”¹³⁸

In my opinion, the inscriptions on the Nestorian tombstones have fully proved that Nestorian Christians in Quanzhou are more likely to follow the Mongolian army to the South and originated from the Central Asia. Supporting this, the tombstones unearthed in Yangzhou are also strong evidence.¹³⁹

¹³² Xie, 2006: 257-275.

¹³³ Yang, 1986 (6).

¹³⁴ Yang, 1984 (4).

¹³⁵ Niu, 2003 (2):73-79.

¹³⁶ Tian, 2011 (6): 31-34.

¹³⁷ South of the Yangtze, it is a geographic area in China referring to lands immediately to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of its delta.

¹³⁸ Yin, 2009:317.

¹³⁹ Niu, 2003 (2).

However, Nestorian believers are not limited to those immigrants. The Nestorian tombstone of 王氏十二小娘 Wang Shier Xiaoniang (the person who erected the tombstone) is a rare example. According to the textual research of Wu Yingxiong, maybe there have already been Han nationality Nestorians in the local before the Mongolian army entered the south.¹⁴⁰

Another controversial matter is whether Nestorianism during Mongol era an inheritance of Jingjiao. Some scholars hold the view that Nestorianism in the Yuan Dynasty is introduced into China as a new faction and is very different from the Jingjiao in the Tang Dynasty. Others argue that there might be survivors in North and South of China after 845, and their source may be traced back to the Jingjiao factions.¹⁴¹

According to records, when the Huangchao Uprising Army attacked Guangfu¹⁴² in the late Tang Dynasty, 120,000 Muslims, Nestorian Christians, Zoroastrianism believers and Jews were killed. Zhou Liangxiao argues that the number “120,000” was unbelievable, however, it is enough to prove that there were Christians in the coastal area before the rise of the Mongolian Empire.¹⁴³

Qiu Shuseng comments: “From the Tang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, the basic doctrine of Nestorianism introduced into China is the same as the orthodox Christianity, and they may share the similar origins.”¹⁴⁴

Similar view comes from Dickens, when talking about the Christians fragments (9-13th centuries) in Turfan, he argues: “With the possible exception a few texts that may reflect Melkite¹⁴⁵ influence, all Christian texts found at Turfan originated in the Church, which had missions into China as early as the seventh century, as recorded in the famous Nestorian Stele in Xi’an.”¹⁴⁶

Wang Yuanyuan states: “Some of the Christians popular in the Yuan Dynasty might be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. Because the term of Qinjiao [the Qin teaching] appeared on a bi-lingual inscription from Quanzhou”¹⁴⁷ The inscription goes like this:

“管理江南诸路明教、秦教等，也里可温，马里失里门，阿必思古八，马里哈昔牙。皇庆二年岁在癸丑八月十五日，贴迷答扫马等，泣血谨志。”

¹⁴⁰ Wu, 2002.

¹⁴¹ Wang, 2010 (1): 145-162; Wang, 2013:279-296.

¹⁴² Today is Guangzhou

¹⁴³ Zhou, 1982 (1):137-163.

¹⁴⁴ Qiu, 2008: 49-54.

¹⁴⁵ The term Melkite, also written Melchite, refers to various Christian churches of the Byzantine Rite and their members originating in the Middle East.

¹⁴⁶ Dickens, 2009 (9) :22-42.

¹⁴⁷ Wang, 2010 (1):145-162; Lieu, 2006:277-291.

[Yelikewen Mar Shilimen (Solomon), Supervisor for Religious Affairs of the Religion of Light (Manichaeism), the Religion of Qin (Nestorianism), etc. for various Circuits (lu) of Jiangnan, and Abisguba (the Episcopal) Mali Haxiya (Bishop). Dedicated with tears of blood by Tiemida Saoma (Timothy Sauma) and the others on the 15th day of the 8th month of the second year of Huangqing (13th September 1313), Guichou.]¹⁴⁸

Wang argues that both of the Religion of Light (Manichaeism) and the Religion of Qin are considered as “Barbarian Religion” and managed by Yelikewen Mar Shilimen (Solomon). Here, the Religion of Qin is Jingjiao, suggesting that there are Nestorian Christians originating from Tang Jingjiao in the Jiangnan area of the Yuan Dynasty.

Yin Xiaoping states that Gaochang Uighur is an important intermediate link between the Tang Dynasty Jinjiao and Yuan Dynasty Nestorianism. Also, there are some common grounds between Nestorianism in the two periods, such as the two are specialized in the medicament.¹⁴⁹ Yin further concludes that “Tang Jingjiao and Yuan Yelikewen might enjoy the common headstream.”¹⁵⁰ But she also insists: “Yelikewen in the Yuan Dynasty was dominated by Nestorians in the early days, but it was not the descendants of the Tang Dynasty Christians. It had no direct inheritance relationship with Jinjiao. It should be derived from the Mongolian Army and other Central Asian people who migrated to southern China with the army.”¹⁵¹ The view comes from her interpretation of the *Gazetteer of Zhenjiang of the Zhishun Period*. “As the description of Daxingguo Monastery showed, Liang Xiang¹⁵² was ignorant about Tang Jingjiao...If Yelikewen came from Tang Jingjiao, Liang Xiang had no reason to omit the connection between them.”¹⁵³

Halbertsma holds the similar view: “Li Zhichang’s *Journey to the West of the Perfected Changchun* of 1228 refers to Diexie when detailing a Nestorian community at Luntai, situated in present-day Xinjiang... The Luntai Diexie lived, of course, in a region outside the influence of the Tang and were not directly affected by the edict of 845 banning foreign religions in the Empire. Li’s account, however, does not dwell on

¹⁴⁸ Translation from Tang, 2011:61-62.

¹⁴⁹ Yin, 2013 (2):51-59.

¹⁵⁰ Yin, 2009: 305-319.

¹⁵¹ Yin, 2006 (4) :289-313.

¹⁵² In Chinese, 梁相. He was the director of Classical Studies who wrote the commemorative inscription.

¹⁵³ Yin, 2009:305-319.

the Christian history of the Diexie of Luntai nor does it make any reference to a connection with the Tang Christians.”¹⁵⁴

To conclude, it is difficult to have a definite answer for this question. In this study, I quite approve of the opinion that Nestorianism, even though it is not a direct inheritance of Jingjiao in the Tang Dynasty, the two should belong to the same religious faction from a broader perspective because they enjoy the same source from Central Asia. The biggest difference is in the ethnic groups of the believers: Jingjiao is dominated by the Iranian Persian and Sogdian descendants¹⁵⁵ from Central Asia while Yelikewen features the Turkic and Uighur background. And Nestorian believers during the Mongol period are not only limited to those immigrants, the locals may have practiced Nestorianism before the Mongolian army arrived.

¹⁵⁴ Halbertsma, 2008: 24.

¹⁵⁵ Luo Zhao believes: “No exact record of Han Chinese believing in Nestorianism in the Tang Dynasty”, see Luo, 2007(06):3+32-44+50, however, Zhang Naizhu argues that maybe there are Han people believe in Jinjiao in the Tang Dynasty, see Zhang, 2013:177-202.

2. Historical Literary Sources on Nestorianism of the Mongol era

In this section, I will briefly sort out these historical literary records of the conversion to Nestorianism in Central Asia and China. As most of the them will be brought up and discussed in next chapters when referring to different image motifs, the following is merely a summary of the main sources that give references to Nestorian Christians.

2.1 Chinese Sources

2.1.1 Official History

Unfortunately, we have not found any Chinese Nestorian scriptures of the Yuan Dynasty so far¹⁵⁶, only several short references on Yelikewen mentioned together with the names of other religious adherents.

Yuanshi 元史 [History of the Yuan Dynasty] is commissioned by the court of the Ming dynasty, in accordance to the political tradition. The texts were composed in 1370 by the official Bureau of History of the Ming dynasty under the direction of Song Lian (1310–1381). Most of these passages contain the Mongol policy on the tax issues of religious groups including Yelikewen Christians. 16 out of 210 chapters gives quite some short references for Yelikewen:

Volume V·Imperial biographies V·Emperor Shizu II; Volume VII·Imperial biographies VII·Emperor Shizu IV; Volume IX·Imperial biographies IX·Emperor Shizu VI; Volume XII·Imperial biographies XII·Emperor Shizu VI; Volume XVII·Imperial biographies XVII·Emperor Shizu XIV; Volume XXII·Imperial biographies XXII·Emperor Wuzong I; Volume XXIII·Imperial biographies XXIII·Emperor Wuzong II; Volume XXIV·Imperial biographies XXIV·Emperor Renzong I; Volume XXIX·Imperial biographies XXIX·Emperor Taiding I; Volume XXXII·Imperial biographies XXXII·Emperor Wenzong I; Volume XXXIII·Imperial biographies XXXIII·Emperor Wenzong II; Volume LXV·Treatises XVII/Upper·Rivers II; Volume LXXXIX·Treatises XXXIX·Officials V; Volume XCIII·Treatises XLII· Food and goods I; Volume XCVIII·Treatises XLVI· Soldiers I; Volume CXCVII·Biographies LXXXIV· Filial piety and friendship I.

Yuandianzhang 元典章 [The Administrative Code of the Great Yuan Dynasty], originally called *Dayuan Shengzheng Guochao Code*, is the official revision book of the Yuan Dynasty, including the compilations of political, economic, military, legal and other sacred regulations, law cases and cases judged by the judiciary from 1234 to

¹⁵⁶ Yin, 2009:312.

1322 for about 90 years. It is divided into pre-collections and new collections. Most of the historical facts are different from *Yuanshi*.

Da Yuan Tongzhi 大元通制 [The General Codes of the Great Yuan Dynasty] and a fragmentary copy called *Tongzhi Tiaoge* 通制条格 are two laws promulgated by the Yuan Dynasty government. Some of the legal provisions are related to Yelikewen.

2.1.2 Local Gazetteer

Zhishun Zhenjiang Zhi 至顺镇江府志 [Gazetteer of Zhenjiang of the Zhishun Period], including the famous *Daxingguo Monastery* 大兴国寺记 [Epigraph in Daxingguo Temple Stele]¹⁵⁷, is the only Chinese source which gives detailed information on the census made in 1333 regarding the household registers of Yelikewen in the city of Zhenjiang.¹⁵⁸

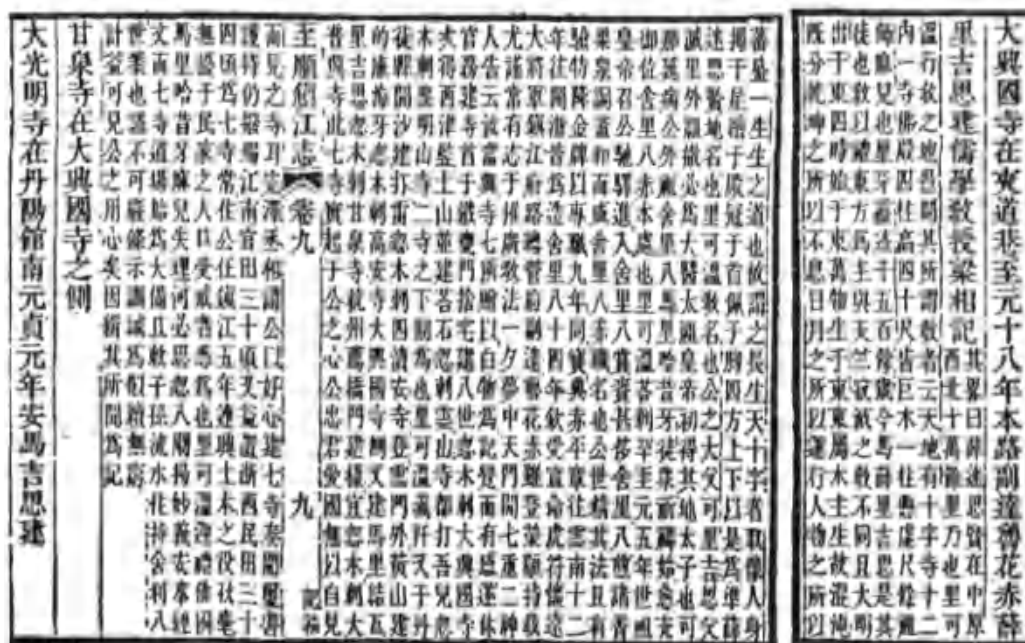


Figure 2 The Epigraph in Daxingguo Temple Stele

2.1.3 Folk Literature

NanCun ChuoGeng Lu 南村辍耕录, also known as *ChuoGeng Lu* 辍耕录, with a total of 30 volumes, is the work of Tao Zongyi in the late Yuan and Ming Dynasties. It records some trivial notes such as classics, cultural relics, customs, military. Volume IX involves a Yelikewen believer knowing medicine.

¹⁵⁷ Qiu, 2008 (1): 49-54.

¹⁵⁸ Tang, 2011:82-83.

2.2 Syriac, Sogdian and Uyghur Sources

2.2.1 Syriac, Sogdian and Old Uyghur Manuscripts from Turfan

The German Turfan Expedition has conducted four campaigns at the Turfan Oasis between 1902 and 1914, bringing total 40,000 fragments in 20 scripts and 22 languages back to Berlin. In history, the Turfan region in Xinjiang once belonged to the center of the Uighur Kingdom of Qocho (Gaochang). The archaeological discovery in this region gave clues for understanding the nature and expression of liturgy that was conducted by Nestorian Christians at the time.

Reflecting the religious diversity of Turfan, the vast majority of manuscript finds were Buddhist or Manichaean in nature. Fortunately, amongst the many fragments, several Christian texts were unearthed. Most of these manuscripts are thought to belong to the 9th-13th centuries, the duration of the Uighur Kingdom of Qocho. The few exceptions concern texts that can be dated to the Mongol era due to the occurrence of certain words not found before that time.¹⁵⁹ This piece of fragment is numbered U338 and is a small booklet consisting of ten folios, described in depth by Peter Zieme.¹⁶⁰

The 2nd and 3rd German Turfan Expeditions (1904-1907), led by Albert von le Coq and Albert Grünwedel, discovered slightly over 1100 Christian manuscript fragments covering 3 major languages: 500 fragments are Syriac, 550 are Sogdian (an Eastern Middle Iranian language) in Syriac script, 50 are Sogdian in Sogdian script and 50 are Old Uyghur (a dialect of Old Turkic) in Syriac script or Uyghur script.¹⁶¹ Most of the Syriac fragments came from the site of Bulayïq, on the outskirts of Turfan. Besides, small quantities of Christian texts in Syriac, Sogdian, Uyghur and Persian were also discovered at other sites in the Turfan oasis including Astana, Qocho, Qurutqa and Toyoq.¹⁶²

Syriac was maintained as the primary language of the liturgy at Turfan. This language was admitted into liturgical use only for particular parts such as hymns, psalms, and the *Bible* readings. In 1937, P.Y. Saeki provided the English translations of some of the Syriac material.¹⁶³

Sogdian was widely used by the writers and readers of the Christian Sogdian in the region in the later period. Judging from the contents of the Sogdian manuscripts, in

¹⁵⁹ Dickens, 2009 (9): 22-42.

¹⁶⁰ Zieme, 2009: 167-180.

¹⁶¹ Dickens, 2009 (9): 22-42.

¹⁶² Hunter, 2014; Moule, Hao Trans.1984: 332-341

¹⁶³ Saeki. 1937.ch. XVI, pp.337-347.

addition to general the *Bible* readings, many texts concern ascetical texts and the religious life. The majority of the hagiographies were written in Sogdian but were all translated from original Syriac texts.¹⁶⁴

As to the Uyghur language, Sims-Williams proposed: “During the final phase the monastery’s existence...(Uyghur) Turkish was probably the principal language day- to-day business, although Sogdian retained place beside Syriac as a language of literature and liturgy.”¹⁶⁵ Texts began to be increasingly written in Uyghur, these cover various genres: prayer-books, a story about the Magi, an omen book, a hagiography of St George, a wedding blessing and economic documents.¹⁶⁶ The most well-known are the fragments about the three wizards (Magi) going to Bethlehem to worship the young Christ. This story can be found in the *Bible*, while the contents of the Magi’s worship of the fire are not mentioned originally in the *Bible*.

Furthermore, there are some divination instruments with Christian imprint among Turpan’s Nestorian documents.¹⁶⁷

To conclude, although the Christian fragments constitute less than 3% of the total Turfan corpus, they gave us a glance at Nestorian community at Turfan. The contents on the fragments proves that this site may have ever supported large scale religious actives, as well as served the local Sogdian and Uyghur communities in the divination, medicine,¹⁶⁸ religion or other aspects.

2.2.2 Christian manuscript fragments from Dunhuang

Some Christian manuscript fragments were recovered from western China, notably Dunhuang. In addition to the early relics, such as the Jinjiao literature and Nestorian painting of Jesus Christ during the 9th-11th centuries, two new relics were unearthed at the northern part of the Mogao Grottoes recently, one is a bronze cross (in B105 Grotto), the other is part of the Syriac *Bible* (in B53 Grotto, No. B53: 14). The excavation process lasted for 7 years (1988-1975).

The document consists of four pages and each page has 15 lines of Syriac from right to left. There are 16 lines of Uighur text between the Syriac script on page 1.¹⁶⁹ The Uighur parts have been translated by Zhang Tieshan.¹⁷⁰ For the Syriac parts, Duanqing

¹⁶⁴ Hunter, 2012: 79-93.

¹⁶⁵ Sims-Williams, 1992:49+50-51+ 54; He, 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Yang, 2001(2): 167-173+188.

¹⁶⁷ Haneda, Zheng Trans.,1934:79.

¹⁶⁸ Sims-Williams, Yang & Shan Trans., 2017 (2): 122-127.

¹⁶⁹ Peng, 2013 (3):51-58.

¹⁷⁰ Peng & Wang, 2000, Vol1. Niu Ruji re-examined the Uighur part in 2002, see, Niu, 2002 (2): 56-63+112.

identified it as a part of the *Psalms*.¹⁷¹ Then the content is further explained by Niu Ruji in 2002.¹⁷²



Figure 3 Syriac *Psalms* from Dunhaung¹⁷³

Besides, Peng Jinzhang recorded another Syriac document which was mistaken for the fragment of Manichaeism (No. D.0071) early. It shares the same paper quality and color with the Syriac *Bible* No. B53: 14. The scholars proposed that it also belongs to the *Bible* and might be written between 1250-1368.¹⁷⁴ The content is part of the letter from the Apostle Paulus to the Galatians church, line three to line seven in paragraph three.¹⁷⁵

2.2.3 Christian manuscript fragments from Khara-Khoto

In 1908-1909, the ruin of Khara-Khoto¹⁷⁶ was excavated by the Russia expedition team led by P.K. Kozlov (1863–1935). Several Nestorian manuscripts written in Syriac script were uncovered. Three of them are important, one piece is Uyghur in Syriac script and the other two are Syriac. According to the famous Syrian scholar N. Pigoulewsky

¹⁷¹ Duan, 2000 (4), 120-126+183.

¹⁷² Niu, 2002 (2): 56-63+112.

¹⁷³ https://www.weibo.com/2104378152/F0sNJKic1?type=comment#_rnd1588675258606

¹⁷⁴ Peng, 2013(3):51-58; Niu, 2002 (2): 56-63+112.

¹⁷⁵ Niu, 2008: 42-45.

¹⁷⁶ In Chinese 亦集乃路, also known as black city, Khara-Khoto. It was a Tangut city in the Ejin Banner of Alxa League in western Inner Mongolia near Juyan Lake Basin. It has been identified as the city of Etzina, which appears in *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

(1894–1970)¹⁷⁷, the Syriac fragments contain the contents of praying for the rain and praising the Lord Jesus.¹⁷⁸ They are believed to be the relics of the 13th century. As to the Uyghur fragment, it has been studied by N. Pigoulewsky and P. Zieme¹⁷⁹ successively.

Stein excavated Khara-Khoto during his third Central Asian expedition in 1914. The findings from this research include several Nestorian documents written in Uyghur or Old Turkic.¹⁸⁰

From 1983 to 1984, the archaeologists in Inner Mongolia once again excavated Khara-Khoto and found about 3,000 multilingual manuscripts. Most of them belong to the Yuan period. “A team of Japanese and Chinese researchers have studied 228 manuscripts, mainly Mongolian, but also 16 Uyghur, 5 Tibetan, 1 Sanskrit and Tangut, 17 in Arabic letters (Arabic, Persian, Turkic languages) and 17 in Syriac letters (1 in Syriac, 16 mainly Turkic).”¹⁸¹

One piece of the Syriac liturgical book was studied in detail by Shinichi Muto and given English translation.¹⁸² This fragment highlights the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in their daily religious practice. The sources above allow us to catch a glimpse of Syriac Christian thought introduced to North China before the 14th century.

However, the two sites do not compare in quantity to the sheer volume of the Turfan material.¹⁸³

2.2.4 Syriac manuscript hymns from Beijing

In 1925 or 1926, eight Syriac manuscript hymns both written in front and back were found at the upper story of the Women of the Imperial Palace in Beijing.¹⁸⁴ They are considered as the relics of the Yuan Dynasty.

These Syriac documents are perceived as significant materials not only for Silk Road studies but also for the study of Chinese Christianity, especially in light of the current poor availability of historical data of Nestorianism.

¹⁷⁷ Pigoulewsky, vol. 30, 1935-1936: 49.

¹⁷⁸ Chen, 2011:64-69.

¹⁷⁹ Zieme 2006: 341-345.

¹⁸⁰ Chen, 2011:64-69.

¹⁸¹ Muto, 2013: 381-386.

¹⁸² Muto, 2016:147-154; Muto, 2013: 381-386.

¹⁸³ Zieme. 2006:341-345.

¹⁸⁴ Saeki, 1951:315-319.



Figure 4 Syriac manuscript hymns¹⁸⁵

2.3 Medieval Travellers and Their Travelogues

European travelers and their narratives give references to Nestorian Christian presence in Inner Asia and China proper. Besides the famous Marco Polo (1254–1324), there are Giovanni da Pian del Carpine (1185–1252), William of Rubruck (1220–1293), Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247–1328), Odoric of Pordenone (1286–1331) and John of Marignolli (1290–?), etc.

Giovanni da Pian del Carpine was sent as the head of the first formal Catholic mission to the Mongol Khan in 1245 by Pope Innocent IV (1195–1254) because of the threat of the great Mongol invasion of eastern Europe. After a long and hard journey, he finally reached the Mongol center in 1246 and witnessed the formal enthronement of Güyük Khan (reign 1246–1248), after which he was presented to the new emperor. However, the Güyük Khan refused the invitation to become Christian and demanded that the Pope and rulers of Europe should allegiance to him. In 1247, Carpine returned to Europe and delivered Khan’s letter to the Pope. His manuscripts were known as *Ystoria Mongalorum*, describing the Mongol history, politics, culture, customs and religion, especially nomads who dwelt in the land of the Mongols.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Moule, Hao Trans. 1984:343, pl. 24.

¹⁸⁶ Geng & He Trans. 2002.

William of Rubruck (1220–1293) was a Franciscan missionary and explorer. He set out from Constantinople in 1253 and reached the Mongol capital Karakorum in 1254, where he had a couple of occasions to meet with Möngke Khan (reign 1251–1259). Upon his return to Europe, William presented a report to King Louis IX (reign 1226–1270), entitled *Itinerarium fratris Willielmi de Rubruquis de ordine fratrum Minorum, Galli, Anno gratiae 1253 ad partes Orientales*, giving the detailed and scientific information on the peculiarities of Mongolia and many geographical observations.¹⁸⁷

Giovanni da Montecorvino (1247–1328) was an Italian Franciscan missionary and the founder of the earliest Roman Catholic missions in China. Sent by Pope Nicholas IV (1227–1292), Montecorvino went to the Mongol Empire during 1289 and arrived in Khanbaliq in 1294, where he won the confidence of the Yuan dynasty ruler and built two churches in 1299 and 1305 respectively. In 1307, Pope Clement V (1264–1314) sent seven Franciscan bishops who were commissioned to consecrate John of Montecorvino archbishop of Peking. However, only three of these missionaries arrived safely. Importantly, they successfully inherited John’s career in Zaiton (Quanzhou).¹⁸⁸

Also, there were some diplomats from east to west, such as Rabban Bar Şawma (1220–1294), Yahballaha III (1245–1317, known in earlier years as Rabban Marcos or Markos).¹⁸⁹ Born in 1220 near Beijing, Bar Şawma was a follower of the Nestorianism and became an ascetic monk when he was young. Markos was one of his students. In Şawma’s middle age, they decided to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. During the journey, Rabban Markos was appointed as a Nestorian bishop. In 1281, Rabban Markos was elected as Yahballaha III when he was only 36 years old. In 1287, Şawma brought some gifts and letters from Arghun to Europe in an attempt to unite European countries to recover Palestine and Syria but failed.

In 1288, Şawma returned and lived out the rest of his life in Baghdad, during which, he wrote the account of his travels, which was translated and edited by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge and titled *Monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China*.¹⁹⁰ This memoir provides detailed biographies of these two Turkic-speaking monks, their journey to the West, as well as medieval Europe at the close of the Crusades from the perspective of the East looking to the West.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Geng & He Trans. 2002.

¹⁸⁸ Klimkeit, 1995.

¹⁸⁹ Zhu, 1997.

¹⁹⁰ Sauma, Budge Trans. 2014.

¹⁹¹ Wang, 2007.

Besides the materials listed above, there are other Syrian descriptions on Nestorianism¹⁹², describing the presence of bishops and priests in important Christian conferences as far away as in Herat¹⁹³, Lake Balkhash, Samarkand, Bechbaliq¹⁹⁴ and Khanbaliq.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Klimkeit, 1994:477-484.

¹⁹³ An ancient city of Afghanistan.

¹⁹⁴ In Chinese 别失八里. An ancient city in Xinjiang.

¹⁹⁵ In Chinese 汗八里. Khanbaliq or Dadu was the capital of the Yuan dynasty, the main centre of the Mongol Empire founded by Kublai Khan in what is now Beijing.

3. Archaeological Evidences of Nestorian Presence in Part of Central Asia and China

3.1 Semirechye in Central Asia

3.1.1 The found of Nestorian tombstones in Semirechye

Beginning in autumn of 1885, two Nestorian graveyards were discovered by Russian settlers in the region of Semirechye.¹⁹⁶ About 610 Nestorian tombstones¹⁹⁷ with cross and Syriac inscriptions were excavated. The two sites were distributed in the Chu Valley (the southern area of Semirechye): one was Karajigach, at a distance of some 11 km from Pishpek¹⁹⁸; the other was Burana, south of Tomok¹⁹⁹ (or Tokmak). The former was larger and was the capital of Tokmak province, discovered by M. Andreff; the latter was smaller and discovered by Dr Prorjakoff.²⁰⁰

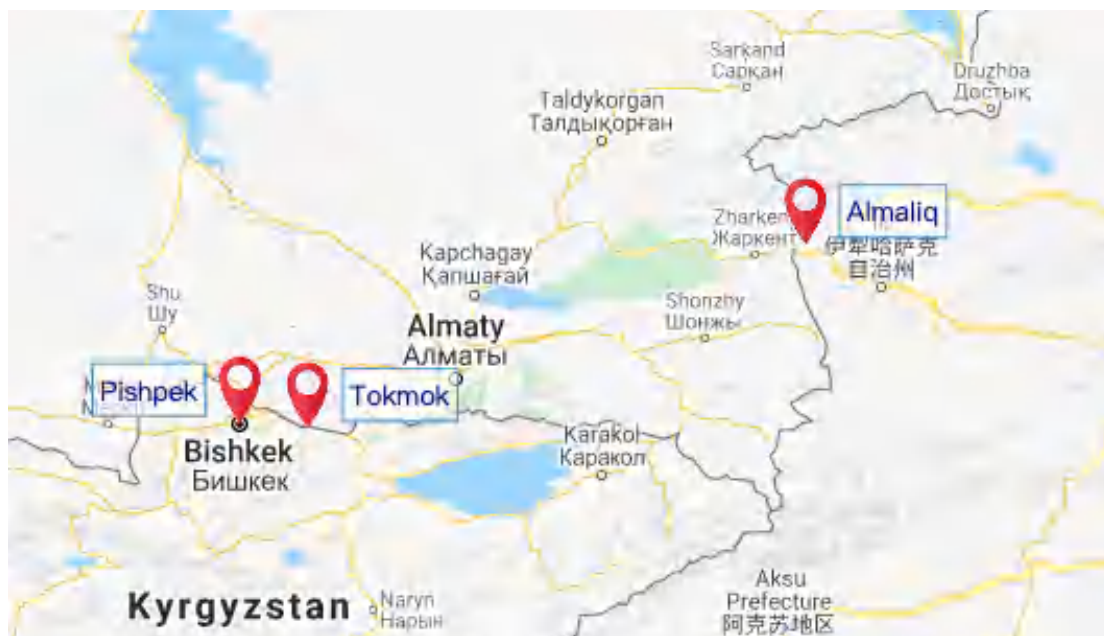


Figure 5 Pishpek (now Bishkek), Tokmok and Almaliq

N.N. Pantusov was one of the pioneers in the discovery and was an official of the Province of Semirechye. He visited Semirechye and Almaliq between 1883 and 1908.²⁰¹ He argued that in one graveyard near Pishpek alone (size of 256 x 128 cm), about 3, 000 people were buried.²⁰² Mark Dickens recorded: “Approximately 3, 000

¹⁹⁶ Saeki, 1951: 408-409.

¹⁹⁷ See Li & Niu, 2014: 91-99, recorded as “630 Nestorian tombstones”.

¹⁹⁸ Now Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁹⁹ Tokmok is a city in the Chuy Valley, northern Kyrgyzstan, east of Bishkek.

²⁰⁰ Saeki, 1951: 408-409.

²⁰¹ Li & Niu, 2014: 91-99.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

graves were found, although there were only about 600 gravestones with inscriptions. Thus, the gravestones give us information about only 20% of the Christian community that was buried in the two cemeteries.”²⁰³ Such data showed that the number of Nestorians who once dwelt here was so large.

As more gravestones were unearthed, Chowlson (1819–1911) published an initial report in German and Russian and then two lengthy monographs in German covering a total of 568 stones.²⁰⁴ Few of them are without inscriptions and all are engraved with a cross.²⁰⁵ Most of the stones are dated according to the Seleucid Era (SE) used by Syriac Christians, the twelve-year animal-cycle used by the Turkic peoples, or both in one tombstone.²⁰⁶ The stones with dates are dated from 1200/1–1344/45. All of the inscriptions except one are exclusively in the Syriac script (about 30 were Turkic in Syriac script). The special stone is inscribed partly in Syriac and partly in Armenian.²⁰⁷ Those tombstones dating 1338 and 1339 are almost all given the plague as the cause of death.²⁰⁸ (the very same Black Death which devastated Europe beginning in 1346)

Between 1902 and 1903, N.N. Pantusov sent the originals of 11 gravestones to the Imperial Archaeological Commission (Russia). In 1906, they were published by Semiticist Pavel Kokovtsov (1861–1942) from St. Petersburg.²⁰⁹ In 1904, the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences received a collection of 10 gravestones, which were sent by the Russian Consul in Yining.²¹⁰ This group of stones, dating from 1301/02 to 1371/72, was published by P. Kokovtsov in 1907 and some of them were restudied by Wassilios Klein.²¹¹

Among the more than 600 pieces of Nestorian tombstones found in Semirechye, at least seven of them indicate that the tomb owners are originated from Almaliq, implying the close connection between the Nestorian Christians in Semirechye and Almaliq.²¹²

Another interesting phenomenon is that there are several Christians buried in Semirechye who came not only from the vicinity, also from other areas, such as India, East and West Turkestan, Siberia and Persia.²¹³

²⁰³ Dickens, 2014:13-49.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Li & Niu, 2014:91-99.

²⁰⁶ Dickens, 2014:13-49.

²⁰⁷ Li & Niu, 2014:91-99.

²⁰⁸ Saeki,1951:408-409.

²⁰⁹ Li & Niu, 2014: 91-99.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Klein, 1994:432.

²¹² Niu, 2008:3.

²¹³ Li & Niu, 2014: 91-99.

Records prove that the spread of Nestorianism in West Asia and Central Asia reached its peak in the middle of the 13th century. They eagerly preached the gospel and were called “the church that was on fire”. At one time there were as many as 25 parishes, and the number of the believers even exceeded that of Latin and Greek Language churches.²¹⁴

3.1.2 The collection and protection of the tombstones

According to Mark Dickens, “a large number of stones from Semirechye ended up in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, although many were also distributed to museums throughout the Russian Empire (and later the Soviet Union). A smaller number ended up in France, England and Finland. Regrettably, about 500 were destroyed in a fire in a museum in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 1939. One of the current challenges is to determine exactly which stones are still extant and where they are currently located.”²¹⁵

According to Niu Ruji, “there are 15 gravestones from Semirechye in France, seven of which are in the Musée Guimet in Paris (Collection Numbers: 16599,16600, 16601, 16602, 16606, 16608, 16609), six in the Musée Guimet in Lyon (Collection Numbers: 16598, 16604, 16605, 16607, 16650, 16651, 16609) and two in the Musée du Louver (Collection Numbers: AO 28051, AO 28052). The inscriptions were studied and published by F. Nau and A. Dersreumaux. 20 are said to have been sent from Verny (modern Alma-ata) to Paris in around 1896. Two gravestones from Semirechye are in private possession in Finland since 1909. Two are in Great Britain, one is in the British Museum and the other is in the Gulbenkian Museum, Durham University with registration number ‘Northumberland 2475’”.²¹⁶

Besides, there are three Nestorian tombstones in the Russian Hermitage Museum. One of them is the stone that has been sent from Yining to the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in 1904 mentioned above, featured two “winged-angels” on both sides of the cross.

Moreover, four gravestones are on display at the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, which have been discussed by Mark Dickens in 2009.²¹⁷ And other ten tombstones have also been studied in detail by Mark Dickens in 2016,²¹⁸ seven of them

²¹⁴ Xu, 2016 (4).

²¹⁵ Dickens, 2016:105-129.

²¹⁶ Niu, 2013:93-98.

²¹⁷ Dickens, 2014:13-49.

²¹⁸ Dickens, 2016:105-129.

are kept in the storage at the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, one is stored at Tashkent State University, one is kept in Panjikent, Tajikistan and one is kept in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (among them there is a stone No. 312\8, originating in Almaliq, so I put it in the section of “Almaliq”).



Figure 6 Nestorian tombstones from Semirechye

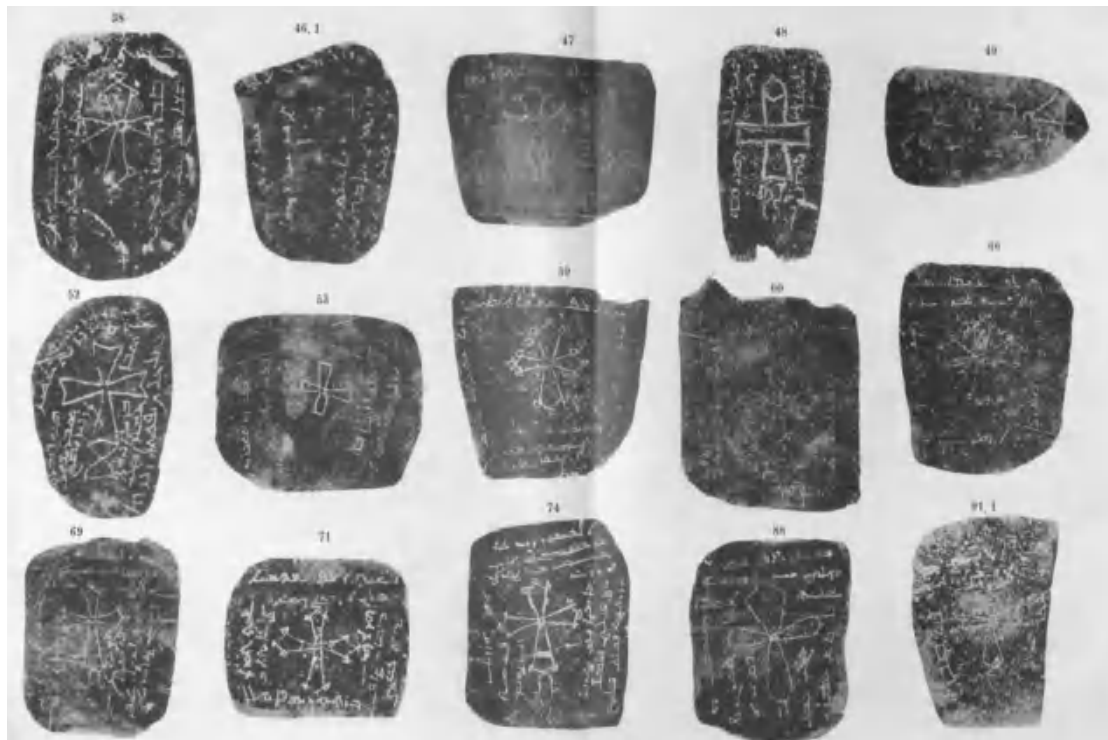


Figure 7 Nestorian tombstones from Semirechye



Figure 8 Nestorian tombstones from Semirechye

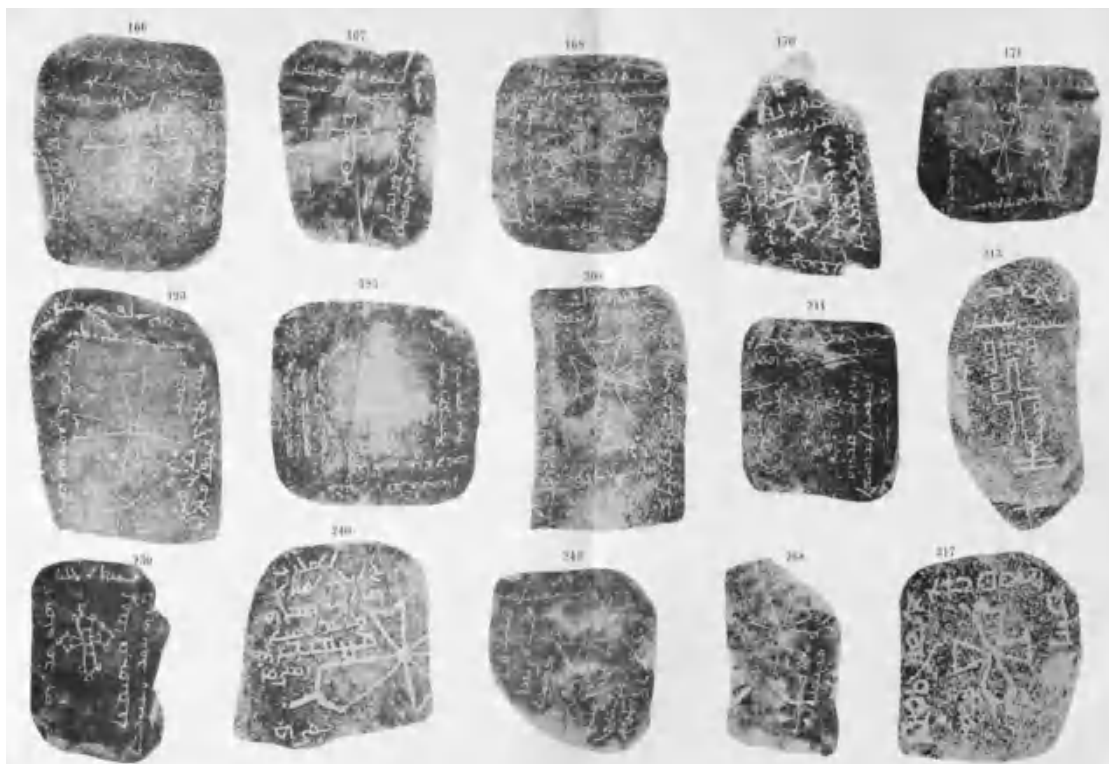


Figure 9 Nestorian tombstones from Semirechye²¹⁹

²¹⁹ The Figures 6,7,8,9 are from Chwolson,1897.

3.2 Almaliq in Xinjiang

The medieval capital Almaliq is located on east of Huocheng county, in the Ili region of today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It has ever been the center of Nestorian activities during the 13th–14th centuries.

The tombstones in Almaliq appear as stones, following the practice among the steppe peoples who erect stones or stone columns at gravesites dates from well before the Turkic period.

Chinese archaeologist Huang Wenbin was the first to confirm the position of Almaliq²²⁰ and discovered the tomb of Tuchlug Timur Khan (reign 1347–1362/3) at this ruined city in 1958.²²¹ Besides, coins, pottery and agate jewelers were found from the tomb. The Nianhao 年号 [Chinese era name] of the coin was identified as 1327. It was the common currency during the period when the Mongols ruled Xinjiang. Huang concluded that the area was still inhabited in the 14th century.²²²

Almaliq continued to be the capital of East Chagatai Khanate or Moghulistan after the Chagatai Khanate had been divided among 1321/2.²²³ The medieval Franciscan missionaries, William of Rubruck and John of Marignolli have ever passed through this city. John of Marignolli even built a Catholic church there and baptized several people in 1340. The city became Islamized under the reign of Tuchlug Timur Khan (reign 1347–1362/3).²²⁴

At least nine Nestorian tombstones have been unearthed in this city so far. They are now kept in different museums: three now in the Museum of Xinjiang in Urumqi, two in Huocheng at the Cultural Heritage Bureau, one in the Museum of the Ili District, and one in Hermitage Museum, Russia. Most of them feature a simple Syriac-Turkic epitaphic sentence or with a cross and simple lotus, giving the identity of the deceased and the year of death. Most of the epitaphs have been given a translation by Niu Ruji.²²⁵

The inscriptions here are quite similar to those found in Semirechye, while the patterns of lotus resemble more those in Inner Mongolia. As Almaliq and Semirechye were both inhabited by Turkic-speaking groups, it is reasonable that the inscriptions share some similarity.²²⁶

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Tang, 2011:81-82.

²²² Huang, 1983:16, plate 8/1-8.

²²³ Tang, 2011:81-82.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Niu, 2008:57-66.

²²⁶ Tang, 2011:81-82.

3.3 Inner Mongolia

There are four important Nestorian sites in Inner Mongolia: Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner of Ulanqab City, Darhan Muminggan Lianhe (United) Banner of Baotou City, Chifeng City and Ordos City. In Darhan Muminggan Lianhe (United) Banner, there are three Nestorian archaeological sites: the old city of Olon Sume, Muqur Suburghan (Mukhor Soborghan) Cemetery and Biqigetuhaolai Cemetery.

In modern times, Darhan Muminggan United Banner and Dorbod Banner belong to different administrative regions, however, they were very close in location and had very developed traffic during the Mongol Empire.²²⁷ The number of Nestorian objects from Inner Mongolia, however, is still much smaller than the Nestorian inscribed pebbles found in Semericye and Almaliq.²²⁸

Halbertsma states: “Except for Biqigetuhaolai and Shizhuziliang (Now it belongs to Hebei Province, Zhou), all major Nestorian gravesites in Inner Mongolia feature horizontal gravestones.²²⁹ The overall design of the horizontal gravestones is unique but also portrays parallels to Muslim gravestones.”²³⁰

The introduction of the Nestorian culture in the Mongolian region was guided by the tribes of Central Asia, suggesting the influences from Turkic. The gravestones in Inner Mongolia feature short inscriptions revealing the name of the deceased, multiple crosses and decorations including Islamic lantern windows, the interlaced floral design and ogees patterns (resemble the Humen decoration in Quanzhou). No winged creatures like that in Almaliq and Quanzhou have been found so far. The design of the funerary objects thus developed from an early Turkic style stele to a late Chinese style grave with Sino-sculptures, epitaphs or funerary items.²³¹ (such as the censer and the altar table)

²²⁷ Gai, 1991: 97, pl. 1.

²²⁸ Halbertsma, 2008:162.

²²⁹ According to Gai, Wangmuliang Cemetery also feature vertical gravestones, see Gai, 1991:204-212.

²³⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:128.

²³¹ Gai, 1991: 222-225.



Figure 10²³²

Olon Sume, Mukhor Soborghan Cemetery and Biqigetuhaolai Cemetery of Darhan Muminggan Lianhe Banner; Wangmuliang Cemetery of Siziwang Banner.

²³² Halbertsma, 2008:51, map 2.

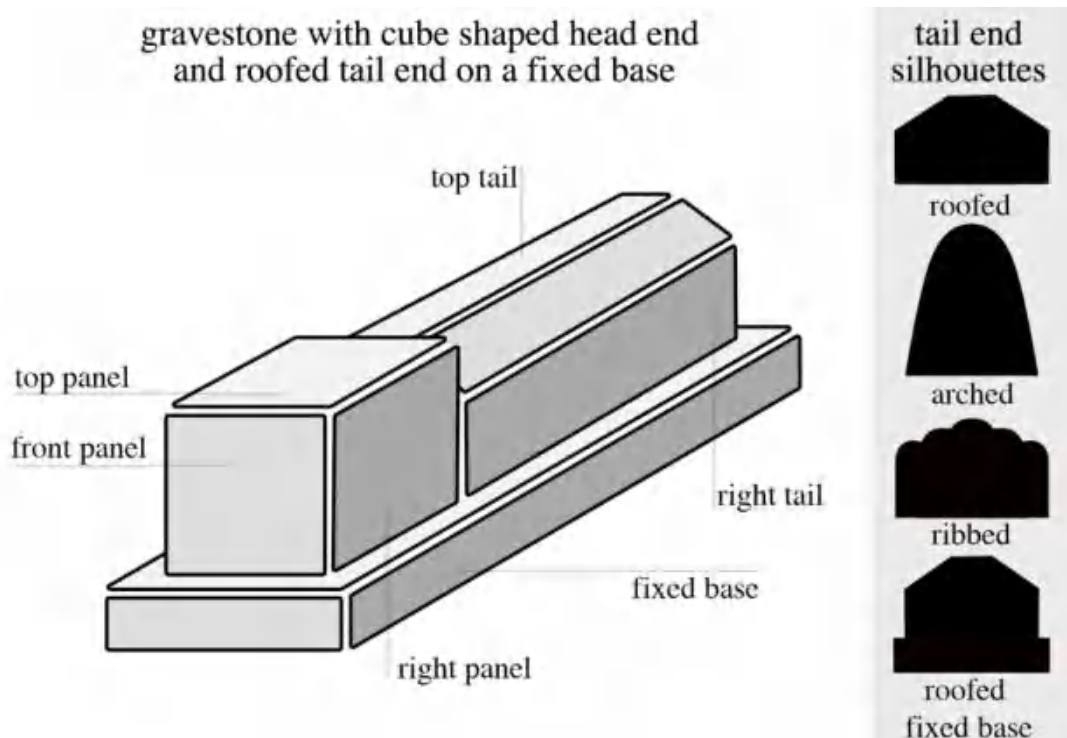


Figure 11 Nestorian Horizontal Gravestone²³³

3.3.1 Darhan Muminggan Lianhe (United) Banner

3.3.1.1 Olon Sume

Olon Sume is located more than 30 kilometres north of the Bailingmiao Town, Darhan Muminggan United Banner of Baotou city. To the south lie the Yinshan mountains separating the steppe from the Ordos plain and the Huanghe River. To the north stretch the numerous Gobi deserts and the vast steppes of Mongolia.²³⁴

Olon Sume and its environs was an Öngüt area during the Yuan Dynasty. It was also called “Zhaowang Cheng” (The city of King Zhao) and belonged to the District of Dening Lu²³⁵ within the central administration of the Mongol Yuan government.²³⁶

Huang Wenbi (1893–1966) was the first to find the relics there. As a member of Sino-Swedish Expedition²³⁷, he found the famous Chinese monument Wangfu defeng tangbei ji 王傅德风堂碑记 and a Mongolian incomplete monument. The results were

²³³ Halbertsma, 2008:137, figure 1.

²³⁴ Halbertsma, 2008:86.

²³⁵ 德宁路 in Chinese, an administrative unit of the Yuan Dynasty

²³⁶ Tang, 2011:77.

²³⁷ The Sino-Swedish Expedition was a bilateral Chinese-English expedition, led by Sven Hedin, which carried out scientific research in north and northwest China from 1927 to 1935.

published in *XiBei KeXue KaoCha GaiYao* 西北科学考察概要 [Summary of Northwest Scientific Expedition] in 1931.²³⁸

In 1932 Owen Lattimore (1900–1989) researched the remains of Olon Sume. The short visit resulted in the extensive article titled *A ruined Nestorian city in Inner Mongolia* which published in 1934 in the *Geographical Journal*.²³⁹

The eminent Japanese scholar Egami Namio (1906–2002) also did great contribution on studying the remains here. He conducted a series of field research along the banks of the Shara Muren²⁴⁰ in 1939 and 1941. Beginning in 1935, Egami published a wide range of Japanese, English and French articles and books on Olon Sume and the Christian heritage in Inner Mongolia. He also allowed P. Y. Saeki (1871–1965), a Japanese Christian who later became an expert on Christian Nestorian, to publish a selection of his photographs of Olon Sume in a Japanese publication of 1935.²⁴¹

In 2000, two years before his death, Egami published *The Mongol Empire and Christendom* as a summary of his research, which could be the conclusion of his three expeditions to the Christian sites of Inner Mongolia in China.

In 1936, Henry Desmond Martin (1908–1973) explored this place. The scholar came well equipped to make maps, panorama photography and rubbings of objects. His research resulted in *Preliminary Report on Nestorian Remains North of Kuei-Hua, Suiyüan* and published in *Monumenta Serica*, which is the most detailed article on the Nestorian remains in Inner Mongolia until now.²⁴²

The research for this site before 1949 was dominated by foreign expeditions. In the 1970s Chinese archaeologist and historian Gai Shanlin (1936–2020) conducted extensive field research on the historic sites. In 1991, Gai published *Yinshan Wanggu* 阴山汪古 [The Öngöt of the Yinshan Mountains] which contained hundreds of images of Öngüt sites, objects and Nestorian remains. Gai's team mapped most of the sites and documented objects with line drawings, data, rubbings and photographs.²⁴³

Today only a few tombstones lie in the wildness of Olon Sume, and the others are stored in the Archaeological Institute or museums of Inner Mongolia.

²³⁸ Chen, 1938:250-256.

²³⁹ Lattimore, 1934:481-497.

²⁴⁰ (Xar Moron) is a river in Inner Mongolia. It is the source of the Xiliao River, which in turn is one of the headwaters of the Liao River.

²⁴¹ Halbertsma, 2008:65.

²⁴² Martin, 1938:232-249; Niu, 2008:15.

²⁴³ Gai, 1991; Halbertsma, 2008:72-74.

3.3.1.2 Muqur Suburghan cemetery

Muqur Suburghan lies on the southern side of a bend in the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) wall. At the northern end of the site stands a striking hill with a horizontal summit which gives the city its current name.²⁴⁴ According to Martin's map, the site was measured some 570 by 570 m²⁴⁵, while Gai recorded it as 500 by 500 m.²⁴⁶

Nestorian cemetery here was excavated on the high ground about 100 meters northeast of the ancient city. It is said that there are about 30 tombstones, but the archaeologists only recorded 13 pieces,²⁴⁷ recovering only two pieces of Syriac script tombs.

Gai also discovered an object in the shape of a large stone dome decorated with a cross on the cemetery in the northeast of the ancient city. It is speculated that the object has been used as a stand for a flagpole and it might be part of the top of a Nestorian stone.²⁴⁸

Compared to Olon Sume, the walls of Muqur Suburghan are much weathered and reduced to shallow structures which are now barely visible.²⁴⁹ And the tombs here were rough and simple.²⁵⁰ The site was heavily damaged by grave looters who had dug several holes and tunnels into both city and cemetery. A great number of stone objects, bricks and pottery shards scattered at the site when it was being unearthed.

3.3.1.3 Biqigetuhaolai cemetery

Biqigetuhaolai is some 15 kilometres north-west of Olon Sume.²⁵¹ In 1974 Gai researched and excavated the Cemetery.²⁵²

Gai recorded that the cemetery was enclosed by the remains of a 30-centimetre-high wall. He and his team excavated some 19 graves inside the cemetery and four further graves outside the walls. He identified the tombs as vertical shaft tombs of the simple tomb type and failed to find the head of tombstone with Noah's Ark-style as in other cemeteries. Ancient Syrian stone monuments stood beside the tombs.²⁵³

²⁴⁴ Halbertsma, 2008:93.

²⁴⁵ Martin, 1938: 232-249.

²⁴⁶ Gai,1991:134.

²⁴⁷ Gai,1991:192.

²⁴⁸ Gai,1991:292, pl. 163.

²⁴⁹ Halbertsma, 2008:93.

²⁵⁰ Niu, 2008:19.

²⁵¹ Halbertsma, 2008:113.

²⁵² Gai, 1991: 200-201.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

Gai's excavation further revealed some wooden coffins positioned with the east-west direction. The deceased were facing the east or northwest. The position suggests a Turkic influence in addition to the Chinese style.²⁵⁴ Gai discovered that all graves had been looted and only a few objects, such as the leather sole of a shoe, remained. He also unearthed nine important stone fragments at the sites. The fragments featured the inscriptions in Syriac script and depictions of crosses and flowers which also found at other Nestorian sites.²⁵⁵

Besides, two circular stone tombs were discovered on the hillside about half a kilometre south of the cemetery. A bronze object like the Chinese character “大”, a bronze mirror, some copper ornaments and other items were unearthed in the meantime.²⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the tombstone was stolen in the early years.

3.3.2 Wangmuliang Cemetery of Dorbod Banner

Wangmuliang Cemetery is situated on a hill overlooking the Shara Muren River. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Sino-Swedish Expedition investigated this cemetery. The group revealed the monument of the Yelü gongshen daoBei 耶律公神道碑 [Yelü spirit way inscription] and photographed other tombstones.²⁵⁷ Until 1973, Gai researched and excavated the cemetery carefully²⁵⁸, though many of the graves had been looted, he was able to provide further insight into the burial practices of the Nestorians in Inner Mongolia.

Gai generally described the site as a walled terrace along the Shara Muren river measuring 75m by 75m with 17 gravestones.²⁵⁹ In terms of material, decoration and workmanship, the tombstones from Wangmuliang were of the highest quality in Inner Mongolia. The material was often a durable white marble which has withstood the harsh climate of Inner Mongolia remarkably well. A number of these stones originally stand on pedestals or base plates and were thus constructed of multiple parts.²⁶⁰

Also, the most numerous and most beautiful GuGu guan²⁶¹ made of birch bark²⁶² were unearthed here.

²⁵⁴ Gai, 1991: 200-201; Halbertsma, 2008:111.

²⁵⁵ Gai, 1991:204-212.

²⁵⁶ Gai, 1991: 200-201.

²⁵⁷ Martin,1938:232-249; Chen,1938:250-256.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Gai,1991:204-212.

²⁶⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:120.

²⁶¹ Gu Guguan is a kind of hat worn by aristocratic women in the Jin and Yuan dynasties. The height is about 66cm and usually made of wire and birch, wrapped red cloth outside, decorated with pearls, etc.

²⁶² Gai,1991:246.

Gai interpreted the gravesite as the cemetery of Yelü family. During his excavation of the graveyard, Gai noticed that the heads of the deceased were placed towards the west. The head of the gravestones were positioned in the same direction.²⁶³

3.3.3 Chifeng

Chifeng is a prefecture-level city in south-eastern Inner Mongolia. In 1984, a farmer discovered a Syrian-Uighur Nestorian white glaze tomb brick in an ancient ruin of Songzhou City of the Yuan Dynasty (now in Chengzi Township, Songshan District of Chifeng City). This brick has the features of Gangwa Kiln. Gangwa Kiln²⁶⁴, once has been the ceramic centre in eastern Mongolia since the Liao Dynasty (916–1125).

James Hamilton and Niu Ruji (1958–)²⁶⁵ identify the Syriac inscription at the upper end of the brick as: “Look ye unto it. Hope in it.”²⁶⁶ The same psalm is, in a slightly different form, also found at one of two stones with cross depictions in Fangshan²⁶⁷ and a Nestorian bronze mirror conserved in the National Museum.²⁶⁸

Such frequent use proved that the sentence was very common among Nestorian Christians during the 13th–14th centuries. But the inscription in Chifeng is more traditional and standard in the use of Syrian words,²⁶⁹ reflecting an earlier connection with the Eastern Church. Compared with the dating of other tombstones: the tri-lingual stele (I–O–1)²⁷⁰ at Olon Sume, dating 1327; I–O–2, dating 1290; Yelü gongshen daoBei²⁷¹ dating around 1308–1311, the brick of Chifeng (dating 1253) is a good example of an early phase of the Nestorian tombstones in Inner Mongolia.

The famous Nestorian brick has ever made a public appearance at the exhibition of “Capital Cities of Yuan Dynasty” in the Beijing Capital Museum in 2016 and the exhibition of “Embracing the Orient and the Occident—When the Silk Road Meets the Renaissance” in National Museum in 2018.

3.3.4 Ordos

The Ordos is one of the twelve major subdivisions of Inner Mongolia. It lies within the Ordos Loop of the Yellow River and is the sedentary area of the legendary Mongolian

²⁶³ Gai, 1991:204-212.

²⁶⁴ The Gangwa kiln or Chifeng kiln, the products here are mainly white porcelain. It is located in the area of Chifeng in Inner Mongolia and is named after the small town Gangwayao about 60 km southeast of Chifeng.

²⁶⁵ Hamilton and Niu, 1994:147-164.

²⁶⁶ This sentence is from the *Bible•Old Testament*, Psalm, Chapter 34, Section 6.

²⁶⁷ Niu, 2008:24.

²⁶⁸ Niu, 2017:57-63.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Niu, 2008:67-72; Tang, 2011:77-78; Gai, 1991:284, pl. No.158; Halbertsma, 2008:114.

²⁷¹ Gai, 1991:287-289; Chen, 1980: 20-22; Niu, 2008:21.

Nestorians. Since the 20th century, a large number of metal objects have been uncovered and became known as the “Ordos bronze crosses”. The curious objects resemble crosses, birds, swastikas, feather men, geometrical pieces, seal-shape pieces, etc.²⁷² Saeki,²⁷³ Gai Shanlin,²⁷⁴ L. Hambis,²⁷⁵ Halbertsma²⁷⁶ all have documented a number of these objects. I will give a detailed discussion in the future chapter.

3.4 Shizhuziliang

Shizhuziliang 石柱子梁 is a village of Zhangbei County, located in the northwest of Hebei Province, north of the outer Great Wall. It is on the south-eastern edge of the Inner Mongolia Plateau. The chorography of Zhangbei during Republic of China (1912–1949) records: “Shiding River (Heishui River) ...passing the north of Shizhuziliang village... about 40 miles long”.²⁷⁷

In 1890, Cesar de Brabander (1857–1919)²⁷⁸ who worked as a C.I.C.M.²⁷⁹ missionary in Inner Mongolia between 1882 and 1902 recorded and researched the cemetery. He drew eight sketches including six Christian tombstones and publishes them in the Belgium missionary bulletin of C.I.C.M. One of them is a censer with a cross, however, he mistaken them for a lamb. According to him, the cemetery of Shizhuziliang was positioned at the north side of a large lake and a beautiful river.²⁸⁰ Could this river be Shiding River? It is difficult to verify now.

In spring 1923, Charles Pieters (1884–1926)²⁸¹ investigated this site, some thirty years after the De Brabander’s discovery. He identified the site as Shizhuziliang and photographed some objects in the graves. What’s important, a rubbing made by Pieters which was interpreted firstly as a lamb by Brabander revealed that it was in fact a Chinese censer. Also, Pieters found a mirror with what was perhaps “a Catholic representation of the Virgin carrying the Christ child”.²⁸² Pieters further noted that the graves had been positioned on an east-west axis. This would suggest that the tombs are

²⁷² Halbertsma, 2008:195.

²⁷³ Saeki,1951:414, Fig.10-12.

²⁷⁴ Gai, 1991:354, pl. No.164

²⁷⁵ Hambis, 1951:483-526.

²⁷⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:208.

²⁷⁷ Yin, 1994. Vol.1

²⁷⁸ Chinese name 庞笑爱. He was a Catholic priest and Chinese missionary associated with the Scheut Missionary Congregation and also was one of the first Scheut missionaries to serve in Inner Mongolia.

²⁷⁹ The C.I.C.M. is a Roman Catholic missionary religious congregation of men established in 1862 by the Belgian Catholic priest, Theophiel Verbist (1823–1868). The congregation is most notable for their international missionary works in China, Mongolia, the Philippines, etc.

²⁸⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:132.

²⁸¹ Chinese name 边崇正. Charles Pieters was a Catholic priest and Chinese missionary associated with the Scheut Missionary Congregation. He came to China as a missionary in 1911.

²⁸² Halbertsma, 2008:54.

consistent with the cult of the East followed by the Nestorian Christians in Inner Mongolia.²⁸³

Overall, there may thus well be a total of eight stones documented by De Brabander and Pieters from Shizhiziliang. The practice of erecting vertical stone columns with depictions was adopted here but none of them featured inscriptions, which complicates the dating of the objects and the site.²⁸⁴

Pieters dated some objects found at Shizhuziliang to the Song and Liao dynasties. While De Brabander believed the tombstones were either over a thousand years old or the Yuan dynasty and they were the relics either Nestorian or Catholic. Also, they wondered about the origin of the site and speculated that it might have been Nestorian rather than Roman Catholic because the cross depicted on top of a lotus flower stands on a Chinese style altar table, which may thus well date from the Nestorian period in Inner Mongolia.²⁸⁵

Halbertsma proposes that it is uncertain if these tomb objects are originated from Christian graves. The first stone slab from Shizhuziliang depicts an engraving in low relief of a Chinese censer (interpreted and sketched by De Brabander as a lamb) between two candles is confirmed as the Roman Catholic cross and IHS-symbol. Except for this, the depictions on the majority of stones seem to be Nestorian in style.²⁸⁶ I will mention the symbol again in later chapters.

Saeki²⁸⁷, Li Chonglin and Niu Ruji²⁸⁸ identify the cross depictions are Nestorian through the inclusion of the objects from Shizhuziliang in their discussions of Nestorian relics.

To conclude, it may well be possible that the relics are Nestorian because of the cross and floral depictions, the altar tables, as well as the orientation of the graves, however, considering the fact that Nestorian and Catholic Christians functioned at the same time alongside each other around Shizhuziliang, the cemetery may be also used by Catholic creeds.

²⁸³ Halbertsma, 2008:132-133.

²⁸⁴ Halbertsma, 2008:133.

²⁸⁵ Halbertsma, 2008:132-135.

²⁸⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:134.

²⁸⁷ Saeki, 1951:427.

²⁸⁸ Li & Niu, 2014:91-99.

3.5 Nestorian sites in Beijing

Unlike other places, the Nestorian remains in Beijing are part of temple sites rather than tombstones. There are at least three Nestorian sites in Beijing:

1. The Temple of the Cross of Fangshan

The Cross Temple is located at a village called Chechang, northwest of Zhoukoudian in Fangshan District (about 30km southwest of Beijing). It was discovered by Sir Reginald Johnston²⁸⁹ (1874–1938, Emperor Xuantong’s private tutor) in the summer of 1919. Sir Reginald published how he happened to discover these relics in *The New China Review* under the pseudonym of “Chriatopher Irving”.²⁹⁰ H. I. Harding, second secretary of the English mission in Peking, pointed out that there was also a sanctuary called “Shizici” near Peking, at the foot of the mountains.²⁹¹ Harding precluded that the name could mean “temple of the cross” and that it could refer to Nestorianism.²⁹²

In 1931, the remains of stone blocks were brought to Beijing and preserved in the History Museum of Beijing. In 1936, they were transported to Nanjing Museum and kept there until now.

Besides, two monuments remained at the temple, unfortunately, both of them were broken in two parts during the 20th century.

The first is entitled *Account on the stele of Chongsheng yuan*²⁹³ at Dadu²⁹⁴ (named Monument of the Liao Dynasty), dating of 960. The stele was written by Wang Mingfeng in the 4th month of the year 960, presenting the temple has ever been to a Buddhist temple called Chongshengyuan [Temple of the Reverence for the Holy].

The other is entitled *Account on the stele of the temple* called by imperial decree as *the Great Yuan “Temple of the cross”*²⁹⁵ (named Monument of the Yuan Dynasty), dating of 365. The inscriptions were written by Huang Jin (1277–1357) and the calligrapher was Li Haowen, explaining how a Buddhist monk restored the temple between 1358–1363 and obtained the name “Temple of the Cross” from the Yuan emperor.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁹ Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston, (1874–1938) was a Scottish diplomat who served as the tutor and advisor to Puyi, the last Emperor of China. He was also the last British Administrator of Weihaiwei.

²⁹⁰ Saeki, 1951:430-431.

²⁹¹ *The New China Review*, 1919:321.

²⁹² Marsone. 2009:205-213.

²⁹³ Da du Chong sheng yuan beiji 大都崇圣院碑记

²⁹⁴ Mongolian Daidu = Chinese Tai-tu 大都, now Beijing, often referred to in Western documents as Cambaluc or other approximations of the Turkish form Qan Baliq.

²⁹⁵ Da yuan chi ci shi zi si beiji 大元敕赐十字寺碑记

²⁹⁶ Marsone. 2009: 205-213.

The contents of the inscription indicate that it is a Buddhist monastery, but why are the patterns of crosses depicted on the monuments? Tang Xiaofeng synthesized the opinions of many scholars and came up with the following three speculations²⁹⁷:

(1) It was a Buddhist temple during the (later) Jin (936—947) and Tang dynasties and repaired in the Liao Dynasty. It was used as a temple of the cross in the early Yuan Dynasty and became a Buddhist temple again in the late Yuan Dynasty.

(2) In the Tang Dynasty, it was a temple for Jingjiao. Later it was used as a Buddhist temple. It was rebuilt in the Liao Dynasty and then transformed into a Yelikewen Cross Temple.

(3) It used to be the Yelikewen Cross Temple during the Mongolian period.

Nevertheless, the remains with the cross-lotus depictions and the Syriac script imply they are Nestorian relics because they resemble Nestorian images in Chifeng and Quanzhou.



Figure 12 Monument of the Liao Dynasty²⁹⁸



Figure 13 Monument of the Yuan Dynasty²⁹⁹

2. Nestorian tombstone at Shifangyuan

In the 1920s, a Nestorian tombstone with patterns of honeysuckle and crosses on the

²⁹⁷ Tang, 2015:215-235.

²⁹⁸ Photo by labilaoxin, 2012. It is 204 cm high, 91 cm wide and 20 cm thick.

²⁹⁹ Photo by JingxiBaisannainai, 2016. It is 307 cm high, 92 cm wide and 20 cm thick.

surface and both sides was excavated from the old site of the Shifangyuan, a few miles west of Guang'an Gate of Beijing, and close to present Paomachang 跑马场. This stone was originally discovered by a German Professor, Dr Roussell, in the premises of a house where he lived and originally ever stood the destroyed old temple Shifangyuan or Shifangsi.³⁰⁰ The stone was once in possession of the Catholic University of Beijing.

3. The Temple of the Cross at Jinggongfang

The temple is close to the Di'an Gate of Beijing. In the history books of China, only two records about it which could be found in the book *XiJin zhi* 析津志.³⁰¹ There are no remains in this place now.

3.6 Yangzhou

Yangzhou is located in the north of Quanzhou, at the crossing of the Grand Canal and the Yangzi. In 1981, some farmers uncovered an important Nestorian gravestone with an extensive trilingual inscription in a field bordering the town.³⁰²

The inscription, decorated with a cross on a lotus flower flanked by two winged "angels", dating from 1317 and commemorating the death of a Nestorian Christian named Elizabeth. Elizabeth is recorded on the stone as "the wife of Sama (Xindu 忻都 in Chinese, Hindu in Mongolian) from Beijing". Geng Shimin, Klimkeit, Laut³⁰³, Zhujiang³⁰⁴, Niu Ruji³⁰⁵, Franzmann³⁰⁶ all have interpretations on the monument.

Another fragment of a Nestorian tombstone was discovered at Jiangdu County, Jiangsu Province in 1929, depicting a Nestorian cross embedded by floral designs and a lotus flower portrayed in perspective. The backside was decorated with other floral motifs. The town where this stone was discovered no other than the very famous historic town of Yangzhou. At present, the stone is in the possession of a Mohammedan Temple in Yangzhou.³⁰⁷

Besides, Yangzhou further yielded the gravestones of two Roman Catholics of the Mongol era.³⁰⁸ Several Chinese sources and western historical documents refer to the Christian community at Yangzhou are also excavated.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁰ Saeki, 1951:429-430.

³⁰¹ For more information about the Chinese records on the Temple of the Cross in *Xijin zhi*, see Niu, 2008:28.

³⁰² Halbertsma, 2008:41.

³⁰³ Geng, Klimkeit & Laut, 1996:164-175.

³⁰⁴ Zhu, 1986:68-69.

³⁰⁵ Niui, 2008:114-121.

³⁰⁶ Franzmann, 2013: 83-92.

³⁰⁷ Saeki, 1951:434-436, Fig.19.

³⁰⁸ Rouleau, 1954 (17):346-365.

³⁰⁹ For more information, see Niu, 2008:29-31.

3.7 Quanzhou

3.7.1 The Port City of Quanzhou

The port city of Quanzhou (Ch'üan-chou in the older Wade-Giles system of transliteration) is one of the principal cities of the province of Fujian on the South China coast, known formerly as Zaitun (Zayton, Zaiton or Zaytun). Citong is another ancient name because it is famous for the scarlet Citong flowers.³¹⁰

Quanzhou evolved into a city in the 8th century during the Tang Dynasty and rose to be a prosperous seaport along the Maritime Silk Route from the Song Dynasty (960–1279) to the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). Since Shibosi³¹¹ was established in 1087, the port of Quanzhou officially opened to the outside. Under Mongol rule, it gradually became a thriving multicultural center. An increasing number of foreign merchants with various culture (such as Arabs, Uighurs and Armenians) and religions thus came to Quanzhou.



Figure 14 The Location of Quanzhou³¹²

³¹⁰ Citong in Chinese refers to “coral trees” and pronounced as Zaiton in Minnan Dialect. The words Zeyton, Zaitun, Zaytun, Zayton and Zaiton are from Latin spelling and are the phonetic transcription of Arabic زيتون, which means olive, employed by Arab merchants to name the city Quanzhou. However, the Arab traveller Ibn Battuta (1304–1377) who visited Zaiton in the middle of the 14th century confirmed that although Zaitong signifies olives in Arabic, there are no olives here anymore than elsewhere in India and China; only that is the name of the place. See Niu, 2008:233; Tang, 2011:109.

³¹¹ Shibosi is the official government of China that manages maritime foreign trade established in various ports in Song, Yuan and early Ming Dynasty, which is equivalent to the current customs. It is the organ that manages foreign trade in ancient China.

³¹² <https://www.worldatlas.com/as/cn/35/where-is-quanzhou.html>

3.7.2 The Discovery and Protection of Nestorian Relics

Evidence of a Nestorian presence in Quanzhou first came to light in the 17th century when a Jesuit missionary noticed some gravestones decorated with the typically Nestorian “Cross-on-the-Lotus” symbol embedded either in its medieval walls or used as rockery in gardens.³¹³ These copies of Nestorian woodcuts were inserted in *A Commentary on the Nestorian Monument at Hsian-fu* by Emmanuel Diaz (1574–1659), which was published in 1644 for the first time.³¹⁴

According to *Quanzhou Fuzhi* 泉州府志 [The record of Quanzhou], the last major repair of Quanzhou’s city walls was during the Hongwu (1368–1398) period of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). This project would mean that the tombs of Christians were destroyed at least in the early years of the Ming Dynasty because the tombstones were removed to build the wall.³¹⁵

The 19th century saw the city of Quanzhou going through a series of reconstruction. As the old city walls were demolished, numerous tombstones which formed part of the wall became well known.³¹⁶

The building of a railway in the 20th century and the decision to demolish the walls to prevent it from being used by the Imperial Japanese Army in 1938 led to further discoveries, including mainly inscribed or decorated headstones which once formed parts of Christian sarcophagi.³¹⁷ Wu Wenliang (1903–1969) recorded: “From 1920–1948, the city walls were torn down, and the city foundation was excavated. There were no fewer than thousands of cross inscriptions and tombstones that I have personally seen.”³¹⁸ In September 2018, when I went to Quanzhou for a field investigation, I saw hundreds of Islamic tombstones in the backyard of the Quanzhou Maritime Museum. According to the staff, these tombstones were newly excavated during urban construction in the 21st century. It would not be surprising if more such tombstones will be discovered in the future, as the city is in the process of developing and rebuilding.

³¹³ Sam Lieu FRHistS, FSA, FAHA and Dr Ken Parry, ARC DP0557098-Macquarie University; Tang, 2011:58.

³¹⁴ Saeki, 1951:436-438, pl. 21-23; Wu,1957:36, pl. 97-99.

³¹⁵ Yang&He, 1983.

³¹⁶ Tang, 2011:58.

³¹⁷ Sam Lieu FRHistS, FSA, FAHA and Dr Ken Parry, ARC DP0557098-Macquarie University.

³¹⁸ Wu,1957:42.



Figure 15 Islamic tombstones in the backyard of Quanzhou Maritime Museum³¹⁹

Wu Wenliang firstly began systematically to catalogue the discoveries from the 1950s. He published in a seminal work titled *Quanzhou Zongjiao Shike* 泉州宗教石刻 [Religious Stone Inscriptions at Quanzhou] in 1957. The collection includes 70 pictures of Islamic tombstones, 30 pictures of Christian tombstones, 6 pictures of Manichean carving stones, 36 pictures of ancient Indian Brahmin carving stones and the other monuments.³²⁰ His energy and enthusiasm eventually led to the formation of the now famous Quanzhou Maritime Museum. In 2005, Wu Youxiong, the son of Wu Wenliang, produced a new edition of his father's *Quanzhou Zongjiao Shike* and added some photos of the discoveries and gave more new information about them.

Since 2000, a research team of Australia-based scholars has systematically collected and analyzed the discoveries relating to the diffusion and cultural adaptation of two religions (Manichaeism and Christianity) of Near Eastern origin, which had ever reached China via the Silk Road in the Middle Ages.³²¹ The project focused particularly on Manichaean and Nestorian remains found in the port city of Quanzhou.

³¹⁹ Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2008

³²⁰ Wu, 1957.

³²¹ The team is led by Professor Sam Lieu FSA, FAHA (Macquarie) and consisting of Dr Ken Parry (Macquarie), Professor Majella Franzmann FAHA (UNE), Associate Professor Iain Gardner FAHA (Sydney) and Dr Lance Eccles (Macquarie) with Ms Michelle Wilson (Macquarie) as project photographer in 2004.

The project is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC DP0210152 2003-04 and DP0557098 2005-09) and the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation of International Scholarly Exchange (2001-08) and operates under the aegis of the UNESCO-sponsored Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum Project. The second stage of the project (2005-2009) is entitled "Mission and Inculturation: the Manichaean and Nestorian experience in China—a textual, iconographical and epigraphical investigation", see Sam Lieu FRHistS, FSA, FAHA and Dr Ken Parry, *Manichaean and (Nestorian) Christian Remains in Zayton* (Quanzhou, South China) ARC DP0557098-Macquarie University, see Sam Lieu FRHistS, FSA, FAHA and Dr Ken Parry, *Manichaean and (Nestorian) Christian Remains in Zayton* (Quanzhou,

As a result, the team published an interim report on the project titled *From Palmyra to Zayton: Epigraphy and Iconography*. A further volume is currently in final preparation for CFM Series Archaeological II and entitled as *Medieval and Christian Remains from Zayton*.³²²

According to the report of Wu Wenliang³²³ and these discoveries in the past 20 years, Nestorian tombstones were always found in Jintoubu District, Dongmen (East Gate) District, Secuowei District, Dongyueshan District and Houmao District of Quanzhou. The graves of the foreigners who believed in other religions (such as Jews, Jacobean, Armenian, Georgian, and Greek Orthodox Christians, Zhou) in ancient Quanzhou also distributed in the areas.³²⁴

The grave monuments are clear evidence of the religious diversity which existed during the Mongol era in Quanzhou. Alongside Confucianism and Taoism, and the by then well-established Chinese variant of Buddhism, adherents of many other doctrines and denominations there enjoyed the freedom to practice their respective faiths with less interference from the authorities.



Figure 16 The distribution of Nestorian tombstones in Quanzhou³²⁵

3.7.3 The shape and structure of Nestorian tombs

Generally speaking, there are two main styles of the tombs in Quanzhou: altar-style and grave-style, both of them are built with the base of Sumeru Throne 须弥座. The two

South China) ARC DP0557098 - Macquarie University.

³²² Franzmann, 2013:83-92.

³²³ Wu, 1957.

³²⁴ Wu, 1957:39-42; Niu, 2008:35-38.

³²⁵ Niu, 2008:32.

styles are popular among Islam and Christianity and their shapes are generally similar. The difference is that Islamic tombstones are characterized by clouds, moons and Arabic scripts, while Christian tombstones are distinguished by crosses, lotuses and Syriac alphabet.³²⁶

Today only survive parts of the tombstones. Most of them are headstones and normally inscribed with multilingual inscriptions or carved with a cross on the top set off by a lotus flower or surrounded by propitious clouds and sometimes escorted by flying “angels”. The contents of these inscriptions were written in Chinese, Phagspa, Syriac, Turkic and Uighur, except for Phagspa and Chinese, all the other languages are spelt with the Syriac alphabet.

According to the results of my field investigation, about 36 pieces of Nestorian relics (including replicas) are kept in the Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian, six pieces are in the Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University (three of them are the same as the relics of Quanzhou Maritime Museum, while they are originals) and one is kept in the Quanzhou Museum of Fujian Province. Among them, 15 pieces are inscribed with the inscription, the others are only left with patterns. The English translation of these inscriptions on the Nestorian tombstones are given in the appendixes.

According to Yang Qinzhang, most of Nestorians in Central Asia are ordinary people, those in Inner Mongolia are nobles and the tombstones in Quanzhou belong to businessman or monks.³²⁷ An interesting phenomenon mentioned by Niu Ruji is that the owners of the Syrian tombstones discovered in China are mostly women.³²⁸



Figure 17 The cover of the Nestorian tomb in Quanzhou Maritime Museum³²⁹

³²⁶ Wu, 1957:39-40; Niu, 2008:32-35.

³²⁷ Yang, 1984 (4). This view is controversial, see Tian, 2011 (6): 31-34.

³²⁸ Niu, 2003 (2).

³²⁹ Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2008

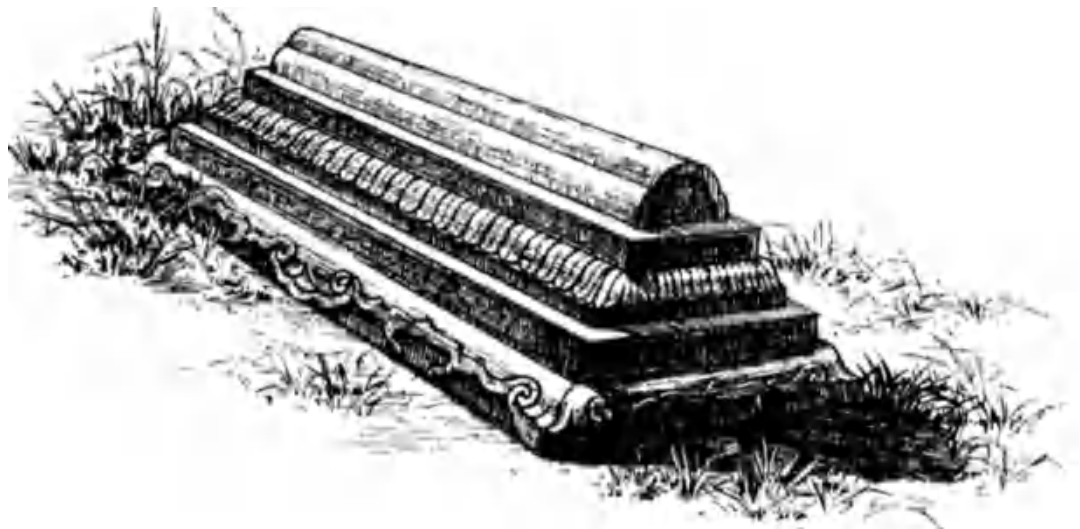


Figure 18 Nestorian tombstone of grave-style³³⁰



Figure 19 Nestorian tombstone of grave-style³³¹

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. 104.

³³¹ Wu, 2005, B63.

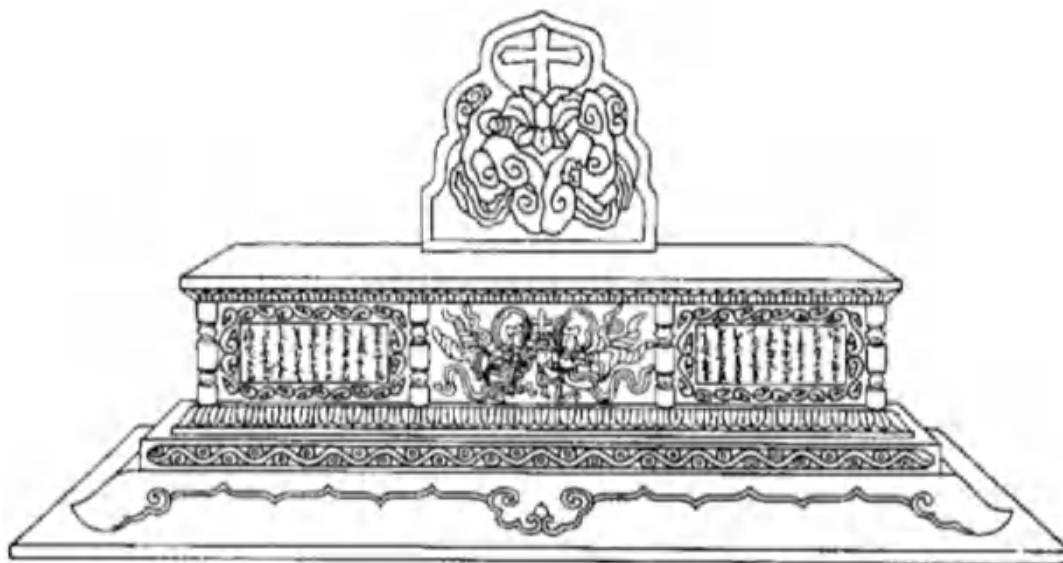


Figure 20 Nestorian tombstone of altar-style³³²

³³² *Ibid.*, pl. 101.

4. Research on the Motifs of Nestorian Images

4.1 The Motif of Cross

Before becoming a spiritual symbol of Christianity, the cross shape has been absorbed and given a variety of meanings by many cultures far from the place where Christianity has not arrived. Cross symbol was used by humans even from the Neolithic period.

The cross was first an instrument of punishment used by Romans and Greeks. The punishment on the cross remained in force throughout the Roman Empire until the first half of the fourth century.³³³ Examples of cross depicted Jesus nailed to it appear until the 6th century.³³⁴ As time goes on, cross and the crucifixion of Jesus gradually become the central images of Christianity.

Nestorian Christians in the Far East, however, seem to have followed the preference of the Church for the “empty” cross without exception. Malek points out the important consideration that these plain crosses “are the only ‘images’ of Jesus in China of the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty”.³³⁵

This is indeed a question worthy of special attention. I will discuss the “empty cross” later. In this section, I only do a brief analysis of the styles of the Nestorian crosses.

4.1.1 The Different Types of Nestorian Crosses in Central Asia and China

Dauvillier distinguishes two main types of these crosses used by the Church of the East. One kind is Maltese cross, which has four arms of equal length and end in “flares”; the other type features arms that are split at the end into three branches and is frequently found in India.³³⁶ [maybe Cross of St. Thomas, Zhou].

Dauvillier made his categorization in 1956, sometime before the discovery of many of the cross depictions from Inner Mongolia which would add a third type to his categorization. This third type from Inner Mongolia concerns the so-called “Greek cross” which features straight arms.

Halbertsma adds a fourth stylistic category of cross depictions based on the above. He argues that the fourth categorization can be defined as crosses positioned within a circle, based on “Circular frames are common on horizontal gravestones, but the category defined here concerns depictions whereby the cross touches or connects to the inner rim of the circle. In Inner Mongolia such depictions are exclusively found at the

³³³ Parsons, 1896.

³³⁴ Jensen, 2017:74.

³³⁵ Malek, 2002: 36-37.

³³⁶ Dauvillier, 1956: 297-304.

gravesite of Shizizhuliang”, and “similar representations have, however, also been found in Quanzhou.”³³⁷

The striking likeness of such cross depictions from Quanzhou with certain Caucasian crosses was for the first time pointed out by Michel van Esbroeck.³³⁸ However, in my opinion, “crosses positioned within a circle” is only a kind of decoration.

Also, Van Esbroeck based his comparison in part on the winged figures to each side of the cross depiction. This style is occasionally found in Almaliq but widely appeared in Quanzhou. However, such creatures are absent from any cross depiction in Inner Mongolia.

Li Jingrong classified Nestorian crosses in Quanzhou as Greek cross with Persian style and Maltese style.³³⁹ However, this classification seems to be slightly rough. Besides, she conflated the Maltese cross with the Cross pattée.³⁴⁰

From my point of view, the classifications of Nestorian crosses could be more detailed. I try to classify all the about 137 Nestorian crosses into six types: Cross Pattée, Greek Cross, Occitan Cross, Malte Cross, Formée Branchée and Cross Potent. However, those crosses are always variants rather than the very standard styles. The table below shows the number of different types of crosses in different sites.

It should be noted that many cross depictions are not very clear. It is very difficult to identify exactly the style of each cross. The classification made in this study is only for the convenience of research, and any other possible classification criteria is acceptable.

4.1.1.1 Nestorian Cross pattée and Maltese cross

Cross pattée has arms narrowing at the center, often flaring in a curve or straight-line shape. Nestorian cross pattée has some subtle changes based on the variants. One variant has a sharp point added to the lower limb, as if it was staking into the ground. This style is usually found in the Seven Rivers region and Almaliq. The other variant has ends bending slightly inward, but it does not have a large curved angle as the Maltese cross.³⁴¹

³³⁷ Halbertsma, 2008:161.

³³⁸ Esbroeck (1934-2003) is a priest, Jesuit, Bollandist and Belgian orientalist.

³³⁹ Li, 2013.

³⁴⁰ Li, 2013:56.

³⁴¹ http://www.mystica.gr/knights_9.htm

However, cross pattée and Maltese cross are often confused. The true Maltese cross has a very strict definition: “A cross made from four straight lined pointed arrowheads, meeting at their points, with the ends of the arms consisting of indented ‘V’s.”³⁴² Keister explains: “The Maltese cross looks like a + sign with flared ends that are usually indented to form eight points. These eight points represent the Beatitudes. It is often associated with such fraternal orders as the Knights Templar.”³⁴³

Several Nestorian crosses may have the characteristics of Cross pattée and Maltese cross at the same time or be considered as “Cross–Not–Pattée–Not–Maltese”. For the convenience of explanation, when this happens, those patterns are temporarily classified to be cross pattée unless it appears to be a very standard Maltese cross pattern.

The crosses on a Nestorian Sogdian relief (7th–8th centuries) and Sogdian coin (6th–8th centuries) collected in Hermitage Museum in Russia are interesting examples of typical Nestorian cross pattée along the silk road earlier than Mongolia era.

Also, this kind of cross are present on the Nestorian Stele in Xi’an and Stone Pillar in Luoyang of the Tang Dynasty. Ge Chengyong argues that those Jingjiao crosses are typical Maltese crosses.³⁴⁴ I do not very agree with him. The ends of the arms of the Maltese cross are indented, while that of the cross pattée are slightly flat, although sometimes they sag inward. The ends of crosses in Xi’an and Luoyang are smooth and closer to the variant of the cross pattée like the Sogdian coin.

In terms of the current archaeological findings, the number of Nestorian cross pattée is the largest, remaining the most in Inner Mongolia. Some of them are decorated with gems at the ends of the arms, at the center or within the four quadrants of the cross. Besides, this kind of cross is always surrounded by a circle of pearls, indicating the influence from the Sassanid Dynasty.

Li Jingrong argues that the Maltese cross in Quanzhou first appeared in *Tang Jingjiao Beisong Zhengquan* 唐景教碑颂正诠 [Interpretation of the Nestorian Monument in the Tang Dynasty]. I think this is debatable. The cross she mentioned is typical Cross pattée because there is no “V” at the ends of the arms.³⁴⁵

³⁴² http://www.lishfd.org/History/history_of_the_maltese_cross.htm

³⁴³ Keister, 2004.

³⁴⁴ Ge (a), 2009 (2): 61 - 65.

³⁴⁵ Li, 2013:56



Figure 21 Sogdian relief³⁴⁶



Figure 22 Sogdian coin³⁴⁷

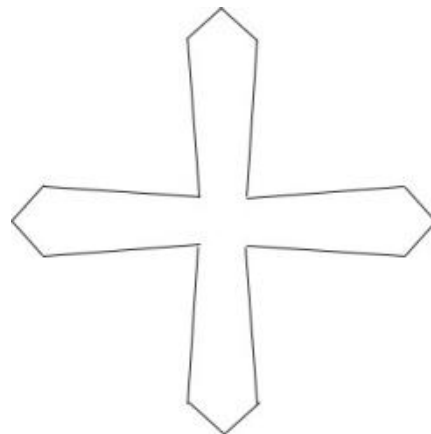


Figure 23 Nestorian Greek cross

4.1.1.2 Nestorian Greek Cross

The Greek Cross is formed by four arms of equal lengths, barely longer than the width. Nestorian Greek cross could be regarded as a variant of the Greek cross. It has sword-like tips at the end of the four arms. Moreover, the four arms are not standard rectangles and contract inward near the center. It seems to be a combination of the standard form of the Greek cross and Passion cross.³⁴⁸ The Passion cross has sharpened points at the ends which represent the nails that Christ suffered.

However, according to the *English Oxford Living Dictionary*, “Passion cross, the cross on which Jesus was crucified; (concerning shape) = ‘Latin cross’; (Heraldry) =

³⁴⁶ Klimkeit, 1993: 477-488.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ <https://www.seiyaku.com/customs/crosses/passion.html>

‘Calvary Cross’³⁴⁹, originated from late 18th century; earliest use found in Joseph Edmondson, herald and coach-painter.”³⁵⁰ And another definition of Passion cross from *Dictionary.com*: “Passion cross, noun Heraldry: Latin cross. First recorded in 1770–1780”.³⁵¹ The two records prove that Passion cross is present three or four hundred years later than Nestorian Greek cross. Thus, it cannot be the source of the Nestorian Greek cross, even though they have so many similarities. This kind of cross appeared mostly in Quanzhou.

³⁴⁹ A Latin cross with a representation of three steps beneath it.

³⁵⁰ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/passion_cross

³⁵¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/passion-cross>

The table below shows the number of different types of crosses in different sites.

Table 1

	Cross Pattée (64)		Greek Cross (32)		Occitan Cross (16)		Malte Cross (9)		Formée Branchée (5)		Cross Potent (2)	
Semirechye	5 ³⁵²	S-1 ³⁵³ , S-2, S-8, S-14, S-16	2	S-13, S-19	7	S-5, S-6, S-7, S-8, S-10, S-11, S-21	5	S-3, S-9, S-12, S-17, S-18	×		2	S-4, S-20
Almaliq	5	A-4, A-7, A-8, A-9, A-10	3	A-1, A-2, A-6	1	A-5	×		×		×	
Inner Mongolia	45	I-O-3, I-O-6, I-O-5, I-O-16, I-O-11, I-O-14, I-O-7, I-O-9, I-O-2, I-O-10	4	I-O-12, I-O-4	4	I-O-1, I-O-13	4	I-O-15, I-O-18	5	I-M-7	×	
		I-M-6		I-M-4		I-Other-11, I-Other-18		I-M-1, I-M-2		I-D-13, I-D-14, I-D-21		
		I-B-6, I-B-2		I-Other-23								
		I-D-1, I-D-3, I-D-4, I-D-5, I-D-6, I-D-7, I-D-8, I-D-12, I-								I-C-1		

³⁵² The quantity of cross.

³⁵³ S-1 means Semirechye-Number 1, see appendices.

		D-15, I-D-18, I-D-20, I-D-19, I-D-11										
		I-Other-1, I-Other-2, I-Other-3, I-Other-4, I-Other-5, I-Other-7, I-Other-9, I-Other-10, I-Other-12, I-Other-13, I-Other-14, I-Other-15, I-Other-16, I-Other-25, I-Other-26, I-Other-27, I-Other-28, I-Other-29, I-Other-30										
Shizhuziliang	2	S-3, S-6 (back)	2	S-4, S-5, S-6 (front)								
Beijing	2	B-1, B-2	×		2	B-3, B-4	×		×		×	
Yangzhou	2	Y-1, Y-2	×		×		×		×		×	
Quanzhou	5	Q-7, Q-10, Q-34, Q-35, Q-39	2 4	Q-3, Q-8, Q-12, Q-13, Q-16, Q-19, Q-21, Q-22, Q-23, Q-24, Q-	4	Q-2, Q-20, Q-14, Q-4	×		×		×	

			25, Q-26, Q- 27, Q-28, Q- 29, Q-30, Q- 31, Q-32, Q- 33, Q-36, Q- 37, Q-40, Q-41								
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4.1.2 Discussion on Nestorian “plain cross”

The crucifix is usually chosen by the Christian world as an important symbol, especially by the Roman Catholic Church. However, the depiction of Christ seems to have been unpopular among Nestorian Christians in the Far East (both in the Tang Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty). Nestorianism favor the “plain cross” which is decorated without an image of the crucified Christ. Also, the St. Thomas crosses with Syrian tradition in India share this character.

4.1.2.1 The reasons for choosing “plain cross”

4.1.2.1.1 The doctrine of Christ suffering

Some scholars state that the preaching of Christ suffering is inadequate in China. Halbertsma proposes: “As illustrated by the Nestorian preference for the triumphant cross of the glorified Christ, the Roman Catholic notion of Christ suffering on the cross for humanity is not prominent in Nestorian Christianity.”³⁵⁴

Nestorianism has been labelled as Buddhism and Taoism since its introduction into China and given the face of Eastern Culture. “Since Alopen entered Chang’an, Nestorianism began to be Sinocisation. At that time, the powerful religions were Buddhism and Taoism. Therefore, the Nestorian Jesus was dressed as the face of Laozi and Sakyamuni (already with Chinese Characteristics); at the same time, it also absorbed Confucian thought. Only with such changes can it survive in China. Moreover, the tolerance of the Chinese nation to various religions was also one of the conditions for the existence of Nestorianism. In other words, China’s Nestorianism has become a part of Chinese culture after its transformation.”³⁵⁵ This can easily lead to an assumption: the absence of the image of the crucified Christ is due to the insufficient spread of the Nestorian doctrine.

Michele Bacci records: “He (William of Rubruck, Zhou) was in the first place struck by the fact that the precious golden crosses owned by those Christian communities lacked the image of the crucified Christ and had no other ornament than gems arranged along the arms and at their intersection, in a manner he interpreted as a reflection of their heretical doctrine; he thought that the Nestorians did not represent the Passion because they rejected it from a dogmatic point of view, to the point of

³⁵⁴ Halbertsma, 2008:159.

³⁵⁵ Zheng, 1971:17-27.

feeling ashamed of it and blushing every time the subject was raised.”³⁵⁶ This piece of historical source points again to the problem of doctrine.

However, the concept of crucifixion has been mentioned many times in Nestorian literature.³⁵⁷ The fragments from Gaochang, Bulayïq, Khara-Khoto and Beijing could prove strong evidence.

1. The Syriac fragments from Gaochang

These fragments are generally dated between the 9th–10th century, which is earlier than the Yuan Dynasty, however, they can still be used as references to some extent as the Nestorian Christians here were important origins of Nestorians in the Yuan Dynasty. The following extracts clearly mention the fact that Jesus is crucified.

“Behold, forgive our sins, the Holy Body and Holy Blood of the Saviour are being placed on the altar of life.” (1–Front–2)

“Today, the Saviour is born for us. The Saviour was born by Maria, who has the same nature as us.” (1–Front–11)

“Take a night at Adam’s house. The Saviour uses his blood to cleanse the sins of mankind.” (2–Back–14)

“Redeem the sin of the people. God the Father is laudable for sending his dear one-child to the Human world.” (2–Back–15)

“We pray that you will pray for us to benefit us on the day of the resurrection of Jesus.” (3–Front–15)

“Pray to those who leave the world. The Saviour, because you are crucified, the descendants of Adam have eternal life.” (3–Front–27)³⁵⁸

2. The fragment mixing Syriac and Uyghur script from Bulayïq

Most of the fragments from Bulayïq are dated between the 9th and the 13th century, the duration of the Uyghur Kingdom Qocho. However, there are few exceptions concern texts that can be dated to the Mongol era due to the occurrence certain words not found before that time (such as the words for Christian (s), Zhou).³⁵⁹ The fragment U 338 (T II B 41, No. 1) is an excellent example. It is a small booklet consisting of ten folios, described in depth by Peter Zieme.

The passage describes something about the Saviour and the Holy Spirit:

³⁵⁶ Bacci, 2005 (36): 337-372.

³⁵⁷ Weng, 1996: 10.

³⁵⁸ 1-Surface-2, 1-Surface-11, 2-Back-14, 2-Back-15 and 3-Surface-27 are selected from Moule, Hao Trans. 1984:332-341.

³⁵⁹ Dickens, 2009 (9): 22-42.

[lord?] God, community of your sole holy church, passion of Lord Messiah ... (for the) sheep of your flock, from the goodness of the Holy Spirit who is son of the nature of your Godliness, your Praised...grade of treasure of the true priesthood, in your mercy.

Lord...to his humbleness, we are of noble members in...

Lord of your ..., we serve with (our) spiritual benefit the souls of the believers...

Lord...hearing..., goodness...in your hand, love and mercy to you...we...to your Godliness.....goodness...”³⁶⁰

The translation of the Turkic passages goes like this:

“(prayer)

By the heart of love and gratification of God, our Lord Messiah who keeps our bodies healthy and alive, who rescues our souls, who has mercy with all creatures of Adam’s lineage {who has mercy with the fiery and flaming people} (blessings may come) upon the holy ärkiküt who are praised through the word “people blessed, men praised!”

(colophon)

the Cow year, the first month, on the 23rd, I Bäküz (=Bacchus) have written (it). Its merit may be transferred to my father Yonan! Amen, amen.

Five times thus writing and letting recite, boy and girl in the house, it may be heard! Amen!”³⁶¹

3. Syriac script fragments from Khara-Khoto

One of the three fragments found by P.K. Kozlov in 1909 was a piece of hymn dedicated to the Lord for his crucifixion, reflecting Nestorian Christians’ worship to Jesus Christ during the prayer ceremony.³⁶²

The Turkic fragment written by Syriac script revealed the story of Jonah in the belly of the whale. According to the book Jonah 1 and Jonah 2, God called Jonah to preach to Nineveh. However, Jonah refused to accept his divine mission and tried to run away from God in the opposite direction of Nineveh. God then raised a great storm as a sign of his anger with Jonah. The sailors thought Jonah should be blamed so they threw him overboard. God sent a whale to swallow Jonah in attempt to save him from drowning. Jonah remained within the belly of the whale three days and three nights, during which, he repented to God what he has did and praised God.

³⁶⁰ Zieme, 2009:167-180;

³⁶¹ Zieme, 2009:167-180; Dickens, 2009 (9): 22-42.

³⁶² Chen, 2011:64-69.

In Matthew 12:40, we read: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” This story about Jonah thus typifies the crucifixion of Christ and the miracle of Christ’s resurrection.

Besides, similar contents about Jonah are present in the Nestorian hymns in Beijing.

“When Jonah called to you from the depths of the sea, you listened to his lamentation on the throne of love. And, for those who are shouting in the blazing stove, you rescue the people who are calling for help.” (五)³⁶³

Also, the Syriac liturgical book interpreted by Shinichi Muto revealed that the great power of Jesus or the victorious cross rescued the people who lived in the middle layer of the mundane, and last, God won the victory over the demons. Those saved people would rise to the heaven. The salvation here was regarded as the exorcism.³⁶⁴

4. Nestorian hymns in Beijing

There are two pieces of documents related this concept.

“Lord, listen to the prayers of the martyrs who sacrificed for you. Because they witnessed you being hung on the cross everywhere. Lord, stop the sword of anger. Because the sword is enough to make everything in the heavens and the earth ruined.” (一)³⁶⁵

“Going out in the morning Dawn, when Daniel got up, the beast of the cave could not give any damage to his body. Lord, for those who have redeemed the wicked with your blood, and those who have been saved with your cross, and who worship you, do not let them die.” (三)

Besides, we also have evidence of the depictions related to the death and resurrection of Christ in the region of Semirechye. It is a silver paten, found in the Perm region but at the village of Grigorovskoe, dating back to the 9th–10th century. It can stylistically be related to Sogdian art and also shows a Nestorian influence. In the depictions of the circles, there is the crucifixion, the women at the empty tomb, and the ascension. In the triangular spaces there are the Roman soldiers sleeping at the sepulchre, Daniel in the lions’ den (Daniel 6: 19-28) and St. Peter disown Jesus three

³⁶³ Moule, Hao Trans. 1984:349.

³⁶⁴ Muto, 2013: 381-386; Muto, 2016:147-154.

³⁶⁵ Selected from Moule, Hao translation,1984:342-354.

times before the rooster crows (Matthew 26: 33-35, 69-75). All these scenes are clearly labelled in Syriac inscriptions.³⁶⁶

The examples above all revolve around the crucifixion, reflecting the importance of the resurrection of Jesus to Nestorian Christians. It can be said that the doctrine of the crucifixion is an important theme in Nestorian literature during the Mongol era. More contents related are present in Nestorian literature of the Tang Dynasty.³⁶⁷ We have good reason to believe that Nestorian believers are familiar with this doctrine and have an attitude of acceptance.



Figure 24 Paten Decorated with Christological Scenes³⁶⁸

However, it must be highlighted here that Nestorian Christians are more willing to emphasize the concept of resurrection than the Passion. Michele Bacci states: “The friar could verify this assumption personally when Guillaume Boucher³⁶⁹ made a cross for him in the French Gothic style: dismayed by the presence of the dead body of Christ,

³⁶⁶ Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.

³⁶⁷ For more study on Nestorian literature during the Tang Dynasty, see Lin, 2003; Nie, 2016; Sun, 2003; Weng, 1996.

³⁶⁸ Bacci, 2005 (36): 337-372, fig.1.

³⁶⁹ Guillaume Boucher was an artisan from Paris named.

realized in relief, the priests of Karakorum³⁷⁰ hastened to conceal it. But this unusual reaction was due to the fact that in the tradition of Central Asian Christianity it was not the torture instrument of the Savior that was represented, but rather the cross of the Parousia, triumphal symbol of victory and Resurrection from the dead. This is why it may be seen in one of the medallions of the paten of Semirechye (see Fig.24), inside the empty sepulcher. ”³⁷¹

Varghese Pathikulangara holds the similar opinion. He believes that the empty cross [St. Thomas Cross, Zhou] is in imitation of the empty tomb, symbolizing the resurrection of Jesus.³⁷²

Besides, the purpose of emphasizing cross in the inscriptions of Nestorian Stele is to spread Nestorian all around rather than associating the cross with the concept of atonement. The meaning of its Chinese name Jing 景 is also the emphasis on this purpose.³⁷³ From this point of view, the “empty cross” seems to be a better choice.

4.1.2.1.2 Controversies over the “plain cross” and the image of Christ crucified

The image of Christ crucified is so ubiquitous in Christian art that people always consider it has appeared from the beginning. However, the art historians have been unable to identify an unambiguously Christian crucifix before the fourth or early fifth century, though crosses and episodes from the events of Christ’s Passion began to appear on Christian artefacts by the mid-fourth century.³⁷⁴ None ever depicted Christ on the cross until the presence of a few examples before the sixth century.³⁷⁵

A seventh-century debate over whether Christ’s human and divine natures shared a common will or activity had a direct impact on Christian iconography.³⁷⁶ The long-standing question of how Christ two natures were joined in the one person of Jesus was closely related to Nestorius’s theory and resolved by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Nestorius believed that there were two distinct hypostases in the Incarnate Christ, the one was divine and the other was human. He further argued that it was the humanity of Christ who suffered rather than the divine nature of Christ.³⁷⁷ This position preserved

³⁷⁰ Karakorum (Chinese: 哈拉和林) was the capital of the Mongol Empire between 1235 and 1260 and of the Northern Yuan in the 14th –15th centuries.

³⁷¹ Bacci, 2005 (36): 337-372

³⁷² Thadikkatt, 2004.

³⁷³ Ge (a), 2009 (2), 61-65.

³⁷⁴ Jensen, 2017:74.

³⁷⁵ Ge argues that the crucifixion did not appear until the 8th –9th centuries, see Ge (a), 2009 (2):61-65.

³⁷⁶ Jensen, 2017: 92.

³⁷⁷ Cross & Livingstone, 1997: 1139.

the impassible divine nature from suffering and death. Thus, for Nestorian Christians, their enthusiasm for the cross is higher than the image of the suffering Jesus.

By the early eighth century, inhibitions about images of Christ's crucifixion restarted. Iconoclasts viewed the cross as an adequate memorial of the crucifixion. Christian icons were publicly removed during the period of Constantine V (741–775).³⁷⁸ In 743, Constantine V had rebuilt the earthquake-damaged church of Hagia Eirene and ordered that its apse could be decorated with only a simple cross. This kind of plain cross has remained such decoration to this day.³⁷⁹

In the ninth century, defenders of images argue that the crucifix was far better, as it presented both Christ's corporeal reality and human suffering. The voice against the worship of the icon slowly died down, and the worship of the icon became a major part of Eastern religious life.³⁸⁰ Nestorian painting of Jesus Christ from Dunhuang and Nestorian mural fragments from Gaochang reflect that the worship of Christ portraits were popular at the time.³⁸¹

However, the recognition of the portrait of Christ does not mean the widespread popularity of the crucifix. The transition in iconography raises again the long-debated question of whether in Christ's divine nature could suffer and die. In this context, the crucifix did not become a widely used image motif in Latin churches until the late Middle Ages.³⁸²

The spread of Nestorianism to the Far East was so long that it was difficult to connect closely with the headquarters church. When the western Christian world was debating about whether the cross or the crucifix should be the object of worship, the Nestorian sect in Central Asia and China has quietly been influenced by more local cultures—the ambiguous attitude of Western churches to the crucifixes did not make a deep impression on Nestorians in the distance.

The Catholic Franciscans William of Rubruk who visited the Mongol capital of Karakoram in 1254 mentioned the tradition of the use of the cross by the Nestorians:

“The first is the Uighurs... In the above-mentioned city of Qayaligh (Haiyali)³⁸³, they have three idol temples. I entered two of them. I saw a man with a small ink cross

³⁷⁸ Jensen, 2017: 74-96.

³⁷⁹ Jensen, 2017: 93.

³⁸⁰ Smart, 2004: 274. Gao, etc. Trans.

³⁸¹ Chen, 2008 (4): 66-72.

³⁸² Kitzinger, 1954, Vol. 8: 83-150.

³⁸³ Qayaligh is today's Taldykorgan of Kazakhstan and Ili area. During the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). It was one of the four great Khanates of the Mongol Empire and belonged to the territory of the Kaidu (1230–1301), the

on the hand, and I decided that he was a Christian. I asked him, and he replied that he was a Nestorian Christian. So, I asked him: ‘Why is there no image of Christ on the cross?’ He replied: ‘That is not our habit.’ I thus concluded that they were Christians but removed the image of Christ for the error of doctrine.”

Rubruk recorded this incident in the Mongol era, from which we infer that the crucifixion has become compulsory in Western churches around the 13th century. Nestorian Christian adopted the “empty cross” as a habit because they had not been exposed to the similar images rather than the wrong doctrines.

Furthermore, Nestorianism continues the etiquette and theology of Eastern Syrian Christianity, and therefore has the origins of the Syrian Christian tradition.³⁸⁴ The cross gained prominence and rich symbolism in the Syriac tradition earlier than it did in the other traditions.³⁸⁵ Perhaps for this reason, the “empty cross” is more emphasized by Nestorian Christians.

4.1.2.2 The Interpretation of Nestorian “plain cross”

4.1.2.2.1 The cosmic meaning

In China, the interpretation of Nestorian cross in literature is different from the “true cross” as it features more Chinese elements.

The first example is from the inscription of Nestorian Stele of the Tang Dynasty:

“其唯我三一妙身无元真主阿罗诃软。判十字以定四方。鼓元风而生二气。”

[This is our eternal true lord God, triune and mysterious in substance. He appointed the cross as the means for determining the four cardinal points, he moved the original spirit, and produced the two principles of nature.]

“印持十字，融四照以合无拘。” [As a seal, they hold the cross, whose influence is reflected in every direction, uniting all without distinction.]

The cross here is used as a tool to determine the directions and even has a cosmic meaning—the concept of the space.

During the Mongol era, the famous and the official explanation on the cross is from Liang Xiang, who served as the Director of Classical studies of the Yuan Dynasty. He commented the cross in his early 14th-century description of the religion of the Yelikewen in *Daxing Guosi Ji* of *Zhishun Zhenjiang Zhi*. Also, he attempted to explain

grandson of Mongol Khagan Ogedei Khan (1185–1241).

³⁸⁴ Klimkeit, Lin. Trans., 1995.

³⁸⁵ Nedungatt, 2008: 346.

the Nestorian faith through Chinese cosmology³⁸⁶ and regarded it as a foreign religion which traced its origins well outside China.

“...薛迷思坚，在中原西北十万余里，乃也里可温行教之地……且大明出于东，四时始于东，万物生于东，东属木，主生，故混沌既分，乾坤之所以不息，日月之所以运行，人物之所以蕃盛，一生生之道也，故谓之长生天。十字者，取象人身，揭于屋，绘于殿，冠于首，佩于胸，四方上下，以是为准。薛迷思坚，地名也；也里可温，教名也。”³⁸⁷

[Samarkand] is distant from China more than ten myriad li to the north-west. It is a land where the [Yelikewen] practices their religion... The fact is that the sun rises in the east, the four seasons begin in the east, all things are born in the east. The east comes underwood and presides over birth. Thus, chaos having been parted, that which causes heaven and earth to be without rest, that which causes sun and moon be carried on their way, that which causes the human race to increase and multiply, is the principle of continuous reproduction. Therefore, they call it the ever-creative God. The figure of ten (the Cross) is an image of the human body. They set it up in their houses, paint it on their churches, wear it on their heads, hang it on their breasts. They consider it as an indicator of the four quarters, the zenith and the nadir. [Samarkand] is the name of a place... [Yelikewen] is the name of religion.³⁸⁸

Here Liang Xiang attached a “traditional Chinese” interpretation on the meaning of the cross.³⁸⁹ In my opinion, this paragraph is very similar to the statement in Nestorian Stele. Yin Xiaoping, however, has some objections. She argues that the two are quite different just from the literal meaning. Furthermore, as a Director of Classical Studies, Liang Xiang seems known little about Nestorianism judging from the terms he used.³⁹⁰

I do not agree with this. First, Liang Xiang indicated the use of the cross tallying with this practice [“they set it up in their houses, paint it on their churches, wear it on their heads, hang it on their breasts”³⁹¹]. Such usage has been depicted in the earlier period. For example, the bishop in the Nestorian silkscreen painting in Dunhuang has three crosses on his chest, head and rod respectively.³⁹² This could be a tradition for

³⁸⁶ Moule, 1930:147, note 7.

³⁸⁷ Qiu, 2008 (1): 49-54.

³⁸⁸ Translation is from Halbertsma, 2008: 42-43; Moule. 1930: 146-147.

³⁸⁹ Moule, 1930:147.

³⁹⁰ Yin, 2006 (4):289-313.

³⁹¹ Moule (1930) 147; Luo, 1966.

³⁹² Yan, 2009:383-392

Nestorian Christians. Second, the complete document has listed also the names of the Yelikewen administrators that served in the town. Third, the document also included a commemorative inscription regarding a church founded by Mar Sargis.³⁹³ If Liang Xiang had nothing to do with Nestorianism, nor he mentioned the information. Thus, his interpretation of cross is informative.

Halbertsma even speculates that “Liang Xiang may have based his conclusion regarding the representation of the cross as an image of the human body after seeing a crucifix of the Roman Catholics in southern China.”³⁹⁴ This statement is questionable because it is not yet possible to determine whether a crucifix existed in a Catholic church in South China at the time. On the tombstone of the Catholic bishop Andrew of Perugia (died in 1332) found in Tonghuaimen, Quanzhou in 1946, we only see the cross-lotus pattern and the “angels”³⁹⁵; on the Latin tombstones of the Franciscan Caterina (died in 1342) found in Yangzhou, there are only the images of the Virgin and Child, as well as the scenes of St. Caterina martyrdom.³⁹⁶

The meaning of the Chinese character 十 (the figure of ten) could trace back to the early 2nd century, in a Chinese dictionary titled *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 [Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters]³⁹⁷ by Xu Shen³⁹⁸:

“十，数之具也。一为东西，丨为南北，则四方中央备矣。”³⁹⁹

“十，counting tools. 一 [Horizontal] represents the direction of east-west, 丨 [vertical] represents the direction of north-south, then the four directions and the centre are determined.”

And the graphical expression of “十” has already appeared on the pottery in the Neolithic. The shape of “十” is given the symbolic significance related to the sun and the sun god, and the pattern “十” depicted in the circle represents the light and direction of the sun. In China, “Sifang 四方” refers to the east, south, west and north, as well as the tracks of the sun, the direction of sunrise and sunset. Therefore, the Chinese

³⁹³ Moule, 1930: 152.

³⁹⁴ Halbertsma, 2008: 158.

³⁹⁵ Moule, Hao Trans., 1984: 218-222.

³⁹⁶ Bao, 2019 (6).

³⁹⁷ *Shuowen Jiezi* was an early-2nd-century Chinese dictionary from the Han Dynasty. It was the first to analyse the structure of the characters and to give the rationale behind them.

³⁹⁸ Xu Shen (in Chinese 许慎) was a Han Dynasty scholar of the Five Classics records.

³⁹⁹ Xu, 2007: 105.

character “十” represents the Chinese concept of space-time and universe.⁴⁰⁰ This idea is also embodied in the Nestorian crosses.

Hundreds of years later, a Chinese Christian named Pan Shen⁴⁰¹ explain the sentence “印持十字” in his *Jingjiao beiwen zhushi* 景教碑文注释 [Annotation on the Nestorian inscription]⁴⁰² as follows:

“所谓“印持十字”者，其义甚广。凡人受洗时，教士以十字圣号，画在额上为印证，一也。教会中恒喜以金银制成十字佩戴，籍以纪念吾主，救赎大恩，二也。礼拜堂中或以铜制十字，供于圣台之上，俾令众可能触于目而感于心，三也。凡持十字以为信徒之印证者，无论何地之人，不分富贵贫贱皆能和辑而无所顾忌也。”

Pan Shen listed several meanings of “印持十字”: depicting on the forehead and proving been baptized; commemorating the salvation of Jesus; enlightening human’s soul and the verification of the identification of Christian believer. As a member of Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui⁴⁰³, Pan Shen’s interpretation may be more based on his religious fervour.

Manuel Dias the Younger, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary who was active in China from 1610–1659 and included Nestorian remains discovered in Quanzhou in the Ming Dynasty in *TangJingjiao Beisong Zhengquan* 唐景教碑颂正诠 [The interpretation of the inscriptions of Tang Jing Jiao monuments], has ever said: “Those who believe in this religion should believe in the cross to emulate the Lord’s, holy love. No matter how rich or poor, they must give care to those around them and make everyone happy.”⁴⁰⁴

To conclude, the symbolism of the cross—salvation, the honour of Christ, and the victory over death were always preached in China, however, the cross was given another meaning of cosmic which approached involuntarily to Chinese culture in an attempt to gain acceptance by more believers at the time. This is different from the Christianity introduced into China after the 17th century.

4.1.2.2.2 The strong amulet and magical symbol

It appears with the proofs that Nestorian believers give the cross another interpretation—a sign of powerful charm—it may be a compromise balance.

⁴⁰⁰ He, 1992.

⁴⁰¹ In Chinese 潘绅

⁴⁰² Pan, 1917.

⁴⁰³ The Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui was established on 26 April 1912 and was the name of the Anglican Church in China from 1912 to about 1958.

⁴⁰⁴ Weng, 1996:51.

In 591, the Turkic army led by the King of Bukhara fought against the Persian dynasty and Byzantine army. A large number of Turkic soldiers were captured. The Persian king Khosrow II (570? –628) killed the captives by an elephant. Only the Turkic soldiers with a cross on their foreheads were sent to the Byzantine emperor Maurice (539-602). Emperor Maurice asked the origin of the cross and learned that there was a terrible plague in Central Asia in the past. Some Christians advised Turkic women to tattoo a cross on children's foreheads. The women accepted the advice and the children survived intact as they were blessed by God.⁴⁰⁵

Also, the fragments from Gaochang and Bulayïq give further supports. In some examples, prayer words and the cross pattern were copied and depicted on the folio and carried by the believers, which also functioned as amulets. The prayer-amulets from a small category of the Syriac material, approximately 5% of the collection. At times it is not always easy to discern how a text was used—whether as a prayer or an amulet or for another purpose.⁴⁰⁶ Generally, the prayer-amulets were dedicated to the Virgin Mary or specific saints.

1. The Syriac fragments from Gaochang

“(Pray to the Lord’s Cross) Lord, may your cross

Protect us,

May we rely on the Lord’s cross to avoid the harm of the devil.

The Lord’s cross is the source of life for Adam’s children, and it is the weapon to defeat the evil of the devil.”⁴⁰⁷

2. The fragments Bulayïq

(1) No. SyrHT 99

“... [Lord] God Almighty, grant me the request

... [diseases] or illnesses. And may it be commemorated ... of sorceries/magic this prayer

... that is recalled and by mercy/alms

... [crucifixion] suffering and holy. And bless

... to it? and your dominion. Your greatness shall be increased.

... and forever and ever. Amen.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Zhang, 2005 (6).

⁴⁰⁶ Hunter, 2012:79-93.

⁴⁰⁷ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984: 332-341.

⁴⁰⁸ The reconstructed contents of SyrHT 99, see Hunter, 2012:79-93.

What is interesting, a crude representation of the cross-lotus pattern is present on this piece, however, it is far less refined than that was carved on the Nestorian stele in Xi'an. The arising lotus is vague and difficult to identify. Hunter describes: "The larger text of which SyrHT 99 + SyrHT 330 were part, was at some stage cut down and recycled. SyrHT 99 was folded into three with the cross drawn free hand in the middle of the verso side of SyrHT 330...Crease marks indicate that the fragment was previously folded and was probably kept in a pouch and hung as a personal amulet, possibly being the possession of a pilgrim or a monk at Bulayiq."

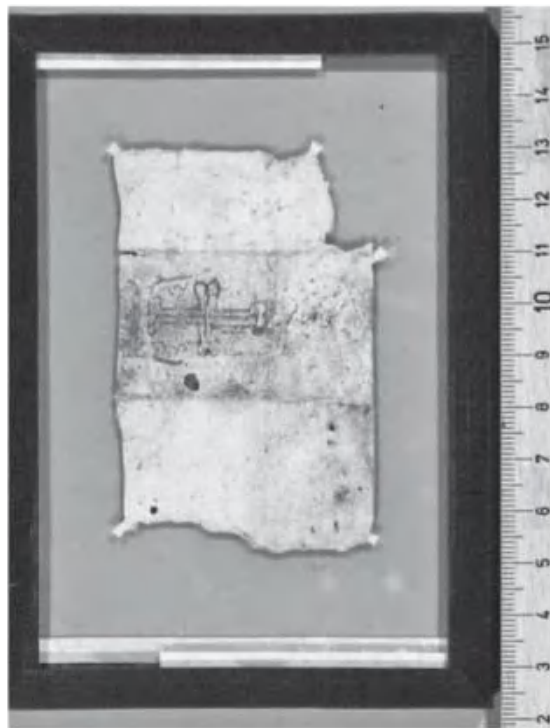


Figure 25 SyrHT 99 side (b)

(2) No. SyrHT 102 and two fragments: No.364-365

No. SyrHT 102 were two separate prayer-amulets dedicated to Mar Quprina. A Sogdian text written on the verso side was fragmentary and largely illegible but mentions "... the victorious cross ...".⁴⁰⁹ Each word of the text of n. 364-365 was separated by a red dot, possibly highlighting its function as an amulet. The translated texts go like this:

"The anathema of the holy [Quprina]

In the name ... forever. Amen.

⁴⁰⁹ Hunter, 2012:79-93.

By the prayer of the saint ... who as he was celebrated
in this world ... he requested from our Lord Jesus Christ and he gave
him his request ... Praise to you God in heaven
and on [earth] ... that hangs on him, your servant
... merciful God. Mar ...
directed his mind to God. Now... Yea, Lord”⁴¹⁰

Hunter comments: “The prayer-amulets, written in Syriac, maintained in the citation of specific saint’s vital links with the ‘mother church’ in Mesopotamia. They may also suggest that the monastery was a centre of healing, providing both spiritual as well as physical healing.”⁴¹¹

3. The fragment from Dunhaung

This piece of Syriac document was written between 1250-1368. There are some lines of hymns on the reverse side, of which the contents about the cross are mentioned:

“...My brethren, the word cross is foolish for those who are going to perdition; but for those of us who are saved, it is the power of God...”⁴¹²

In addition to the records above, Rubruk has seen a “Nestorian” priest forced the second lady of Möngke Khan (reign 1251–1259), who was nor a Christian but who felt ill, to worship the cross with bended knees and prostrations, while facing the east. The Christian women in the Mongol court would put the cross on a silk cloth and worshipped it most devoutly.⁴¹³

A number of the Nestorian horizontal gravestones from Inner Mongolia each depict more than one cross. Moule and Klimkeit state: “A large number of cross depictions in Inner Mongolia should also be best understood as a strong amulet and magical symbols.”⁴¹⁴

And if the Ordos Bronze Crosses that we are going to discuss later is indeed Nestorian relics, there is no doubt that these objects worn on body have a protective force. Just as Nestorian followers sang more than 700 years age:

“Because of the power of the eternal cross...We wish our Lord Christ to be worshipped by all nations.” (Syrian prayer instruments in Beijing, 四)

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ Hunter, 2012:79-93.

⁴¹² Niu, 2008: 42-45.

⁴¹³ Tang, 2011:140.

⁴¹⁴ Moule, 1931: 85; Klimkeit, 1979: 103-104.

We sing and praise you at dawn. The angel's leader, Gabriel, exalted the banner that Jesus won with the cross, and joined the voice of the olifant and the horn, marching forward in the face of all mankind. (Syrian prayer instruments in Beijing, 八) ⁴¹⁵

Halbertsma argues: "The practice of embedding the Nestorian cross depictions in symbols from other faiths and foreign cultures can be best understood as an attempt to increase the authority and symbolism of the cross. This development constitutes a shift from the cross as a sign of the glorified Christ towards the cross as a powerful charm or amulet."⁴¹⁶

4.1.2.3 Conclusion

Nestorianism in China reflects the compromise of Nestorianism on local culture when it is in a weak position. This happened from its first coming during the Tang Dynasty. According to Fang Hao,⁴¹⁷ many of the contents of the inscriptions on the Nestorian Stele involve ancient Chinese classics, for example, 30 places related to *Yijing* 易经 [I Ching] ⁴¹⁸, 30 places related to *Shijing* 诗经 [Classic of Poetry] ⁴¹⁹, 20 places related to *Chunqiu* 春秋 [The Spring and Autumn Annals]⁴²⁰, 150 places involved in *Jing* 经 [Confucian classics], 100 places involved in *Shi* 史 [Historical records], and 30 places involved in *Zi* 子 [Philosophical writings].⁴²¹ The excessive borrowing of Buddhist and Confucian terminology reflects the dilemma of Nestorianism at the time. And the important core "God's salvation of man" in Christian faith carried by the cross is difficult to find a correspondence in Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. In this case, the spread of Nestorian teachings is inadequate and limited.

A similar situation occurred also in the Mongolian and Yuan Dynasty, during which, Nestorian Christians were mostly members of Öngüt tribe, Kerait tribe, etc., that is, the Mongolians or Semu people. Only minority Han people who were intermarried with other ethnic groups practiced Nestorianism.

⁴¹⁵ Selected from Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:342-354.

⁴¹⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:161.

⁴¹⁷ Fang, 1987:32.

⁴¹⁸ The I Ching or Yi Jing, also known as Classic of Changes or Book of Changes, is an ancient Chinese divination text and the oldest Of the Chinese classics.

⁴¹⁹ The Classic of Poetry, is the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry, comprising 305 works dating from the 11th to 7th centuries BC. It is one of the "Five Classics" traditionally said to have been compiled by Confucius.

⁴²⁰ The Spring and Autumn Annals or Chunqiu is an ancient Chinese chronicle. The Annals is the official chronicle of the State of Lu and covers 241 years from 722 to 481 BC. It is also included as one of the Five Classics of Chinese literature.

⁴²¹ Chinese classical books are divided into four categories: Confucian classics 经, historical records 史, philosophical writings 子 and miscellaneous works 集. These four categories cover about all the books of ancient China.

The believers may comprehend Christ's suffering, but the cross is more likely to be accepted. Whether in Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism, there is no such tradition of treating the image of the Saint being punished as an object of respect.⁴²² Isn't there such a similar situation when the western church was experiencing the controversy over the cross with the image of Christ? Crucifixion was an insulting form of execution reserved for slaves and criminals. How could their messiah and saviour have been subjected to such an ignominious death? Different from Eastern culture, when they wrestled with this paradox, they reimagined the cross as a triumphant expression of Christ's sacrificial love and miraculous resurrection. Thus, the image of the Saint being punished has the meaning of immortality.

Garry Moon Yuen Pang comments: "When the Syriac Christians came to China, they introduced the Syriac theology from the soil of Persia. They were facing the question of transplanting the Syriac theology to the soil of China and making it a Chinese theology. Also, they needed to adapt to the cultural and social context of China to interpret the text of the divine revelation from the *Bible*. They adopted of Jingjiao with Chinese characteristics. Thus, the theology of Jingjiao was an intercultural product. The theology of Jingjiao was the first Chinese theology which was written in Chinese. However, the basic thinking of theology was Syriac Christian. Therefore, the theology of Jingjiao can be regarded as Syriac-Chinese theology which was either translated or composed in Chinese".⁴²³

Interestingly, in the soil of the East, the lotus, clouds, censers, and winged characters are selected to add to the Nestorian cross and form some new motifs that are different from orthodox Christianity. The innovation weakens the death of Jesus, but the meaning of eternal life carried by the cross is reserved through the lotus (as the lotus in Buddhism means the eternal-life). The so-called Syriac-Chinese theology cleverly found the soil for its survival by borrowing the local cultural and social background. And its representation on the image is just "plain cross".

The possible reasons that Nestorian Christians choose "plain cross" are:

(1) Nestorian theology easily denies the absolute value of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. Their passion for the "plain cross" is higher than the crucifix;

⁴²² Hubei Aesthetic Society, 1986: 17-19.

⁴²³ Pang, 2013: 397-416.

(2) The Christian world's controversy over crosses and crucifixes has lasted for hundreds of years and did not become widespread until the late Middle Ages, during which the Nestorian sect has been introduced into China and deeply influenced by local culture. This long argument over the "plain cross" and crucifixion led the Nestorian Christians to be unfamiliar with the crucifixion pattern for quite a long time;

(3) In the tradition of Nestorian Christianity, the cross represents more the victory and resurrection than the torture instrument of the Savior.

Several scholars propose that the presence of "plain cross" indicates the spread of Nestorianism during the Tang Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty is failed. However, in my opinion, the "empty cross" is not the manifestation of its less successful missionary activities, instead, it is more likely a popular custom or Nestorian original iconographic tradition at the time.

Indeed, we cannot deny that Nestorianism in China has experienced an ambiguous and incomplete process. The meaning of the cross in the Nestorian literature is more referred to the concept of universe and space, the function of the amulet. From the perspective of preaching, this is a regret; but from the perspective of human civilization, this is a surprising innovation.

4.1.3 Further discussion

4.1.3.1 The decoration of small spheres

4.1.3.1.1 Two decorative styles

Generally, there are two decorative styles for these small spheres. One style is pearl roundels pattern and the other style is at the ends of the four arms or four quadrants the cross.

In early times, the crosses on the Nestorian Sogdian coin, Nestorian painting of Jesus Christ and Nestorian Stone Pillar in Luoyang were adorned with pearl roundels pattern. The small dots formed a circle and placed in the center of the cross. During the Yuan period, the pearl roundels pattern was reduced to a simple circle (**B-3, B-4**). This style is more often seen in the Nestorian images of Inner Mongolia. (such as **I-O-2**).

The second style appears mostly on Nestorian Greek cross, Occitan cross and Cross pattée, distributing in the region of Semiryeche, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Beijing. In Yangzhou, there is no similar depiction. In Quanzhou, there are only two tombstones with this decoration (**Q-2, Q-4**), dating of 1289 and 1301 respectively, later than the time when the Mongolian army invaded southern China in 1234. Besides, the

decoration is present on the Ordos bronze cross. Such transformation implies the influence of Persian style gradually weakened in the Yuan Dynasty.

S-1 in Semirychye is depicted with a cross with 16 small spheres (eight at the ends of the cross and eight at the arms). Every sphere at the end also has three petals. This style is unique and very similar to Budded Cross.

4.1.3.1.2 The symbolic meaning

It is agreed that such decorative styles originated from Persian influence as Nestorianism has been flourished in Persia. According to Niu, there were 15 metropolitan parishes in Persia at the end of the 10th century.⁴²⁴ In history, Persia was rich in jewelers, and people were good at decorating with jewelers. The pearl roundels pattern became the most popular decoration image in Sassan Persian art.

Generally, the pearl roundels pattern represents the worship of the sky or the sun, while the small beads express the astrological meaning. In Zoroastrianism, the whole pearl roundels pattern means the “divine light”.⁴²⁵ Zoroastrianism has ever been the state religion of the Persian Empire. Nestorianism and Zoroastrianism have been influenced each other, then was this pattern around the cross also influenced by the “divine light”?

During the Tang Dynasty and early Yuan Dynasty, both the small spheres and flames were used by Nestorian Christians to demonstrate the “brightness” and “purity” of the religion,⁴²⁶ just like its Chinese name Jing 景 expressed.

The prayer books from the *East Syrian Daily Offices* of Eastern Church provide further support.

“Oh, the great martyr Marius! The flawless pearl! The light shone on his soul!

Seeing the flawless pearl on the top of Calvary

Under the guidance of the cross, they passed a bridge across the earthly ocean and came to the Garden of Eden, which is the high land of pearls, where they live.”⁴²⁷

The pearls here present the light, shining around. These dots resembling the pearls thus have the meaning of illuminating. This opinion has been approved by most scholars.⁴²⁸ However, there are other speculation.

⁴²⁴ Niu, 2008: 2.

⁴²⁵ Chen, 2007 (1): 78-95.

⁴²⁶ Yin & Zhang, 2016 (1):1-25.

⁴²⁷ Saeki, 1916:12-14; Gu, 2005:2.

⁴²⁸ Yang, 1986 (6):86.

Iain Gardner proposes that this cross should be *crux gemmate*⁴²⁹ and the pearls symbolize Christ and his twelve apostles.⁴³⁰ Li Jingrong put forward different opinions because she found there were more than 13 pearls on the cross of the tombstone **Q-2** in Quanzhou.⁴³¹

Other scholars insist that the spheres are the emphasis on the Trinity.⁴³² The concept of Trinity has been mentioned many times in the Nestorian literature, for example:

(Pray to the Trinity), Lord, there is no doubt that your God's character is unique. (3-Front-22)

May the glory always belong to the God of the Trinity. Then, rely on the authority of the Lord to start or end the worship. (3-back-13)

The Lord of the Trinity is precious and superior to anything in all things, so the Lord is the God who should be praised. (3-back-14)⁴³³

(Look at the character of your God from heaven. How worthy of your authority! Praise and respect your holy name of the glorious Trinity. Ah! Lord.) (texts besides the page) (五)⁴³⁴

... [the Father], the Son, and the Holy Spirit forever. In the beginning...

.....

Son, and the Holy Spirit.../He gathered into the mountain...

.....

Son! /...from struggle ...Ask the Holy Spirit to fall to us!...

/ In the name of the Father is placed...And in [the name] of (the Son) is it

Placed in Your bosom. And in the name of the Holy Spirit / is placed...

And ...to the abyss of the sea. And He tore out...a third part of the Father,

The Son, and / the (Holy) [Spirit]...⁴³⁵

It seems a bit far-fetched to associate pearl with the Trinity because the documents above do not reflect the connection between the two.

Thus, this study tends to consider these spheres as pearls and have the symbolic meaning of shining rather than the symbols of twelve apostles.

⁴²⁹ Iain Gardner, 2005:215-228.

⁴³⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:157.

⁴³¹ Li, 2013:51.

⁴³² Jia, 2010.

⁴³³ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:338-340.

⁴³⁴ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:349-350.

⁴³⁵ Muto, 2013: 381-386.

4.1.3.1.3 Two cases

I-O-1 is depicted with two circles in the upper left and upper right corners of the cross-lotus. The circle may have evolved from the pearl roundels pattern of the early Sassan style. The peak period of this pattern in China was in the middle and late 7th century. Inside the circle on the left is the rooster while the right is jade rabbit. In Chinese folklore, the rooster represents the reincarnation of the soul and is used to call back the soul of the dead.⁴³⁶ The rabbit is often portrayed as a companion of the Moon goddess Chang'e, and constantly pounds the elixir of life for the goddess.

In the art of the Sassanid dynasty, animal figures are usually depicted in the pearl roundels circle. These animals are given religious or mythological meanings. The rooster is considered as the holy fowl of Sraosha, the messenger of Ahura Mazda. In Zoroastrian tradition, Sraosha is considered as one of the three guardians of the Chinvat bridge. Within three days after the soul of the deceased returned, he was responsible for protecting the soul from the demon. He, together with the great gods Rashnu and Mithra, use the scale to judge the good and evil of the soul in the underworld, and then decide the whereabouts of the soul.

A bronze statue from the Begram site during the Kushan Empire (30–375) is depicted with the amalgamation of Mercury and rooster. In Greek and Roman culture, the rooster is always with Mercury (in Greek religion and mythology he is named Hermes, who is considered as the protector of human heralds, travelers, etc). One of Mercury's deities is to guide the soul to rise to heaven. The rooster is the messenger of the sun and the auspicious symbol of resurrection. Judith comments that this image absorbs the elements of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the elements of ancient Indian myth.⁴³⁷

To conclude, either in Chinese culture, Sassan art, or Greek and Roman culture, the rooster is closely connected with the function of guiding the soul of the dead. Nestorianism was once the most important religion of the Sasanian dynasty,⁴³⁸ it thus comes to no great surprise that the circle and the rooster may be influenced by Sassan Persia. The rooster on the left represents that the soul of the dead can be guided and protected, and the rabbit on the right might suggest the good wish that the soul can rest

⁴³⁶ Tang, 2006. Vol.6 (3):70-73.

⁴³⁷ Judith, 1975. XIII. 166-171.

⁴³⁸ Lin, 2017 (5):58-61; Huang, 2013:15.

in peace and get eternal life in another world. The two patterns are the result of the simultaneous influence of multiple cultures.

On the bronze mirror **I-Other-1**, there is a ring in the center of the cross. The mirror was firstly studied by Niu Ruji in 2017.⁴³⁹ Niu recorded it as a Greek cross, however, in my opinion, the arms of the cross narrow at the center and flare in a curve line shape, thus, it is closer to cross pattée.

The style of the cross with gems at the end, the ring in the center and the Syriac script resemble the Nestorian carving stone in Beijing (**B-1**). The similar styles indicate that their dates may be closer. The ring is also present in **I-C-1**. Interestingly, all three carved stones are depicted with the same Syriac script: “Look at it. Hope in it.” Besides this common sentence, there are some Uighur scripts on **I-C-1**, which read as: “...When he was seventy-one years old, he completed the mission of God. May the soul of this adult be permanently...Rest in heaven.”

One possibility is that such a ring is a simplification of the pearl roundels pattern originated in Sassan Persian art. A different view comes from Niu: “In Christian culture, the combination of circles and crosses represents the universe—the sky and the earth, and the ring is the symbol of eternal life in early Christianity.”⁴⁴⁰ However, this argument has no very precise basis.

Similar words like Eternal Heaven were continuously used by many inscriptions on Nestorian gravestones in Quanzhou. Halbertsma proposes that this may be related to the traditional faith of Tengri or the Eternal Heaven among the Central Asian steppe peoples.⁴⁴¹ Tengri is considered to be the chief god who created all things and play an all-powerful and all-encompassing role. Genghis Khan and his successors generally accepted them as the sons of Tengri and represented him on Earth.⁴⁴²

Halbertsma argues: “It is important to note here that the adoption of Nestorian Christianity by members of these tribes probably did not constitute a full or exclusive conversion to Christianity.”⁴⁴³ That is, even if they have converted to Christianity, it is possible to add a symbol of the Tengri faith to the Christian image. As De Rachewiltz remarked: “Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they borrowed from other cultures only those elements that had a practical or prestige value. The adoption of

⁴³⁹ Niu, 2017:57-63.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ Gardner, Lieu and Parry, 2005:202.

⁴⁴² Zhao, 2002, Vol.13 (3):74-77.

⁴⁴³ Halbertsma, 2008:28.

Christianity was seemingly conceived by their leaders as a means of obtaining the assistance of yet another superhuman power, and this was in no way incompatible with their traditional beliefs.”⁴⁴⁴ The Christian “converts” probably did not fully give up their traditional beliefs and religious customs, but rather extended their beliefs with another belief system.⁴⁴⁵

In conclusion, if the circle represents the Eternal life, it may be a combination of Christianity and Tengri faith.

4.1.3.2 The steps (or triangle) where the cross stands

Besides the base of lotus and clouds, Nestorian cross sometimes stands on the one-step (**A-7**, **I-B-2**), five steps (**S-1**) and the six steps (**A-1**). **A-8** is depicted with a cross standing on a triangle. **S-1** is depicted with a cross standing on a shape connected by a triangle and a rectangle. The base of the cross **I-O-11** is difficult to identify because this is a very vague rubbing. If it must be identified, it looks like a Chinese character Gong 工. In Shizhuziliang, the image **S-3** seems to be depicted on top of a mountain of stones. The stones, or pebbles, are stacked on top of each other, suggesting the image of a mountain or a Mongol ovoo⁴⁴⁶, which is much revered by Mongolians.⁴⁴⁷ And the **S-4** documented by Pieters depicts a cross above a potted flower standing on an altar table. The altar table stands on a chest with doors. Both the altar table and the chest are distinctly Chinese in style, suggesting their sinicization.⁴⁴⁸

For the **S-1**, some might conjecture if it was the chalice. The chalice is often described as a cup or dish with miraculous powers that could provide happiness in infinite abundance. On the sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore of Ravenna in Italy, there is a cross depiction standing on a vase or chalice.

⁴⁴⁴ Rachewiltz, 1971: 46.

⁴⁴⁵ Halbertsma, 2008:29.

⁴⁴⁶ Ovoo (in Chinese 敖包) are sacred stone heaps used as altars or shrines in Mongolian folk religious practice and in the religion of other Mongolic peoples. They are usually made from rocks with wood.

⁴⁴⁷ Halbertsma, 2008:133.

⁴⁴⁸ Halbertsma, 2008:133-134.



Figure 26 The sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore of Ravenna, Italy Seventh century⁴⁴⁹

As to the steps, a bold assumption comes from Klimkeit: “The base of the flower is reminiscent of the fire altar of Zoroastrianism from Sogdian community.”⁴⁵⁰ However, in Zoroastrianism, there will be flames above the altar and the altar are usually flanked by priests, embodying the worship of fire.⁴⁵¹ By thinking this, the steps may not be related to Zoroastrianism.

According to the *Gospels of the Bible*, Jesus Christ was crucified on the hills of Golgotha (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17). Similar description could also be found in Nestorian literature:

“Between the mountains Between the mountains and the mountains, between the mountains and the hills, our king, our Savior ordered: “Separate the limbs of the blessed martyrs...” (一) (Syriac hymns in Wumen, Beijing)⁴⁵²

Are the bases likely to be a symbol of the Golgotha? We can only make simple hypothesis here because there is not sufficient evidence. However, some scholars interpret the St. Thomas crosses in India as: “The lotus on the bottom shows the Christian faith erected on Indian culture. The three steps on the bottom of the lotus signify the Golgotha, the Calvary.”⁴⁵³ Considering the similarity between the two, this explanation may be used as a reference.

⁴⁴⁹ <https://twitter.com/bradhostetler/status/937484347057360896>

⁴⁵⁰ Klimkeit, 1994. 477- 484.

⁴⁵¹ Sun, 2012.

⁴⁵² Moule, Hao Trans., 1984:344.

⁴⁵³ Pathikulangara, 1986.

4.1.4 Crosses in the art of Manichaeism

The region of Central Asia has always been a place where all kinds of religion coexist. Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Zoroastrianism are three religions originated from Persia.

Manichaeism was born in the 3rd century and it may have been spread to China at the same time. Similar to Nestorianism, Manichaeism was suppressed by religious persecution in the Tang Dynasty and revived in the later period. Also, Manichaeism had a Chinese name—Mingjiao and left rich ruins in Fujian Province in China.

Manichaeism and Nestorianism, because of their communication areas were so similar that the two influenced each other and learnt from each other in the fields of teachings, terminology and images, etc. Jesus became one of the most important Gods in Manichaeism. The cross also appeared in several Manichaeism images. However, the scholars have questioned whether Manichaeism has ever chosen the cross as one of the motifs.⁴⁵⁴

Besides, similar arguments began from linking St. Thomas Cross in India to Manicheanism. Scholars argue that there is no evidence for the use of the cross in any form by the Manichaeans. Nedungatt certified: “The St. Thomas Cross has been dubbed by some critics as Manichaean, but there is no valid reason for doing so...Neither Apostolic nor Manichaean in origin...”⁴⁵⁵

The following provide the examples that crosses are depicted in the art of Manichaeism.

1. Prayer banner with Gods of salvation, Gaochang, 8th – 9th century

This prayer banner is a gilded silk hanging scroll, depicting the Four Primary Prophets of Manichaeism around the Light Mind. Two gods of salvation are sitting on the lotus seat (b, c). The portraits of the supporters are below the gods (now only one person’s head is left (a)). At the top of the scepter which is held by the god (b) is a cross with Nestorian style. The processional cross is decorated by 12 gems at the ends and two circles in the center.

It can be easily reminiscent of many similar crosses on the Nestorian tombstones unearthed in the Seven Rivers and Almaliq Xinjiang, as well as the famous Nestorian silk picture in Dunahung and Nestorian mural in Turpan (the picture of Riding Horse).

⁴⁵⁴ Wang, 2010: 39-60.

⁴⁵⁵ Nedungatt, 2008:386-387.

However, defining it as a Nestorian portrait only based on the style of cross is dogmatic. We cannot ignore the fact that this mural was discovered from a relic of a Manichaeism temple,⁴⁵⁶ and the composition of the picture is in Buddhist style.⁴⁵⁷ This question is still being debated.⁴⁵⁸

Because of the close connection between the cross and Christianity, we have reason to believe that the god who is holding the cross is Jesus—light-Jesus in Manichaeism.⁴⁵⁹ In the doctrine of Manichaeism, Jesus is one of the main gods, and the cross becomes a bright cross which symbolizes the crucifixion of Jesus. The concept of the crucifixion is important because it is a model for every soul in the world. The soul imprisoned in the matter is expressed by the “Jesus of the Passion”, and the “bearing of suffering” is symbolized by the light cross. The desire to be saved is reflected in the portrait of the boy on the left (d).

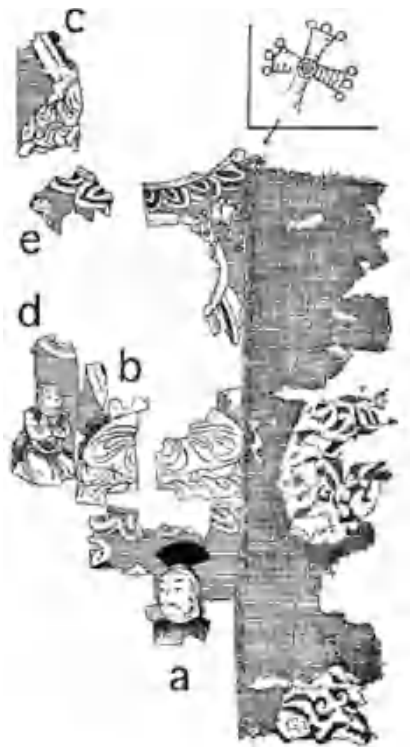


Figure 27 Drawing of Manichaean Fragment with Jesus Figure⁴⁶⁰

Figure 28 Cintamani⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁶ Le Coq, Waldschmidt, Guan & Wu Trans., 2006.

⁴⁵⁷ Klimkeit, Lin Trans. 1989:91.

⁴⁵⁸ Albert von Le Coq and Klimkeit argue it as a relic of Manichaeism, Gulácsi Zsuzsanna once doubted this, but she later determined it as a portrait of Manichaeism, see Gulácsi, 2009. But 泉武夫 thinks that this is a Nestorian image, see 泉武夫, 2006.

⁴⁵⁹ Klimkeit, Lin Trans. 1989:91-92; Gulácsi, 2009: 91-145; Yan, 2016: 173-180.

⁴⁶⁰ Klimkeit, 1979:99-115, pl. 5; Klimkeit, Lin Trans., 1989, pl. 40.

⁴⁶¹ Klimkeit, Lin Trans., 1989, pl. 16.

2. Cintāmaṇi in the painting of Nirvana, Kizil near Gaochang

According to the description of Klimkeit, the Cintāmaṇi was placed on the head of the dying Buddha. The Cintāmaṇi is a little strange because it is featured by the style of a cross standing on a red stone, around by the blazing flame. Nirvana is the goal of the Buddhist Practice. Cintāmaṇi is said to be a wish-fulfilling jewel within both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. According to the records, it can produce treasures by itself as desired and it has the merit of getting rid of illness and bitterness.

Klimkeit argues confidently that the Cintāmaṇi was affected by Manichaeism. Its symbol is related to Mani's identity as a savior.

From the Manichaeism in Central Asia, we can perceive the close connection between Mani's concept of death and the Buddha's Nirvana. This is a Buddhist painting, while the Cintāmaṇi shows the influence of Manichaeism. The cross-shaped Cintāmaṇi however, implies the influence of Christianity on Manichaeism images.

3. Akshobhya and Cross of light, Ladakh, 11th – 12th century

In an article of Klimkeit, he mentioned a cross of Manichaeism in a Tibetan Buddhist mural. The mural is a part of the land of Five Tathagatas. According to the doctrine of Adi-Buddha, Five Tathagatas is derived from the original Buddha. In every land of the Buddha, there are Tibetans, Indians, and Manichaeism believers from Central Asian who pray toward Buddha in the central.

In the painting (the upper left), the cross of bright is highly hanging over the top right of the Buddha, which is unique in Buddhist art. The cross is equal to the crucifixion of Jesus and is also equivalent to the "living soul" mixed with matter which is waiting to be liberated. In this mural, the bright cross is a symbol of Akshobhya instead of lightning.

4. Amitabha and Cross, Ladakh, 11th – 12th century

This picture (the lower left) is also a part of the land of Five Tathagatas. It can be interpreted to belong to either Buddhism or Manichaeism. The Amitabha in this painting is dressed in white in attempt to distinguish from the other four Buddhas.⁴⁶²

Tibetans, Indians and Central Asians are also inhabited in the land of Amitabha. The sun in the lower-left corner and the cross in the lower right can be regarded as symbols of Manichaeism.

⁴⁶² Klimkeit, 1979:99-115, pl.10; Klimkeit, Lin Trans., 1989, pl. 18.

The cross here represents the Savior Jesus. The Savior lives in the Moon Palace. In the Turkic documents, he is equal to the Moon Palace. The god of the sun and god of the moon are the gods of salvation who are widely worshipped by Manichaeism in Central Asia. This explains why the cross and the sun are symmetrical. A large number of documents from Central Asian prove that the Buddha is often confused with the Savior of Manichaeism like Jesus.



Figure 29 Five Tathagatas (Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha, Vairocana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava)⁴⁶³

5. Manichaeism painting in Seiunji Temple, Japan 13th – 14th century

This painting has caused some controversies since it was found. It was recognized by the famous Manichaeism scholar Gulácsi Zsuzsanna as Yishu fozhen 夷数佛帧.⁴⁶⁴ In the painting, Jesus sits on the throne of the lotus. A golden halo is around his head and a faint body light is behind him. His left hand holds a golden Greek cross–lotus. The right hand, however, is erected and maybe this is a kind of Buddhist mudra. His hair is scattered on the white stripes outer garment.

Wang Yuanyuan argues that in southeast China, although Manichaeism has borrowed the image of Jesus in Nestorianism, it did not borrow the cross as a symbol of the religion. There are hardly any records about the cross in remaining Manichaeism scriptures, even the bright cross in the doctrine. Sometimes, the word will be replaced

⁴⁶³ Klimkeit, 1979:99-115, pl. 9; Klimkeit, 1979:99-115, pl. 8; Klimkeit, Lin Trans., 1989, pl. 17.

⁴⁶⁴ Gu & Wang Trans., 2008: 139-189.

by Buddha-nature, Buddhism, Wu Mingzi, etc.⁴⁶⁵ Wang believes that the figure should be the idol of Nestorianism—Jesus.

Lin Wushu has different opinions. He believes that the image is a product of the worship of the Yishu Buddha 夷数佛 on the southeastern coast of the Yuan Dynasty in China—a kind of folk belief with the fusion of Yelikewen and Catholicism. To show the difference between this “Yishu Buddha” and other Buddhas, the folk artisans used the cross as a sign. This belief was reflected in a large number of *Xiapu wenshu* 霞浦文书 [Xiapu texts].⁴⁶⁶



Figure30 Mani's Picture in Seijunji Temple

In conclusion, the figures above show the cross in the art of Manichaeism, however, the use of the cross by Manichaeans is always argumentative. Did Manichaeans ever venerate a cross? According to Manichaean principles, neither Jesus nor Mani die on a cross. Mani was imprisoned by Bahram I (274– 277) and died in the prison. His corpse was pierced through with a torch and then mutilated. His remains were buried by his

⁴⁶⁵ Wang, 2010: 39-60.

⁴⁶⁶ Lin, 2016 (37): 223-225.

followers at Ctesiphon.⁴⁶⁷ It seems that the worship of the cross in Manichaeism is not as strong as Christianity.

Wang Yuanyuan proposes that Yishu is always described as a Savior in Chinese Manichaean classic, never being a figure crucified. The concept of cross is used more in the Scripture in Parthian and ancient Persian language, and less mentioned when Manichaeism is introduced to the Uighurs or Chinese.⁴⁶⁸ The cross appearing in Manichaean art is likely to be the result of the triple influence of Nestorianism, Buddhism, and Manichaeism. The source of the cross should be the Nestorian religion that flourished in Central Asia at the time. This may explain why the cross in Manichean art is so similar to the style of Nestorianism.

4.1.5 Crosses in the manuscripts kept in the Berlin Turfan-Sammlung

There are four pieces of fragments with cross symbol kept in the Berlin Turfan-Sammlung. The first example is from a Buddhist text, the other three are from Christian texts. The concerned texts containing various scripts and languages reflect the multiethnic situation along the Silk Road. However, given the limited data, especially some of them have not been studied, it is difficult to make a profound interpretation of the meaning of the cross. We look forward to more archaeological discoveries to help us solve this mystery.

1. The cross on the back of a Buddhist text Ch1063 (T II 1734)

This fragment was recovered by Albert von Le Coq during the second Turfan expedition in 1905-1906.⁴⁶⁹

The texts are written by the Kaiti 楷体 [Regular script], and the contents correspond with the passages of the *Da bore boluomiduo jing* (*Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*).⁴⁷⁰ In the center of the reverse side, a cross stands on an unfolded sheet. It seems to be hand-drawn with a reed pen (菖蒲 calamus) in black ink. Why does the cross appear on the back of a Buddhist text? Is it related to Nestorianism? And is it purely a coincidence? Unfortunately, it is difficult to know the original function of the cross based on such a small fragment.

⁴⁶⁷ Kollamparambil, 1994:34-35.

⁴⁶⁸ Wang, 2012:39-60.

⁴⁶⁹ Wang, 2006:149-162.

⁴⁷⁰ Regular script is one of the Chinese script styles, appearing by the Cao-Wei dynasty (220–265) and maturing stylistically around the 7th century.

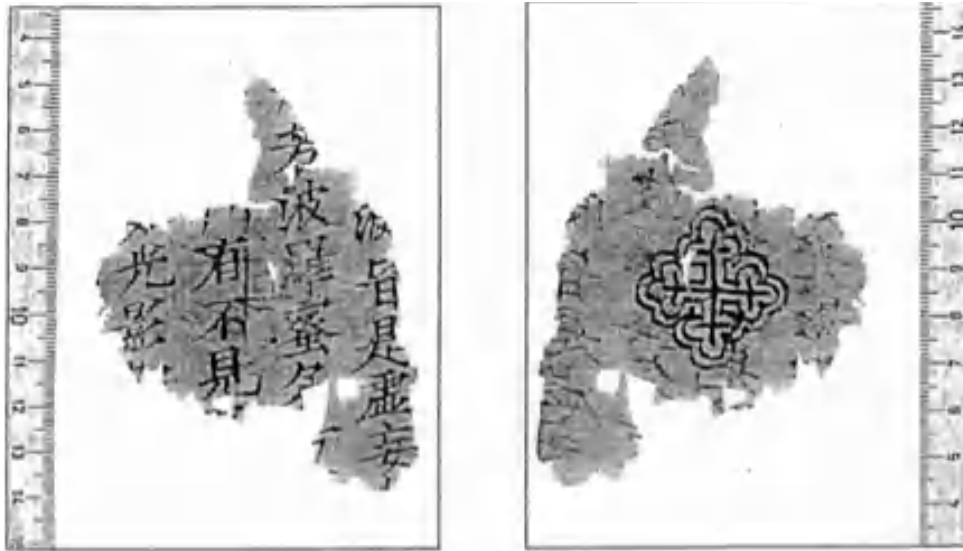


Figure 31 Ch1063r (the left) and Ch1063v (the right)

2. The fragment So 12510 (T II B 4)

This fragment has not been interpreted and published. The double sides are written in Sogdian. Two crosses are depicted on the verso side.⁴⁷¹



Figure 32 So 12510 verso side⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Wang, 2006:149-162.

⁴⁷² <http://turfan.bbaw.de/dta/index.html>

3. The fragment MIK III 5977 (T II D R. e. g. K.)

According to the information in the inventory of the Museum of Asian Art, the object is described as a wooden key. One side of the object bears a line of Old Turkish inscription. The line ends with a Cross. A second cross is on the opposite side.⁴⁷³



Figure 33 MIK III 5977 19.5 cm (h) x 3.5 cm (b)⁴⁷⁴

4. The fragment in Syrian script and Sogdian script (C6= T II B 6 + T II B 60 + T II B 65 + T II B 66 = n 167)

This fragment stems from a codex book and describes the Mār Eugen legend.⁴⁷⁵ It said that two crosses appear on the margin of the paper and another cross is present in line two on the reverse side. All the crosses bear Sasanian style.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Wang, 2006:149-162.

⁴⁷⁴ Feistel, 2009.

⁴⁷⁵ Sundermann, 2002: 309-311.

⁴⁷⁶ Wang, 2006:149-162.

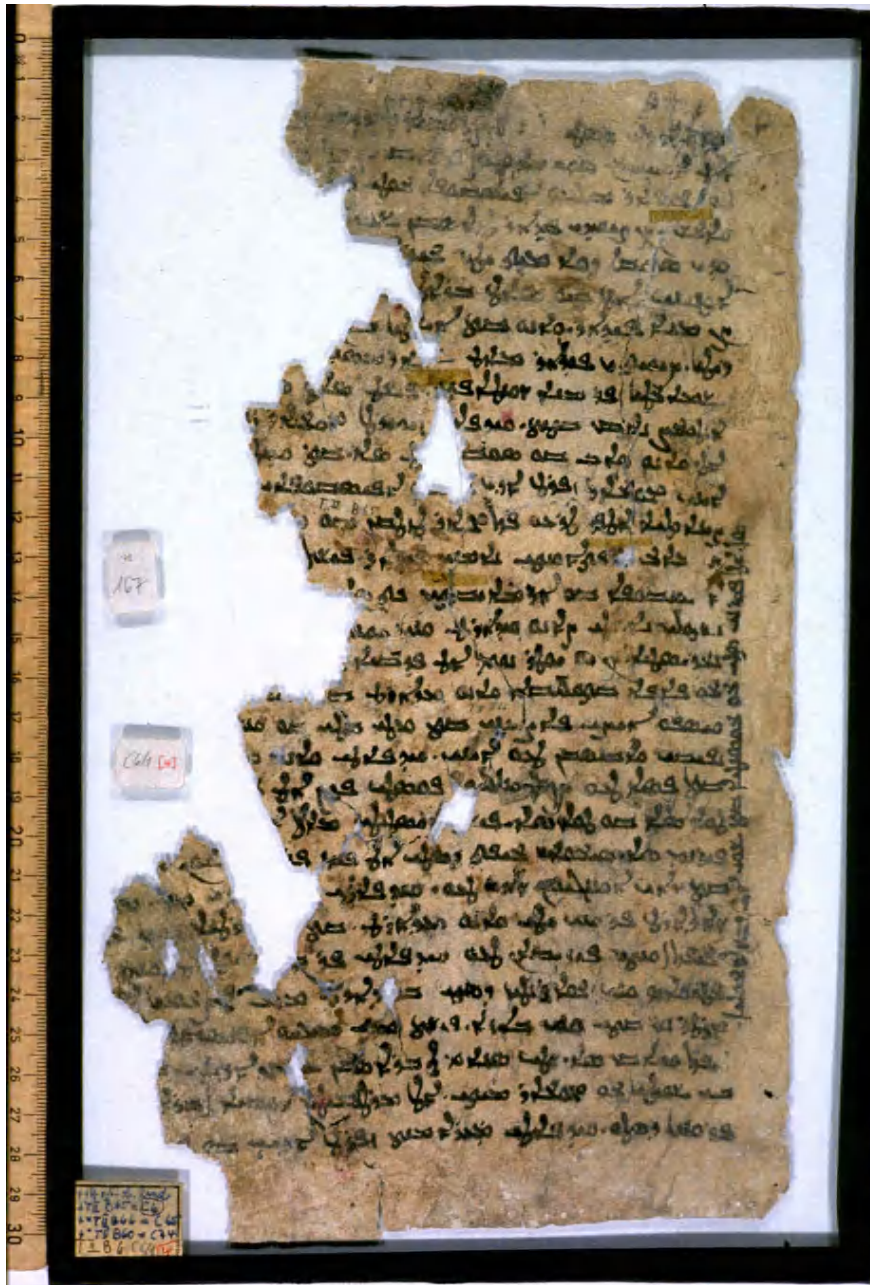


Figure 34 n 167 verso side⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁷ <http://turfan.bbaw.de/dta/index.html>

4.2 The Cross-Lotus Motif

4.2.1 An overview of the cross-lotus pattern in different regions

Lotus depiction has not been found in Semirechye so far. Nestorian crosses in China, however, are always depicted with lotus (not everyone has). The cross-lotus pattern firstly appeared in the Nestorian Stele (781) and then in Nestorian Stone Pillar (829). This pattern has been considered as the most important decorative motif of the Chinese Oriental Church.⁴⁷⁸ The lotus was borrowed by the Nestorian Christians, who considered that the cross rising from a lotus flower was the most central and powerful symbol of Christianity.⁴⁷⁹

Table 2 shows Nestorian images with cross-lotus in different archaeological sites.

Table 2

Site	Quantity	Number	
Almaliq	6	A-1, A-2, A-4, A-6, A-9, A-10	
Inner Mongol	1	6	I-O-1, I-O-2, I-O-3, I-O-6, I-O-14, I-O-18
	4	1	I-M-4
		1	I-B-6
		4	I-D-1, I-D-4, I-D-11, I-D-1
		2	I-C-1, I-C-2
Beijing	2	B-1, B-2	
Yangzhou	2	Y-1, Y-2	
Quanzhou	22	Q-2, Q-3, Q-7, Q-8, Q-13, Q-16, Q-19, Q-20, Q-21, Q-22, Q-24, Q-26, Q-27, Q-28, Q-29, Q-30, Q-31, Q-32, Q-34, Q-36, Q-37, Q-38	

1. Almaliq in Xinjiang

Among the 10 tombstones listed in Almaliq, about six of them have the decoration of cross-lotus (A-1, A-2, A-4, A-6, A-9? A-10). A-1 has a six-layer base, which reminds us of the Nestorian stone in Shizhu ziliang. The similar style implies that the two sites might be related. A-9 has a base resembles a petal of lotus. A-10 is incomplete, remaining only the cross. The exact number of lotus petals couldn't be determined.

2. Inner Mongolia

⁴⁷⁸ Parry, Li Trans., 2010, Issue 2: 113-125.

⁴⁷⁹ Halbertsma, 2008:160.

The lotus flowers in Inner Mongolia are more complex, with six or more lotus petals and more Chinese characters. Most of these lotuses are carved in the front panel, top panel, left panel and right panel of the gravestones. The presence of other elements, such as the interlaced floral design pattern, lantern window frames, implies that Nestorianism in Inner Mongolia is more multicultural. **I-O-8, I-O-15, I-O-17, I-M-3, I-M-5? I-B-9, I-D-1, I-D-3, I-D-8** are depicted with patterns similar to the rose decoration originated from the ancient Egypt or the lotus pattern during the Warring States Period in China.

However, not every flower pattern on the gravestones is a lotus. Halbertsma argues: “Several crosses from Inner Mongolia depict the cross rising from a floral object which is neither a lotus nor a clear depiction of such leaves.”⁴⁸⁰

3. Beijing

The cross-lotus in **B-1** erects on the base consisting with lotus and auspicious clouds while the cross in **B-2** stands on a two-layer lotus seat. Similarly, bottled flowers (chrysanthemum?) are carved on the left and right sides. Based on the carved themes and styles of potted flowers, Xu Pinfang identifies them as the relics of the early Yuan Dynasty.⁴⁸¹ Niu holds the similar view.⁴⁸² However, Gai Shanlin believes that they belong to the Five Dynasties (907–960) because the style of the cross is closer to that of the Tang Dynasty. His claim is endorsed by Namio.⁴⁸³ I quiet agree with Gai as the decoration of the dots and the circle in the center of the cross resemble that of the Nestorian Stele in Xi’an.

B-3 is determined as the relics of Jin (1115—1234) and Yuan Dynasties.⁴⁸⁴ The cross of **B-4** is depicted with the flame pattern similar to the Nestorian Stele.

Compared to Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, the depictions in Beijing feature more characteristics of oriental culture, such as the double layer lotus seat, auspicious clouds, flame pattern, as well as the bottled flowers.

4. Yangzhou and Quanzhou

There are no decorations like gems on the crosses in Yangzhou. The change reflects the Nestorian image in South China is more Sinicized. The carving lines are very

⁴⁸⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:160 +232-234, gravestone 16.

⁴⁸¹ Xu, 1992 (2):188-193.

⁴⁸² Niu, 2008:27.

⁴⁸³ Gai, 1991:297.

⁴⁸⁴ Namio,1980:40-50.

smooth and refined. The craftsmen are believed to have a good grasp of Chinese decorative pattern as the lotus looks very full and beautiful.

Nestorian cross-lotus depictions in Quanzhou bear more complex features. The simplest lotus has only three petals (Q-3). Others have multi petals or two-layer lotus base.

In addition to the common pattern, there are seven tombstones (Q-7, Q-8, Q-16, Q-17, Q-19, Q-20, Q-21, Q-29) are depicted with the censer under the lotus. Q-17 is carved only lotus and censer, no cross. Four tombstones (Q-13, Q-27, Q-30, Q-38) are decorated with the canopy above the cross-lotus. Five tombstones (Q-10, Q-12, Q-14, Q-23, Q-25) have the depictions of the cross-cloud pattern. The censer and the canopy are the most significant characters in Quanzhou.

Also, cross-lotus is present on the Catholic tombstone of Andrew of Perugia (died in 1332), who was Bishop of Quanzhou in Fujian from 1322.⁴⁸⁵ The presence of Nestorian iconography in a Catholic tomb reflects the popularity and the dominance of cross lotus-pattern in Christian art at the time.

4.2.2 The combination of cross-lotus (cross) and different elements

4.2.2.1 Cross-lotus (cross) with censer

The combination of cross, lotus and censer appear mostly in Quanzhou. There is only a similar example in Inner Mongolia. The stone slab S-2 depicts an engraving in low relief of a Chinese censer between two candles. This rare example indicates the symbol is not properly executed because the depiction of censer is so Chinese in the style that some conjecture if it would be accepted widely by a foreign missionary at the time.

4.2.2.1.1 Cross-censer in Shizhuziliang

This carving was originally mistaken for a lamb laying between two candles by Cesar de Brabander (1857–1919) who had been one of the first missionaries of C.I.C.M. in Inner Mongolia. In 1924, Pieters (1884–1926) corrected it was a cross and Chinese censer depiction.

Halbertsma argues that this particular cross may have been Catholic as it implies the “HIS–monogram” used by the Roman Catholic Church. “Above the censer is a cross depicted with on the left side the Greek letter ‘iota’(I) and on the right side the letter ‘sigma’(S). The top of the censer can be interpreted as being modelled on the letter ‘eta’

⁴⁸⁵ Moule, 1984. Hao Trans. 218-222.

(H). According to this interpretation, the cross is standing on the horizontal part of the ‘H’”.⁴⁸⁶

The IHS-symbol is composed of the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus and frequently depicted as an abbreviation for “Iesus Hominum Salvator” [Jesus Savior of Man in Latin]”. It is often used as a monogram or enriched with other graphic details (such as the cross and the sun). The abbreviation IHS was used in Latin since the seventh century and became a real popular monogram following the spread of devotion to the Most Holy Name of Jesus. It has been often displayed on Eucharistic vessels since at least the 12th century and was particularly dear to the Franciscans.



Figure 35 Rubbing by Pieters⁴⁸⁷



Figure 36 The censer of Jun porcelain Inner Mongolia Museum

The physical appearance of the censer is very similar to that of Jun kiln unerathed in Baita Village, Hohhot in 1970. The inscriptions on the censer of Jun kiln imply that it was produced in 1309,⁴⁸⁸ from which we infer that the censer documented by Pieters should be also the relic of the Yuan Dynasty, during which Catholic missionaries have begun frequent activities in the northern grasslands. In this sense, it is quite possible that this symbol may have been introduced by Western missionaries in the 14th century.

However, I would like to raise a few questions here.

⁴⁸⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:133.

⁴⁸⁷ Halbertsma, 2008, Appendix 2.2.1

⁴⁸⁸ Li, 2010: 88-90.

First, several tombstones of missionaries, such as Matteo Ricci (1552–1610)⁴⁸⁹, Tang Ruowang (1591–1666)⁴⁹⁰ during the Ming and Qing Dynasties have depictions of the HIS symbol. Take Tang Ruowang’s tombstone as an example, the depiction uses the technique of low relief and every letter of HIS is easy to recognize. The three letters are all on the same horizontal line, and three nails are engraved under the letter H. The monogram is surrounded by the sun, which is a typical symbol of the Catholic Jesuits.



Figure 37 HIS–system on the tomb of Tang Ruowang⁴⁹¹

However, the depiction in Shizhuziliang is fuzzy. We can recognize I and S, but the letter H is very difficult to be seen. The vertical part of the “H” is actually the handle of the censer. The part where the cross stands is the ear of the censer instead of the horizontal part of “H”. If it is HIS, why are these three letters not on a horizontal line? This is very different from the pattern on the tombstone of Tang Ruowang.

Secondly, at that time, the Genghis Khan family and their followers mostly believed in the Nestorian sect. After the introduction of Catholicism, it began to compete with the Nestorian sect for believers, however, Nestorianism was the mainstream of Christian faith at that time.⁴⁹²

Montecorvino once wrote about his experiences of being framed and persecuted by Nestorians on January 8, 1305. He wrote in a letter to the church members: “The Nestorians—they call themselves Christians, but their behavior is not like that of Christians at all—their influence in these areas has developed so powerfully because

⁴⁸⁹ Matteo Ricci was an Italian Jesuit priest and one of the founding figures of the Jesuit China missions.

⁴⁹⁰ Tang Ruowang, whose original name is Johann Adam Schall von Bell, was a German Jesuit and astronomer. He spent most of his life as a missionary in China and became an adviser to the Shunzhi Emperor of the Qing dynasty.

⁴⁹¹ https://www.sohu.com/a/132003925_180686

⁴⁹² Houston, 1980: 60-68.

they do not allow any Christian who practices another religious ceremony to have any place for worship, even if it is very a small chapel; it is also not allowed to preach any doctrines different from them. Since no apostles have ever visited these places, the Nestorians mentioned above directly use bribes to instruct others to persecuted me terribly and announced that I was not sent by the Pope, but a conspiracy, a magician and a liar. Later, they forged more evidence, saying that the Pope sent the messenger who carried a lot of treasures was murdered by me in India and I stole the gifts he carried. This conspiracy lasted for about five years. I was often interrogated because of this and at any time I was threatened with death. Finally, thanks to God's arrangement, some of them admitted that all these were conspiracies, so the emperor knew that I was innocent. Those who accused me were exiled together with their wives and children."⁴⁹³

It's hard to imagine that under such circumstances, a Catholic can still leave such a mark on the tombstone. But the vague HIS-symbol reminds us that it seems to be a hidden hint. It is possible that because of the oppression, Catholics cannot make a clear mark, but can only use this obscure style.

It is important to note here that Roman Catholicism and Nestorian Christianity coexisted in this region at the time,⁴⁹⁴ even though the two have a fierce fight in the local. A letter written by Montecorvino in 1305 to his pope in Rome revealed that he had converted the Nestorian King George to Roman Catholicism. King George brought a great part of his people to the true Catholic faith and built a fine church with royal generosity in honour of God, the Holy Trinity and the Lord Pope, and called it "the Roman church".⁴⁹⁵

It thus well be possible that that the Christians around Shizhuziliang were not that particular in distinguishing between different Christian creeds and used the cemetery for both Nestorian as well as Catholic Christians.⁴⁹⁶ Considering the other tombstones unearthed in Shizhuziliang, which are depicted with the cross-lotus pattern with obvious Nestorian characteristics, it may be the case that the stone was executed by a Nestorian or influenced by Catholic iconography and imagery.

⁴⁹³ Dawson, Lü & Zhou Trans., 1983: 262-263.

⁴⁹⁴ Halbertsma, 2008:134.

⁴⁹⁵ Dawson. ed. 1955:225-226.

⁴⁹⁶ Halbertsma, 2008:134.

4.2.2.1.2 Cross-lotus with the censer in Quanzhou

Q-7, Q-8, Q-16? Q-17, Q-19, Q-20, Q-21, Q-29 are depicted with censers. Some of the censers are decorated with the pattern of ripple or lotus petal in the belly. From the physical appearance, they are so different from those in Western Christianity that many scholars doubt whether they are censers.

Some early examples, such as a bronze thurible or censer featuring episodes in the life of Jesus Christ of the 8th -9th century from the Urgut settlement near Samarkand, Uzbekistan, are important pieces of evidence of the presence of censer in Nestorian iconography.⁴⁹⁷



Figure 38 Bronze censer Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, SA-12758

As far as I am concerned, it appears with the text proof that using censer has formed a normal part of Nestorian liturgy and worship during the Yuan Dynasty. It thus comes to no great surprise that the depictions of censer are present under the Nestorian cross. These censers resemble ancient Chinese utensils named 鼎 Ding and 鬲 li.

Ding and li are prehistoric and ancient Chinese cauldrons. Ding is always made in two shapes: round vessels with three legs and rectangular ones with four legs. Nestorian censers general have three legs. In ancient China, both ding and li were used for cooking,

⁴⁹⁷ Klimkeit, 1994:477-484; Dickens & Savchenko, 2009:121-135; Tashmanbetova, 2019.

storage, and ritual offerings to the gods or ancestors. In the Song Dynasty, these styles of utensils were also used as incense burners.

After the wars of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–979), the Northern Song Dynasty faced pressure from powerful different nations. To highlight the legitimacy of their power and establish a new social order, the rulers restructured the etiquette based on the ancient three dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou.⁴⁹⁸ The courts and local administrative agencies began to imitate the rituals during the pre-Qin, but the restoration of ancient artefacts could not reach 100%. Under the situation that the use of bronze utensils in the pre-Qin period was interrupted for nearly a thousand years, their shapes, decorations, and manufacturing processes were inevitably affected by the contemporary trend in the Song dynasty. Thus, various changes in appearance have occurred. Using the imitations of pre-Qin bronzes as censers is an innovation of the Song people.⁴⁹⁹

The physical appearance of Ding and Li in Nestorian tombstones have some new variations—they have slightly exaggerated abdomens and feet. Of these censers, **Q-20** is particularly worthy of mention as it has a more complicated model. It is close to the furnace unearthed in Ru Kiln, Qingliang Temple, Baofeng city in Henan, and it is also like a ceremonial goblet named Gu 觚 used to hold wine in ancient China. Gu is characterized by a trumpet-shaped mouth and bottom. In the picture *Born of Gautama Buddha* during the Tang Dynasty by Wu Daozi, there is a goddess holding a censer similar to Gu. In the lower part of the censer in **Q-20**, there are round belly and thin feet similar to Li. These characters make it difficult to find similar artefacts in the remains unearthed at present. This peculiar shape may be the product of the retro trend at the time.

⁴⁹⁸ Huo, 2014:49.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

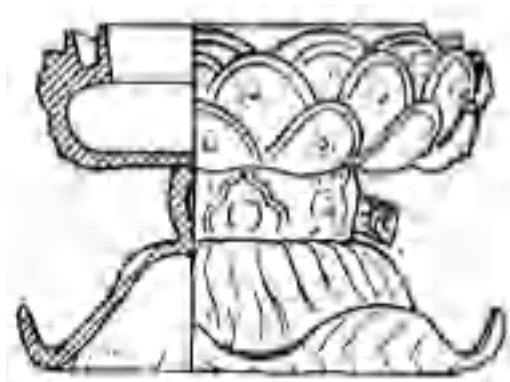


Figure 39 The furnace unearthed in Ru Kiln ⁵⁰⁰



Figure 40 The heaven being in *Born of Gautama Buddha* ⁵⁰¹

4.2.2.1.3 Incense and censer in Nestorian Christianity

As mentioned earlier, incense and censer are very important in Nestorian liturgy. There is a record about the censer in the hymns in Beijing, which goes like this:

Think of our prayers as incense⁵⁰² You are blessed by God. You are pure offerings for us, and censers reconciling with God for us. God pleases you. The Father welcomes you, the Son and the Holy Spirit crowning you with the crown of life. (—)⁵⁰³

This piece of source reveals some information about the etiquette of Nestorians during the Mongolian era. The believer may often burn incense when he was doing Morning and Evening Prayers. They put all their prayers in a censer and dedicated it to God in attempt to be blessed.

Also, a lot of depictions about incenses and censers are present in the *Bible*.

In Leviticus, we read Aaron and his son Nadab bring censer and burn incense for his sin offering. (Leviticus 10:1, Leviticus 16:12-13)

In Numbers 16 we read Korah gathered 250 leaders to attack Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:1-19), then the Lord punished Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:20-

⁵⁰⁰ Guo, et al, 2001 (11):4-22, pl. 7-17.

⁵⁰¹ https://www.sohu.com/a/240237348_100110703

⁵⁰² Red in the original text (by Hao, see Moule, Hao Trans. 1984: 342.)

⁵⁰³ Moule, Hao Trans. 1984: 342.

35). God instructed Moses to hammer the censers into sheets and overlay the altar, for they were presented before the LORD and have become holy. (Numbers 16:36-40). The assembly gathered against to Moses and Aaron. Then God sent a plague, and Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for the assembly. (Numbers 16:41-50)

In Matthew 2:11 we read the Magi bring Frankincense (a particular type of incense) as a gift to the Christ child.

In Revelation, the burning of incense appears to be an important part of the worship of heaven. In chapter 5 verse 8 we read that the golden bowls full of incense are the prayers of the Saints. (Revelation 5:8)

In Revelation 8 we read an angel brings out a golden censer filled with fire from the heavenly altar and throws it to the earth—unleashing peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake, then the other seven angels blow their seven trumpets. (Revelation 8:3-5).

Besides the quotes above, there are some contents related to the incense and censer in Chronicles 26:18, 2nd Corinthians 2:15, 2nd Chronicles 26:19, Ezekiel 8:11.

Suffice here to say that most of Christianity use incense in worship. Incense is a token of the best that we offer for the thanksgiving and sacrifice of Christ. Also, the incense enables fuller participation of the believers in the liturgy by stimulating the sense of smell. And the priest or deacon often bless it with the cross.

In the illustrations of the 13th century in *Psalms*, two censers were depicted. They consist of an oval section, three or four chains and a metal ring around the chains which is used to lock the lid of the censer in place. Two angels are holding the censers and coming from the clouds.

The censer in Nestorian images is completely different from the depiction in *Psalms*. In the early years of the spread of Nestorianism to the east, Western Christianity had not yet formed perfect theological symbols. It thus comes to no great surprise that Nestorian Christians in the Far East chose the Chinese-style censer. Just as Nestorian “angels” on both sides of the cross who borrow the physical appearance of Apsaras, however, the appropriation of appearance does not mean the change of religious connotation.⁵⁰⁴ The depiction of censer implies its importance in religious ceremonies.

⁵⁰⁴ Ge, 2014 (4):1-8; Yin & Zhang, 2009 (1):1-25.



Figure 41 The Entombment 1250-1300⁵⁰⁵

To conclude, the censers with Chinese style under the cross-lotus is unexpected but is expected. Symbols in liturgy help to point the minds of believers in the direction of invisible realities and communicate to us in a method often richer than words alone. As a symbol, incense is understood as symbolizing the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Saints rising to heaven. When we burn incense, we remind ourselves that our prayers will ascend to the throne of God like the incense, and blend in with the prayers of the Saints in heaven. The depictions of censers may come from the influence of this kind of worship or liturgy in Nestorianism, even though their styles look like extreme sinicization.

4.2.2.2 Cross-lotus with clouds and cross-cloud (flame)

I-Other-1 is depicted with clouds in the upper and lower parts of the cross. **Q-1? Q-10, Q-12, Q-14, Q-23, Q-25** and **Q-40** are depicted with the cross-cloud pattern. **Q-24** are depicted with cross-lotus with clouds. Some of the clouds (**Q-23, Q-24, Q-25**) are surrounded by flames. **Q-13, Q-16, Q-17, Q-18, Q-21, Q-26, Q-28, Q-29** are depicted with clouds around the angels.

⁵⁰⁵ Gombrich, 1999: 195, pl.131.

The pattern of cloud in China is an important decorative element. It first appeared on the colored pottery of the Majiayao culture period more than 5000 years ago. The Han Dynasty was the pinnacle of the development of this pattern as it was inseparable from the prevalence of Taoist immortal thoughts at the time.⁵⁰⁶

The themes of encircling cloud rising into immortality frequently appeared in the funeral art of the Han Dynasty as it was considered as a metaphor for heaven and a symbol of the fairy world. Thus, it is believed that the pattern of clouds in Nestorianism is influenced by Taoism.⁵⁰⁷

In Buddhism, this pattern derives some new symbolic meanings. Generally, the clouds in Buddhist art are classified three types: the nature clouds; the clouds for decoration and the clouds around the Buddha.⁵⁰⁸ The third type includes the clouds from incense burning which can be further divided into three types: clouds of aureola (halo or nimbus), depicted on the back of the Buddha (sometimes they change to be flames); clouds of the parasol, depicted on the top of the Buddha; clouds distributed in the blank spaces of the picture, named the sea of clouds.⁵⁰⁹ These clouds with supernatural feature become a language of communication between believers and Buddha.

In Nestorian images, the distribution of the clouds is quite similar to that in Buddhism. Klimkeit argues that the cross in the cross-lotus pattern replaces the bodhisattva.⁵¹⁰ If we restore the image and imagine the cross as a Buddha, don't the clouds around the "cross" [Buddha] mean the clouds of aureola, the parasol and the sea of clouds? From this perspective, the clouds in Nestorian images are deeply influenced by Buddhism. However, the clouds here should still be Christian. When a pattern deviates from its original environment, it is likely to spread only as a decorative motif. To understand such a pattern, it is better to rely on its new cultural background.

In Christianity, the cloud is very important. It is said that the swirling cloud pattern is referred to the "tree of life".⁵¹¹ Generally speaking, there are three kinds of clouds described in the *Bible*: clouds of nature (Genesis 9:13-14); clouds for the coming of the Lord or the angels (Exodus 33:9, Exodus 40:34; Numbers 12:5; Matthew 24:30;

⁵⁰⁶ Li, 2013:70.

⁵⁰⁷ Klimkeit, 1994:477-484; Li, 2013.

⁵⁰⁸ Zou, 1959; Zhang, 2013:18-19.

⁵⁰⁹ Zhang, 2013:18-19.

⁵¹⁰ Klimkeit, 1994:477-484

⁵¹¹ Foster. 1954:1-25. note 1.

Revelation 10:1); clouds formed by the burning incense (Leviticus 16:13). Sometimes the cloud exists as a metaphor. For example, a king's shiny face means life and his favor is like a rain cloud in spring. (Proverbs 16:15)

Similar descriptions are also present in the hymns in Beijing,

I offered my prayers at dawn. At dawn, Jacob walked out of his father's house and came to the Holy Land, where he was inspired. Standing on the ground with a cloud ladder, the top of the ladder passes through the sky. Look, a group of angels stay on it. The angels sang the hymns of Hallelujah in unison and expressed sincerity to God because God allowed the Son to rely on his essence and light to keep the people of heaven and the land harmonious. (三)⁵¹²

Mar Shimu (Simon, Zhou), you are the pillar of cloud, you are the pillar of compassion, and you are the tree of fragrance. Your Savior will always delight you and bring you to heaven with the Lord. Behold, all lands are holding ceremonies in memory of you. (五)⁵¹³

From the aeon to the everlasting Just as the dawn when you resurrected riding the clouds to heaven, our Holy Father, to meet our Savior, may your prayer be turned into our wings, so that we can ascend to heaven together with you and share the joy in the Temple of Light. (六)⁵¹⁴

In the hymns above, the angels and the Lord ascend or descend by clouds, and the Simon is likened to a pillar of cloud.

In Nestorian images, sometimes there are flame-like patterns near the clouds. Li Jingrong believes that this is influenced by Zoroastrianism as Zoroastrianism particularly believes in the god of fire. However, in the depictions on the tombstones of the Sogdians of the Northern Dynasty in China, there are generally priests on both sides of the fire altar,⁵¹⁵ which is quite different from the flame patterns in Nestorian images. Another opinion is, "According to the interpretation on the inscriptions on Nestorian tombstones by Niu Ruji, Liu Nanqiang and other scholars, many of the tomb owners are originated from the Turkic tribe of the Western Regions. For the Turkic peoples, the holy fire can cleanse the dirt and exorcise the evil. Therefore, the flame decoration on Nestorian tombstones may be derived from Turkic culture."⁵¹⁶ This

⁵¹² Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:346.

⁵¹³ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:349.

⁵¹⁴ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:351-352.

⁵¹⁵ Sun, 2012: 142-153.

⁵¹⁶ Li, 2013: 118-123.

possibility cannot be ruled out, but I prefer to consider this pattern from the Christian cultural background. The pillars of cloud and fire are concepts mentioned often in the *Bible*.

In Exodus 13 we read that by day God went ahead of the Israel in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could advance day and night. (Exodus 13:21)

In Exodus 14 we read when the Israel army is chased by a heavily armed Egyptian army, a pillar of cloud appeared between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side. (Exodus 14:20).

In Nehemiah 9 we read that by day God led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take. (Nehemiah 9:12)

Besides, there are similar contents in Numbers 14:14, Deuteronomy 1:33 and Nehemiah 9:19.

In Psalm 104: 4, God uses the wind as a messenger and fire as a servant.

The above excerpts tell us that the main functions of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire are: (1) Light and guide. Cloud pillars guide during the day, and fire pillars are the best beacon lights at night. They guide the way forward and illuminate the road ahead. (2) The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire are powerful Gods who intervene in the Israelites in a transcendent way and provide salvation and help to them. It is conceivable that the pillars of cloud and fire symbolize God's presence and provide great comfort and strength for the frightened people who have just fled Egypt.

If we put the other holy elements such as the cross, the censer and the "angel" together, the symbolic meaning of the Nestorian image is ready to come out. The cross erecting among the clouds means the Lord appearing with the clouds. The "angels" hold a censer full of prayers to Jesus, symbolizing the dependence on the Lord. However, neither clouds nor fire has been carved as columns as the scenes in the Anthem or *Bible*, but their role in believers' hearts should be unchanged.

As we have discussed above, it is difficult for the Nestorian believers in the Yuan Dynasty to be fully familiar with the theological symbols of Western Christian images. Since Taoism and Buddhism have complex and highly developed iconographic code, it thus understandable that Chinese patterns of clouds and fire were borrowed by the sculptors. From the physical appearance, the styles of clouds and fire are completely sinicized, but the connotation is still Christian.

4.2.2.3 Cross-lotus with parasol

I-M-7, Q-13, Q-27, Q-30, Q-38 have the pattern of cross-lotus with parasol, Huagai 华盖 in Chinese. In Nestorian images in Quanzhou, there is a pair of long tassels flying on both sides of the parasol, but this style is absent in Inner Mongolia.

It is worth noting that there is a pair of Mingjing 铭旌 [banner] under the cross-lotus icon in Q-30.⁵¹⁷ Mingjing is a kind of ancient funeral customs, similar to the Fan 幡 [banner] in Buddhist utensils. The official rank and title of the deceased are always written in white on it. In this tombstone, eight Chinese characters “大德黄公, 年玖叁岁” [Dade, Mr. Huang, died at the age of 93] are written on the two banners, showing the tomb owner’s name, age and identity.

Historically, in order to avoid the summer heat, the ancient Indian tribes often used the shade of the trees as a venue for discussion. This custom was inherited by Gautama Buddha. Gradually, the parasol had a symbolic meaning in Buddhism.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, the parasol is included in the “Eight Auspicious Signs”.⁵¹⁸ Volume XI of *Guhyapada of Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra* describes the scene in which the flowers offered to Buddha are changed to Huagai: “All the flowers are dedicated to the Buddha. The Guhyapada transforms the scattered flowers into parasols to carry the Buddha’s divine power...”

On the mural in Cave 47 of the Kizil Cave in Xinjiang, there is an Apsara holding an object like an umbrella. Some scholars argue it as a parasol.⁵¹⁹ Recorded in the Buddhist scriptures that both Deity of white umbrella and Vajravikirna hold parasols to protect all sentient beings. Sometimes the Deity of white umbrella holds the lotus in the left hand and the white umbrella is erected in the lotus; sometimes the Deity holds the white umbrella which is emitting white light and sits on the white lotus.

⁵¹⁷ Li, 2013 (01): 118-123.

⁵¹⁸ “Eight Auspicious Signs” is Ashtamangala, meaning a sacred suite of Eight Auspicious Signs endemic to several religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism are: 1. Precious parasol. 2. Two golden fish. 3. Dhvaja, the banners. 4. Sankha. 5. Sacred knot. 6. Lotus. 7. Wheel. 8. Great vase.

⁵¹⁹ Hu, 2017.



Figure 42 Apsaras Cave 47 of the Kizil Cave in Xinjiang

In the images of Nestorianism, the cross is depicted in the middle of the parasol and the lotus. If we image the cross as a Buddha, this will be a typical pattern of Buddhist images.

In Chinese, the “Hua 华” of Huagai and the “Hua 花” of Huaduo [flowers] are the same pronunciation, *Lotus Sutra Xuanzan II* records: “The western region is hot in summer, and most people hold parasols decorated with flowers, so it is called Huagai 花盖 [parasol of flower].” This record indicates that the parasol often features the ornament of flowers. On the parasols of Nestorian images, there are always pearls or lotus-like decorations which is consistent with the records.

Besides, there is a legend about the origin of a parasol in ancient Chinese mythology. According to the record in *Gujinzhū·Yufu* 古今注·輿服 [Notes to things old and new· Chariots and robes]⁵²⁰:

“华盖，黄帝所作也。与蚩尤战于涿鹿之野，常有五色云气，金枝玉叶，止于帝上。有花葩之象，故因而作华盖也。”

[Huagai was made by the Yellow Emperor.⁵²¹ When he battled Chiyou⁵²² in the field of Zhuolu, pieces of five-color auspicious clouds in the shape of flowers appeared

⁵²⁰ Gujinzhu is an encyclopaedia attributed to the Jin period (265-420) scholar Cui Bao 崔豹.

⁵²¹ The Yellow Emperor (2711–2598) is a deity in Chinese religion, one of the legendary Chinese sovereigns and culture heroes. He is regarded as the ancestor of all Chinese.

⁵²² Chiyou was a tribal leader of the Nine Li tribe (九黎) in ancient China. He is honoured and worshipped as the

on the top of his head. Thus, the Yellow Emperor modeled Huagai after the shape of auspicious clouds.]

The use of the parasol is not limited to gods. It is widely used by nobles and royalty to demonstrate their identity. It appears with the historical source that parasol is a common element in Chinese culture and Indian religion. The combination of the cross-lotus and the umbrella may be the results of multiple culture influences. As Halbertsma proposes: “The symbol of the parasol can be seen as an appropriate way to enhance the weight and authority of the cross.”⁵²³

4.2.3 Similar cross-lotus patterns before the Mongol era

4.2.3.1 The cross-lotus pattern in China during the 8th and 9th centuries

In China before the Mongol era, there were examples of cross-lotus on Nestorian Stele and Nestorian Stone Sutra Pillar. Another similar pattern was present on the Nestorian painting unearthed in Dunhuang, but it was not particularly clear.

1. The Nestorian Stele in Xi’an

The famous Nestorian Stele was unearthed between 1623 and 1625 nearby the Chongren Temple 崇仁寺 outside of the ancient city Xi’an. The study of Jingjiao just started from the discovery of this monument. According to the inscriptions, the monument was erected in 781 by the Nestorian monk named Jingjing from Persia. The Chinese and Syriac inscriptions on it revealed the existence of Christian communities in northern China, and the fact that the initial Nestorian Christian church was been recognized by the Tang Emperor Taizong due to the efforts of the Christian missionary Alopen in 635.⁵²⁴

In the ninth year of Emperor Taizong, Alopen and some fellow Syriac missionaries came to China from Daqin (Roman Empire), bringing scriptures to introduce Nestorianism. Buried in 845, probably during religious suppression, the stele was rediscovered more than 700 years later.

The cross on Xi’an Monument is rising out of a lotus which is surrounded by a pair of symmetrical clouds. According to our previous analysis, it belongs to cross pattée. Inside the large cross, there is a small one. The gems in the center and at the ends of the arms reflect the obvious Persian influence. At the top of the cross, there is a fame pattern or Buddhist Cintamani which seems to be glowing.

God of War and one of the three legendary founding fathers of China.

⁵²³ Halbertsma, 2008:160.

⁵²⁴ For more research on Nestorian Stele, see Goodspeed, 1909, 33 (4): 279-282; Legge, 1966; Saeki, 1951.

The lotus consists of seven petals. Two branches with flowers are depicted on either side of the main pattern. Gu Weimin believes that they are lily flowers, symbolizing the holiness as mentioned in the *Bible*.⁵²⁵ Yin Xiaoping and Zhang Zhan are more inclined to judge that they are pomegranate branches symbolizing the glory of heaven and the prosperity of the church. Also, the pomegranates are mentioned many times in the *Bible*.⁵²⁶ Yin and Zhang argue that the lily is always associated with the Virgin in Christian art, but Nestorianism claims that the Virgin is not the mother of God, thus the importance of the Virgin in Nestorian teachings are weakened. It's hard to imagine the lily is present in the Nestorian iconographic tradition as a symbol of the Virgin.⁵²⁷

This kind of depiction is unique among all the Nestorian images found at present. In my opinion, the branches are more like to be pomegranate. The only case that can be compared is the remnant of a Manichaeism silk book unearthed from the site of Alpha in Gaochang. Of the book, two pages are depicted with such decorations. Klimkeit identified them as pomegranate fruits.⁵²⁸ This book is dated to be 8-9th centuries, corresponding to the erection of Nestorian Stele. Moreover, Manichaeism and Nestorianism has coexisted in Central Asia and influenced each other. Such images are probably pomegranate branches and used as decorative patterns by many religions at the time.

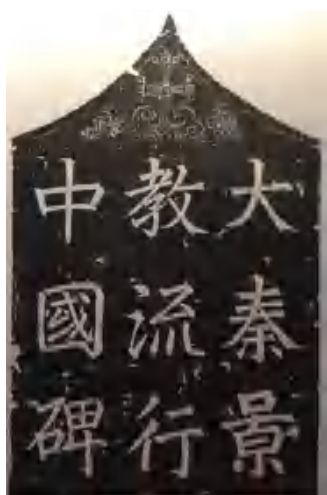


Figure 43 The detail of Nestorian Stele Forest of Stone Steles Museum in Xi'an

Figure 44 The detail of the cross-lotus on the Nestorian Stele

⁵²⁵ Gu, 2005:4-5.

⁵²⁶ Yin & Zhang, 2016 (1):1-25.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁸ Klimkeit,1989:100.

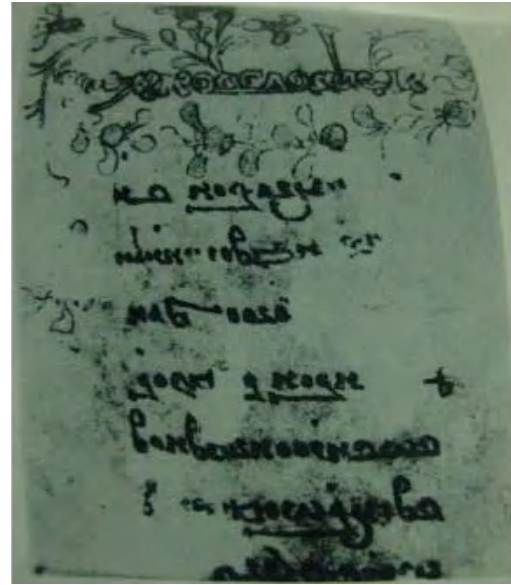
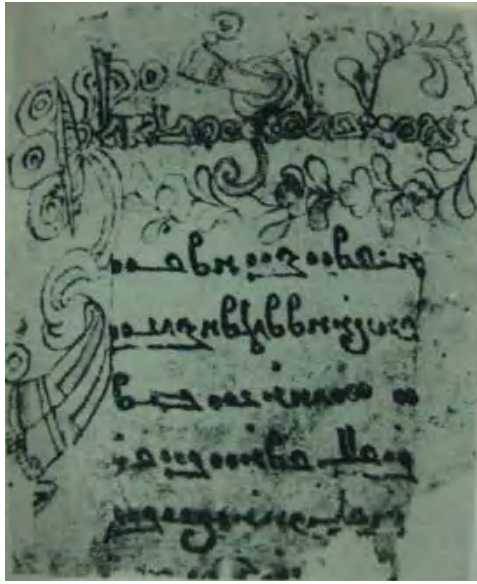


Figure 45 Manichaeism silk book Illustration IB 4981a⁵²⁹

Figure 46 Manichaeism silk book Illustration IB 4981f⁵³⁰

Here, the cross occupies the main space of the image. The low angle of the clouds and the inconspicuous lotus make it more prominent.⁵³¹ From the introduction of Nestorianism in China in 635 until to the erection of the Monument in 781, Nestorianism have been known by Chinese for at least 146 years, during which such a delicate pattern was created and added new oriental elements. It appears with the archaeological evidence that the most basic and important iconographic tradition of Jingjiao—the cross-lotus pattern has been very matured in China during the 8th century.

2. The Nestorian Stone Sutra Pillar in Luoyang

The Nestorian Stone Sutra Pillar was unearthed in Luoyang in 2006. Since it was unearthed, it has shed new light on the research about Nestorian Christianity in China and the Nestorian manuscripts in the Dunhuang Grottoes.

Unfortunately, the pillar is not complete. The destruction of the second half of the pillar suggests that this may be related to religious persecution in 845.⁵³² The inscription of the stone pillar bears the Chinese Nestorian text named *Daqin Jingjiao xuanyuan zhiben jing* 大秦景教宣元至本经 [Scripture of the Brilliant Teaching from Da Qin Promoting the Origin and Reaching the Original], and a relevant note which narrates the undertaking of the project. The erection of the pillar occurred on January

⁵²⁹ Klimkeit, 1989, pl. 51.

⁵³⁰ Klimkeit, 1989, pl. 52.

⁵³¹ Yin & Zhang, 2016 (1): 1-25.

⁵³² Zhang, 2007 (1): 65-73+126.

22, 814. (the eighth day of the 12th month of the ninth year of the Yuanhe 元和 period of the region).⁵³³

According to the inscriptions, the pillar was erected for the deceased “Lady An from the An kingdom” and their “deceased father’s elder brother” by the younger brother Nestorian priest named Qingsu, the elder cousin Shaocheng (from paternal side) and uncle An Shaolin (from maternal side), etc. Following the tradition of the Buddhist devotees, they erected a stone pillar on the side of the tomb passage.

Besides the inscription, six depictions around the pillar were preserved. Every three are a group, and the cross-lotus pattern is in the middle, guarded by the two flying figures similar to the Apsaras. Scholars generally believe that the cross in the first group is more richly decorated than the second group.

In my opinion, the ornate cross is a kind of Occitan cross and the other is cross pattée. There are gems or small flowers, or flame patterns decorated on the two crosses. The gems are considered to be influenced by Persian and used by Nestorian Christians to demonstrate the light and purity of Jingjiao.⁵³⁴The lotus consists of many petals. The cross is flat, but the lotus has a three-dimensional effect.

Of particular interest is the more two “Apsaras” on both sides of the cross-lotus pattern which are very similar to the true Apsaras of Longmen Grottoes at the same time. In Central Plains area, flying figures are added to the two sides of the cross as new elements, thus further the iconological tradition of Jingjiao. This change happened more than half a century after the erection of the Nestorian Stele in Xi’an.

In conclusion, the Jingjiao images of the Tang Dynasty show the following characteristics: (1)Strong Persian style; (2)Mature cross-lotus pattern; (3)The direct borrowing of Buddhist Apsaras without wings. The features are inherited and developed by Nestorian Christians of the Yuan Dynasty more than 200 years later.

⁵³³ For more research on the pillar, see Ge, 2009 b; Lin & Yin, 2008(1) :330-357+398-399; Zhang, 2013:177-202; Nicolini-Zani, 2013:141-160; Ge, 2013:161-176; Tan, 2012(4):63-69;Tang, 2009:109-132.

⁵³⁴ Yin & Zhang, 2016 (1): 1-25.



Figure 47 Nestorian Stone Pillar in Luoyang⁵³⁵

Figure 48 Rubbing of the images the front (the upper)⁵³⁶ the back (the lower)⁵³⁷

3. Nestorian painting of Jesus Christ of the 9th century

This painting was found in the 17th Cave of the Thousand Buddha Cave in Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang by Stein during his visit to Central Asia from 1906 to 1908.⁵³⁸ When the icon was found, it was used by Nestorian Christians,⁵³⁹ however, it belonged to Buddhism at first. As Waley (1889–1966)⁵⁴⁰ recorded: “Originally intended for a Christian picture, this painting was no doubt used as a Bodhisattva at Tun-Huang.”⁵⁴¹ From Buddhism to Nestorianism, this shows the close relationship between the two at that time. The wing-like decoration on both sides of the cross and the pearl roundels pattern around the crown feature Kushano-Sasanian art.⁵⁴² Dr. 松本栄一 (1900–1984)⁵⁴³ evaluates: “This Nestorian figure is based on the paintings of the Greek figures of the Sassan Dynasty.”⁵⁴⁴

From the restoration by Mr Furuyama⁵⁴⁵, we could vaguely see a lotus seat under the cross on the figure’s head, but it is not very clear. A. Waley has such description:

⁵³⁵ Ge, 2016 (3):149-154, pl.2 & pl.3.

⁵³⁶ Ge, 2009 b, pl.11.

⁵³⁷ Ge, 2009 b, pl.12.

⁵³⁸ Saeki,1951:408, 416 - 417; Whitfield, 1982:85, pl. 25, fig. 76; Parry, 1996, 78 (3):143-162. Gu, 2005: 31.

⁵³⁹ Chen, 2008 (4):66-72; Zhu, 1997:194.

⁵⁴⁰ Arthur David Waley was an English Orientalist and sinologist.

⁵⁴¹ Waley, 1931: 81-82.

⁵⁴² Chen, 2008(4):66-72; K. Parry, 1996, 78 (3):143-162; Rosenfield, 1967: 95.

⁵⁴³ 松本栄一 is a world-renowned Japanese researcher in the history of Oriental art, especially in Dunhuang paintings.

⁵⁴⁴ Namio,1980 (14):46-47.

⁵⁴⁵ Saeki,1951:416.

“The Saint, approaching life-size, is standing slightly to the left, with head turned still farther to the left. Right arm raised from the elbow; handheld out palm uppermost, thumb and second finger joined. Left hand at the breast, mostly broken away but holding a long brown staff which rested on shoulder. Tiara has a wing-like ornament on the left and a Maltese cross in the center. There is a second Maltese cross on the breast. The nose is slightly aquiline. Marking of moustache and beard-down is red...Robe over right shoulder is red. Under-robe, green.”⁵⁴⁶ Here A. Waley may misunderstand the cross pattée as the Maltese styles.

His description has nothing about lotus base below the cross. K. Parry’s records: “That the figure is Christian in inspiration is evident from the cross on the lotus flower in the headdress, the cross pattern on the collar, and the pectoral cross. The figure is also holding in the left hand the staff of a processional cross.”⁵⁴⁷

We see that “lotus flower” is used by K. Parry. His judgement is based on the well-known tentative restoration, from which it is easy to see something like “lotus base” at the bottom of the cross.

Egami Namio (1906–2002)⁵⁴⁸ argues: “There is a lotus throne below the cross but no lotus base.”⁵⁴⁹ The difference between “lotus throne” and “lotus base” is not very clear. Lotus throne is the lotus flower-shaped seat for Bodhisattva, while lotus base consists of lotus petals and does not have a clear platform for sitting down or standing. Possibly, what Egami Namio desires to express is that the base is not the true lotus base like other Nestorian images.

To my best knowledge, I have not seen more scholars have another detailed analysis of the crown and the cross. But in any case, it is not the cross-lotus motif we often see in Nestorian tombstones.

⁵⁴⁶ Waley, 1931: 81-82; Zhu, 1993:194.

⁵⁴⁷ Parry, 1996, 78 (3):143-162.

⁵⁴⁸ Egami Namio was a Japanese archaeologist and historian of East Asian history.

⁵⁴⁹ Namio, Pan Trans. 1980: 46-47.



Figure 49 The restoration Unidentified Christian saint, 9th century, Ink and colours on silk

Figure 50 The mural in Gaochang

Besides, a mural was discovered by Dr A. Le. Coq in the ruins of Nestorian Temple of the late 9th century in Gaochang City of Turpan, Xinjiang.⁵⁵⁰ Albert Grünwedel (1856– 1935) managed to sketch it as best as he could because the place where the painting was found was too dark to take the photograph of the picture in 1905.⁵⁵¹

It depicts a bearded figure mounted on a donkey or a horse holding a processional cross with arms terminating in pearls. A small cross erects on the horseman's headdress.⁵⁵² A female figure (believer) dressing in the Tang dynasty costume is behind him. It is not sure whether the figure is Jesus or not (According to the biblical record, if he is Jesu, he should ride a donkey instead of a horse)⁵⁵³, but the scholars have determined that it belongs to Nestorian paintings.⁵⁵⁴ There is no lotus underneath the two crosses. (one is cross pattée, the other is Greek cross)

Based on the above literature, it is clear that the pattern of cross-lotus in Central Asia was not present or was not popular at least around the 9th century. Such lotus-seat should be created after the introduction of Nestorian into Central Asia with the

⁵⁵⁰ Chen, 2008 (4):66-72; Zhu, 1997:193-194; Saeki, 1951:418.

⁵⁵¹ Saeki, 1951:418.

⁵⁵² Parry, 1996, 78 (3):143-162.

⁵⁵³ Chen, 2008 (4):66-72.

⁵⁵⁴ Chen, 2008 (4):66-72; Zhu, 1993:194.

influence of Buddhism. We are looking forward to the discovery of new archaeological materials.

4.2.3.2 Crosses in Tibet and its neighbouring regions

In the oriental Church history, Tibet was one of the regions which stood in the missionary plan. During their occupation of the region of Dunhuang, the Tibetans have left some traces about their Christian belief. Cross symbols are likewise attested.

Some crosses in this region were recorded by A.H. Francke in the early 20th century, found on the boulder of Domkhar.⁵⁵⁵ The first of these crosses has a Tibetan inscription, "...in the year of the pig."⁵⁵⁶ (No.1) This is the only record of the cross with a Tibetan inscription from Western Tibet. The "cross" of No.4 has a base plant—maybe it is not a true cross because it lacks a quarter.

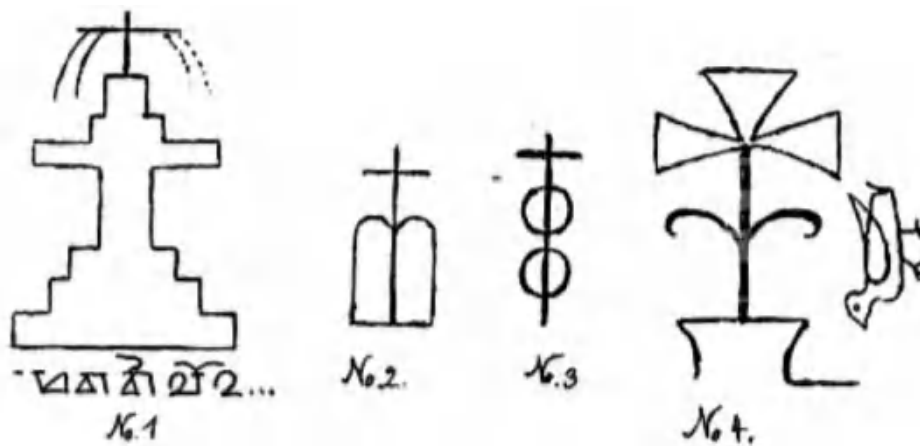


Figure 51

Besides, Giuseppe Tucci found some small metal crosses which worn as ornaments in the same regions. Whether these ornaments are related to the Ordos Bronze crosses is unknown.

Moreover, the other two examples could add Tibetan specimens.⁵⁵⁷ The two crosses were depicted on the Old Tibetan Mss of Dunhuang manuscripts, without the lotus element.

(1) On the Tibetan text P.T.1182v, a Nestorian cross is drawn in a similar form like the specimen on CH1063v (see Chapter 4.1.5). Rong speculates that this cross could be hung up.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁵ Domkhar is a village in the Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is located in the Khalsi tehsil.

⁵⁵⁶ Zhongguo Dunhuang Tulu fanxue hui, 1992.

⁵⁵⁷ Wang, 2006:149-162; Rong, 1998: 492.

⁵⁵⁸ Rong, 1998: 492.

(2) A Greek-style cross is depicted on the border of one page of the fragment. It is the Tibetan translation of the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*. Rong proposes that this cross has nothing to do with this Buddhist scripture.⁵⁵⁹



Figure 52 P.T.1182v



Figure 53 P.T.1676

On the neighboring regions, several Sogdian rock inscriptions with three Nestorian crosses were found on the boulder at Tankse Ladakh, though surrounded by more recent graffiti from casual Buddhist travelers. In history, the region of Ladakh has long received the triple influence of Nestorianism, Buddhism, and Manichaeism.⁵⁶⁰

In the period after Alexander (356–323), the Sogdian territory became a part of the kingdom of the Bactrian Greeks (256-125). Hundreds of years later, the oriental form of Christianity adopted by the Nestorian Church came to this region. Nestorian missionaries followed the Silk Road to Central Asia, then they founded Christian communities and preached it among the Sogdians, till the invasions of nomadic Central Asian tribes, Buddhist reaction, as well as the rise of Islam forces—ended this Christianized Sogdian civilization.

The Sogdian texts of the inscription go like this: “In the year 210 (Arab calendar, corresponding with 825), we sent Caitra from Samarkand together with the monk Nosfarn as messengers to the King of Tibet.”⁵⁶¹

If the texts and the crosses are together, the monk who is called Nosfarn in the inscription may have been a Nestorian messenger. The bottom of the cross is a set of leaves. The leaves flow upwards either side of the base of the cross. Klimkeit (1939–

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ Wang, 2010 (12):39-60.

⁵⁶¹ According to Klimkeit, the date corresponds with 841/842, see Klimkeit, 1993:477-488; according to Lin Meicun, the date corresponds with 844 /845, see: Lin, 1995:457-458.

1999) identifies the plant under the cross as lotus and states that it may be related to the pedestal of the cross in the Armenian story.⁵⁶² But we could not find a more similar description in other scholars' articles. From the physical appearance, it is different the cross-lotus in China while it is similar to the St. Thomas Christian Cross in India.



Figure 54 Sogdian text & Nestorian Cross

Figure 55 Persian cross at St Thomas Mount, Chennai, 7th or 8th century, Tamil Nadu, India.⁵⁶³

4.2.3.3 St. Thomas Christian Crosses in India

Besides China, the place where we can find the cross-lotus pattern is South India—St. Thomas crosses. Interestingly, St. Thomas crosses are also “plain crosses”. They were named by the Portuguese missionaries because they found these crosses in almost all of St. Thomas Christian communities.⁵⁶⁴ It is not clear from which century onward this cross was in constant use in this church, however, St. Thomas Christians, who are willing to trace their origins to the activity of St. Thomas in the first century.

Historically, St. Thomas Christians had a relationship with the Persian-centred Assyrian Church. Zhu regarded early Christianity introduced to India as the Nestorian sect.⁵⁶⁵ Their traditions were different from the Latin rite introduced by the Portuguese missionaries after the 16th century. With the arrival of the Portuguese, St. Thomas crosses were destroyed and abandoned. These new missionaries rebuilt the Churches and kept the Latin Cross with Crucifix in attempt to make St. Thomas Christians away from the memories of their ancient traditions and in conformity with the new rituals.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶² Klimkeit: 1993:477-488.

⁵⁶³ The Cross is at Our Lady of Expectations Church under the Latin Catholic diocese of Chingelpet (Madras-Mylapore). This Cross is considered as the oldest cross in India.

⁵⁶⁴ Nedungatt, 2008.

⁵⁶⁵ Zhu, 1997: 52-57.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Generally speaking, there are five main features in St. Thomas Cross: (1) three steps at the bottom, (2) the lotus (leaf) shaped patterns under the cross, (3) the cross without the figure of Jesus with spheres decorations at the four ends, (4) the descending dove is at the summit of the cross, (5) Pahlavi (Middle Persian) inscriptions round the edges of the slab. Due to the high degree of ambiguity in these inscriptions, scholars have not yet reached on an agreement on the interpretations.

The appearances of lotus under the Nestorian cross and St. Thomas cross are different. The petals of the latter are thin and narrow, resembling that in Ladakh. Because of this, some scholars think it is not a lotus flower.⁵⁶⁷

Varghese Pathikulangara has ever interpreted the St. Thomas Cross with his immense knowledge in East Syriac theology based on the Indian context:

“The empty cross in imitation of the empty tomb symbolizes the resurrection of Jesus. The blooming buds at the ends of the four arms of this cross symbolize the new life. The descending dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The lotus on the bottom shows the Christian faith erected on Indian culture. It represents purity and divine birth. The three steps on the bottom of the lotus signify the Calvary.”⁵⁶⁸ Thadikkatt gives the similar interpretation.⁵⁶⁹

The similarities between Nestorian crosses and St. Thomas crosses remind us of the possibility that there is a connection between the Christian community in Quanzhou and South India,⁵⁷⁰ especially the state of Kerala on the southwestern Malabar Coast of India, although the two are different in many aspects, such as the dove, the inscriptions, the style of the lotus.

During the Mongol era, Quanzhou enjoyed the reputation of the international trade center, and Christians in South India were likely to engage in business activities there. The port of Quilon⁵⁷¹ in Kerala connected the international trade of the Middle East and China,⁵⁷² which was called Gulin 故临, Julan 俱兰 or Guilong 奎隆 in ancient China. The famous Catholic missionary Montecorvino and his companions have ever moved down by sea to India From Persia. In 1291 they arrived “Country of St. Thomas” where they preached for 13 months and baptized about one hundred people. There are

⁵⁶⁷ Chen & Li, 2010, 40 (3):21-29.

⁵⁶⁸ Pathikulangara, 1986.

⁵⁶⁹ Thadikkatt, 2004.

⁵⁷⁰ Parry & Li, 2010:113-125.

⁵⁷¹ Kollam Port is one of the historic ports situated 4 kilometres away from the ancient Quilon. It was one of the country's most important trade hubs from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries.

⁵⁷² Liu, 1991.

records that he has also been to Quanzhou in 1923. Then he reached Khanbaliqin 1294.⁵⁷³ It appears with the historical source that the traffic between China and South India was smooth at the time. So, was there any connection between the Chinese Nestorianism and the St. Thomas community in India? We look forward to more information in the future to help us solve this mystery.

4.2.3.4 Conclusion

Historical sources prove that the motif of cross-lotus has achieved a perfect combination in China in the 8th –9th centuries. St. Thomas cross in India shares the similar lotus element and forms a relatively fixed style—basically has the elements of a cross, lotus flower, a dove and steps.

In other regions outside of China, the immature attempt of the combination of cross and lotus was also present before the Mongolia era. There have not been definite examples in Central Asia and the patterns in Tibet and Ladakh appeared occasionally.

During the Mongolia era, the motif of cross-lotus was inherited and further developed. It derived many forms through the appropriation of local elements: cross-clouds, cross-lotus with parasol, cross-lotus with censer and cross-lotus with clouds. No matter how it changes, cross-lotus is always the main theme of Nestorian iconology in China. Klimkeit sees the use of lotus flowers and clouds in cross depictions of China and characterizes them as an “early spontaneous attempt to indigenize Christianity in China”.⁵⁷⁴

4.2.4 Discussion on the lotus as a decorative motif

4.2.4.1 The mainstream concept

The opinion that the cross-lotus is influenced by Buddhism has been the mainstream for a long time.

Yao Chongxin argues that the influence of Buddhism on the Nestorian art is not limited to the lotus, but also affects the Nestorian architecture. Influenced by the tradition of setting up a seat for the saint in Buddhist art, at least until the late 8th century, Nestorianism has incorporated the lotus seat of Buddhism into its plastic art and placed the lotus under the cross.⁵⁷⁵

Klimkeit believes: “From Ladakh to Mongolia and southern China, the most remarkable feature of Nestorian iconology is the combination of the cross with

⁵⁷³ Klimkeit, 1995.

⁵⁷⁴ Klimkeit, 1993: 478.

⁵⁷⁵ Yao, 2017(1).

Buddhist and Taoist art, such as the cross standing on a lotus flower. In Buddhism, the lotus symbolizes purity, transcending the secular and the evil. This symbol is expressed in Buddhist art, that is, a bodhisattva stands or sits on a lotus seat. The Nestorian cross-lotus pattern is a similar expression. (The cross replaced the bodhisattva.) This is also consistent with the Nestorian doctrines. The Nestorian Christians do not depict the crucified Jesus on the cross but leave a lot of unmodified blanks to represent the ascended Christ.”⁵⁷⁶

The concept that lotus is considered as a symbol of Buddhism and became the symbol of India itself due to the influence of Buddhism especially during the time of Ashoka. In China, the Buddha and celestial beings in the Dunhuang murals are all drawn according to the birth idea of “lotus in the Heaven—birth by the transformation from lotus—Buddha and celestial being”.⁵⁷⁷ Lotus and Buddhism are inextricably linked.

In First Corinthians, we read that if Christ is not resurrected, the preaching is useless and so is our faith.” (Corinthians 15:14-17) The resurrection is the core of the Christian faith, and it happens that the corresponding concept can be found in the lotus flower of Buddhism.

The relief “Yuwang Qianshan” 育王迁善 [Ashoka listens to Buddhist Dharma] on the east pagoda (also known as Zhenguo Pagoda) of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou is an excellent example of lotus symbolizing rebirth. This stone pagoda was rebuilt between the second year of Jiayi (1238) and the tenth year of Chunyou (1250) during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279).

The relief depicts a Buddhist story about Ashoka, who was an Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty (321–185 B.C.E.). He ruled almost all of the Indian subcontinent from 268 B.C.E. to 232 B.C.E. In early years, Ashoka liked fighting and killing. In his later years, he believed in Buddhism and laid down the butcher’s knife.

On this relief, a lotus flower is raising from the utensil named 鑊 Huo. Huo is a kind of cookware (big caldron) for cooking food, also used as a punishment of boiling criminals alive in ancient China. The lotus flower turned into a Buddhist nun (middle) and preached to Ashoka (right).

⁵⁷⁶ Klimkeit, 1994: 477- 484.

⁵⁷⁷ Yoshimura, 2009:127.



Figure 56 Relief on the east pagoda of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou⁵⁷⁸

In history, Ashoka's life can be divided into two parts. The first half was the era of "Black Ashoka", which was full of war and killing; the latter half was the era of "White Ashoka", full of love and compassion. After he believed in Buddhism, he worked hard to promote Buddhism throughout the country and contributed Buddhism to be a state religion. The change brought his rebirth which was expressed through the symbol of the lotus.

It is easy to remind us of Jesus. The cross is raising from the lotus, does it also mean the resurrection of Jesus? The Buddhas sit on the lotus seat, indicating that they are born from the lotus by the transformation.⁵⁷⁹ If we consider the lotus in Nestorianism from its symbolic meaning in Buddhism, the core of cross—the rebirth of Jesus and his victory over death receives activation in the oriental soil.

4.2.4.2 The debate

Some scholars in past decades have questioned this mainstream concept with diverse reasons.

For example, Chen Jianguang argues: "These are the crosses of ancient Christianity from Persia—the crosses are placed at the top of the leaves or the upper part of the lotus. And the lotus here is not a symbol of Buddhism, but only an expression of the Assyrian culture of Persian Christianity. It has nothing to do with Buddhism... Lotus was widely used by Persians and Egyptians as a religious symbol long before Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. And in Persia, Lotus is also commonly used as a religious symbol of Assyrianism to represent rebirth, life and resurrection. It is used with the cross to represent the resurrection and salvation in Christianity."⁵⁸⁰ Here, he denies a close connection between Nestorianism and Buddhism and concludes that Chinese Nestorians must have inherited the motif from Persia, where Nestorianism started.

⁵⁷⁸ <https://www.meipian.cn/o4vpw4c>

⁵⁷⁹ Yin, 2012:169.

⁵⁸⁰ Chen & Li, 2010, 40 (3):21-29.

Also, he questions the lotus under the cross of St. Thomas in India: “The lotus here is not a symbol of Buddhism but comes from Assyrian culture.”⁵⁸¹

His opinion was criticized by some scholars. Chen states: “His claim sounds attractive, but actually is short on scientific substance...and even some obvious mistakes when drawing in the historical evidences and art terms, are all quite explicit.”⁵⁸²

For example, he mistakes the Yelikewen porcelain stele excavated in Inner Mongolia as a Syrian artefact and even believes that there was no Buddhist belief in Central Asia at that time, which reflects his very rigorous academic attitude. He also ignores the comparison with different genres, the plastic art tradition, analysis of artistic expressions which are very necessary in the study of art history.

Andrea makes a more convincing assertion that the Jingjiao lotus-motif-design is most likely an adoption of Chinese or Indian Buddhist iconography, rather than being of Persian origin.

As far as I am concerned, I quiet agree with Andrea. In history, lotus first appeared in Persia and was introduced to ancient Egypt from 7th century BC to 4th century BC. Before Buddhism and Hinduism flourished, lotus has been present as a decorative pattern in the Nile. Around 3000 BC, the lotus was introduced to India by the Aryans and gradually became a symbol of holiness. Alois Riegl (1858–1905) proposes: “All ancient Western decoration of plant pattern is the inheritance and continuation of the ancient Egyptian lotus pattern.”⁵⁸³

Lotus in many parts of the world is originally used in conjunction with a specific symbolic meaning. As the sun rises, the lotus flower opens and closes at night when the sun goes down. The lotus flower, which is regarded as the national flower in Egypt, represents the sun and life. Some appear in the tomb as symbols of rebirth.

Lotus motif in Egypt comes in both side and front forms. The image of the lotus in front form is that the petals rotate around the center and connect together. It is also called rose decoration in Egypt, which has become a major feature of Assyrian decoration. This shape appears more in Nestorian tombstones in Inner Mongolia. **(I-O-8, I-O-15, I-O-17, I-M-3, I-M-5? I-B-9, I-D-1, I-D-3, I-D-8)**. Some of them are

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² Andrea, 2019.

⁵⁸³ Riegl, 2018.

depicted with two circles in the center. However, this pattern also resembles the lotus pattern during the Warring States Period in China.⁵⁸⁴

In China, a pottery in the Neolithic era carved a lotus petal-like pattern was unearthed in the Hemudu site in Yuyao, Zhejiang. In the Zhou Dynasty, lotus has become a favorite decorative pattern. In the Spring and Autumn Period, the practice of decorating the lotus petals was very popular.⁵⁸⁵ During the Six Dynasties (222–589), the lotus motif was greatly influenced by the Buddhist iconography and reached its peak as a decoration pattern. Gradually it developed into the most complicated style in Tang dynasty, that is the birth of Bao Xiang Flower 宝相花 [Po-phase Pattern]. It is the prosperity of Buddhism that led to the growing importance of lotus in Chinese decorative arts.

During the Mongol era, the Yuan dynasty further developed the Song aesthetic ideal in mixture with the Nomadic and Central Asia elements, and finally established a kind of elegant and highly symbolic style. At the time, the once glorious Buddhist art gradually declined. However, the lotus as a decorative image has not been dim. On the contrary, because it is well integrated with traditional Chinese culture and art, it has developed significantly and is used widely in ceramics, architecture, textile, stone carving and other daily utensils. Like the Apsara, it comes from the secular world, then absorbed by religion, and finally returns to the secular.

It appears with the historical that both Chinese culture and Persian culture have their own lotus preference since very early time. However, they are very different in artistic aspects when used in iconography.

First, from the perspective of plant, they are absolutely different. “The ancient Persian lotus, strictly speaking, is not the same species with the one in Chinese or Indian iconography. The prototype of ancient Persian and Egyptian lotus motif is Water Lily belonging to the Nymphaeaceae family; while the Chinese lotus is usually referring to *Nelumbo nucifera*, commonly named lotus flower or Indian sacred lotus, belonging to the *Nelumbo naceae* family.”⁵⁸⁶

Second, based on the different cultural background, they also have many differences in forms and meanings. Apart from the lotus decoration resembling rose decoration in Inner Mongolia, most of the Nestorian lotus clearly showed the

⁵⁸⁴ Zhai, 2014:18.

⁵⁸⁵ Yuan, 2001:5.

⁵⁸⁶ Andrea, 2019.

characteristics of lotus in China and were homogenous with the other lotus decorated artefacts of its time.

Thus, Chen Jianguang's conclusion is only supported by his arbitrary assertion that the Assyrian church had the lotus motif long before Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism but he ignores their absolute difference in plastic art features.

When discussing lotus, we had better put the elements together with it. For example, the cross-lotus is carved on Buddhist-style tombstones in Quanzhou. Some cross-lotus patterns are also decorated with a censer and a parasol. These mixed elements indicate that the cultural background that influences the shape of the cross-lotus is very complex. The single "Assyrian source" must be problematic.

By analyzing and investigating the true meaning and possibly evolving traces of the Lotus motif, as well as the possible dissemination routes of the lotus design during that period, I will advocate that Nestorian cross-lotus pattern is based on a hybridized and synthetic culture. The motif of cross-lotus both in the Tang Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty enjoys an identical artistic style, which is believed to be influenced by Chinese Buddhist iconography firstly and the lotus, in later period, exists as a decorative element.

It must be highlighted here that the flowers under the cross are not all very standard lotus styles. Halbertsma proposes: "Given the Buddhist presence in China I would regard the lotus depiction on Nestorian grave material as an adaptation of the leaved cross through the incorporation of a Buddhist motif. The depiction of the cross over a floral object which is neither a pair of leaves nor a lotus can be understood as an intermediate stage."⁵⁸⁷ I think this statement is also worthy of reference.

⁵⁸⁷ Halbertsma, 2008:160.

4.3 The “angels” motif

Before talking about this motif, I am willing to stress that the “angels” in question is not the same as the angels in Christian art.

In fine art, angels are often depicted in Christian artwork with bird wings, halos, and light and they act as intermediaries between God and humanity.⁵⁸⁸ However, Nestorian “angels” are not true angels because they have the costumes and appearance like Apsaras, and some of them have neither wings nor halos; they are also not true Apsaras, because they fly around the cross rather than the Buddha.

When the winged figures were present for the first time in the Tang Dynasty, scholars have different names for them.

Zhang Naizhu calls them “heavenly beings” and argues: “The depictions of the heavenly beings on both sides are not the same as the winged angels common in the Christian community ... The figures are extremely similar to Buddhist Apsaras.”⁵⁸⁹

Luo Zhao believes that the depictions on the Luoyang Nestorian stone pillar are Apsaras with male and female faces and are completely consistent with Buddhist Apsaras in Luoyang. They are undoubtedly influenced by Buddhism.⁵⁹⁰ Ge Chengyong proposes that Nestorian missionaries will not easily change their original religious symbols. Thus, the flying figures should be Christian angels rather than Buddhist Apsaras.⁵⁹¹ Tang Li⁵⁹² infers that the angel who holds an object with a wisp of smoke is likely to be Seraphim described in Isaiah.⁵⁹³

As to the Nestorian winged figures depicted on the gravestones in Quanzhou, the scholars are more cautious. When Foster consulted the catholic of the Church of the East regarding the images of “angels” from Quanzhou, the Catholics remarked in his reply of 1953: “Images are contrary to the teaching and tradition of the Church of the East, and we have never noticed them before on the relics of the Church found in China.”⁵⁹⁴ However, several scholars identify them as angels, such as Samuel N. C. Lieu⁵⁹⁵, Wu Youxiong⁵⁹⁶ and Li Jingrong.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁸⁸ Ferguson, 1996:97-101.

⁵⁸⁹ Zhang, 2007 (1):65-73+126.

⁵⁹⁰ Luo, 2007 (6):3+32-44+50.

⁵⁹¹ Ge, 2014 (4):1-8.

⁵⁹² Tang, 2009:109-132.

⁵⁹³ “Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.” (Isaiah 6:6)

⁵⁹⁴ Foster, 1954:1-25. 24, note 1.

⁵⁹⁵ Lieu, 2002:1-17.

⁵⁹⁶ Wu, 1998.

⁵⁹⁷ Li, 2011 (5):26-30.

Suffice here to say that for such images with multiple cultural elements, both the names of angels and Apsaras are inaccurate. In this study, for the convenience of description, I will temporarily call these winged figures as “angels” with quotation marks to distinguish them from real ones.

4.3.1 An overview of “angels” in different regions

The patterns of “‘angel’ holding the cross-lotus” during the Tang Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty share the similar plastic art features.⁵⁹⁸ However, the latter is richer in quantity and style than the previous.

4.3.1.1 Xinjiang

Only one tombstone with winged figures has been found in Xinjiang so far, two wings on the back and two at the waist. The two figures bent their heads and shoulders down, holding the lotus in their hands and sagging their legs. The feeling of flying is presented by the wings on both sides.

Klimkeit (1939-1999) argues that the two figures wear clothing of Chinese style.⁵⁹⁹ Their faces are also very oriental.⁶⁰⁰ The inscription indicates the dating of the tombstone is 1301/2, during which the Mongol Empire began to rule modern-day Xinjiang after their conquest of the Qara Khitai. (The Mongols fully conquered the former territories of the Qara-Khitans in 1220.) After the Yuan Dynasty was established by Kublai Khan in 1271, Xinjiang became a battle place between the Yuan dynasty and the Chagatai Khanate. Shortly, the Yuan put most of present-day Xinjiang under its control under the Bechbaliq province.⁶⁰¹ Then Yuan did set up an institution named “Qara-hoja Governor’s office” (Gaochang)⁶⁰² in eastern Xinjiang in 1330, which was directly governed by the Yuan dynasty.

The years of war has caused widespread ethnic migration and ethnic integration. Jurchens, Khitans, Han Chinese, Uighurs and Xixia people, many of whom became local officers and government bureaucrats. Based on the background, the models of two flying figures were likely to originate from the Han people who migrated in Xinjiang or the ethnic minorities assimilated by the Han people.

⁵⁹⁸ Ge, 2014 (4): 1-8.

⁵⁹⁹ Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.

⁶⁰⁰ Niu, 2008:65.

⁶⁰¹ In Chinese 别失八里行省

⁶⁰² In Chinese 哈刺火州总管府

It is worth of noting that on the Nestorian paten of the 9th–10th century unearthed in the region of Semirechye, there have been depictions of four angels, however, each of them has only a pair of wings. (see Figure 24)

4.3.1.2 Yangzhou

The “angels” in Yangzhou have also four wings like Almaliq. The difference is that there are two small crosses erecting on the crowns of the “angels”. “Angels” **Q-8, Q-16, Q-19, Q-21 and Q-29** in Quanzhou share the same character. The “angel” on the left bends his right leg slightly and the right bends his left leg slightly. It is difficult to find the prototype of the crown worn by the “angels” from historical sources, but there is a similar crown worn by a guard of the Yuan Dynasty.

The cross erecting on the crown has ever been present on the Nestorian painting at the Cave 17 of the Mogao Grottoes and a mural in Gaochang (see Chapter 4.2.3.1). This style is coincide with the record in *Daxing Guosi Ji*: “……冠于首 [wear it on their heads]……”

Historically, it is common in Byzantine art. In the southwestern entrance mosaic of the former basilica Hagia Sophia of Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey), Mary the Virgin is sitting on a cushion in the middle and holding Child Christ in her lap. ‘The Mother of God’ monograms are around them (MP and ΘY, an abbreviation of MHTHP ΘEOY). On her right side stands emperor Justinian I (483–565), offering a model of the Hagia Sophia. On her left, emperor Constantine I (272–337) is presenting a model of the city. Crosses stand on the crowns of the two emperors, as well as on the steeple of the model of the church.

Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. He played an influential role in the proclamation of the Edict of Milan in 313, which stated that Christians should be allowed to follow their faith without oppression. He did favor the Christian Church, even though these measures were for his imperial power. He moved the capital to ancient Byzantium in the name of God and claimed that “the invisible god (God) is leading in front of me”. He himself became the executor of God’s will and the cross became a symbol of “divine right of kings”.⁶⁰³ The crosses erecting on the crowns of the Byzantine emperors emphasize the supreme imperial power. The religious authority must not override the imperial power.

⁶⁰³ Chen, 2003:86-92.

The stage of Nestorian activity was mainly in Persia, but its early history was inseparable from the Byzantine Empire. Nestorians have inherited many elements of Greek and Roman culture preserved by the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁰⁴ Cross on the crown may be a tradition from the Byzantine Empire.



Figure 57 Hagia Sophia Southwestern entrance mosaics⁶⁰⁵ 944



Figure 58 The emperor Justinian I⁶⁰⁶



Figure 59 The Emperor Constantine I⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Budge, 1928:37; Zhang, 2005(6).

⁶⁰⁵ <https://hagiasophiaturkey.com/the-vestibule-mosaic/>

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ <https://www.alamy.com/stock-image-turkey-istanbul-basilica-of-the-hagia-sophia-mosaic-the-emperor->

The similar feature of four wings implies the close connection between Almaliq and Xinjiang. According to the inscription, this is the tomb of Elizabeth (yelishiba), wife of Hindu from Dadu (Khanbaliq, now Beijing).⁶⁰⁸ According to Niu, in the book *Yuanshi Renming Suoyin* 元史人名索引 [Index of the Names from *Yuanshi*]⁶⁰⁹ edited by Yao Jing'an, there are about 12 people named Hindu. It is very difficult to determine who is the person mentioned in the inscription. The only thing can be confirmed is that the Hindu Clan belongs to the sects who speak Turkic.⁶¹⁰ Among the tombstones unearthed in the Seven Rivers of Central Asia, there is also a tombstone inscribed the name Hindu (S-15). Similar patterns and names confirm our conjecture—Nestorian Christians in Yangzhou were also originated from Central Asia.

Besides, a Latin Catholic tombstone found in 1951 in Yangzhou depicts the similar images of “angels”. It was the gravestone of Catherine Vilioni, daughter of Domenico de Vilioni. The inscription indicated that she died in 1342. An image of the Virgin Mary and Child is carved in the upper panel of the gravestone. On the left, Catherine is kneeling in prayer while the wheels of torture are miraculously destroyed. A pair of angels are flying above. On the right, Catherine’s decapitation by the sword is shown. Slightly above this, a pair of angels is lowering the martyr’s body into a tomb.⁶¹¹

The “angels” in the Latin tombstone reminiscent of the above-mentioned Nestorian gravestone. But the “angels” in the Latin tombstone only have two wings and no crowns. Most importantly, they do not hold the cross-lotus pattern. This is the first time for the presence of Latin Catholic angels in the 14th century in China. These scenes tell us the story of doomsday trial completely. The Virgin, the Son, the angels, and wheels constitute the heroes of the story together. No such complete and narrative pattern has been found in Nestorian images of the same period. However, there have been narrative expressions on the Nestorian patens in Central Asia in early times. One is from the Perm region with the depictions about the death and resurrection of Jesus (see Figure 24), but absence of the Virgin⁶¹²; the other is from the village of Malaya Anikova, depicting Joshua’s siege of Jericho. (Joshua 2, Joshua 5, Joshua 6.)

constantine-164275951.html

⁶⁰⁸ Zhu, 1986: 68-69; Niu, 2008:114-121; Franzmann, 2013:83-92.

⁶⁰⁹ Yao, 1982.

⁶¹⁰ Niu, 2008:118-121.

⁶¹¹ Bao, 2019(6); Rouleau,1954 (17):346-365.

⁶¹² Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.



Figure 60 The guard of the Yuan Dynasty⁶¹³



Figure 61 The gravestone of Catherine Vilioni ⁶¹⁴



Figure 62 Detail of the depictions on the gravestone of Catherine Vilioni



Figure 63 Detail of the depictions on the gravestone of Catherine Vilioni

⁶¹³ Yuan, 1900:175, pl.8-224.

⁶¹⁴ Thomas Ertl, 2015. Negative reproduction of the original rubbing made in 1952. See Rouleau, 1954 (17):346-365., pl. II.



Figure 64 Paten depicting siege of a castle 9th–10th century Hermitage Museum, S-46.

4.3.1.3 Quanzhou

There are 16 tombstones with “angels” in Quanzhou. For the convenience of analysis, I classify them into three categories according to the numbers of their wings. The table below shows the elements about the “angels”, including the wings, the cloud collar, the clouds, the HuMen, the crown, the Keyūra and the objects they hold.

(1) No wings

“Angels” of Q-7, Q-8, Q-15, Q-17, Q-18, Q-19, Q-20 have no wings. The expression of their flying completely relies on the shawls around the bodies. Their costumes indicate a direct borrowing of Buddhist Apsaras. Their costumes are Mongolian style.

(2) Two wings

“Angels” of Q-2, Q-3, Q-13, Q-16, Q-21, Q-22 have two wings. Their feet are wrapped in the clothes, slightly tilting up and showing a flying posture. The feeling of flying is more vivid and lighter.

(3) Four wings

“Angels” of **Q-26, Q-28 and Q-29** have four wings. The first two sit above a few of propitious clouds with lotus position like the Buddha.⁶¹⁵ **Q-29** shows the common flying posture. They wear long trousers instead of long skirts. Their feet are wrapped in the clothes, twisting together with the wind. The shawls around emphasize the feeling of flying.

The Metropolitan Museum of the United States collects a Christian seated statue with a cross on his chest while this statue only has a pair of wings on his back.⁶¹⁶ In Buddhism, the seated Buddha in the lotus position indicates that he is in meditation and on the path toward liberation, awakening and Nirvana. Similar posture without wings is also present in a Mani’s Picture in Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian. It might be understood as a deeper influence from Buddhism. Does this seated statue have a higher status than those flying “angels”? There is no more evidence to prove this conjecture.

Also, the four-winged “angels” are present on the gravestone of Andrew of Perugia.⁶¹⁷ His tombstone was discovered in 1946, with a copy left in the Quanzhou Maritime Museum. Remarkably, the tombstone displays “Nestorian Christian iconography”.



Figure 65 Tombstone of Andrew of Perugia at the Quanzhou Museum of Maritime Photo by Zhou Yixing in 2018

⁶¹⁵ Lotus Position is a cross-legged sitting asana originating in meditative practices of ancient India, in which each foot is placed on the opposite thigh. The asana is said to resemble a lotus.

⁶¹⁶ Li & Yuan, 2016 (3), 230-235.

⁶¹⁷ Moule.1984. Hao Trans. 218-222.

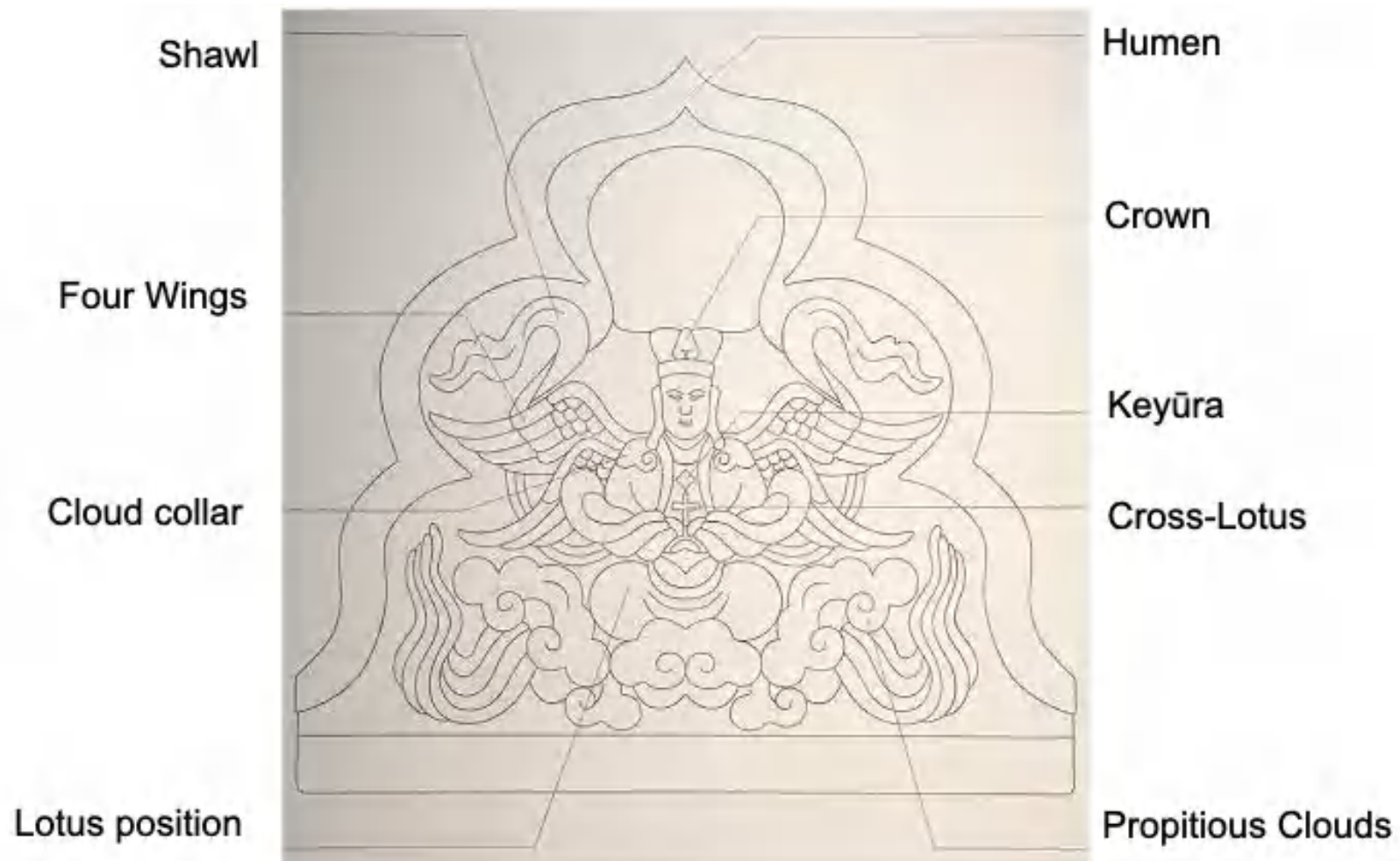


Figure 66 Yuan Dynasty stone featuring the Christian motifs of the four-winged “angel” blends elements of diverse culture, Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian

Table 3 “Angels” without wings

Number	Shawl	Cloud Collar	Kūn Men	Crown	Keyūra	Objects in hand	Clouds
Q-7	Every “angel” has a long shawl around the body	Unclear	√	Mountain type crown	Unclear	cross-lotus-censer	Unclear
Q-8	A long shawl is around the body	Unclear	×	A cross stands on the crown	Unclear	cross-lotus-censer	×
Q-15	×	×	×	Unclear	Unclear	Unknown	×
Q-17	A long shawl flies over the neck	×	×	Unclear	×	cross-lotus-censer	Around the left side
Q-18	Two long shawls fly over the neck and the body	√	×	Mountain type crown	×	Unknown	Around the left side
Q-19	Every “angel” has a long shawl passing under the arms	×	×	Bun with flowers with a cross above	×	cross-lotus-censer	Unclear
Q-20	Every “angel” has two long shawls passing under the arms	√	×	Mountain type crown	Unclear	cross-lotus-censer	×

Table 4 “Angels” with two wings

Number	Shawl	Wings	Cloud Collar	Crown	Keyūra	Objects in hand	Clouds
Q-2	The shawls pass under the waist and flutter upwards	Every “angel” has 2 wings on the back	Unclear	Asian conical hat	Unclear	Cross-lotus	×
Q-3	×	Every “angel” has 2 wings on the back	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	Cross-lotus	×
Q-13	Every “angel” has a long shawl passing under the arms	Every “angel” has 2 wings on the back	Unclear	Bun	Unclear	Cross-lotus	Under the two angels and cross-lotus
Q-16	×	2 wings on the back	√	Mountain type crown with a cross above	Unclear	cross-lotus-censer	Around the right side
Q-21	A long shawl is around the body	2 wings on the back	√	Mountain type crown with the decoration of cloud pattern and a cross above	×	cross-lotus-censer	On the two sides

Q-22	×	Every “angel” has 2 wings on the back	×	Pointed hat	×	Cross- Lotus	×
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Table 5 “Angels” with four wings

Number	Shawl	Wings	Cloud Collar	Kūn Men	Crown	Keyūra	Objects in hand	Clouds
Q-26	A long shawl passes through the waist	4 wings on the back	√	√	Mountain type crown with the decoration of cloud pattern	√	Cross-lotus	Symmetrically distributed around the seat, with flame pattern
Q-28	A long shawl passes under the arms	4 wings on the back	×	√	Piao crown	×	Cross-lotus	Around the “angel”
Q-29	Unclear	Every “angel” has 4 wings on the back	Unclear	√	Bun	Unclear	cross-lotus-censer	Symmetrically distributed around the seat and the “angels”, with flame pattern

4.3.2 The clothes, accessories and decorations of “angels” in Quanzhou

4.3.2.1 The Crown

An opinion from Yang Qinzhang is that some of the “angels” wear Persian crowns,⁶¹⁸ however, in my submission, the crowns are more likely to be the style of Mongolia or Central Plains. “Angels” Q-7, Q-16, Q-18, Q-20, Q-21 and Q-26 wear the mountain type crown. This crown is widely used in Buddhist statues. It first appears in the east wall of the 11th Grotto of Yungang Grottoes, the second phase (465–494)⁶¹⁹ of the cave. Lin Liangyi argues that this mountain crown is originated from Sassan’s wall-shaped crown, while Zhao Shengliang disagree with him.⁶²⁰ Some of the mountain crowns worn by the Nestorian “angels” have the common decoration of cloud pattern. The illustration from the *Zhongguo fushi shigao* [History of Chinese Clothing]] shows a person who wears a kind of popular costume named Zhisunzhuang 质孙装 in the Yuan Dynasty. The person wears the mountain type crown.⁶²¹



Figure 67 Zhisunzhuang



Figure 68 Huntuo hat from Dunhuang mural⁶²²

Q-28 wears a kind of hat which is always used by monks named Piao Mao as it looks like a Piao (half of a gourd, used to spoon water). *Shiwu Ganzhu* 事物纪原 [A book of notes] records:

“毗罗帽、宝公帽、僧迦帽、山子帽、班吒帽、瓢帽、六和帽、顶包，八者皆释冠也。”⁶²³

⁶¹⁸ Yang, 1984 (4).

⁶¹⁹ Su, 1978 (1).

⁶²⁰ Zhao, 2005(3).

⁶²¹ Zhu, 2001:260.

⁶²² Dai & Lu & Li, 1998:82.

⁶²³ Huang, 1985.

[Piluo Crown, Baogong Crown, Sengjia Crown, Shanzi Crown, Banzha Crown, Piao Crown, Liuhe Crown, Dingbao, all these eight are Buddhist crowns.]

Similar crowns are possible to be seen in Islamic art. The excellent example is a pair of carving stone images produced during the 12th–13th century. It is said that the two winged-angel reliefs were brought from the gate of the horse Market. They are believed to be the works of Seljuk Empire (1037–1194).⁶²⁴ The crown, the clothes and the long braid worn by the figures are Mongolian style. Their legs slightly raise and seem to prepare to fly, or it may be just landing. This sculpture was born when the Mongolian army invaded the Central Asia. In 1220, Genghis Khan conquered Samarkand and a year later he started part of the attack on Afghanistan. Wherever the Mongolian army goes, it would collide and merge its own culture with the local culture. It thus comes to no great surprise that they wear Mongolian costumes.



Figure 69⁶²⁵



Figure 70⁶²⁶

Stone boards with angelic figures from Konya Castle. 1220. the Museum of Stone and Wood Art (Taş ve Ahşap Eserler Müzesi) in İnce Minareli Medrese⁶²⁷

Q-2 wears a kind of Boli guan (the left) or Walengmao (the right). *Caomuzi* 草木子 [Collection of Ancient Chinese Classical Notes and Novels] records:

“官民皆带[戴]帽，其檐或圆，或前圆后方。”

⁶²⁴ <https://muze.gov.tr/muze-detay?SectionId=KIM01&DistId=MRK>

⁶²⁵ <https://www.skylife.com/en/1986-01/bir-selcuklu-saheseri-inceminare-ve-muzesi>

⁶²⁶ <https://www.sanatin Yolculugu.com/konya-ince-minareli-medrese-tas-ve-ahsap-eserler-muzesi/>

⁶²⁷ İnce Minareli Medrese is a 13th-century madrasa (Islamic school) located in Konya, Turkey.

[Officials and the public in the Yuan Dynasty wore hats. The brim of the hats are round, square or front round and back square.]”⁶²⁸

The hat here refers to Boli guan, named for its shape like a musical instrument called copper cymbal. This kind of hat resembles Huntuomao⁶²⁹ of the Tang Dynasty, which is originated from Persia. Huntuomao is made of black sheepskin, high top.⁶³⁰

In the murals of the Anxi Yulin Grottoes in Gansu of the Yuan Dynasty, Mongolian nobles who are praying with a gesture of Añjali Mudrā wear wide-brimmed Boli guan. There are many similar examples in historical sources, for instance, the horseback riding figurines unearthed in Lishui County of Shanxi Province.⁶³¹ In the illustration of the sequel of *Shilin Guangji* 事林广记 [*Encyclopedia of Life in the Southern Song Dynasty and the Yuan Dynasty*]⁶³², there are two Mongolian bureaucrats playing a game called Shuanglu 双陆. The hat worn by the child servant is also Boli guan.

Walengmao is the traditional hat of the ancient northern nomads. The Music and dance pottery figurine of Yuan Dynasty wear a typical Walengmao, and they are singing and dancing.⁶³³



Figure 71 Huntuo hat from Dunhuang mural⁶³⁴



Figure 72 Mongolian nobility of Anxi Yulin Grottoes in Gansu⁶³⁵

⁶²⁸ Huang & Chen, 1995.

⁶²⁹ In Chinese 浑脱帽

⁶³⁰ Dai & Lu & Li, 1998-:82.

⁶³¹ Huang & Chen, 1995: 250, pl. 8-47.

⁶³² Chen, 2011.

⁶³³ Shen & Wang, 2004:124.

⁶³⁴ Dai & Lu & Li, 1998-:82.

⁶³⁵ Huang & Chen, 1995:249, pl. 8-48.



Figure 73 Horseback riding figurines in Lishui County



Figure 74 Mongolian bureaucrats are playing Shuanglu⁶³⁶



Figure 75 Music and dance pottery figurine⁶³⁷ Henan Museum

⁶³⁶ Huang & Chen, 1995: 248, plate 8-42

⁶³⁷ Shen & Wang, 2004:124.

Q-22 wears a kind of pointed hat, which is a typical style in the West Region. The donor on the mural of the south wall of E206 Caves in a Uighur Buddhist temple at Gaochang wears a pointed hat with an upright small cylinder. He is a little smaller than the other two nuns on the right. Maybe he is a young boy.

The right kneeling male donor in the mural of the 20th grotto of Bezeklik Caves who are praying with a gesture of Añjali Mudrā also wears a similar pointed hat.

In the Number K ruins of Manichaeism at Gaochang City, on the wall of the narrow ramp next to the library, there is a portrait of the donor wears this kind of hat.

In the mural of Senmusaimu Thousand Buddha Caves, which was dated to 8th century by Le Coq (1860–1930), the pointed hats worn by the two donors were decorated with geometric lines and dots,⁶³⁸ showing a special Western style.

The similar costumes remind us again to pay attention to the close connection between Quanzhou Nestorian Christians and Western Regions.



Figure 76 Mural of Beiting Gaochang Uighur Buddhist Temple⁶³⁹

⁶³⁸ Shen, 2008.

⁶³⁹ Zhongguo shehui kexue yuankao guyan jiusuo bian ed.1990.



Figure 77 Mural of Bezeklik Caves



Figure 78 The figure from Number K ruins of Manichaeism



Figure 79 The donors in Senmu Saimu Grottoes

4.3.2.2 The Bun

“Angels” of **Q-13** and **Q-29** wear round buns, tall at the top of the head. This hairstyle was very popular at the time and used widely by the ordinary woman. According to the documents, it was called Tongxin Bun [knot of one heart]⁶⁴⁰, appearing early in the Han Dynasty and popular in the Song Dynasty. At the later of the Song Dynasty, it was also called Danya Bun [Single Bun]⁶⁴¹.

Vol.32 of *Yijianzhi* 夷坚志 in the Song Dynasty records: “经十馀日，解头编与我绾同心髻。” [After more than ten days, knitting the hairs as Tongxin Bun with me.]⁶⁴²

Rushuji 入蜀记 [Travels into the land of Shu] records: “……未嫁者率为同心髻，高二尺，插银钗至六只，后插大象牙梳。” [Unmarried woman wears Tongxin Bun, two feet high, with six silver hairpins and an ivory comb behind.]⁶⁴³

In Dunhuang murals, sometimes the Bodhisattva is depicted with a hairstyle without a crown, simply tying his hair on the top with a belt. For example, the Apsara of Cave 275 of the Northern Zhou Dynasty only has a round bun on the head. Zhao Shengliang argues: “...the early Bodhisattvas had no crowns, only tying hair or spreading hair. After the presence of Bodhisattva wearing the crown, it became the

⁶⁴⁰ Zhou & Gao, 1996: 331-332.

⁶⁴¹ Yuan, 1900: 249, pl. 9-43.

⁶⁴² Hong, 2006.

⁶⁴³ Lu, 2004.

basic costume of the Buddha.” Perhaps the crown is a symbol of identity and status. In the Yungang Grottoes, only the sacred offering Bodhisattvas and Apsaras have buns on their heads. The status of the Buddha without a crown may be lower than the others.⁶⁴⁴



Figure 80 Cave 275



Figure 81 Sculpture of Jinci Temple, Shanxi⁶⁴⁵

“Angels” of **Q-19** wears a big bun with flowers, named Yunbin or Chaotianji. In the Jinci Temple of Shanxi, a colored sculpture of Song Dynasty has similar hairstyle. Yunbin began in the Three Kingdoms (220–280) period and became popular in Tang Dynasty.⁶⁴⁶ In the Yuan Dynasty, women often use wigs to decorate their hairs, called 狄髻 *Diji*. Guan Hanqing (1241–1320) of the Yuan Dynasty wrote in *Dou E Yuan* 窦娥冤 [The Injustice to Dou E]⁶⁴⁷: “梳着个霜雪般白髻髻，怎戴那销金锦盖头？” [Wearing a white *Diji*, how to wear brocade veil?]⁶⁴⁸ This slightly exaggerated hairstyle of the Nestorian “angel” portrays the appearance that women wear wigs at the time.

4.3.2.3 The Keyūra

The Keyūra worn by **Q-26** is very clear. Keyūra is not the unique ornament of Buddhism. A craving stone of “Linga and Two Gods” of Hinduism in the Yuan Dynasty also shows this decoration.

⁶⁴⁴ Zhao, 2005 (3).

⁶⁴⁵ Huang & Chen, 1995:213, pl. 7-64.

⁶⁴⁶ Zhou & Gao, 1996: 334.

⁶⁴⁷ It is a Chinese play, also known as Snow in Midsummer.

⁶⁴⁸ Dai & Lu & Li, 1998:133-134.

Before the rise of Buddhism, people of the ancient South Asian subcontinent (especially nobles) began to use Keyūra to decorate their bodies and show their identity, as recorded in *The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*⁶⁴⁹ by Xuanzang, no matter man or woman, all of them are “wearing flowers on the head and Keyūra around the body”.⁶⁵⁰ When Gautama Buddha was a Prince, he always wore Keyūra to symbolize his identity. According to the record from *Lotus Sūtra*, Keyūra is one of the ten offerings for Buddha. The Buddhists often take off their Keyūra to express their respect for the Buddha.⁶⁵¹



Figure 82 “Linga and Two Gods” Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian Photo by Zhou Yixing
 Figure 83 Dharmapala of Kaiyuan Temple

One can wonder that the “angel” who wears Keyūra might have a higher status. However, after the Song Dynasty, with the growth of feudal consciousness, more and more clothes were added to the Buddha statue, the symbolic meaning of Keyūra was less and less important. Keyūra is no more a symbol of statue than a decorative motif. The exquisite Keyūra worn by the Dharmapala of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou reflects a strong decorative interest.

⁶⁴⁹ Xuan Zang, 1985. Ji, etc. proofread.

⁶⁵⁰ Xuan Zang, 1985.

⁶⁵¹ Bai, 1998:184.

4.3.2.4 The Cloud Collar

“Angels” of Q-16, Q-18, Q-20, Q-21 and Q-26 wear the special Yujian 云肩 [Cloud Collar]. This is the later Chinese name for a four-lobed pattern of considerable antiquity.

The name arose during the Middle Ages when the pattern was adapted to form an actual collar for decorating the upper part of robes. This pattern was also painted around the necks of vases, jars in later Chinese ceramics and elsewhere. The pattern has been considered purely ornamental, yet there is evidence to indicate that it originally served as a cosmic symbol.⁶⁵²

The Cloud Collar is easily confused with the shawl because of the similarity of their use. However, judging from the historical records, the folks have worn shawls as early as in the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BCE). Another similar concept is Xia Pei which is also worn on the shoulder. As recorded in *Shilin guangji*: “...秦时有披帛...霞帔名，始于晋矣。” [There was shawl in Qin Shi,... the name of Xia Pei, which started from Jin (266–420)]⁶⁵³

These adornments differ in naming and shape depending on the times. In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the shawl was only a special clothing item for the musicians and dancers. Until the Yuan Dynasty, it gradually evolved into a very decorative ornament centred on the neckline. The name Yun Jian was present officially in the literature.⁶⁵⁴ It is called the Cloud Collar⁶⁵⁵ because its shape is like Ruyi Cloud [as desired; as you wish]. Until the Yuan Dynasty it became popular among folks and nobles.⁶⁵⁶

The Dunhuang murals preserved several portraits of Mongolian donors in the Yuan Dynasty. Some of their customs (Zhisunzhuang) were decorated with cloud collars.⁶⁵⁷ Also, this decoration is present on the carving of Dharmapala of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou.

⁶⁵² Schuyler, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1951: 1-9.

⁶⁵³ Chen, 2011.

⁶⁵⁴ Pan, 2007 (6).

⁶⁵⁵ Song, 1976: 1775.

⁶⁵⁶ Pan, 2007 (6).

⁶⁵⁷ Dong, 2011 (3).

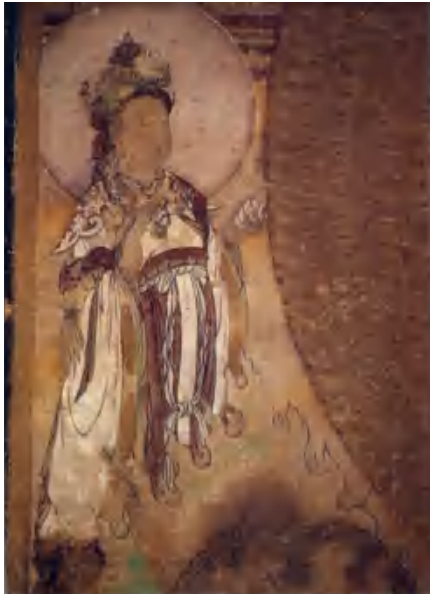


Figure 84 Avalokitesvara 3rd cave of Mogao Grottoes

Figure 85 Dharmapala of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou


4.3.2.5 The Shawls

The shawl is a kind of ornament for the shoulder like the cloud collar in ancient China. It was popular in the group of secular women in the Sui Dynasty and the early Tang Dynasty. After the Tianbao years (742–756), the shawl began to be less popular. This decoration also affected Buddhist statues—the shawls became an important feature of Apsaras.

In the Song Dynasty, when the shawl was less used in the secular, it was included in official uniform. Besides, it became a special costume for the Queen and was often given to the wife and mother of the courtier by the emperor to show his glory.⁶⁵⁸

However, religious art and folk costumes are sometimes not so synchronized. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, the images of Buddha in the Dunhuang Grottoes, the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou and the Nestorian carving stones we saw, there are still shawls helping the Apsaras or the “angels” fly.

4.3.2.6 The Humen

Q-4, Q-7, Q-9, Q-10, Q-12, Q-14, Q-23, Q-24, Q-25, Q-26, Q-27, Q-28, Q-29, Q-30, Q-31, Q-32 have the decoration of “” pattern —Humen.⁶⁵⁹ More than half of the

⁶⁵⁸ Ma, 2008.

⁶⁵⁹ In the academic field, there is a dispute over the names of “Humen 壺门” and “Kunmen 壺门”. In the book *Yingzao Fashi* 营造法式 [Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards] edited by Li Jie in the Song Dynasty, it was written as “Hu men 壺门”. After consulting various sources, I will choose the term “Humen” in this study. See Jing & Liu, 2010 (7): 54-55.

Nestorian tombstones currently collected at Quanzhou are carved with the pattern. Some of the tombstones in Inner Mongolia are also depicted with similar pattern and they are interpreted as ogee arches or Islamic lantern windows.⁶⁶⁰ (I-O-3, I-O-18, etc.) Namio argues: “The pattern of Islamic lantern windows is the main feature of Nestorian tombstones in Öngüt tribe.”⁶⁶¹

According to the existing archaeological evidence, the pointed arch appeared firstly in the Buddha era of the Indian subcontinent. Since lotus is a symbol of Buddhism, the pointed arch pattern might be taken from the outline of the lotus petal and is commonly used in the temple base, stupa, Buddhist Chapel, Buddha backlight and urban architecture.⁶⁶² Later, with the cultural exchanges between the East and the West, the arched image began to be widely used in the decoration of doors and windows in Islamic and Christian architecture.⁶⁶³ Compared with the Humen, the pointed arches are much narrower in proportion. The decorations on the Islamic tombstones in the backyard of the Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian are enough to prove that this pattern had spread widely in the Islamic world at the time.

Speaking from the concept of Humen, it is either a type of door in a Buddhist architecture or a hollow decorative style.⁶⁶⁴ As a style of the door, it was introduced to China with Buddhism⁶⁶⁵, while as a decorative style, it has already appeared on the bronzes of the Shang (about 1600–1046 B.C.E.) and Zhou (1046–256 B.C.E.) Dynasties.⁶⁶⁶

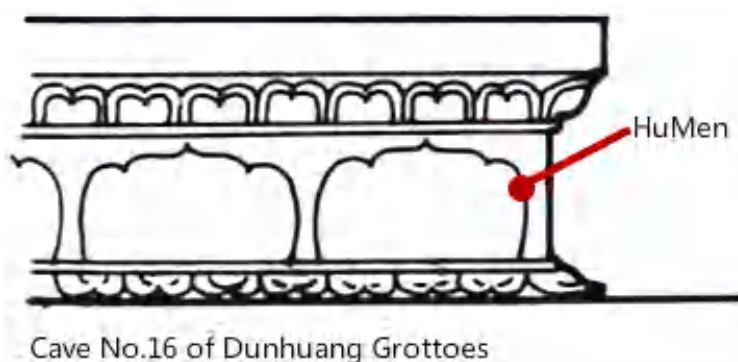


Figure 86⁶⁶⁷ Humen in Dunhuang Grottoes

⁶⁶⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:124.

⁶⁶¹ Namio, Pan Trans.1980 (14): 46-47.

⁶⁶² Wu, 2017 (5):66-75.

⁶⁶³ Wu, 2017 (5):66-75.

⁶⁶⁴ Ji, 1998: 31.

⁶⁶⁵ Zhang, 2011: 182.

⁶⁶⁶ Hu, 1994: 8; Li & Shao, 2018 (22):18-22.

⁶⁶⁷ Jing & Liu, 2010 (7):54-55.

Zhang Yuhuan, an expert on the history of ancient Chinese architecture, believes: “Humen is a niche for a statue of Buddha commonly used in Buddhism. When the outline of the niche is engraved, the Humen appears. It comes with Buddhism and is greatly developed in ancient Chinese architecture.”⁶⁶⁸

Humen is often engraved on the waist of the Sumeru Throne, the door and the window of the Pagoda,⁶⁶⁹ the entrance of Buddhist Chapel and the niche for a Buddhist statue. The interiors are often engraved with Bodhisattvas, Buddhist stories and plants, animals and other patterns.⁶⁷⁰ It is also gradually used on traditional furniture such as censers, beds, tables and chairs during the Han (202-8 B.C.E., 25-220 C.E.) Dynasty and the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). In the Tang and Song Dynasties, it became more popular. The pattern is widely depicted on the furniture in Dunhuang murals and paintings of Tang and Song Dynasties.⁶⁷¹ “From the Yuan Dynasty, the waist of the Sumeru Throne becomes narrow, the patterns of lotus, Humen and God of power are not used anymore.”⁶⁷²

Considering the different culture background, the pattern in Inner Mongolia are more like to be influenced by the Islamic art⁶⁷³ while Southern China enjoys both Buddhist and Islamic art.

4.3.3 Angels as described in Nestorian literature

Most of Nestorian “angels” appear as the appearance of Apsaras. However, from the perspective of Nestorian literature, the religious functions of angels are undoubtedly Christian. For example,

(1) God the Son was originally born in the manger by Mary, and today the Son is guarded by the angels who are in charge of knowledge and the six-winged angels. (1-Back-4⁶⁷⁴)

(2) The angels sang the carols in unison (1-Back-7)

(3) Singing: “Glory belongs to the supreme God. He gives peace to the land and gives people grace.” (1-Back-8)

(4) Originally singing: “Death is painful, praise it.” (1-Back-14)

⁶⁶⁸ Zhang, 2008: 310; Wu, 2017 (5):66-75.

⁶⁶⁹ Wang, 1996:342.

⁶⁷⁰ Shi & Wang, 1987: 616.

⁶⁷¹ Li & Shao, 2018 (22):18-22.

⁶⁷² Pan, 2009:263.

⁶⁷³ Gai, 1991:111.

⁶⁷⁴ 1-Back-4 means the the fourth line on the back of the first page, the following are the same.

(5) Let these be turned into nothing. God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth. (2-second Front-2)

(6) Angel Gabriel declared that the Virgin Mary has been pregnant with our Savior. (2-Front-3)

(7) The angel told the Virgin Mary that God's blessing "may you be blessed." (2-Front-4)

(8) Received the gospel of people and God reconciling. The angels were shocked to hear this gospel of peace. (2-Front-16)

(9) Listen to the angels, they convey the truly good news of the birth of God the Son. (2-Back-5)

(10) This gospel of peace is the good news of the angel Gabriel telling the Virgin Mary. The angel said: (2-Back-12)

(11) The Savior was born in a despicable family, then, (2-Back-13)

(12) Spend a night at Adam's home. The Savior used his blood to wash away the sins of mankind. (2-Back-14)

(13) Redeeming the sins of the people. God the Father who sent his dear one - child to the world should be praised. (2-Back-15)

(14) (Loving everything) Heaven and the land are happy for us. (2-Back-16)

(15) Upon hearing the coming of the Savior, the army of the angels sang loudly: (2-Back-17)

(16) "Glory belongs to the supreme God the Father." (2-Back-18) ⁶⁷⁵

(17) I offered my prayers at dawn. At dawn, Jacob walked out of his father's house and came to the Holy Land, where he was inspired. Standing on the ground with a cloud ladder, the top of the ladder passes through the sky. Look, a group of angels stay on it. The angels sang the hymns of Hallelujah in unison and expressed sincerity to God because God allowed the Son to rely on his essence and light to keep the people of heaven and the land harmonious. (三)

(18) From the aeons to the eternal forever. Respecting the fierceness is what we are struggled for in all our life. You are the martyrdom of Christ, the perfect persons. Look, your soul lives with angels because of your actions in the sacred dwelling places. (四)

⁶⁷⁵ (1)-(16) are selected from Moule, Hao Trans, 1984:332-341.

(19) Serve his angels and praise his noble deity. (六)

(20) You are wise men. Pure Mary gave birth to a son who can be the light of the world in Bethlehem. You listen to her language and look up to her. Behold, you worship the Saviour together with all the churches and angels that are faithful to the Lord in heaven. (六)

(21) Everyone is coming to listen. Among them are, Mary who came to the cemetery, Mary who stood around the cross, Mary who hold the balm, Mary who hold the spice, and the repentant prostitute Mary, Jacob and Joseph's Mary, John's Mary and the idyllic Mary. To commemorate Mary, the army of angels and the people on the land sang glorious songs to the creators of all things. Mary, the holy virgin, you have given birth to the Saviour Jesus of all nations. Lord, glory belongs to you. You should be the most praised. (七)

(22) We sing and praise you at dawn. The angel's leader, Gabriel, exalted the banner that Jesus won with the cross, and joined the voice of the olifant and the horn, marching forward in the face of all mankind. (八)

(23) I praise you at dawn. At sunrise, the angels praise the one true God that all things worship. We praise your kindness on the ground because you forgive our sins. (八)⁶⁷⁶

The literature above tells us the functions of the angels are:

(1) the guardian of the God and the Son; (2) singing hymns and praising God; (3) the messenger; (4) receiving and spreading the Gospel; (5) symbol of holiness. Nestorian "angels" should be the practitioners of these functions.

However, the functions of Apsaras are so different. From a religious perspective, the things Apsaras do are entertaining the Buddha, offerings and rebirth.⁶⁷⁷ The *Lotus Sutra* records ten kinds of offerings in Buddhism: incense, flower, lamp, necklace, jeweled parasols, banners and canopies, clothes, fruit and food, music and joined palms.⁶⁷⁸ The Apsaras in the murals often scatter flowers, play music or offer pieces of jewelry to the Buddha. The scene of scattering flowers means rebirth.

Nestorian "Apsaras" neither scatter flowers nor play instruments. They only hold cross-lotus in hands. As the most important cultural symbol of Christianity, the cross

⁶⁷⁶ (17)-(23) are selected from Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:342-354.

⁶⁷⁷ Yin, 2012: 168.

⁶⁷⁸ http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Ten_Offerings

represents the resurrection of Christ and victory over death. The reverence for the cross implies the reverence for Christ. In this context, Nestorian “Apsaras” no longer have the connotation like Buddhist Apsaras.

In terms of the decorative function Apsaras, the development process goes like this: secular—religious—secular. The prototype of Apsara was originated from the Yakshinis Gandharva and Kinnara who were mythical beings from folk legend in India and had no religious significance at first; later, the secular decorative art was absorbed by the Buddhist statue art to serve the religion, and the images of Buddhist Apsaras came into being; after Apsaras were introduced to China, they were further merged with the flying fairy of the Taoism and the image of the folk celestial being, resulting in Chinese Apsaras at last.⁶⁷⁹

The images of Apsaras developed to its peak during the Tang Dynasty in China. After the Tang Dynasty, they were used widely by the folk as important decorative elements in China, and their functions and symbolic significance gradually separated from the religion and returned to the secular. From the source, secularity is closer to the essence of Apsaras.⁶⁸⁰

Many scholars do not hesitate to believe that Nestorian “angels” absorb the elements of Buddhism. However, in my opinion, it will be more reasonable to understand the borrowing from the perspective of folk decorative patterns.

4.3.4 The winged Nestorian “angels”

Although the wings are signs of angels, they are not Christian patents. They are bestowed upon human to satisfy their fantasy about superpowers and become an important manifestation of mythological hybrids. Winged figures are present very common in various cultures.

The earlier example is the Babylonian lamassu or shedu, a protective spirit with a sphinx-like form, possessing the wings of an eagle, the body of a lion, and the head of a king. And the supreme god of Zoroastrianism, benevolent deity of wisdom, Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) also has two wings. In China, the image of feathered man comes from Taoism and represents people’s longing for becoming celestial being.

Some of the Nestorian “angels” in Quanzhou with the physical appearance of Apsaras but have wings. (Q-13, Q-16, Q-21, Q-26, Q-28, Q-29). The winged Apsaras

⁶⁷⁹ Yin, 2012:173.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

in Buddhist art are rare at the time as Apsaras can fly without wings. The flying direction of Apsaras and the fluttering direction of shawls are opposite, by which the feeling of flying is created. However, it is not the first time for the presence of winged Apsaras.

4.3.4.1 The early winged celestial beings

4.3.4.1.1 Early Buddhist art in India

In early Buddhist art, there are some examples of the chimaeras with wings on the reliefs of Sanchi monuments and Bharhut stupa. The two sites are located in the districts of Madhya Pradesh in India.

Sanchi Great Stupa is a simple hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha, originally commissioned by the emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE and related to his wife Devi.⁶⁸¹ The winged celestial beings were depicted as half-human and half-bird, with gorgeous wings or tails on the end and bird-like feet. They either flew symmetrically or were close to each other, holding garlands or other things in their hands. These physical characters remind us of the Kalaviṅka.

Kalaviṅka is a fantastical immortal creature in Buddhism, with a human head and a bird's torso, as well as long flowing tail. It is said to dwell in the Western pure land and reputed to preach the Dharma with its fine and unparalleled voice. Generally, they appear as figures dancing and playing music.

The heavenly beings from Bharhut show more human's appearance. The Bharhut sculptures are slightly later than the early Shunga-period reliefs on railings at Sanchi Stupa No.2, dating of circa 125–100 BCE.

The following relief from Bharhut stupa are carved with two symmetrical heavenly beings. The left has no wings, while the right has a pair of wings on the back. However, the feet of the right are covered by leaves, which is the same in other winged figures.⁶⁸² It is difficult to determine whether their feet are like human or birds. However, they are getting closer to a complete human appearance. Zhao argues that those who have wings in Buddhist celestial beings are referred to as Kinnara.⁶⁸³

In Buddhism, Kinnara is one of the "Eight Legions of Devas and Nāgas". The Eight Legions are a group of Buddhist deities whose function is to protect the Dharma. In India, Kinnara is a paradigmatic lover, a celestial musician, half-human and half-horse.

⁶⁸¹ Marshall, 1902.

⁶⁸² Zhao, 2008:22, pl.2-6; Zhao, 2008:23, pl.2-7.

⁶⁸³ Zhao, 2008:23.

However, it is different from Kalaviṅka.⁶⁸⁴ The winged figures of Bharhut stupa either hold a garland in their hands or scatter flowers, and they don't seem to have special musical talents. They look more like elegant females than the chimaeras of human and animals.



Figure 87 Sanchi Stupa No.1 Northern Gateway

Figure 88 The Bharhut stupa, Madhya Pradesh, India. depicted on one of the friezes. Freer Gallery of Art Washington

4.3.4.1.2 The cultural circles in Central Asia influenced by Gandhara art

Winged figures frequently appear in Gandhara art (Greco-Buddhist art) and the cultural circles affected by it. It comes to no great surprise because Gandhara art is a mix of Hellenic and Indian influences. The interaction of Greek and Buddhist culture flourished firstly in the area of Gandhara (today's northern Pakistan), and strongly affected the Buddhist art in Central Asia.

On the carving stone of Miracles of the Buddha in Sravasti, two heavenly beings with wings can be seen on the panel. The Buddha is surrounded by seated and standing figures, 168 in number. It depicts Buddha performing a miracle before King Prasenajit in Sravasti with a manifold self-manifestation. Another opinion goes that it depicts Sukhavati—the paradise of the Buddha Amitayus.

⁶⁸⁴ From the physical appearances, Kinnara is very similar to the Kalaviṅka, which is also a half-human half-bird hybrid mythical creature. In East Asian religious art, the two are often confused. However, Edward H. Schafer notes that the two are distinct and unrelated. (see Schafer, 1963:103.)



Figure 89 Miracles of the Buddha in Sravasti Carving in schist stone Lahore Museum Pakistan⁶⁸⁵



Figure 90 The detail

The figures are arranged in 6 horizontal rows, with the Buddha in the center. On the fifth row of the panel (counting from bottom to top), there are two celestial beings with wings on the back holding a basket that looks to be made of bamboo. They are either placing it atop or fetching it back. This composition is very close to Nestorian “angels”.

⁶⁸⁵ Zhao, 2008:47, pl.3-2; <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-gandhara-gallery/0QJShMVC0XR1Jw>

In the cultural circles in Central Asia influenced by Gandhara art, two examples are particularly eye-catching as they are Hellenistic winged “angels” present in Buddhist temples.

One is on the murals found in the Buddhist ruins at Hadda⁶⁸⁶, which is a Greco-Buddhist archaeological site located in the ancient region of Gandhara. Ancient Chinese monks such as Fa Xian⁶⁸⁷, Dao Rong, Song Yun have ever visited this place. This is also the place where recorded by Xuanzang in *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*⁶⁸⁸ as Hiffa or Hidda in Nagarahara.⁶⁸⁹

The mural is depicted with two winged “angels” flying symmetrically. The two “angels” are almost naked and hold a garland together. The mural combines elements of Buddhism and Hellenism in an almost perfect Hellenistic style.

The other example is on the murals of the Buddhist temple at Miran of Xinjiang. It is later than Hadda ruins and is believed to be produced between the second to the fourth centuries.⁶⁹⁰ The two boys, dressed in red, are smiling.

Most scholars believe that the murals are influenced by Gandhara art, with the classical art style of ancient Greece and Rome⁶⁹¹, such as Mario Bussagli, Marylin Martin Rhie⁶⁹², B.N.Puri⁶⁹³ and Klimkeit.⁶⁹⁴ The influence of Gandhara’s art seems uncontroversial, but the origin of the “angels” is so unclear.⁶⁹⁵

Stein suggests that these murals should be traced back to Greek mythology, evolving from love gods. He also links the winged angels to the Gandharva in Buddhism⁶⁹⁶ and reminds that winged figures are also popular in some religious systems in West Asia before the rise of Christianity.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁸⁶ Ten kilometres south of the city of Jalalabad, in the Nangarhar Province of eastern Afghanistan.

⁶⁸⁷ Faxian, 2008: 38. Zhang proofreads.

⁶⁸⁸ Xuan Zang, 1985. Ji, etc. proofread.

⁶⁸⁹ In Chinese 那揭罗曷国醯罗城

⁶⁹⁰ Bussagli thinks that these murals should be created in the second half of the third century. See Bussagli, 1979.

⁶⁹¹ Guo, 2003 (S1):78-79.

⁶⁹² Martin. 1999:370-385.

⁶⁹³ Bussagli, Puti, etc.1992:363-364.

⁶⁹⁴ Klimkeit, 1994. Zhao Trans. 161.

⁶⁹⁵ Qiu, 1993:51.

⁶⁹⁶ Stein, Xiang Trans., 1987:85-96.

⁶⁹⁷ Stein, 1987:85–86.

However, Huang Wenbin,⁶⁹⁸ Yan Wenru,⁶⁹⁹ Huo Xuchu, Zhaoli⁷⁰⁰ and Wu Chao⁷⁰¹ propose that the “angels” have no connection with the Gandharva, but originated from Kalaviṅka.

Other scholars including Zhou Ding, Chen Jingjing⁷⁰², propose more bold speculations. They state that the “angels” are neither from the gods of love, the Gandharva nor the Kalaviṅka, but the feathered man in the Han Dynasty.

In my opinion, the “angels” are closer to the god of love in ancient Greek mythology and they do not have the obvious characteristic of Kalaviṅka. Like the “angels” at Hadda ruins, they serve in Buddhist sites, however, the plastic art is Greek style. This phenomenon is formed because this region has been deeply influenced by the art of Gandhara. The Hellenistic tendency in Buddhist art is a natural choice in the initial period of Buddhism spreading to the east.⁷⁰³



Figure 91 Mural in the ruined Buddhist temple at Hadda⁷⁰⁴ 1st century or later

⁶⁹⁸ Huang, 1989:354.

⁶⁹⁹ Yan, 1962 (5).

⁷⁰⁰ Huo & Zhao, 1996.

⁷⁰¹ Wu, 1991:263.

⁷⁰² Zhou & Chen, 2011, 09 (4).

⁷⁰³ Wang, 2000 (03): 50-58.

⁷⁰⁴ <https://www.douban.com/photos/album/38681887/?type=rec>



Figure 92 Temple M.III.ii of the Buddha in Miran⁷⁰⁵ 2nd–4th centuries

The winged figures judged by most scholars to be Kalaviṅka are from the Sarira casket unearthed at Subashi Buddhist Temple in Xinjiang.⁷⁰⁶ On the lid of the casket four squatting boys are depicted. Two have wings on their backs, one is playing Hichiriki, and the other is playing erect Konghou. The other two boys are wearing cicada feather-like robes (eight cicada feathers), one is playing the pipa, and the other is holding a plucked instrument similar to a five-string Pipa.⁷⁰⁷ These images may be a kind of offering⁷⁰⁸ made to the Triple Gem.⁷⁰⁹

Compared with Hada and Miran, the physical appearance of “angels” on the casket feature less Hellenistic style but show a plastic art combining various cultures. The situation in Miran was different from that of Kucha. Before it had time to absorb and integrate the external Gandhara culture with the local culture, Buddhism here was interrupted due to unclear circumstances.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁵ http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_769fb5f30101jluj.html

⁷⁰⁶ Huo & Zhao, 1996;

⁷⁰⁷ Yang, 2010 (9); Li, 2003 (3) Vol1.

⁷⁰⁸ Playing music is one of the ten offerings in Buddhism.

⁷⁰⁹ Triple Gem in Buddhism refers to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

⁷¹⁰ Wang, 2000 (03): 50-58.



Figure 93 The lid of Sarira casket at Subashi Buddhist Temple⁷¹¹ 6th–7th centuries wood and hemp Tokyo National Museum

This phenomenon was confirmed by the Kucha caves of the later period. Some winged figures in the Kucha grottoes, particularly in the Kizil Caves and Kizilgaha-Grotten, gradually took off the coat of Gandhara art and showed some characteristics of Buddhist Apsaras, but some of the original elements such as wings were still retained.

Two excellent examples are from the murals of Cave 38 and Cave 227 in Kizil Grottoes, with the development occurring between the third and eighth centuries.⁷¹² The Cave 38 (310 ± 80) were created during the development period of Kizil caves (around the middle of the 4th century to the end of the 5th century) while the Cave 227 belonged to the decline period (8th to mid 9th centuries).⁷¹³ The winged celestial being in Cave 38 is depicted as descending to catch a falling person. In the Cave 227, two

⁷¹¹ http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_769fb5f30101fhxt.html

⁷¹² The Kizil Caves are a set of Buddhist rock-cut caves located near Kizil Township in Baicheng County, Xinjiang.

⁷¹³ Huo, 1993 (2):58-70.

naked boys with wings are holding a garland together. Compared with the early examples, the new elements—shawls are added around their bodies. Wearing shawls is one of the features of Apsaras.⁷¹⁴ This is one of the best proofs of the integration of different cultures in this region.⁷¹⁵

Kizilgaha Grottoes are not well-preserved, but a winged figure can still be discerned on the mural of Cave 11.

In conclusion, the images of winged heavenly beings have been present based on different cultural origins. The figure below demonstrates distribution of these sites. From west to east, we can see a series of similar examples along the Silk Road.



Figure 94 Cave 38 of Kizil Grottoes

⁷¹⁴ Yin, 2012:157.

⁷¹⁵ Tai Lai Ti·Wu Bu Li, 2014 (1):38-41.



Figure 95 Cave 227 of Kizil Grottoes, 8-9th century⁷¹⁶



Figure 96 Cave 11 Kizilgaha-Grottoes

⁷¹⁶ Zhao, 2008:54.



Figure 97

4.3.4.1.3 The examples from Midwest China

In Midwest China, the rich contents of the reliefs on the stone structure contained in the tombs of Wirkak and An Bei are noticeable because several images of winged-Apsaras are depicted on it.

The tomb of Wirkak, referred to as the Tomb of Shijun 史君 [Master Shi] in Chinese, is the grave of the Sogdian Sabao 萨保 [caravan leader], Wirkak and his wife Kang Clan, dating of 580. The epitaph from the sarcophagus goes like this: “Wirkak came from the State of Shi, originally lived in the Western Regions...served as a Sabao in the ancient province of Liangzhou...” This reminds us that many of the Nestorian tomb owners in Quanzhou also come from the Western Regions. Is the presence of winged Apsaras a coincidence?

Winged-Apsaras are depicted on the North Panel No. 5, East Panel No. 1, East Panel No. 2 and East Panel No. 3, as well as the ends of the side of the base and the two frames of tomb door.⁷¹⁷ Taking the panel on the East right as an example, Zsuzsanna Gulácsi describes:

“The final panel shows many winged figures flying in a direction opposite to that of the Panel No. 10, that is, towards the left. The riders—a man and a woman—representing the souls of Wirkak and Wiyusi. The context of their ride, surrounded by heavenly musicians, references their entrance into Garōdmān, the ‘House of Song’ Paradise of Zoroastrianism.”⁷¹⁸

Of the eight Apsaras depicted on this panel, five with wings, which is a very high proportion. Some of them are playing musical instruments. In China, the images of feather men are very common on the reliefs of tombs, generally referred to Taoist immortality.⁷¹⁹ The winged characters in the Tomb of Wirkak resemble more Buddhist Apsaras in terms of the appearance.

Jiang Boqin proposes: “In Buddhist art, Feitian (heavenly beings) are celestial musicians called ‘Gandharva’ and ‘Kinnara’. In arts of Zoroastrianism, the heavenly beings and the celestial musicians are little angels.”⁷²⁰

As to the Sogdian tomb of An Bei of 589, there only 2 winged Apsaras on both sides of the holy flames on the base. Ge Chengyong argues: “These two Apsaras all

⁷¹⁷ Sun, 2012:173.

⁷¹⁸ Gulácsi, 2012-2016.

⁷¹⁹ Yoshimura, 2009: 333.

⁷²⁰ Jiang, 2004 b: 99.

have wings, which resemble the little angels that absorb Greek art in the Gandhara region. In the murals unearthed from Hadda in Central Asia, winged angels are holding a garland in their hands. The art of Zoroastrianism is believed to be related to Greek culture. In the tombs of Yu Hong and An Jia, we have seen the images of heavenly beings, but none of them have wings.”⁷²¹

The opinion that the winged figures from the tombs of Wirkak and An Bei are influenced by the Greek angels seems to be supported by scholars, however, as far as I am concerned, it is arbitrary to make such a judgment. Either in Manichaeism or Zoroastrianism, the wings are important symbols. The large number of half-human and half-bird depictions on the sarcophagus suggest that the wings are possibly derived from the original wing worship in Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Scholars have headed discussion on their names and origins, such as Kinnara, Kalaviṅka, Vermilion Bird, a divine beast named Qianqiu Wansui, soul bringer.⁷²² The complex cultural sources warn us that it is inappropriate to interpret the winged images only from a single perspective.

Besides, several pieces of winged bronze children have been unearthed in the sites and tombs of the Han (202 BCE–8 CE) and Jin Dynasties (266–420). Some of them have inscriptions and wings on the back.⁷²³ At first, scholars conclude that they are influenced by the Eros or linked them to the winged angels at the Miran site.⁷²⁴

The recent study proves that the wings are related to traditional fairy beliefs of Daoism as the inscriptions could be interpreted as “Wuzi daji 戊子大吉” which implies the relatives of the deceased expect to hold “Guan Li 冠礼”⁷²⁵ for the early dead child. The wings may help him ascend the immortal after this ceremony. The styles presented by these bronze children should be summarized as a plastic art based on the traditional fairy beliefs with the absorption of Buddhist art, and their western attributes or Buddhist attributes should not be overemphasized.

⁷²¹ Ge, 2009 c (3).

⁷²² Sun, 2018.

⁷²³ Zhu & Duan. 2017 (9).

⁷²⁴ Sun, 1991: 452; Duan, 1992:353.

⁷²⁵ The Guan Li is the Confucian coming of age ceremony. The name Guan Li refers to the ceremony for men, while the Ji Li refers to the one for women. The age of the person is usually 18-20 and during the ceremony, the person obtains a style name.



Figure 98 East right Panel⁷²⁶



Figure 99 Bronze-winged Child Xi'an Museum⁷²⁷

4.3.4.1.4 Conclusion

The above arguments lead to the following conclusion:

(1) Nestorian “angels” are not the only examples of the winged celestial beings. In early Buddhist art, the winged figures appeared as chimaeras of human’s head and birds’ feet. Then they gradually evolved to a complete human appearance.

(2) In the cultural circle influenced by the art of Gandhara, highly Hellenistic winged “angels” are present in Buddhist ruins. The birth of these images was attributed to the painters of Greek cultural origin at the time. They used their familiar painting

⁷²⁶ Line drawing of the East right Panel, see Gulácsi. 2012–2016. fig.2. According to the Sequence of Narrative Panels by Gulácsi, Zsuzsanna, it’s numbered Panel No. 11

⁷²⁷ Zhu & Duan. 2017 (9).

techniques (hues, chiaroscuro, etc.) to promote Buddhism. The wings at this time were originated from the Eros in Greek culture, rather than the angels in Christian art.

(3) As time goes on, the influence of the art of Gandhara weakened, and the images of winged Apsaras came out in the Kucha Grottoes. The wings at this time were also not originated from Christian art because the early images of Nestorian angels on the paten decorated with Christological scenes in Semirechye dated back to the 9th -10th century, later than the development period of Kucha Grottoes. The retention of wings was the reflection of the early influence of Gandhara.

(4) The winged Apsaras on the reliefs of the stone structure contained in the tombs of Wirkak and An Bei represent a religious syncretism by blending Manichaeism, Zoroastrian, Daoist immortality and Buddhist Apsaras in the funerary art as the worship of wings coexists in these cultures.

(5) The winged bronze children are summarized as a plastic art based on the traditional fairy beliefs with the reference of Buddhist art, have nothing to do with the highly Hellenistic winged “angels” at Hadda and Miran.

(6) Nestorian winged “angel” in Xinjiang show the great similarity with that of Kucha Grottoes as they belong to a similar culture circle. The westward attack of the Mongolian Empire led to widespread ethnic migration and ethnic integration. The sculptors may thus have multiple cultural backgrounds. Nestorian “angels” have oriental faces while are dressed in Mongolian-style clothes.

(7) Nestorian winged “angels” in Quanzhou resemble more Buddhist Apsaras as the sculptors in South China are familiar with this style. In terms of plastic arts, they are more sinicized. No matter the sculptors served in Xinjiang or South China, they just used their familiar art forms to preach Christianity like the Buddhist site at Miran. What changed is the form and what does not change is the religious connotation.

(8) Nestorian “angels” exist as a form completely different from the Western Christian iconographic tradition. In connotation, however, they are sure to be Christian, including the wings. The inscriptions on the Nestorian tombstones and Nestorian literature during the Yuan Dynasty imply the believers’ desire for the paradise and eternal life, and the wings will undoubtedly help them achieve the wishes:

From the aeon to the everlasting Just as the dawn when you resurrected riding
the clouds to heaven, our Holy Father, in order to meet our Savior, may your prayer be

turned into our wings, so that we can ascend to heaven together with you and share joy in the Temple of Light. (六)⁷²⁸

(9) Some scholars prefer to associate the winged characters from the Mahavira Hall of Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou since both of them have wings.⁷²⁹ It worth noting that the winged figures at Kaiyuan Temple are playing musical instruments and showing the appearance of half-human and half-bird, thus they should be Kalaviṅka rather than the amalgamation of Apsaras and angels. It is the result of multiple influences, including Kalaviṅka of Indian mythology, the worship of the Indian and Iranian Aryans on the sun and flames, and medieval Persian miniature paintings.⁷³⁰



Figure 100 Kalaviṅka Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou⁷³¹

4.3.4.2 The four-winged “angels”

In general, the stereotypical image of an angel is flying with two wings. However, four Nestorian “angels” with four wings are found in Xinjiang (A-1), Yangzhou (Y-1) and Quanzhou (Q-26, Q-28 and Q-29), but no descriptions relevant in Nestorian literature, while six-winged angel Gabriel is mentioned but no corresponding images. (see the fragments from Gaochang, 1-Back-4, 2-Front-3, 2-Back-12, and the hymns from Wumen, Beijing, 八). The recent study on the Syriac liturgical book from Khara-Khoto also reveals the names of Gabriel, Cherubim and Seraphim:

⁷²⁸ Moule, Hao Trans.,1984:351-352.

⁷²⁹ Li, 2013:100.

⁷³⁰ Mu, 2015(4):59-65.

⁷³¹ http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_c8303ee00102whks.html

“In name of Gabriel, Michael, [the virtues], and in the name of the thrones, the dominions, [Cherubim], Seraphim, the principalities, the power, ... the archangels, and all the (holy) angels, may be released!”⁷³²

Tradition places Cherubim and Seraphim in the highest rank in Christian angelology. Gabriel is always the angel who blows the trumpet to indicate the Lord’s return to Earth or announce the beginning of Judgment Day, however, the *Bible* never specifies clearly Gabriel as the trumpeter (I Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 8:2,6,7,8,10,12,13; Revelation 9:1,13,14; Revelation 10:7; Revelation 11:15; I Corinthians 15:52), yet Gabriel in Nestorian literature is linked closely to the horn. (see the hymns from Wumen, Beijing, 八)

Cherub in the *Bible* come in many forms. The book Daniel describe a beast looks like a leopard with four wings and four heads (Daniel 7:6). In the Book of Ezekiel 1:5–11 and some Christian icons, the cherub is depicted as having two pairs of wings, and four faces.⁷³³ In Ezekiel chapter 10, another description of the cherub appears with slight differences in details (Ezekiel 10:14, Ezekiel 10:15, Ezekiel 10:20).

In the *Bible*, the cherub is a four-winged creature, but it does not have the complete human appearance. However, artistic representations of cherubim in Early Christian and Byzantine art sometimes diverged from scriptural descriptions. Cherubim are often associated with the Greco-Roman god Cupid or Eros, with depictions as small, plump, winged boys, who have only a pair of wings.⁷³⁴ By thinking this, Nestorian four winged “angels” do not necessarily refer to cherubim.

It has been suggested that the term Griffin may be synonymous with Cherubim.⁷³⁵ The early chimaeras of griffin-like hybrids with four legs and a head with beak are present in Ancient Iranian and Ancient Egyptian art dating back to before 3000 BCE. Wu Youxiong purposes: “The four-winged angel is derived from the Persian Greek Luna and the four-winged demon. The four-winged idol art is spread to Syria, Armenia, and even east to China through Christians.”⁷³⁶

Li Jingrong states that it can be further traced to the Assyrian tradition. In Assyrian culture, half-human and half-god guardian elves are often feathered, with two and four wings. After the rise of the Persian Empire in 550 B.C.E, Assyrian culture was absorbed

⁷³² Muto, 2013: 381-386; Muto, 2016:147-154.

⁷³³ Wood, 2008.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁵ Beekes, 2010.

⁷³⁶ Wu, 1998.

by the Persians. The image of the winged guardian elves developed to the highest point during the Persian Empire. As recorded in *History of Persian Empire*: "...the same sculpture also appears on the frame of the side door, but the protagonist is Assyrian protector gods. They are either human or the human body, eagle head, and claws. Like the Assyrian prototype, they have two pairs of wings and wear the same short skirts."⁷³⁷

Nestorianism has a deep Persian tradition.⁷³⁸ Before entering Persia, Nestorianism is successively influenced by Greek cultural⁷³⁹ and Syrian thought (in Ephesus). In 498, Nestorians became independent of the Eastern Roman Empire, then it became a branch of many religions in Sasanian Persia and continued until the destruction of the Persian Empire. Between 552 and 605, Nestorianism became the largest Christian faction in Sasanian.⁷⁴⁰

Thus, it is understandable that in the process of Nestorianism spreading eastward, the four-winged pattern goes along with it. Li Jingrong proposes: "There are no four-winged images of the Nestorian stone carvings in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and other places. It is probably that Nestorianism was more affected by foreign cultures when it was transmitted along land Silk Road to the east. So, it has a greater deviation from the originating tradition. However, it was less affected by foreign cultures when it was spread by the sea ... the Nestorian four-winged images in Quanzhou has a direct connection with Assyrian culture, which is the result of spreading by sea."⁷⁴¹

In my opinion, some of her points are questionable, (1) there is four-winged image in Almaliq, Xinjiang; (2) as we have discussed in earlier chapters, the introduction of Nestorianism in southern China (especially in Quanzhou) during the Mongolian period is still a matter for debate, yet the scholars tend to agree with the idea of spreading by land rather than by sea.⁷⁴²

4.3.5 Further discussion

Someone may ask why Nestorian Christians didn't use the appearance of angels. In history, there are no images of the angel in earliest Christianity, and the symmetric peacocks, candlesticks, flowers are depicted on both sides of the cross at the time.⁷⁴³ The presence of wings are even later.

⁷³⁷ Olmstead, Li & Gu, Trans. 2010: 80-81.

⁷³⁸ Zhu, 1997: 40.

⁷³⁹ Budge, 1928:37; Zhang, 2005 (6).

⁷⁴⁰ Lin, 2017 (5):58-61; Huang, 2013:15.

⁷⁴¹ Li, 2013: 105.

⁷⁴² Tian, 2011 (6): 31-34; Niu, 2003 (2).

⁷⁴³ Rodley, 1994: 94-95.

The oldest surviving icon of the Annunciation is found in the Catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria in Rome, Italy, dating from the second half of the second century. The scene depicts the Annunciation and Mary with Jesus sitting on her lap.

In the fourth century, there remain some elaborate carvings of Christian themes on the famous Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus.⁷⁴⁴ In the scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac, Christ appears as a youthful, beardless figure with shortish hair. The angel without wings stands behind Abraham.

The earliest known representation of angels with wings is on Child's sarcophagus in Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, attributed to the time of Theodosius I (379–395). The image of angels in early Christianity was very similar to the gods of Greece and Mesopotamia as it combines the winged images in Greek culture and the original tradition of wing worship in West Asia and Central Asia.⁷⁴⁵ On the sarcophagus, two-winged angels are flying in opposite directions and holding the laurel wreath with a Chi-Rho monogram. They wear robes which are swinging in the wind.



Figure 101 The Annunciation, late 2nd century or early 3rd century. Rome

Figure 102 Cast of the Sacrifice of Isaac. The hand of God originally came down to hold Abraham's knife (both are now missing)⁷⁴⁶ 359

⁷⁴⁴ The Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus is a marble Early Christian sarcophagus used for the burial of Junius Bassus, who died in 359. It is now below the modern basilica in the Museo Storico del Tesoro della Basilica di San Pietro (Museum of Saint Peter's Basilica) in the Vatican.

⁷⁴⁵ O'Connell & Airey, *Yu Trans.* 2009: 133.

⁷⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcophagus_of_Junius_Bassus#/media/File:Isaac_sarcifice_Pio_Christiano_Inv31648.jpg

Since then, wings, human appearances and crosses became the basic symbols of angels in Christian art. The pattern of a winged angels has greatly developed in Byzantine art. The most famous are the Christian themed mosaics in Basilica of San Vitale (527-547) in Ravenna. A piece of mosaic on the north lunette of the choir of the Basilica of San Vitale shows the scene that Abraham at Mamre is bringing an offering to the three angels, and Sarah is standing in the tent. Above the main picture, two angels are holding a garland with a cross inside.



Figure 103 Child's sarcophagus from the Imperial Cemetery behind the Church of the Holy Apostles (4th/5th century) Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, sarcophagus with two angels on the major sides. ⁷⁴⁷



Figure 104 Mosaic on the north lunette of the choir of the Basilica of San Vitale⁷⁴⁸

The historical evidence shows that the images of angel are used widely among the Christ world until the 4th/5th century, during which, Nestorius was suffering exiled to

⁷⁴⁷ <http://romeartlover.tripod.com/Istanb20.html>

⁷⁴⁸ <https://www.unitedeuropeanchristendom.com/ravenna.html>

the east.⁷⁴⁹ The lengthy communication process makes it difficult to maintain close contact with the headquarters church.

Nestorian language, texts, and images gradually separate from the original and form new characteristics. For example, the abundance Syriac, Sogdian and old Uyghur Manuscripts and their translation into a wide variety of scripts from Bulayïq show the diversity of Nestorianism in the new cultural background. In this case, Nestorian Christians in the Far East were completely unfamiliar with angelic images of the western Christian world, just as they were unfamiliar with the image of Crucifixion.

The “angels” at the ruins of Hadda and Miran mentioned above, resembling the angels in Christian art, however, they are the products of Gandhara art and have nothing to do with Christianity. The sculptor just borrowed the physical appearance of god of love in Greek culture to preach Buddhism, and a thousand years later, the sculptors used the appearance of Buddhist Apsaras to preach Christianity. Although Apsaras are originated from other cultural backgrounds, in the minds of Nestorians, it has long been transformed into the angel who can spread the gospel to people.

Similar appropriations are reflected in many aspects, for example, many Buddhist and Taoist terms are present in Chinese Nestorian classics, which makes it easier for the believers to understand and accept. And the Nestorian Stone Pillar in Luoyang and the styles of tombstones in Quanzhou are all the results of imitating Buddhism. Also, the Nestorian paten (see Figure 64) unearthed in Central Asia depicts the story of siege of a castle, and the scene is presented in a Sogdian style castle.

Compared with Nestorian “angels” in the two periods, the “angels” in the Tang Dynasty have no wings. The reason for this may be complex.

First, the number of Jingjiao “angels” in the Tang Dynasty is so small that it is difficult to make a comprehensive analysis. Expecting newer archaeological discoveries to drive this research.

Second, Nestorian relics found in the Tang Dynasty are monument and stone pillar while in the Yuan Dynasty they are tombstones. The different styles of relics result in different iconology. For example, the reliefs of the 6th century on the stone structure in the tombs of Wirkak and An Bei are depicted with winged Apsaras.

Another question needed to be attended is that the iconic depictions of angels do not occur among the Nestorian Christians in Inner Mongolia. Nestorian images in Inner

⁷⁴⁹ Zhu, 1997:40.

Mongolia are only limited to the crosses, the depictions of Islam lantern window, realistic floral motifs and vine patterns. Beside the depiction of rooster on I-O-1, winged figures only exist in the controversial bronze crosses in the Ordos.

In the book *Investigation the Historical site in Manchuria-Mongolia* by Ryuzo Torii, the author mentioned that there was a Deva statue of in the stupa of the Eastern Mongolian region, 7 inches high, with both hands holding a *Öryōki* and wings on the shoulders.⁷⁵⁰ This piece of historical evidence shows that images of winged features have ever encountered on the depictions in Inner Mongolia, yet it is rare. The following facts may promote this phenomenon:

(1) In grassland culture, the most famous plastic art is the “Scythian three elements”, namely the harness, the weapon and the “animal style/zoomorphic style” pattern, thus, the depictions of winged characters are mostly limited to bird-like pieces.

(2) Inner Mongolia is less effected by Buddhism, while Buddhist tradition enjoys a long history in South China. In Quanzhou, Yanfu Temple has been was established as early as in 288 BC. The images in Quanzhou, thus retained many Buddhist elements.

(3) The shape and structure of Nestorian tombs in Inner Mongolia were more influenced by Central Asia and the Middle East,⁷⁵¹ even though in the later period, it showed some preference for Chinese funeral customs. Different forms produced different iconographic systems. In Inner Mongolia, the emphasis of Nestorian Christians on their beliefs was reflected in the multiple crosses on the coffin rather the images of “angels”.

⁷⁵⁰ Ryuzo, 1933:173.

⁷⁵¹ Halbertsma, 2008: 126.

4.4 Ordos Bronze Crosses

4.4.1 The collection and classification

Before discussing this issue, I would like to clarify two concepts: Ordos bronzes and Ordos bronze crosses.

Ordos bronzes are those bronze artefacts featured by decorative animal patterns and characterized by nomadic cultures which unearthed along the Great Wall in northern China at the end of the 19th century. The largest number and the most characteristic objects are concentrated on the Ordos region, hence they are called “Ordos Bronzes”, also known as “Suiyuan Bronzes” and “Northern Bronzes”.⁷⁵²

According to the archaeological findings, these bronzes are mainly created by the ancient ancestors who are active in the northern grasslands. Its history spans more than one thousand years, roughly from the Shang (1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou (1046–256 BCE) Dynasties to the end of the Han Dynasty (206–220 CE).⁷⁵³ Generally speaking, the bronze objects were useful, portable objects-personal ornaments, horse gear, tools and weapons-richly decorated with intricate geometric, zoomorphic, etc.⁷⁵⁴

While the Ordos bronze crosses to be discussed are the objects, reportedly over one thousand were collected mainly by F.A. Nixon in the first half of the 20th century during his work in China.⁷⁵⁵ These pieces have similar functions and features as the Ordos bronzes. Because of the more cross-shaped or bird-shaped patterns, they are considered by many missionaries and scholars to be Nestorian relics. Ordos bronzes and Ordos bronze crosses are completely different concepts.

After the purchasing and collecting, Nixon donated the crosses to the Feng Pingshan Library of the University of Hong Kong.⁷⁵⁶ According to J. M. Menzies, there are 979 pieces in its original paraphernalia and 935 pieces presently in storage and on exhibition in the University Museum and Art Gallery of Hong Kong (UMAG).⁷⁵⁷ Besides Hong Kong, some objects are included in the Scheut collection displayed at the C.I.C.M. China Museum in Brussels, Belgium.⁷⁵⁸ Besides, the Columbia University Collection, the Toronto Royal Ontario Museum, Mark Brown Collection and the British Museum

⁷⁵² Tian & Guo, 1986.

⁷⁵³ Zheng, 1991(4).

⁷⁵⁴ Kawami, Prior, Wicks, *Museum Collections, I, The Silk Road* 14, 2016: 175-185.

⁷⁵⁵ Mr F. A. Nixon, who used to work as a postman in the northern region of China before he moved to Shanghai, see, Andrea, 2017 (2).

⁷⁵⁶ Niu, 2008:12-13; Chen, 2017.

⁷⁵⁷ Andrea, 2017 (2).

⁷⁵⁸ Halbertsma, 2008:195.

all share several of F. A. Nixon' collection.⁷⁵⁹ There are also some similar objects in the Exhibition Hall of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes and Jiuquan Museum of China.

Studies have been made of them since they were found. In December 1934, after a few days of intensive recording, printing, sketching and investigating, the results were embodied in a monograph entitled *Chinese Nestorian Bronze Crosses* by J. M. Menzies and published as a double number of the Cheeloo (Shantung) University⁷⁶⁰ Bulletin. In this comprehensive and unprecedented survey, Menzies divided the 979 pieces of Nixon's collection into four major groups: (1) cruciform with flat ends, (2) cruciform with circular ends, (3) bird-shape crosses, (4) geometrical and miscellaneous. Each of them was further subdivided into several types, making in all 19 types.⁷⁶¹

Drake states: "Of the 979 pieces in the collection, about three-fifths are cruciform in shape, about one fifth are bird-shaped, some of which, a single bird with spread wings, may suggest a cruciform outline, while the bird itself is also a Christian symbol."⁷⁶²

Generally, the designs are in high relief. There is a strong loop (or two loops crossing each other) on the back of the cross, with fixed for attaching a leather for suspension or being used to attach the object, such as the clothing. The literature also shows: "...the Mongols constantly dig them up, from old graves and elsewhere: they know nothing of their history, but wear them on their girdles, especially the woman, and use them with a lump of mud to seal their doors."⁷⁶³

4.4.2 The debate

For a long time, these influential scholars, including Pelliot and Mostaert, presented the objects as amulets or crosses from the Nestorian Christians of the Yuan period.⁷⁶⁴ This interpretation has been followed by many others and has been the mainstream concept of Nestorian crosses.

As time goes on, the deepening of the research has inspired new ideas and conclusions of different scholars. Some scholars in past decades have questioned these so-called Nestorian relics with diverse reasons.

⁷⁵⁹ Andrea, 2017(2).

⁷⁶⁰ Cheeloo University (in Chinese 齐鲁大学) was a university in China, established by Hunter Corbett American Presbyterian, and other English Baptist, Anglican, and Canadian Presbyterian mission agencies in early 1900 in China. The university was dissolved in 1952 with the establishment of Communist rule.

⁷⁶¹ Menzies 1934: 165-167; Drake, 1962:11-25.

⁷⁶² Drake, 1962:11-25.

⁷⁶³ Moule,1930:92

⁷⁶⁴ Pelliot, 1931-1932; Mostaert, 1934; Hambis, 1954.

Chen Jian Andrea is one of the more active scholars devoted to this issue. In her study, she proposes the influencing factors that have caused this judgment from the following two aspects:⁷⁶⁵

- (1) The collectors' background. The collectors, such as F. A. Nixon and Mark Brown, neither of them has participated in the excavations or collected the objects directly from the Mongol people. Besides, their Christian background further reinforce this opinion. The naming of the bronze cross was based on a strong subjective attitude and religious enthusiasm.
- (2) The archaeological trends ("Midwestern Taxonomic Method") of that time led to the simple idea of Nestorian Crosses applying to the whole package of bronzes.

Then she summarized the questions and made a detailed analysis:

- (1) The people of the Steppes always demonstrate a penchant for the metalworking, specifically working with bronze. The similar styles and functions between these bronze pieces and the artefacts from the civilization of Central Asia prompt us to doubt the validity of the classical concept of Nestorian Crosses. Those who do not have the Christian faith are likely to wear these objects as well because this is the customs and traditions of the grassland culture (L. Hambis⁷⁶⁶, Raffaele Biscione⁷⁶⁷). These motifs might just be charms used by Turkish and Mongol tribes (Gillman and Klimkeit⁷⁶⁸).
- (2) The locations of the discovery of the Ordos Crosses was originally a mystery. No clear archaeological record has been found yet concerning these Ordos Bronzes. No "bronze Ordos crosses" have been excavated in Nestorian graves north of the Daqingshan mountains, and only one Nestorian gravestone has been recorded in the Ordos region (Halbertsma⁷⁶⁹). Some of the so-called Nestorian Crosses were excavated in the region of present-day "Shanxi" (Wang Hanzhan⁷⁷⁰).
- (3) The Ordos crosses, however, could not be mapped out the traces of Nestorianism (Halbertsma⁷⁷¹). The design of these objects, as well as the

⁷⁶⁵ Andrea, 2017 (2).

⁷⁶⁶ Hambis 1956: 286.

⁷⁶⁷ Biscione, 1985.

⁷⁶⁸ Gillman & Klimkeit, 2006: 230.

⁷⁶⁹ Halbertsma, 2008:195.

⁷⁷⁰ Wang, 1990: 109-112.

⁷⁷¹ Halbertsma, 2008: 299.

motifs, such as the cross, the symbol of Swastika 卐 and the birds are not unique to Christianity. There could be a merely coincidental resemblance between the design of the so-called Nestorian Crosses and those of other assemblages.

For the third point, Chen makes a further analysis focusing on the cross-shaped and the bird-shaped pieces. Firstly, she argues that the reading of the cross-shaped as unmistakably Christian is problematic and dogmatic. Long before Christianity was born and carried along the Silk Road to eastern Asia, the people who used to dominate the vast area from the region of the Black Sea to the Altai Mountain, had already a pervasive propensity for the cross-shaped in their symbolic system,⁷⁷² as well as the wadang 瓦当 of the Han dynasty in China, depicting crosses inside circles.⁷⁷³

Secondly, she states that the assertion of bird-shaped pieces symbolizing the Holy Spirit is too casual. In Central Asia art history, the dove motif had another special meaning when presented with pearls in an idiomatic artistic set-up, which has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit even in a Christian theme setting.⁷⁷⁴ Besides, if the single-headed bird-shaped piece represents the Holy Spirit, then how to explain the double-headed one and the folded-wing one? She concludes that the bird-shaped crosses are very likely inspired by the eastward-flowing Buddhist iconography.⁷⁷⁵

I quiet approval her points, as she has attempted to re-read the motifs with an art-historical approach which is a well-established methodology. However, I will supplement her discussion in the areas of the bird-shaped pieces, the swastika symbol and the items from Gansu.

4.4.2.1 Bird-shaped objects

The descending dove depiction in Christian images symbolizes the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and fell on him. (Matthew 3: 16). Holy Spirit transforms Jesus' flesh body into Spirit Body and thus resurrect the dead Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:11).

The St. Thomas crosses in India, which is also derived from Syrian Christianity, are always depicted with a swooping dove on the top of the cross, although sometimes the dove is not so clear that could be interpreted as a flame. There is no doubt that the dove here represents the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁷² Andrea, 2017 (2).

⁷⁷³ Halbertsma, 2008:195.

⁷⁷⁴ Andrea, 2019.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

The interpretation of the inscription around the cross can provide some supports: “Who is the true Messiah, and God above, and Holy Ghost.” (Pahlavi translation, by A.C. Burnell in 1873)⁷⁷⁶; “He who believes in the Messiah, and God on high, and also in the Holy Ghost, is in the grace of Him who bore the pain of the Cross.” (by Dr Martin Haug in 1874); “In punishment by the cross (was) the suffering of this one; He who is (From Burnel) + Messiah, and in God on high, and also in the Holy Ghost.” (by Dr Martin Haug).⁷⁷⁷

However, this similar depiction has not been present in Nestorian remains in China and Central Asia. The concept of Holy Trinity or Holy Spirit is easy to be read from the famous Xi’an Stele inscription, the manuscripts from Khara-Khoto, as well as the literature during the Yuan Dynasty. However, there is no mention of birds or doves of them, let alone the connection between birds (doves) and the Holy Spirit or the Holy Trinity.

Besides, the existence of the elements, such as the bird and the cross, is very isolated as they are often used alone as ornaments, while the elements of St. Thomas Cross—the birds, the cross and the steps constitute a complete iconological system. More importantly, the premise of interpreting St. Thomas Cross is based on the fact that it belongs to Christianity. However, what the mainstream scholars have done is using the dove to judge that these objects are Christian relics, which is a completely reversed step. It is very dangerous and imprecise to say it represents the holy spirit as long as we see a dove.

Two drum-shaped utensils with the animal pattern were unearthed in Xiaoheishigou of Inner Mongolia. The ends of the drum are depicted as two flying wild geese. The depictions from the drum-shaped utensil and Ordos bronze pieces are very similar even though the shapes of the wings change slightly.

The Mongolian tribes worship the sun and heaven. Since birds can fly freely in the sky, people often use the bird’s pattern as a totem to decorate various bronzes in attempt to be close to the sky. It is hoped that the birds will bring their piety and prayer to the heavens and bring the will of heaven back to the world. This desire for freedom and peace is in stark contrast to the brutal wars and strangles on the grassland.⁷⁷⁸ This could be the original symbolism of the bird pattern. And this concept has been born in the

⁷⁷⁶ <https://www.nasrani.net/2008/02/29/analogical-review-on-st-thomas-cross-the-symbol-of-nasranis/>

⁷⁷⁷ <http://chroniclesofmalabar.blogspot.com/2011/11/ancient-stone-crosses-of-india.html>

⁷⁷⁸ Bao, 2009:88-90.

grassland culture since the Bronze Age and passed on to the future generations. With the advent of Christianity, it might be influenced by the new culture, yet the original meaning should be inherited and carried forward instead of disappearing.

From this point of view, the mainstream idea of the “the dove representing the Holy Spirit” once again proved to be far-fetched.

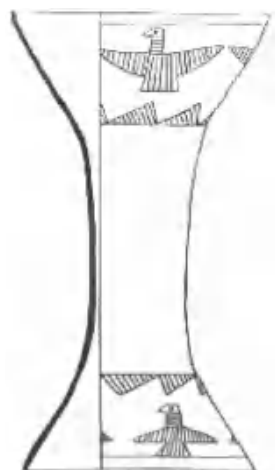


Figure 105 Drum-shaped utensil unearthed in Xiaoheshigou⁷⁷⁹



Figure 106 Bird-shape piece⁷⁸⁰

4.4.2.2 The symbol of swastika 卐

The symbol of swastika is another pattern often present among the bronze objects. However, the Swastika shares the same situation as the cross—it is also chosen by many civilizations as a symbol for a long time.

In Asia, the use of swastika even can be traced back to the Neolithic Age. Long before Buddhism came into being and was introduced into China, the figure has appeared on the painted pottery of the ancient Majiayao culture in China more than 5,000 years ago.⁷⁸¹ Besides, it has been found on the objects in Anatolia (now Turkey) of the Red Copper Age (5000 to 3000 BCE), on the religious altars in northern Africa (from about 2000 to 1000 BCE), as well as on the relics of the Jingjue Country influenced by the Aryan culture of North India, which was in the Niya River Basin in the 1st century.⁷⁸² The most famous is that it is regarded as a symbol of divinity and spirituality in Indian religions, especially appears frequently in Buddhist culture and Chinese culture.

⁷⁷⁹ Gao, 2019:33, pl. 4-4.

⁷⁸⁰ Bronze, Ordos region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong, see Chen, 2017.

⁷⁸¹ Liu & Chen, 2012.

⁷⁸² Ding, 2006:30.

Based on the above facts, we cannot increase the possibility for the reading of these bronze objects as unmistakably Christian, on the contrary, it was weakened.

However, some archaeological evidence indicates that this symbol has ever been used by Nestorian Christians. In 1995, the archaeological team of the Inner Mongolian Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology excavated an ancient nomad's tomb in the Ordos region, 10 bronze objects with a symbol of swastika were unearthed. Lin Meicun believes that these objects belong to the relics of the Turkic Hun tribe⁷⁸³ which practices Nestorianism.⁷⁸⁴

Mostaert has mentioned a Mongolian tribe named Erküt (or Erkud) in his *Chorography of the Ordos* published in 1934. This tribe especially worships the symbol of swastika⁷⁸⁵ and still retains the customs of anointing the body of the dead and placing them in a cross shape. The Erkud people are believed to be the descendants of Nestorian Christians during the Yuan Dynasty.⁷⁸⁶ The name of the Erküt is originated from the Persian “arkhun”, while the term Yilikewen in the Yuan Dynasty is possible the transliteration of “arkhun”⁷⁸⁷, and thus this tribe shares the similar origin with Yelikewen, suggesting some sort of Nestorian connection.

Halbertsma records: “According to the Belgian missionary (Mostaert, Zhou), the Erküt practiced a faith most peculiar to the region with faint echoes of Christianity...Although a leader of the Erküt did not recognize the sign of the cross, Mostaert related many practices among the Erküt to the use of the cross.”⁷⁸⁸

To conclude, the historical records make the problem more complicated and confusing. On the one hand, such a widely used symbol cannot be used as a basis for judging it to be Christianity; on the other hand, there has been the worship of the swastika symbol among some Christian peoples in the northern grasslands. We look forward to more new archaeological data to help us make a breakthrough in this research.

4.4.2.3 The cross-shaped bronze item in Dunhuang and seals in Jiuquan Museum

The cross-shaped bronze item excavated from the north grotto (No.105) of Dunhuang (now conserved in Exhibition Hall of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes) and the seals

⁷⁸³ Hun tribe was one of the nine main constituent tribes of the Tiele Confederation during the Tang Dynasty. During the Mongol era, the tribe moved southwest. Some of them moved to Central Asia and the other moved to Hetao area.

⁷⁸⁴ Lin, 2007:243.

⁷⁸⁵ Chen, 1994 (1).

⁷⁸⁶ Bai, 2017.

⁷⁸⁷ Saeki, 1951: 426.

⁷⁸⁸ Halbertsma, 2008: 194-195.

collected in Jiuquan Museum could be used as indirect analogies with the collections of F. A. Nixon's.

The four ends of the Dunhuang cross are gradually widened, and the center is tightened. The space in the four arms of the cross is decorated with four bird heads. There may have been inlays, but now there is no. This bronze cross is bigger than those in the Ordos and hence believed to be the Nestorian Christian with higher status. Besides the cross, there are bronze coins unearthed in this grotto. According to these pieces, the dating of the cross is determined to be the Xixia Dynasty (1038–1227) or earlier. (At the time, Dunhuang was under the rule of Xixia.)⁷⁸⁹

Peng Jinzhang argues: “The cross is the most important symbol of Christian culture ... thus, the bronze cross found in Mogao Grottos should be a Christian relic.”⁷⁹⁰ He further compares the cross with those on Nestorian stele and Nestorian stone pillar of the Tang Dynasty. This style has been present on the Nestorian silk picture in Dunhuang and mural in Gaochang, accompanied by a little difference in style.

Jiang Boqin holds a similar view: “The four bird-head images on the cross found in Mogao Grottoes remind us of a large number of bronze crosses collected by Nixon in Baotou around 1929. These antiquities are found from the Ordos Desert.”⁷⁹¹ He continues to point out: “The bronze cross in Dunhuang can prove the connection between the relics of the Tang and Song Dynasties.”⁷⁹²

The Nestorian Syriac documents unearthed from the same grotto (No.53) of Dunhuang seems to strengthen the speculation. Duan Qing interprets this document earlier, stating that the content of this document should be part of the *Bible: Psalms* and used by Nestorian Christians in Central Asia and China at the time.⁷⁹³

Chen Jian Andrea points out five reasons to doubt this, including the erroneous presupposition of granting that the cross-shaped exclusively belongs to Christianity; ignoring the assemblage, such as bronze bracelets which were discovered along with the Nestorian Cross in the same pit; lack of the comparisons between these items and the Nestorian relics in other sites, etc.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ Peng, 2013(3):51:58.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹¹ Jiang, 2004 (a).

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

⁷⁹³ Duan, 2000.

⁷⁹⁴ Andrea, 2017(2).

As far as I am concerned, her views are reasonable except for the third point. Peng has made some comparative analysis on the Nestorian crosses in Xi'an, Luoyang, Darhan Muminggan United Banner and Chifeng. And he concludes that the similar characteristics of the cross further prove that Jiang's assertion is correct.

However, although the comparison has been done, his judgment is still suspected. Both Peng and Jiang used the bronze crosses collected by Nixon to judge the Dunhuang Cross, but the premise is that the Ordos bronze Crosses is definitely as Nestorian relics. This premise is not uncertain.

As to the Nestorian seals in Jiuquan, we are even less able to find enough information as they are collected from the folk. Seals are very common during the Yuan Dynasty and named "Yuan Ya 元押". Ya is a kind of seal prevalent engraved with the name, shapes of the animals, plants or geometric patterns, etc. It is born as a tool with credible functions as early as in the Six Dynasties.⁷⁹⁵ Among the four ethnic groups divided by the Yuan Dynasty Government, most of the highest-ranking Mongols and Semu people do not understand Chinese characters, so they often use Ya to avoid writing, resulting in the popularity of Yuanya from official to folk.⁷⁹⁶

At the beginning of the discovery of Ordos bronze collections, some of the seal-like pieces were confirmed to be Yuanya by the dealers and missionaries. Then the rest of the pieces were naturally believed to belong to the same dating and have the same function, including the cross-shaped pieces. Because Christians often use the symbol of the cross, the idea of these bronze crosses being Nestorian relics and kinds of seals came into being.⁷⁹⁷ As we have discussed, the mainstream idea is problematic, thus the items unearthed in Jiuquan are seals but cannot be determined to be Nestorian relics.

Thus, neither the crosses from Dunhuang nor the bronze cross in Ordos cannot be taken as the reference for other Nestorian relics study at the current stage. In turn, these 1,000 Ordos bronze crosses cannot be used to prove the identity of the Dunhuang Cross and the seals in Jiuquan.

To conclude, most of the judgment on these Ordos collections comes from speculation. Questions about the bronze objects should always exist until new archaeological discoveries come out.

⁷⁹⁵ Zhou, 2001:7.

⁷⁹⁶ Sun, 2004.

⁷⁹⁷ Andrea, 2017 (2).



Figure 107 Cross-shaped bronze in Exhibition Hall of Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, Song Dynasty, 6.3x6.3cm, No. B105:2. Photo by li Zi'ao

Figure 108 Bronze Seal in Jiuquan Museum Photo by li Zi'ao

5. Conclusion

Nestorian iconographic tradition is an excellent example of intercultural communication focusing on funeral art. We are sure that the difference has existed between Nestorian iconographic tradition and that of Western Christianity. The divergence has been supported by many facts: the absence of Christian image of the crucifixion in Nestorian iconography, which is ample in the Western tradition; Nestorian appropriation of the attributes of the local culture, including the Buddhist Apsaras, lotus, Chinese censer, as well as other adornments.

Based on the arguments above, we can make the following conclusion:

(1) The three regions discussed in this dissertation—the Semirechye in Central Asia, Inner Mongolia, and the southeast coast of China show different shapes and structures of Nestorian tombs.

In the area of Seven River, simple stones with epitaphs and cross depictions are often used. This is the inheritance of the Turkic tomb form. The cubic design, the inscriptions and the decorative depictions of the gravestones in Inner Mongolia, suggesting influences from multiple cultures. The design of the funerary objects seems to have developed from an early Turkic style stele or grave pillar to the late Chinese style with carving depictions and epitaphs indicating an absorbing of Chinese funerary customs.

In Quanzhou, there are two main styles of the stone tombs: Altar-Style and Grave-style. Both of them are built with the base of Sumeru Throne. The two styles were popular among Islam and Christianity at the time.

With the change of the forms of the tomb, the decorative patterns on the tombstones became rich and diverse. However, the selection of foreign and indigenous cultures, the elements of Christian and non-Christian has never been random and disorganized.

(2) The “empty cross” is favoured by Nestorianism in Central Asia and China. The possible reasons for this selection go like this:

Nestorian theology easily denies the absolute value of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. Their passion for the “plain cross” is higher than the crucifix; the long argument over the “plain cross” and crucifixion led the Nestorian Christians to be unfamiliar with the crucifixion for; in Chinese culture, there is no tradition of considering the image of a torturing saint as an object of respect.

In Nestorian literature, the “empty cross” has the concept of universe and space. In the minds of Nestorian Christians, it is a sign of powerful charm.

(3) The motif of cross-lotus appears in the Western Regions, Tibet, Ladakh and even South India—but it shines great light on Chinese soil through incorporating elements from other religious and cultural traditions encountered by the Nestorian Christians. The pursuit of eternal life reflects in the Glory Nestorian cross-lotus. The process of the lotus flower growing from the mud represents the sublimation from filth to purity and the cross erecting above the lotus represents the resurrection of Jesus.

(4) The censers with Chinese style under the cross-lotus may be related to the liturgy about incense in Nestorianism. As a symbol, the incense symbolizes the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Saints rising to heaven.

(5) The pattern of clouds creates a beautiful paradise atmosphere. The pillars of cloud and fire symbolize God’s presence and provide great comfort and strength to the frightened people. The parasol and the cross erecting on the crown are the symbols of power.

(6) Winged-Apsaras have been present in ancient Buddhist art, in the cultural circle influenced by Gandhara art, and on the reliefs of the tombs of Wirkak and An Bei. The presence of Nestorian “angels” dressed in popular costumes are not the only examples. In Christian context, it exists as a form completely different from the previous cases, and in this sense, it is an innovation or an artistic revival.

(7) The mainstream ideas about the “Nestorian bronze crosses” are controversial. Some bear the distinguishable Nestorian iconographical characteristics might be identified as Mongolian Nestorian artefacts temporarily. However, the controversy continues to exist.

To conclude, Nestorian iconographic tradition is a Christian art genre and style that used to dominate the area from Central Asia to China during the Mongol era, under the influences of Buddhism, Daoism, and many nomadic primordial folk religions such as Shamanism. Living in such a background, Nestorian Christians accepted the hybrid culture and created their own aesthetics of iconography which are reflected in their imaginings about the afterlife, their funeral art and their comprehensive understanding of their own identity.

In the historical process of the spread of Christianity in China, some artistic traditions, such as cross-lotus icon, have kept unquestionable consistency from the

Tang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty, from Central Asia to Inner Mongolia and South China. However, this kind of hybridized and synthetic art can only be the product of a historical stage. In the process of mutual communication and integration, external factors can only be absorbed as a component and a supplement of local subject art. Nestorian images, before it had time to stand firm, disappeared again with the demise of the Yuan Dynasty.

There are still some related matters for debating further, for example, to what extent has the Syrian Christian tradition been inherited by the Nestorian Christians in the Far East? Also, the presentation and interpretation of Nestorian discoveries by foreign and Chinese scholars are sometimes problematic. We look forward to more and updated archaeological data and will keep pursuing the more appropriate answers through unceasing interdisciplinary dialogue. Hopefully, this article will serve as the starting point for future Nestorian art history study and I will keep an open attitude to some possibly diverse results from all the Nestorian images in question.

Appendices

1. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones found in Semirechye

S-1



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 1261/62

Material: Stone

Technique: Engraving

Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent

Description: A cross with arms terminating in pearls, standing on a base connected by a triangle and a rectangle

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

ܩܘܕܝܫܐ ܕܘܫܘܢܐ .1
ܡܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܡܝܫܘܢܐ .2
ܒܗܝܬܝܫܫܐ .3
ܕܡܝܫܘܢܐ .4
ܕܡܝܫܘܢܐ .5
ܕܡܝܫܘܢܐ ܕܡܝܫܘܢܐ .6

English Translation

In the year 1537 (1261/62),
this is a female teacher
Bahitsysša, the tomb of a
general's mother.

Reference: 1.Baumer, 2006:210.

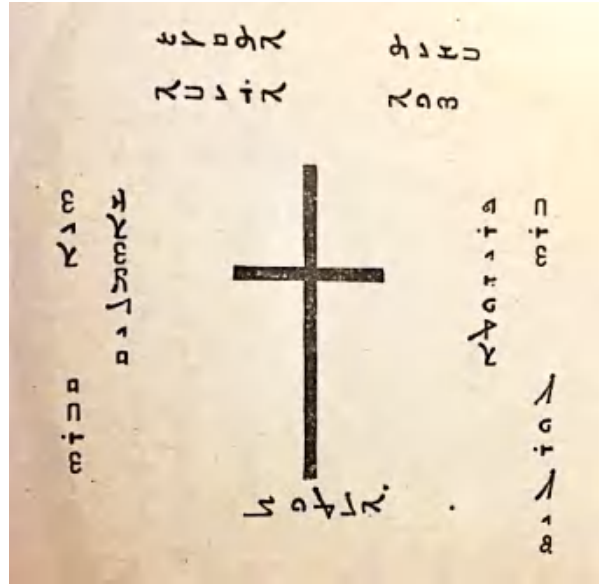
2.Niu, 2012:163-181. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

3. Chwolson, 1897, No.5.

4. Dickens, 2014:13-49.

Source: Photo by A. Savchenko

S-2



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 1267

Found: Semirechye

Material: Stone

Technique: Carving

Description A cross with one gem

Inscription: In the year 1578 (1267) which is the Hare year. This is the Tomb of Periodeut Shah-Malyk, the son of Gewargis (George) Altuz.

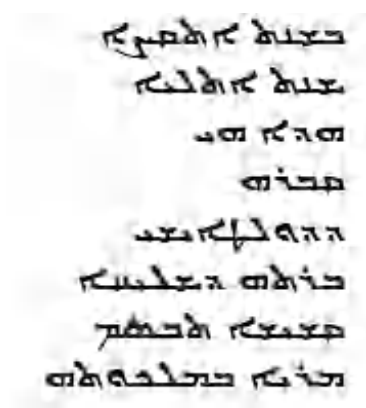
Reference: Saeki, 1951:410-411, Fig.4.

S-3



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1279/80
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent
Description A cross

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

In the year 1591 (1279/80),
the year of the dragon. This
is the grave of Dawlat-eši,
the daughter of Šliha the
priest. May she please the
lord in his kingdom.

Reference: 1. Chwolson, 1897, No.18.
2. Dickens, 2014:13-49.

Source: Photo by A. Savchenko

S-4



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1289
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 21.59 (L) x 15.24 (W) cm
Inventory No. PS352510
Number:
Location: The British Museum
Description: A cross with dots in four quadrants
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

ܩܘܪܬܐ ܕܡܫܘܬ ܕܩܘܪܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܬܐ .1
ܩܘܪܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܬܐ .2
ܩܘܪܬܐ ܕܩܘܪܬܐ .3

English Translation

In the year 1600 of the Greek calendar (1289), in the Year of the Ox, this is the tomb of the priest Mashut.

Reference: Niu, 2012:163-181. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

Source: Dr. Carol Michaelson of The British Museum

S-5

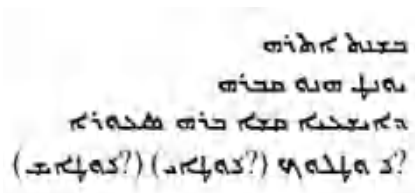


- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 1292
- Found:** Semirechye, Kyrgyzstan
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 23(L) x 20 (W) x 11 (T) cm
- Inventory** CA-14357
- Number:**
- Location:** Entered the Hermitage Museum in 1938; handed over from the Museum of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR
- Description:** A cross with arms terminating in pearls
- Source:** Hermitage Museum

S-6



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1293/94
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent
Description A cross with arms terminating in pearls
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

In the year 1605 (1293/94),
 [the year of] the horse. This
 is the grave of Isaiah the
 priest, son of the church
 visitor Qutluq (or Qutāy or
 Qutāš?)

Reference: Dickens, 2014:13-49.
Source: Photo by A. Savchenko

S-7



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 1307
- Found:** Semirechye
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Carving
- Description** A cross with arms terminating in pearls
- Inscription:** In the year of 1618 (1307) which is the Sheep year, (and) Turkish Kui (sheep). This is the Tomb of Julia, the beloved young lady, the bride of Chorepiscopus Johan (John).
- Reference:** Saeki, 1951:412, Fig.5.

S-8



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 1311/12
Material: Stone
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 26.5 (L) x 20 (W) x 9 (T) cm
Inventory No. 3127
Number:
Location: State Museum of History of Uzbekistan

Description A cross with arms terminating in pearls

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

[sic] ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 1
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 2
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 3
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 4
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 5
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 6
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 7
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 8
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 9
ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܘܢܝܘܢܝܘܢ 10

English Translation

(According to) the calculation of Alexander Khan it was thousand six hundred twenty-three (1311/12), it was the Turkic year of the Mouse. This is the grave of Mangu Tāš-tāy the qobuz player. May he be remembered.

- Reference:**
1. Chwolson. 1897.
 2. Dickens, 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

S-9



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 1312
- Found:** Issyk Kul
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Carving
- Location:** Musée d'art et d'histoire de Saint-Denis, Temporary loan from Musée Guimet.
- Description** A cross

S-10



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross, Lotus

Date: 1314/15

Material: Stone

Technique: Carving

Dimensions: 29 (L) x 23 (W) cm

Location: Formerly in the Tajikistan National Museum, Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Item BP-201/5. Now in the Museum of Ancient Panjikent.

Description A cross with arms terminating in pearls

Inscription: Text in Turkic Script

1
2
3
4
5
6

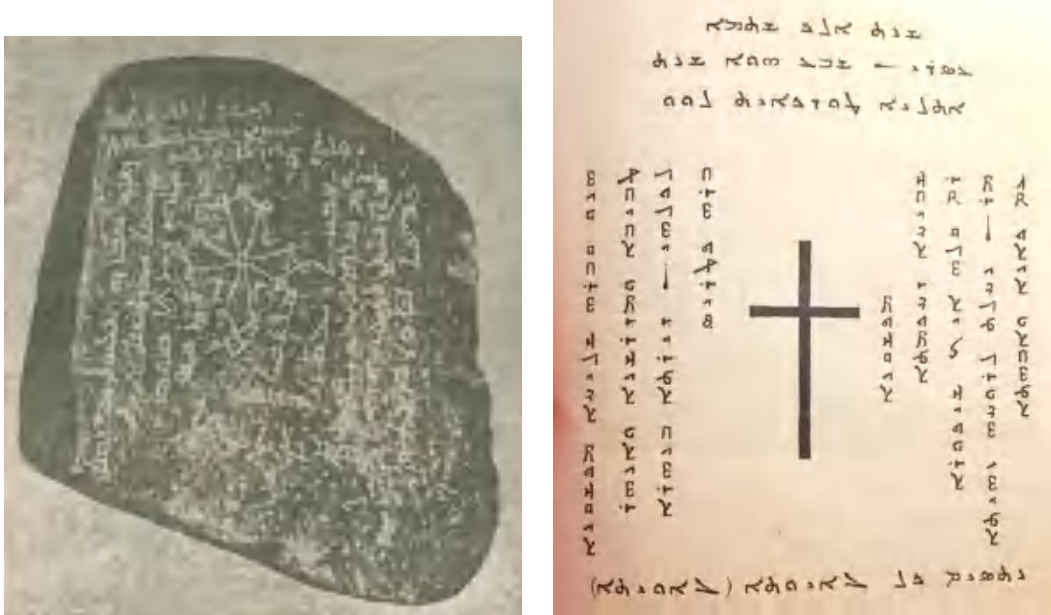
English Translation

In the year on thousand six hundred and twenty-six (1314/15 C.E.). It was the year of the Hare, in Turkic “tavigshan.” This is the grave of Denha, the head of the church, the son of Marqos the priest.

Reference: 1. Chwolson. 1897. No.77.

2.Dickens, 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

S-11



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 1316

Found: Semirechye

Material: Stone

Technique: Engraving

Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent

Description A cross with arms terminating in pearls

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

English Translation

ܩܘܪܒܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .1
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .2
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .3
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .4
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .5
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .6
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .7
 ܕܡܪܝܡ .8
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .9
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .10
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .11
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .12
 ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ .13

In the year 1627 (1316) which was the year of the Eclipses, and the Turkish Luu (i.e.,Dragon).This is the Tomb of Shelicha, the famous Exegete and Preacher who enlightened all the Cloisters with Light, being the son of Exegete Peter. He was famous for his wisdom, and when preaching his voice sounded like a trumpet. Mar our Lord unite his enlighteded soul with those of the righteous and of the forefathers so that he may be worthy of participating in all glories.

Reference: 1. Saeki, 1951:412+414, Fig.6.
 2. Chwolson, 1886:14-15.
 3. Niu, 2012:163-181. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

S-12



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 1319/20
Material: Stone
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 30 (L) x 21.5 (W) x 10 (T) cm
Inventory No. 3123
Number:
Location: State Museum of History of Uzbekistan
Description A cross with one arm terminating in three gems

Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	(Ⲁ) ⲕⲁⲗⲁ ⲁⲗⲁ ⲁⲗⲁ 1	In the year on thousand six
	ⲁⲗⲁ ⲕⲁⲙ ⲁⲗⲁ ⲁⲗⲁ 2	hundred and thirty-one
	ⲕⲁⲙ ⲕⲁⲗⲁ 3	(1319/20). It was the year of
	ⲙⲁⲗⲁ 4	the Monkey. This is the
	ⲕⲁⲗⲁⲓⲕ 5	grave of Arslan the believer.
	ⲕⲁⲗⲁⲓⲕ 6	

Reference: 1. Klein, 2000, No.41.
2. Dickens, 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

S-13



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1326/27
Found: Semirechye (Seven Rivers)
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 27.5 (L) x 22.5 (W) x 7 (T) cm
Inventory No. 3124
Number:
Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent
Description A cross
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script English Translation

ܘܠܟ ܕܘܥܘܫ	1	In the year on thousand six
ܠܘܫܗ	2	hundred ,1638 (1326/27). It
*ܘܠܝܗܘܟ	3	was <u>the Turkic year of the</u>
ܕ(ܟ) ܠܘܫܗ	4	<u>Tiger.</u> ⁷⁹⁸ This is the grave of
*ܟܘܡ ܘܝܘܫ	5	Urug the believer and his
ܡܝܘܫܘܢ	6	daughter Tuztāy the
ܠܘܫܗ ܕܘܝܘܫ	7	compassionate.
(lege m̄h̄isa) ܡܝܘܫܘܢ	8	
ܘܠܝܗܘܟ	9	
ܕܘܝܘܫ	10	

Reference: 1. Chwolson, 1897.
 2. Dickens, 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

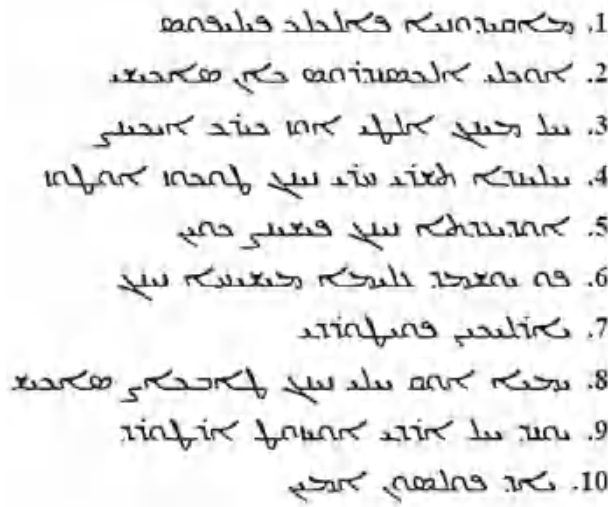
S-14



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: A cross
Date: 1330
Found: Semirechye (Seven Rivers)
Material: Granite

⁷⁹⁸ This part is in Turkic, see Dickens, 2016:105-129.

Technique: Engraving
Description A cross
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

On the 29th day of the 11th month in the year 1640 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1330), or on the 5th day of the prayer day, the son of King Philip of Macedonia, the young man Yušmed fulfilled Messiah’s mission. In addition, according to Chinese Calendar, the year of Horse. May his soul forever rest in peace in Heaven. May people miss him. Amen!

Reference: Niu, 2012:163-181.

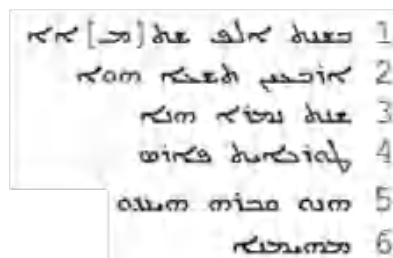
S-15



Object: Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1337/38
Found: At the village of Bir-bulak (roughly 30km south of Bishkek)
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 26 (L) x 20 (W) cm (thickness measurement not available)
Location: Tashkent State University, Faculty of History, Department of Archaeology

Description A cross

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

In the year on thousand six hundred and forty-nine [1337/38]. It was the year of the Tiger; this is “bars” in Turkic. This is the grave of Hindu the believer.

Reference: 1. Klein, 2000, No.11.
 2. Dickens, 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

S-16



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 1368
Found: Semirechye, Kyrgyzstan
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 20 (L) x19.5 (W) x 5 (T) cm
Inventory CA-14408
Number:
Location: Hermitage Museum
Description A cross on the top of the tombstone
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

1. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
2. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
3. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
4. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
5. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
6. ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

English Translation

In the year 1679 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1367 –1368), the Year of Monkey, this is a blessed female pastor, Tärım. She left the world and wish she have a niche in the temple of fame.

Amen !

Reference: Niu, 2012:163-181.

Source: Hermitage Museum

S-17



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Ashgabat

Material: Stone

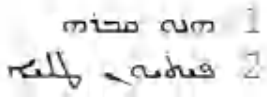
Technique: Engraving

Dimensions: 27.5 (L) x 18.5 (W) x 0.6 (T) cm

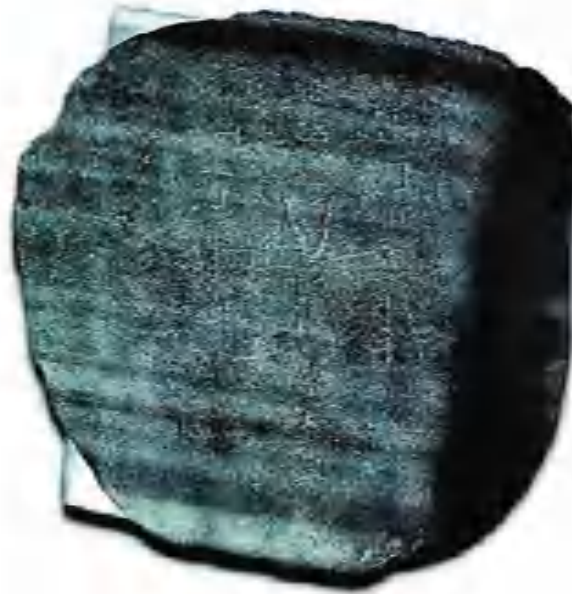
Inventory N-310

Number:

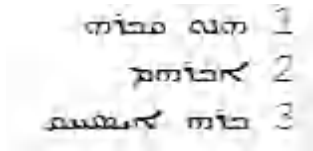
Location: Ashgabat National Museum of History, Archaeology Department

Description	A cross	
Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
		This is the grave of Pethion, the young boy.
Reference:	1. Chwolson, 1897. 2. Dickens. 2016:105-129. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)	

S-18



Object:	Nestorian Syriac Tombstone	
Subject:	Cross	
Date:	13 th –14 th Centuries	
Material:	Stone	
Technique:	Engraving	
Dimensions:	43 (L) x 33 (W) x 9.5 (T) cm	
Inventory	No. 312\2	
Number:		
Location:	Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent	
Description	A cross	
Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation



This is the grave of
Abraham, the son of Isaac.

Reference: Dickens. 2016:105-129.

S-19



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Material: Stone

Technique: Engraving in relief

Dimensions: 30.5 (L) x 16 (W) x 12.5 (H) cm

Inventory No. 3126

Number:

Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent

Description A cross

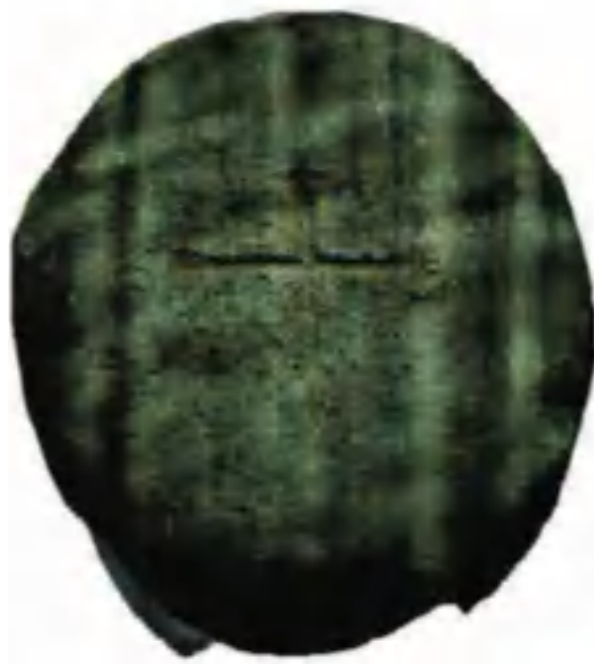
Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script** **English Translation**

(?) ܐܠܐܫ ܐܠܐܫ ܐܠܐܫ ܐܠܐܫ
(?) ܐܠܐܫ ܐܠܐܫ

Jesus(?) alas(?)

Reference: Dickens. 2016:105-129.

S-20



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving in relief
Dimensions: 34 (L) x 25 (W) x 5.7 (T) cm
Inventory No. 312\1
Number:
Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent
Description A cross
Reference: Dickens. 2016:105-129.

S-21



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Material: Stone

Technique: Engraving

Location: Uzbekistan National History Museum, Tashkent

Description: A small cross and a larger one with arms terminating in pearls

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

English Translation

In the year of the dragon.

This is the grave of the Believer Šauma, son of Išo, the head of charity.

Reference: 1. Dickens, 2014:13-49. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into English of the whole inscription)

2. Chwolson, 1897, No.230.

Source: Photo by A. Savchenko

2. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones found in Almaliq

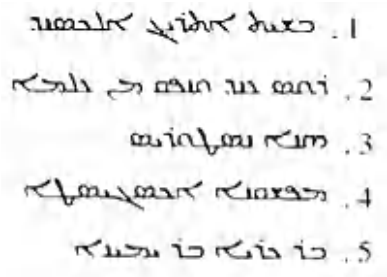
A-1



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, lotus, Angels
- Date:** 1301/2
- Found:** Found in Yining by a Russian named N.N.Pantusov⁷⁹⁹; Found in Kyrgyzstan, Semirechye⁸⁰⁰
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 38 (L) x31 (W) x 13 (T) cm
- Inventory** CA-14296
- Number:**
- Location:** Hermitage Museum
- Description:** A cross-lotus stands on a base of six steps. Angels with four wings fly on the two sides. Three lines of Syriac script on the left and two lines of Syriac script on the right.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script** **English Translation**

⁷⁹⁹ Niu, 2008:65.

⁸⁰⁰ Hermitage Museum, <http://hermitage--www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/?lng=zh.A>



In Alexander calendar 1613 (1310/1302), they were gone, away from the Nestorian world. He was the interpreter of the *Bible* and the praiseworthy son of Karia.

Source: Photo from Hermitage Museum

Reference: 1.Niu, 2008:65-66. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 2. Klimkeit,1993.
 3.Li & Niu. 2014:91-99.

A-2



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 1308/09
Found: Originating in Almaliq
Material: Stone
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 24.5 (L) x19 (W) x 4.5 (T) cm
Inventory Number: No. 312\8

Location: State Museum of History of Uzbekistan

Description: A cross-lotus

Inscription: Syriac **English Translation**

ܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 1
ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 2
ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 3
ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ 4

ՇԿ(Տ)Կ The virgin departed in the
year 1620 of the Greeks
[1308/09] ...monkey

Reference: Mark Dickens. 2016. pp.105-129.

A-3



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Date: 1342–1343

Found: Found by Huang Wenbin in 1958

Material: Granite

Technique: Engraving

Location: National Museum of China

Description: Five lines of Syriac script

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script **English Translation**

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| ܘܕܡܪ ܕܝܡܝܘܪ .1 | The pastor Imayur died and left |
| ܡܝܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܩܠܢ .2 | the world in Greek calendar |
| ܡܝܘܢܝܢ .3 | 1654. |
| ܩܠܢ .4 | |
| ܝܡܝܘܪ .5 | |
| ܝܡܝܘܪܝܢ ܡܝܢ .6 | |

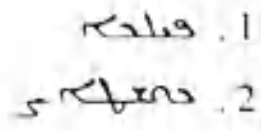
- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2012:163-181. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Huang,1963. (Photo)

A-4



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 1362–1363 /1365–1366⁸⁰¹
Material: Gravel
Technique: Engraving
Location: Huocheng at the Cultural Heritage Bureau
Description: The carved stone is irregularly triangle. Three lines of Syriac script on the two sides of the cross-lotuss. The chiseled part is 14cm in length, 11 cm in width, and 9 cm in thickness, slightly rectangular.

⁸⁰¹ Because the last letter is unclear, it is impossible to determine the age, see Niu, 2008:58-59.

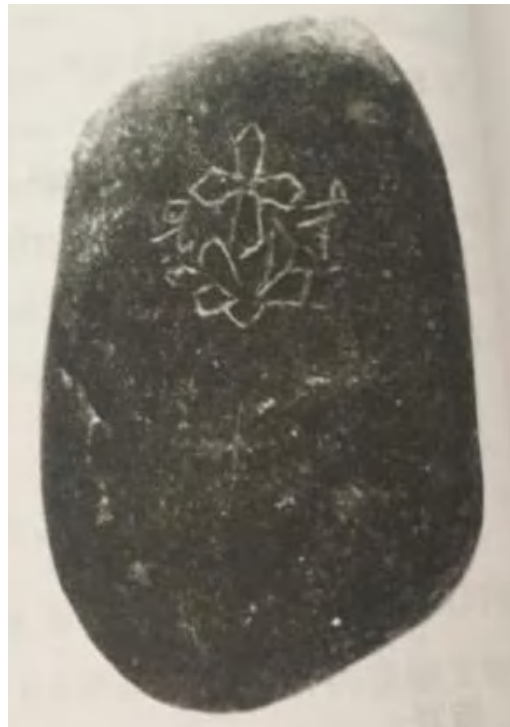


 ܩܠܨܐ .1
 ܩܠܨܐ .2

Bilgä Female pastor.

- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:57-58. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Huang,1963:555-561. (Photo)

A-6

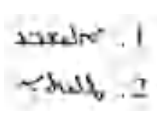


- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Found by Huang Wenbin in Almaliq in 1958
- Material:** Gravel
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** National Museum of China
- Description:** Two lines of Syriac Script on the two sides of the cross-lotus.

Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	 ܩܠܨܐ .1 ܩܠܨܐ .2	Tomb of the young man Qalča.

A-9



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** Mongol-Yuan period
- Found:** Found in Almaliq
- Material:** Gravel
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 20 (L) x12 (W) cm
- Location:** Xinjiang Museum
- Description:** A Cross with a base like one lotus petal. Two lines of Syriac script on the sides.
- Inscription:**
- | Text in Syriac Script | English Translation |
|---|-------------------------|
|  | Élizabeth, young woman. |
- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:64-65. (Photo, Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Zhu,1998, pl. 25.

A-10



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, lotus
- Date:** Mongol-Yuan period
- Found:** Almaliq
- Material:** Gravel
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 19 (L) x 13 (W) x10 (T) cm
- Location:** Xinjiang Museum
- Description:** A cross with an incomplete lotus base. Four lines of Syriac script.
- Reference:** Niu, 2008:65.
- Source:** Photo by Dongsi pailou Wangshifu, Douban

3. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones found in Olon-Sume

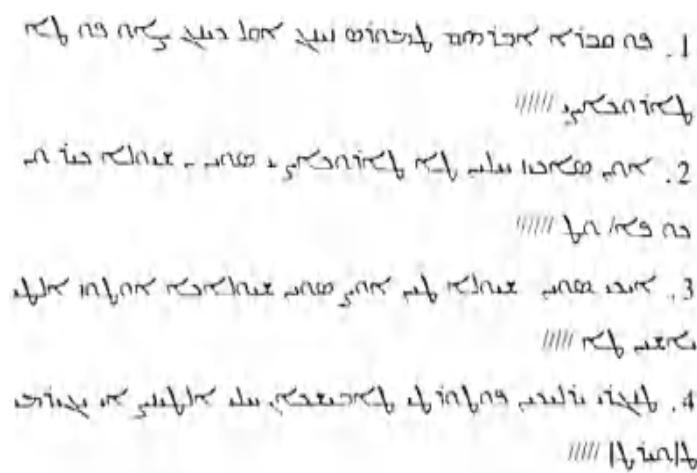
I-O-1



- Object:** Nestorian Stele
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th, July 1327
- Found:** East of Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** Tombstone 130 (H) x 85 (W) cm; Cross 40 x 40 cm; Lotus 26 (L)x 20 (W)cm by Niu Ruji, 100 (H) x 85 (W) cm by Gai Shanlin
- Location:** Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia in Hohhot
- Description:** Two circles are carved in the upper left and upper right corners of the cross-lotus. Animal depictions are inside the two circles. (left, rooster; right, jade rabbit)
Four lines of Syriac script are engraved, containing six lines of Uighur, four lines of Chinese.
- Inscription:** Chinese

1. 這墳阿兀刺編帖木刺思的京兆府達魯花赤……
2. 花赤宣來後來怯連口都總府副都總管又……
3. 宣二道前後總授宣三道，享年三十六歲終……
4. 泰定四年六月二十四日記

Text in Syriac Script



Text in Uighur Script (Transliteration)

1. bu qabra abrabin tömüräs-ning ol kingčangpu [...]
2. taruqačï-nïng on säkiz yïlïn-ta taruqačï [...]
3. -qa ger-un köbegüt-t' [...]
4. s[...]wn üç sün šiula otuz [...]
5. tängri yarlıyïn bülür [ti ...]
6. törtinč yil altınč ay yigirmi tört [...]

English Translation

This is the tomb of Abraham Tömüras⁸⁰², formerly Darughachi⁸⁰³ (governor) of Jingzhao Fu⁸⁰⁴ and the vice governor of Sünla-Qiula⁸⁰⁵ for eighteenth years. He completed the mission of God and died on July 13, 1327 at the age of 36.

⁸⁰² A name of Turkic

⁸⁰³ Darughachi is a Mongolian Title of a provincial governor.

⁸⁰⁴ Now in Xi'an

⁸⁰⁵ Supervisor of the craftsman in Yuan Dynasty

- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:67-72. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Syriac inscription)
 - 2.Tang, 2011:77-78. (English translation)
 - 3.Gai,1991:284, pl. No.158.
 - 4.Halbertsma, 2008:114+ 218-224, stele 57.
 - 5.Yang, 2001 (2), 167-173+188.
- Source:** Photo by Dongsipailou Wangshifu, Douban

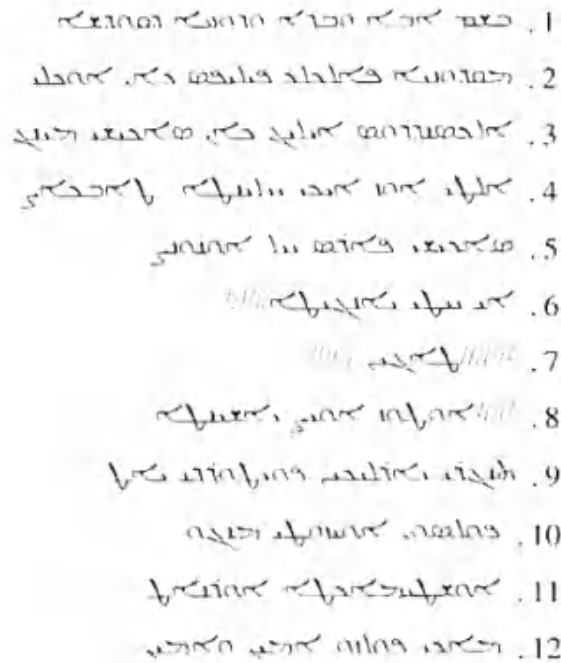
I-O-2



- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 1290
- Found:** Northeast of Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 120 (L) x 40 (W) cm
- Location:** Missing

Description: A cross-lotus. Four dots in the four quadrants of the cross.
Twelve lines of Turkic in Syriac script are carved under the lotus.⁸⁰⁶

Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script**



English Translation

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the year 1602 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1290), or on the 7th day of the 10th month in the Tiger year of the Peach Stone Calendar...teqin...the son of King Philip fulfilled God's missioning at the age of 30. May people miss him! His soul will rest in peace in Heaven. Amen!

Reference: 1.Gai, 1991:285, pl. No.159.
2.Niu, 2008:72-75. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

⁸⁰⁶ See Niu, 2008:72-75, the author recorded as "13 lines", which are suspected to be incorrect.

I-O-3



a

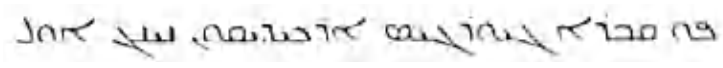


b



c

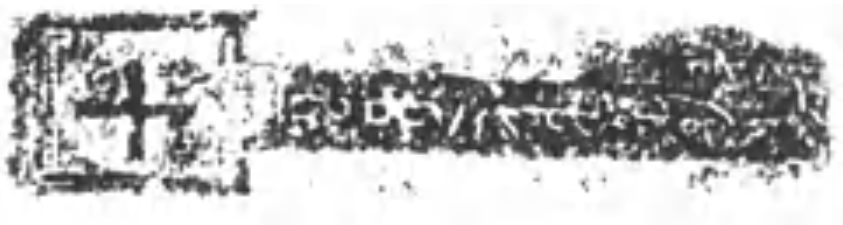
Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 115 (L) x 40 (W) x 47 (H) cm

- Number:** A•1⁸⁰⁷
- Location:** Missing
- Description:**
- a. A cross-lotus base and Islamic lantern windows. Two lines of interlaced floral design.
 - b. A cross surrounded by two circles with four dots in four quadrants. A line of Syriac script.
 - c. A cross surrounded by one circle with four dots in four quadrants and a lotus is under the cross.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of bishop Gioargis.
- Reference:**
- 1. Gai, 1991: 285 – 286, pl. No. 161/1-3.
 - 2. Niu, 2008: 75-76. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 3. Halbertsma, 2008: 155-156, gravestone 13.

I-O-4



a. The side



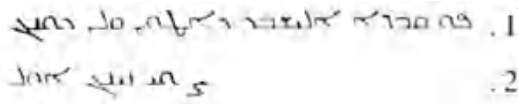
b. The back

Object: Nestorian Tombstone

⁸⁰⁷ The numbers of Nestorian relics found in Inner Mongolia is from Gai, 1991.

Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 117 (L) x 42 (W) x 33 (T) cm
Number: A•2
Location: Missing
Description: a. A cross with four points in four quadrants, Islamic lantern windows and the pattern of interlaced floral design is carved.
 b. A cross and a line of Syriac script is engraved.

Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script**

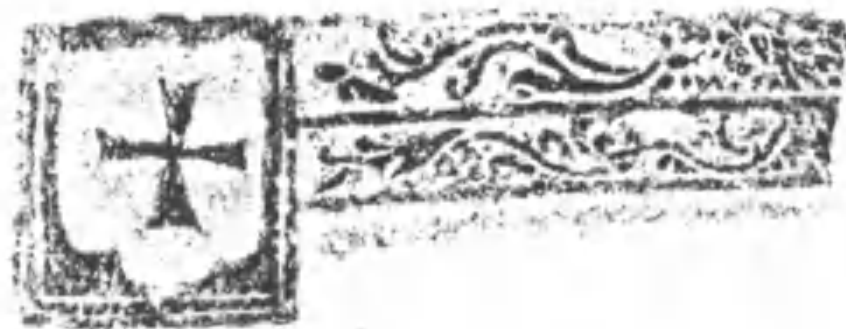


English Translation

This is the tomb of the bride Ališbay Qatun.

Reference: 1.Gai,1991:285 – 286, pl. No.161/4-5.
 2.Niu, 2008:81-82. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

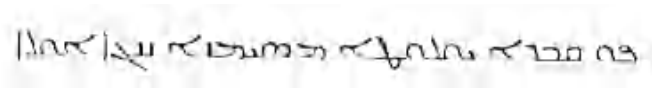
5



a. The side



b. The front

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 121 (L) x 41 (W) x 30 (H) cm
- Number:** A•5
- Location:** Missing
- Description:** a. A cross, Islamic lantern windows and pattern of interlaced floral design.
b. A lotus? A line of Syriac script.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of the Christian Yoluṭa.
- Reference:** 1.Gai,1991:285–286, pl. No.161/12-13.
2.Niu, 2008:90-91. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

I-O-6



a. The back



b.



c. The top

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 110 (L) x 39 (W) x32 (H) cm
- Number:** A•4
- Location:** Missing
- Description:**
- a. A cross surrounded by one circle. A line of Syriac script on the side panel.
 - b. A flower (lotus?) is on the head of the panel. Two lines of interlaced floral design are on the side panel. Two persons, three points and a line of text (unrecognizable) is carved on the left of the second line.
 - c. A cross-lotus with the decoration of Islamic lantern windows.
- Inscription:** Text in Syriac Script

English Translation

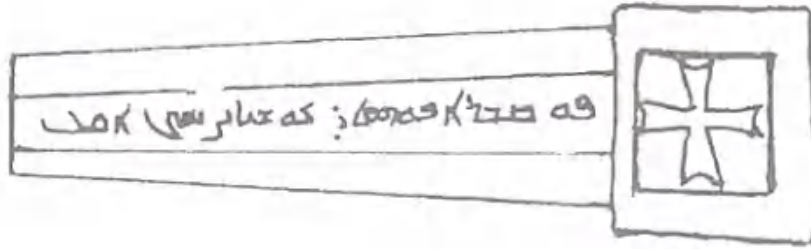
This is the tomb of the Priest Se[yorgi]s Qu[šna]č.

Reference:

1.Gai,1991:285 – 286, pl. No.161/9-11.

2.Niu, 2008:93-94. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

I-O-7



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross, Lotus

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia?

Material: Stone

Technique: Engraving

Dimensions: Tombstone 190 cm, Inscription 75 cm

Location: The storehouse of Baotou Museum

Description: A cross is surrounded by a square. A line of Syriac script.

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

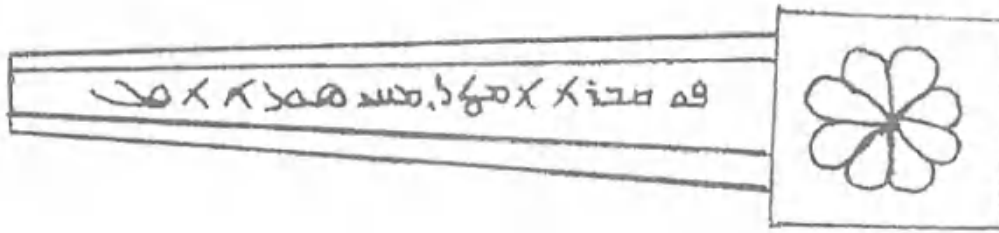
English Translation

This is the tomb of the Priest βursar.

Reference:

Niu, 2008:99-100. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription and the sketch)

I-O-8



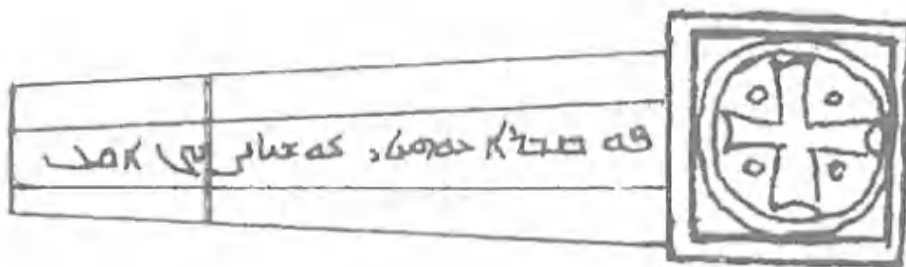
- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th-14th Centuries
Found: Aolunsumu, Inner Mongolia?
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: Tombstone 85 cm, Inscription 50 cm
Location: Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
Description: A lotus. A line of Syriac script.
Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script**

English Translation

This is the tomb of Ämtäd Maḥī.

- Reference:** Niu, 2008:100-101. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription and the sketch)

I-O-9



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th -14th Centuries

Found: Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia?
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: Tombstone 110 cm, Inscription 83 cm
Location: Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
Description: A cross is surrounded by two circles with four dots in four quadrants. A line of Syriac script.

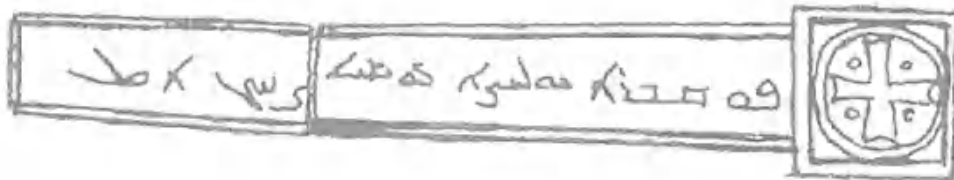
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

English Translation

This is the tomb of the Priest yohnan.

Reference: Niu, 2008:101-102. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription and the sketch)

I-O-10



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia (?)
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: Tombstone 110 cm, Inscription 83 cm
Location: Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
Description: A cross is surrounded by two circles with four dots in four quadrants. A line of Syriac script.

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

English Translation

This is the tomb of the Priest Yoliča.

Reference: Niu, 2008: 102. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription and the sketch)

11



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: East of Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: A•M2
Description: A cross with four dots in four quadrants stands on the base like the Chinese character 卍. The text is unrecognizable
Reference: Gai,1991:285, pl. No.157/10.

I-O-12



- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Description: A cross. The text is unrecognizable
Reference: Gai,1991:285, pl. No.157/11.

I-O-13



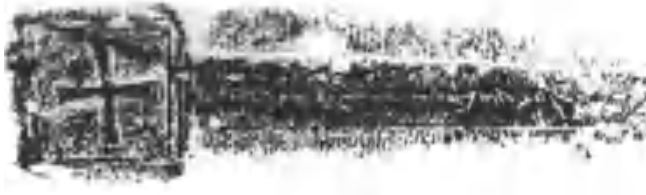
- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia

Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Description: A cross with arms terminating in pearls. The text is unrecognizable.
Reference: Gai,1991:285, pl. No.157/12.

I-O-14



a. The side



b. The back



c. The head

Object: Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus, plants
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 116 (L) x 45 (W) x 35 (H) cm
Number: A•3
Description: a. A cross with four points in four quadrants. Two lines of interlaced floral design are carved on the side panel.

b. A cross with four dots in four quadrants. A line of Syriac script.

c. A cross-lotus with four dots in four quadrants, Islamic lantern windows.

Reference: Gai, 1991:285–286, pl. No.161/6-8.

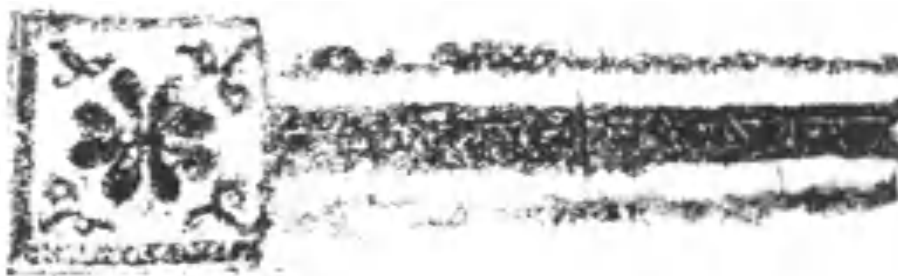
I-O-15



a. Top panel, left panel and left tail



b. Left panel and left tail



c. Top panel and top tail

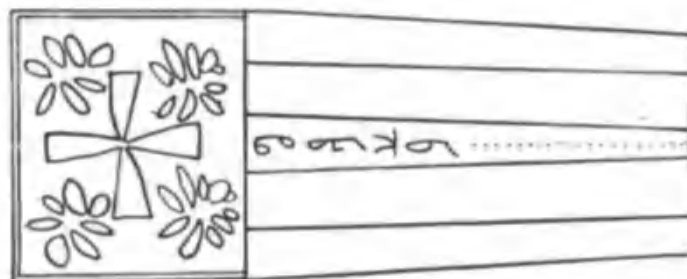
Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus, lantern window frame
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia

- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 111 (L) x 40 (W) x 42 (H) cm
- Diameter cross:** 25cm
- Location:** Bailingmiao, inside cultural relics courtyard (March 2003)
- Number:** A•6
- Description:**
- a. Flower in square frame with corner leaves. Cross with four dots between arms in lantern window frame. Wave design in two rectangular frames.
 - b. Cross with four dots between arms in lantern window frame. Wave design in two rectangular frames.
 - c. Flower in square frame with corner leaves. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
- Reference:**
- 1.Gai, 1991:285–286, pl. No.161/14-16.
 - 2.Halbertsma, 2008:164-165, gravestone 17. (The description of the gravestone)

I-O-16



a. The side



b. The side

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, plants

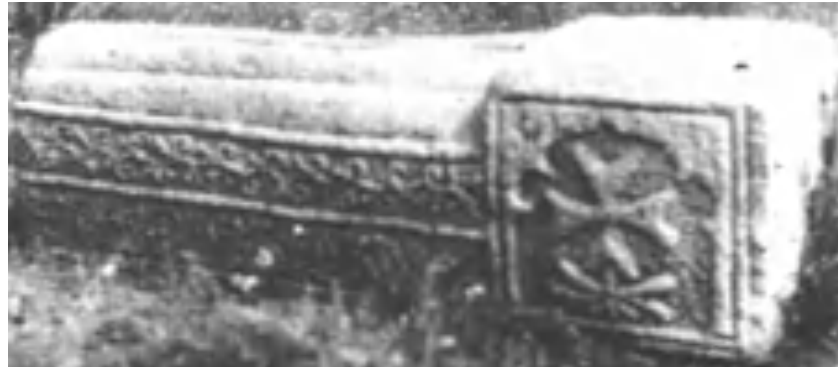
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 111 (L) x 40 (W) x 42 (H) cm
Number: A•7
Description: a. A cross with two lotuses? on the lower left and right corners.
Interlaced floral design.
b. A cross is surrounded by lotuses? A line of Syriac script.
Reference: Gai,1991:285–286, pl. No.161/17-18.

I-O-17

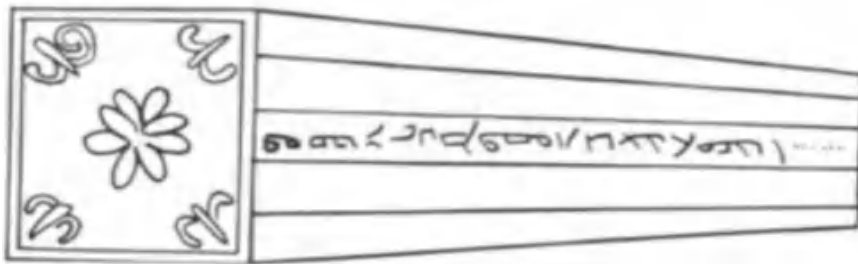


Object: Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: Olon Süme, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 111 (L) x 38 (W) x 37 (H) cm
Number: A•8
Description: A lotus surrounded by a circle. A line of Syriac script (?)
Reference: Gai, 1991:285–286, pl. No.161/19

I-O-18



a. The side



b. The back

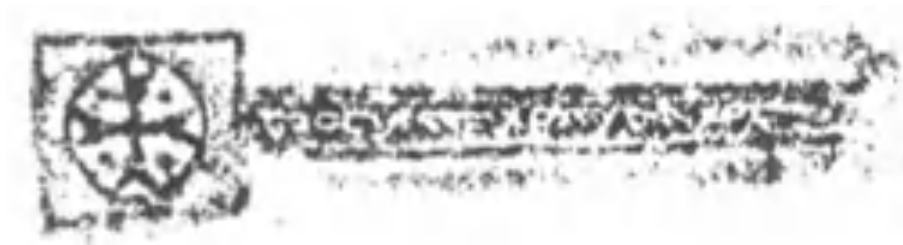
- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, plants, pattern of Islamic style
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Olon Sume, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 131 (L) x 40 (W) x 41 (H) cm
- Number:** A•9
- Description:**
- a. A cross-lotus and pattern of Islamic lantern windows. Interlaced floral design.
 - b. A lotus flower in the middle, plant patterns at the four corners. A line of Syriac script.
- Reference:** Gai,1991:285–286, pl. No.161/20-21

4. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones (relics) found in Muqur-Suburghan Cemetery

I-M-1

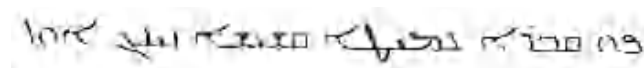


a.



b. The back

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 102 (L) x 33 (W) x 31 (H) cm
Location: Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
Description: a. A cross with four dots in four quadrants, surrounded by a circle.
Two lines of interlaced floral design.
b. A cross with four dots in four quadrants and surrounded by a circle. A line of Syriac script.
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

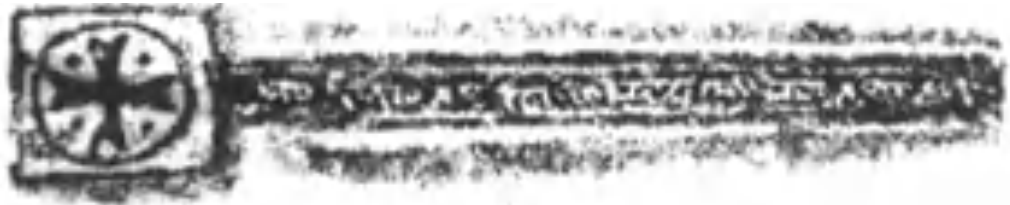
This is the tomb of the priest emiṭa.

- Reference:**
1. Niu, 2008: 85-86. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 2. Gai, 1991:292, pl. No.161/54-55.
 3. Halbertsma, 2008:159-160, gravestone 15.

I-M-2



a. Right panel and right tail



b. The top panel and top tail



c. The left/right panel and tail



d. Front panel

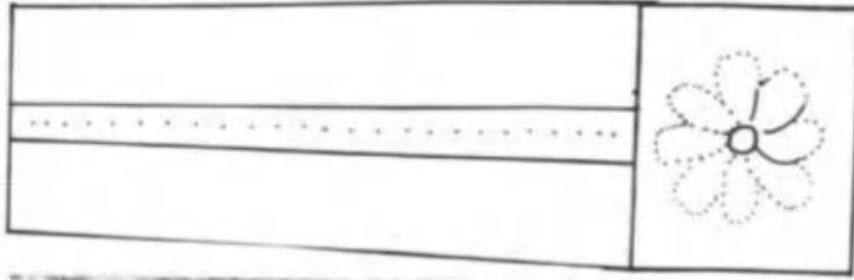
- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 13th –14th Centuries
- Found:** Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 111 (L) x 33 (W) x 24 (H) cm
- Location:** Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
- Description:**
- a. Cross in circle with four dots in square frame. Simple wave motif in two panels.
 - b. Cross in circle with four dots in square frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - c. Cross in circle with four dots in square frame. Simple wave motif in two panels.
 - d. Front Panel: Cross in circle with four dots in square frame.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**

English Translation

This is the tomb of the priest Estpnos.

- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:87-88. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 2.Gai, 1991:292, pl. No.161/56-57. (Photo a)
 3.Halbertsma, 2008:238-239, gravestone 22. (Photo b-d and the description of the gravestone)

I-M-3

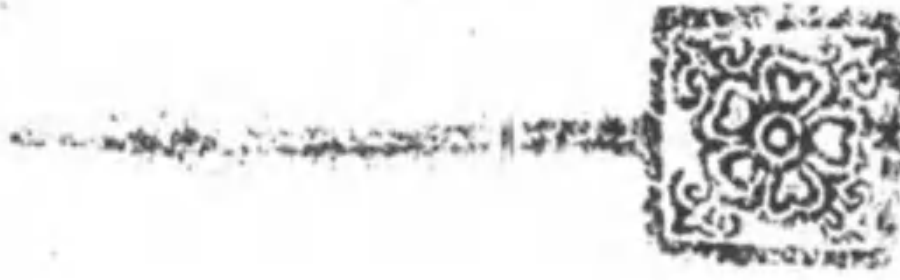


- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th-14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 100 (L) x33 (W) x 43 (H) cm
Description: A lotus and a line of Syriac text (unrecognizable)
Reference: Gai,1991:292, pl. No.161/59.

I-M-4



a. The left panel (?)



b.

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 118 (L) x 34 (W) x 33 (H) cm
Description: a. A small cross with a big lotus? A line of interlaced floral design.
 b. A lotus? Plant patterns at the four corners
Reference: Gai,1991:292, pl. No.161/67-68.

I-M-5



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Description: A lotus? A line of interlaced floral design.
Reference: Gai,1991:292, pl. No.161/69.

I-M-6



- Object:** Cone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 25 cm in diameter (the cross)
Description: A cross in square window
Reference: 1.Gai,1991:292, pl. No.163.
2. Halbertsma, 2008:216-217, Cone 56.
Source: Photo by Shao Fenglei

I-M-7



a.



b. The rubbing by Wei Jian

Object: Nestorian Stombstone
Subject: Cross, lotus flower, parasol
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Muqur-Suburghan, Inner Mongolia
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 107 (L) x32 (W) x36 (H) cm
Location: Hohhot Cultural Relics Bureau storage room
Description: A cross-lotus under a parasol
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:197-198, gravestone 34

5. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones (relics) found in Biqigetuhaolai Cemetery

I-B-1



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.8, BI•M16
Location: Missing
Description: A cross and five lines of Syriac scripts. A lotus is under it. (?)

Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	. 1	This is the tomb of yohnan. The deacon is in front of us...
	. 2	
	. 3	
	. 4	
	. 5	

- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:76-77. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 2.Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/8

I-B-2



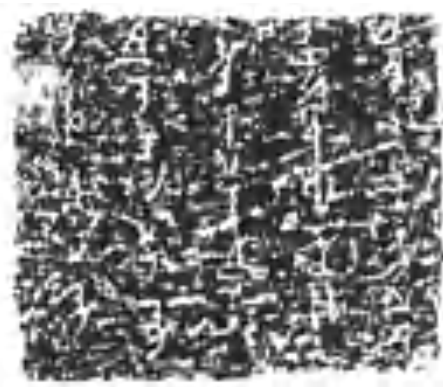
Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.7, BI•M14
Location: Missing

Description: A cross with a rectangular base

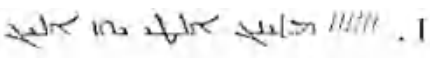
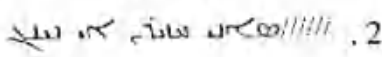
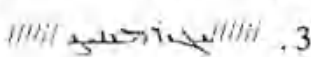
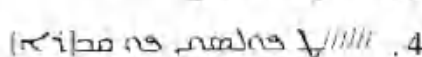
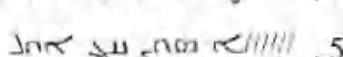
Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	1. ܕܢܝܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	This is the tomb of...Worthy of praise...gold...get countless. Amen!
	2. ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	
	3. ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	
	4. ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	

Reference: 1.Niu, 2008: 77-78. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/7

I-B-3



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Date: 20th, June 1339
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.6, BI•M16
Location: Missing
Description: Five lines of Syriac script

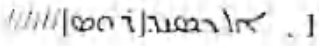
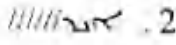
Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	 . 1	...1650...month of haziran of
	 . 2	Syriac Year...the 20th
	 . 3	day...as a memorial! This is
	 . 4	the tomb of...
	 . 5	

Reference: 1.Niu, 2008:78-79. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/6

I-B-4

I-B-5



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.3, BI•M16
Location: Missing
Description: Two lines of Syriac script
- Inscription:**
- | Text in Syriac Script | English Translation |
|--|---------------------|
|  .1 | Alexander... |
|  .2 | |

- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008: 96-97. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/3.

I-B-6



- Object:** Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Cross, Lotus
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.1, BI•M14
Description: A cross-lotus with four dots in four quadrants
Reference: 1. Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/1.
2. Halbertsma, 2008:204-205, gravestone 39.

7



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus

Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.4, BI•M16
Description: An incomplete lotus
Reference: Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/4.

I-B-8



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.5, BI•M16
Description: Only survived the upper left corner of the cross and one dot
Reference: Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/5.

I-B-9



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Biqigetuhaolai, Inner Mongolia, 1973
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: No.9
Description: Only survived some lotus surrounded by circles
Reference: Gai, 1991:283-284, pl. No.157/9.

I-B-10



- Object:** Nestorian Bronze
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: South of Biqigetuhaolai Cemetery, Inner Mongolia, 1974
Material: Bronze
Technique: Casting

Number: BI•S•MI

Description: Similar to the Chinese character “大”

Reference: Gai, 1991:201, pl. No.127.

6. Catalogue of Nestorian Tombstones (Relics) found in Dorbod Banner

I-D-1



a. Top panel and top tail



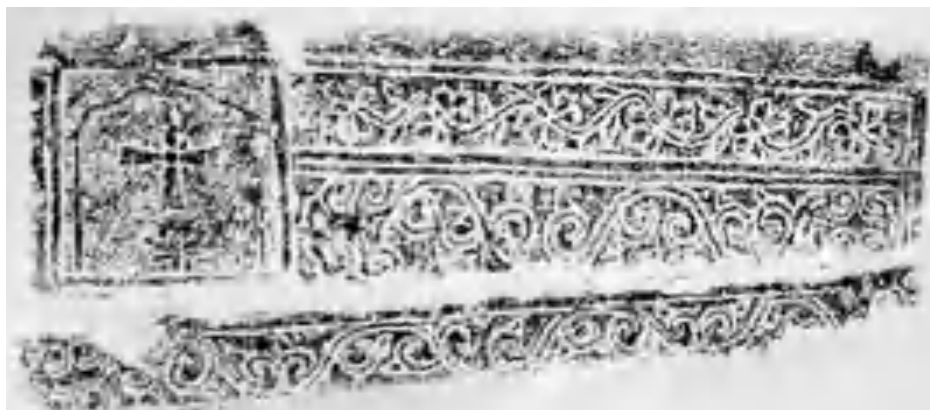
b. Rubbing of the top panel and the top tail



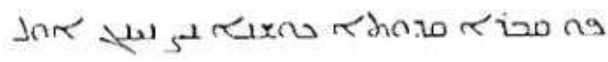
c. The front panel



d. The right panel and right tail



e. Rubbing of the right panel and right tail

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, church window frame
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 101(L) cm
- Diameter cross:** Right panel: 17.5 cm
- Number:** Wang•1
- Location:** Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia in Huhhot
- Description:**
- a. Flower with eight petals in circular frame surrounded by four dots in square frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - b. Flower with eight petals in circular frame surrounded by four dots in square frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - c. Cross in square frame with eight dots between arms at center and at end of arms
 - d. Cross rising from lotus flower in church window frame, with four dots at center. Floral/vine rank design rectangular frames.
 - e. Cross rising from lotus flower in church window frame, with four dots at center. Floral/vine rank design rectangular frames.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of the priest of Qadota.
- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:82-83. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai,1991:289-291, pl. No.161/22-24.
 - 3.Halbertsma, 2008:245-246, gravestone 30. (Photo c-e and the description of the gravestone)

I-D-2



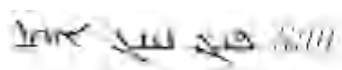
a.



b.

- Object:** Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
Subject: Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th –14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•17
Location: Missing
Description: a. Two lines of interlaced floral design on the side and the base?
b. A line of Syriac script

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

This is the tomb of the official...

- Reference:**
- 1.Niu,2008: 83-84. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai,1991:289-291, pl. No.161/52-53.

I-D-3



a. Top panel, top tail, right panel and right tail



b. Top panel and top tail

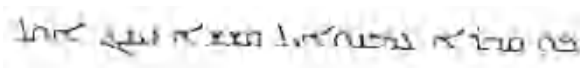


c. Rubbing of the top panel and top tail



d. Front panel

e. Left panel and left tail

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 102 (L) x 75.5 (W) x 63 (H) cm
- Diameter cross:** 18 cm
- Number:** Wang•13
- Location:** Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia in Huhhot
- Description:**
- a. Flower with 10 circular petals in circular frame. Inscription.
 - b. Flower with 10 circular petals in circular frame. Inscription.
 - c. Flower with 10 circular petals in circular frame. Inscription.
 - d. Cross in square frame.
 - e. Cross in square frame. Two lines in rectangular frame with wave design.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of the priest Emnuel
- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:84-85. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/42-43. (Photo a, c)

3.Halbertsma, 2008: 237-238, gravestone 21. (Photo b, d, e and the description of the gravestone)

I-D-4



a. The side



b. The back

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, Pattern of Islamic style, Interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 121(L) x 41(W) x 30 (H) cm
- Number:** Wang•10
- Location:** Missing
- Description:** a. A cross-lotus and the pattern of Islamic lantern windows. Two lines of interlaced floral design.
b. A cross with four dots in four quadrants, surrounded by a circle. A line of Syriac script.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**

ܐܘܪܫܐܝܡ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܫܐܩܗܬܐ ܫܐܝܢ

English Translation

This is the tomb of Šaqhata Ša-in.

- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:91-92. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Gai,1991:289-291, pl. No.161/34-35.

I-D-6

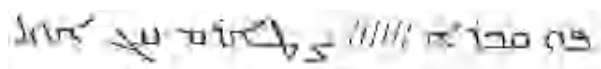


a.



b. The side

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus, Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•9
Location: Missing
Description: a. A cross with four dots in four quadrants. A line of interlaced floral design.
b. A lotus? A line of Syriac script.
Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script**



English Translation

This is the tomb of the Female pastor Țārim.

- Reference:** 1.Niu,2008:92-93. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/36-37.

I-D-7



a. Top panel, top tail, right panel and right tail

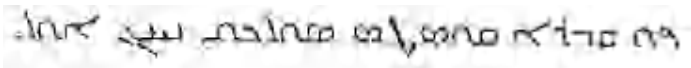


b. Rubbing of the right panel and right tail



c. Rubbing of the top panel and top tail

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus, Pattern of Islamic style, Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia

- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 113 (L) x 33 (W) x 40 (H) cm
- Diameter cross:** Front panel:12.5 cm
- Number:** Wang•16
- Location:** Missing
- Description:**
- a. Flower with eight petals in ornamented frame. Inscription, unrecognizable. Cross in ornamented frame. Heart design in rectangular frame with double border.
 - b. Cross in ornamented frame. Heart design in rectangular frame with double border.
 - c. Flower with eight petals in ornamented frame. Inscription, unrecognizable.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of Qustaṣ Solqun.
- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:94-95. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/49-51.(Photo a,c)
 - 3.Halbertsma, 2008:194-196, gravestone 33. (Photo b and the description of the gravestone)

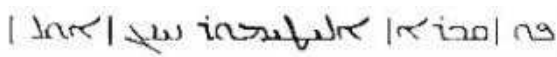
I-D-8



a.




b.

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Number:** Wang•No.4
- Location:** Missing
- Description:** a. A cross with the pattern of Islamic lantern windows. Two lines of interlaced floral design. (?)
b. A lotus is surrounded by a circle. A line of Syriac script.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- 
- English Translation**
- This is the tomb of Elitimur.
- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:95-96. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2. Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/28-29.

I-D-9



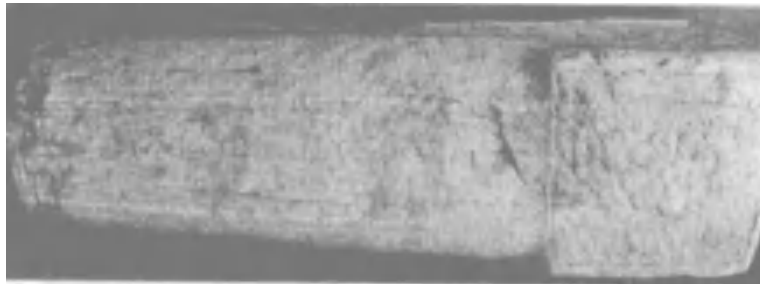
Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Lotus, Pattern of Islamic style
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: Tombstone 119cm, Inscription 60cm
Location: Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia in Hohhot
Description: A cross with the pattern of Islamic lantern windows. A line of Syriac script is on the side.
Inscription: **Text in Syriac Script**



English Translation
This is the tomb of bishop Sergis.

Reference: Niu, 2008:97-98. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

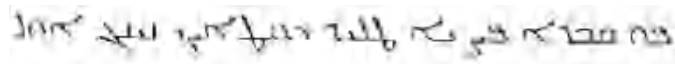
I-D-10



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: Tombstone 103cm, Inscription 51cm
Location: Archaeological Institute of Inner Mongolia in Huhhot

Description: A lotus and a line of Syriac script.

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

This is the tomb of Female pastor Bičya Tilir.

Reference: Niu, 2008:98-99. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

I-D-11



a. Top panel and top tail



b. Rubbing of the top panel and top tail



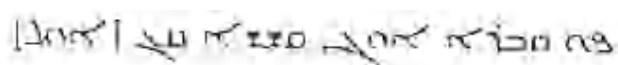
c. Left panel

d. Left panel and left tail



e. Rubbing of the Panels

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lantern window frame
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** A Village of Yuan Dynasty, Dianlaiwusu (Chaimudaitan)
Darhan Muminggan United Banne, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 97 (L) x 36 (W)x 30 (H) cm
- Diameter cross:** Side panel 23x19 cm; top panel 19x21 cm
- Location:** Bailingmiao Cultural Management Office
- Description:**
- a. Cross with four dots between arms rising from flower in lantern window frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - b. Cross with four dots between arms rising from flower in lantern window frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - c. Cross with four dots between arms rising from flower in lantern window frame.
 - d. Cross with four dots between arms rising from flower in lantern window frame. Smooth
 - e. Cross with four dots between arms rising from flower in lantern window frame.
- Inscription:** Text in Syriac Script

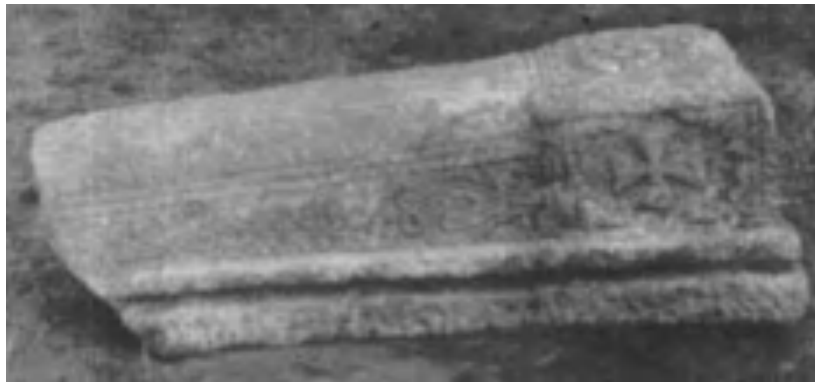


English Translation

This is the tomb of pastor Ugan.

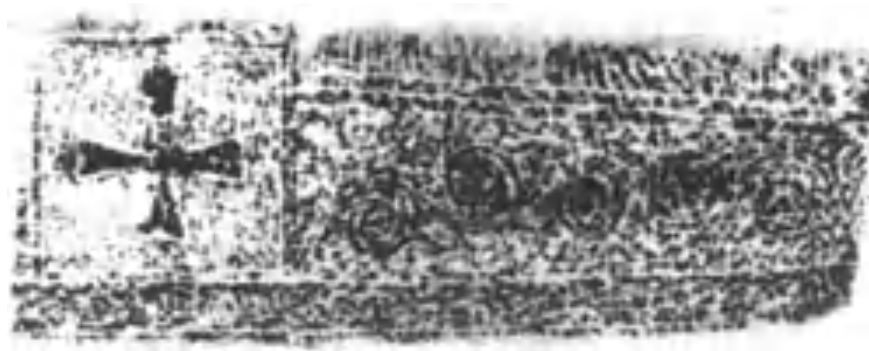
- Reference:**
- 1.Niu, 2008:88-89. (Photo a and the transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 2.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/70-71. (Photo b)
 - 3.Halbertsma, 2008:232-234, gravestone 16. (Photo c, d, e (by Wei Jian) and the description of the gravestone)

I-D-12



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Pattern of Islamic style, Interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Number:** Wang•3
- Description:** A cross with the pattern of Islamic lantern windows. A line of interlaced floral design.
- Reference:** Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/27.

I-D-13



The side

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•5
Description: A cross and a line of interlaced floral design
Reference: Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/30.

I-D-14



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•6

Description: A cross and a line of interlaced floral design

Reference: Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/31.

I-D-15



The side

Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross, Interlaced floral design

Date: 13th-14th Centuries

Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia

Material: Stone

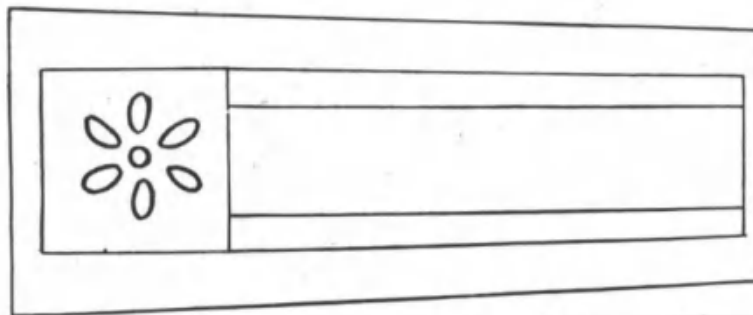
Technique: Engraving

Number: Wang•7

Description: A cross with four dots in four quadrants and a line of interlaced floral design.

Reference: Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/32.

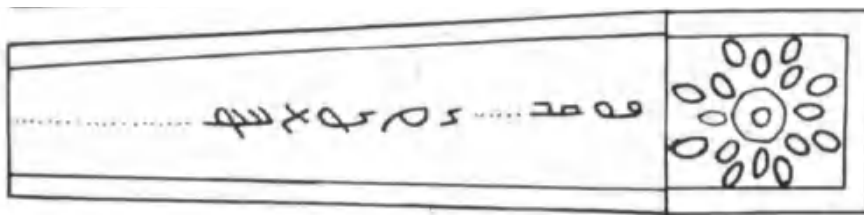
I-D-16



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Cross
Date: 13th -14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•11
Description: A lotus?
Reference: Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/40.

I-D-17



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus
Date: 13th-14th Centuries
Found: Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•12
Description: A lotus? A line of Syriac script
Reference: Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/41.

I-D-18



a. Left panel and left tail



b. Rubbing of the left panel and left tail



c. Rubbing of the top panel and top tail

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, Interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Number:** Wang•14
- Description:**
- a. Cross in ornamented frame. Wave design in rectangular frame.
 - b. Cross in ornamented frame. Wave design in rectangular frame.

c. Cross in ornamented frame. Wave design in rectangular frame.

d. Flower with eight petals in eight petals in ornamented frame.

Front Panel: Cross in ornamented frame. Inscription, unrecognizable

Reference:

1.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/44-45. (Photo a, c)

2.Halbertsma, 2008:192-194, gravestone 32. (Photo b (by Wei Jian) and the description of the gravestone)

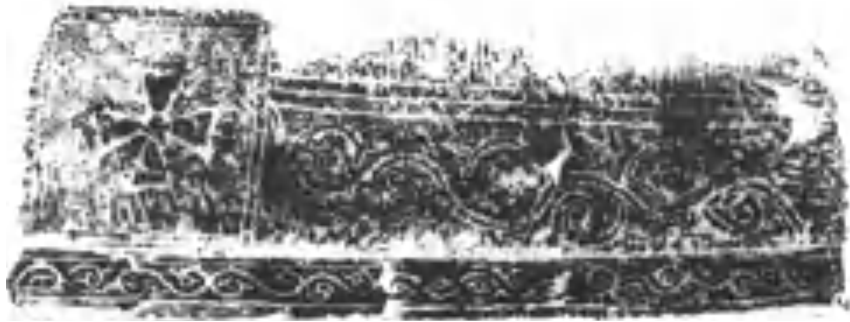
I-D-19



a. Left panel and left tail



b. Right panel and right tail



c. Rubbing of the right panel and right tail



d. Rubbing of the top panel and top tail



e. Rubbing of the front panel

Object:	Nestorian Tombstone
Subject:	Cross, Lotus, Interlaced floral design
Date:	13 th –14 th Centuries
Found:	Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material:	Probably marble
Technique:	Engraving
Dimensions:	106 (L) x 32 (W) x 43 (H) cm
Diameter cross:	Front panel: 14 cm
Number:	Wang•15

- Description:**
- a. Cross with circular center in square frame. Not seen, but presumably same as right tail
 - b. Cross with circular center in square frame. Wave design in one rectangular frame.
 - c. Cross with circular center in square frame. Wave design in one rectangular frame.
 - d. Flower, eight petals, cloud like decorations in corners of square frame. Inscription, a line of Syriac script.
 - e. Cross square frame.
- Reference:**
- 1.Gai, 1991:289-291, pl. No.161/46-48. (Photo a, c, d)
 - 2.Halbertsma, 2008:189-191, gravestone 31. (Photo b, e (by Wei Jian) the description of the gravestone)

I-D-20



- Object:** The Cross on Gugu Guan
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 13th -14th Centuries
- Found:** Wang•M10, Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
- Material:** The Bark of Birch
- Technique:** Weaving
- Description:** Similar to a cross
- Reference:** Gai, 1991:285, pl. No.165/1.

I-D-21



- Object:** The Cross on Gugu Guan
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wang•M6, Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner Mongolia
Material: The Bark of Birch
Technique: Weaving
Description: Similar to a cross
Reference: Gai,1991:285, pl. No.165/2.

I-D-22



- Object:** Nestorian Stone

Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Wang•M13, Wangmuliang, Dorbod (Siziwang) Banner, Inner
Mongolia
Material: Stone
Technique: Engraving
Number: Wang•M13
Description: Similar to a torch
Reference: Gai,1991:240, pl. No.125.

7. Catalogue of Nestorian relics found in Chifeng

I-C-1



- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 1253
- Found:** Chifeng in 1984
- Material:** White glaze
- Technique:** Fired clay
- Dimensions:** 47.2 (L) x 39.5 (W) x 6 (T) cm
- Location:** Cultural Management Office of Songshan District in Chifeng City
- Description:** The writings and patterns are iron black. A large cross with a small lotus base. Two lines of Syriac script on upper part and eight lines of Uighur on the lower part.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**⁸⁰⁸
- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Upper left | Upper right |
| | |
| English Translation | English Translation |
| Look ye unto it. | Hope in it. |
| Text in Uighur Script | |

⁸⁰⁸ Dickens argues that it is better translated as “Look unto him and trust in him.”, not “it”. See, Dickens, 2010 (20): 217-220.

1. ' ' l ' x s ' nturwz x ' n s ' xys y mynk
 alaqsantoroz xan saqış - i miñ
 2. pyś ywz ' ' ltmys twyrt t ' βī ' ē
 beś yüz altmış tört tabʔaē
 3. s ' xys y ' ud yyl ' r ' m ' ' y
 saqış - i ud yil aram ay
 4. ykrmjk ' bw ' urdw ' yk ' zy
 y(e)girmikā bu ordu igāzi
 5. ywn ' ni kwymk ' s ' nkkwm yymys
 y(a)wnan kōm(ā)k(k)ā sāngüm yetmiş
 6. pyr y ' synt ' tnkry yrlx y puytwrdy
 bir yašinta t(ā)ñri y(a)rl(i)ʔ - i bütürdi
 7. pw p ' k nynk ' wyswty tnkry m ' nkkw
 bu bāg ' -niñ ösüti t(ā)ñri māngü
 8. wśdm ' x t ' ' wr ' ndm ' xy pulzw
 w(i)śdmāx - ta ornadmañi bolzu[n?]

English Translation

1. A thousand years of Emperor Alexander
2. 564 year (1253), Peach Blossom Stone
3. The calendar year is the first month of the Year of the Ox
4. On the 20th. The Beijing leader
5. Yawnan--General of the army, in him
6. When he was seventy-one years old, he completed the mission of God.
7. May the soul of this adult be permanently
8. Rest in heaven

Reference:

1. Niu, 2008:24. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
2. Hamilton and Niu, 1994:147-164.

8. "Nestorian Bronze Crosses" found in Ordos

A.⁸⁰⁹



⁸⁰⁹ The images (A-L) are selected from Hambis, 1954: 483-525.

B.



C.



D.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

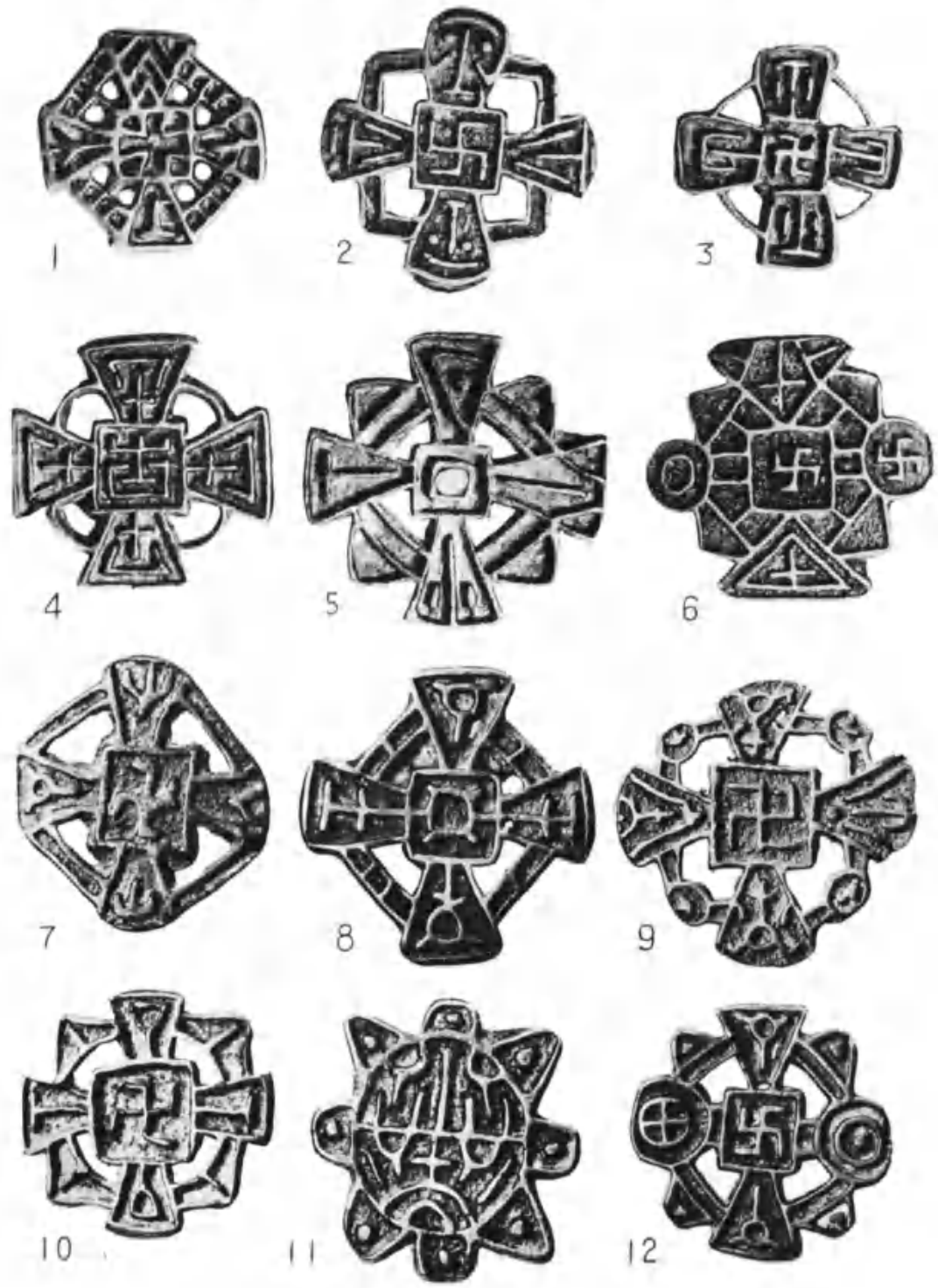


11

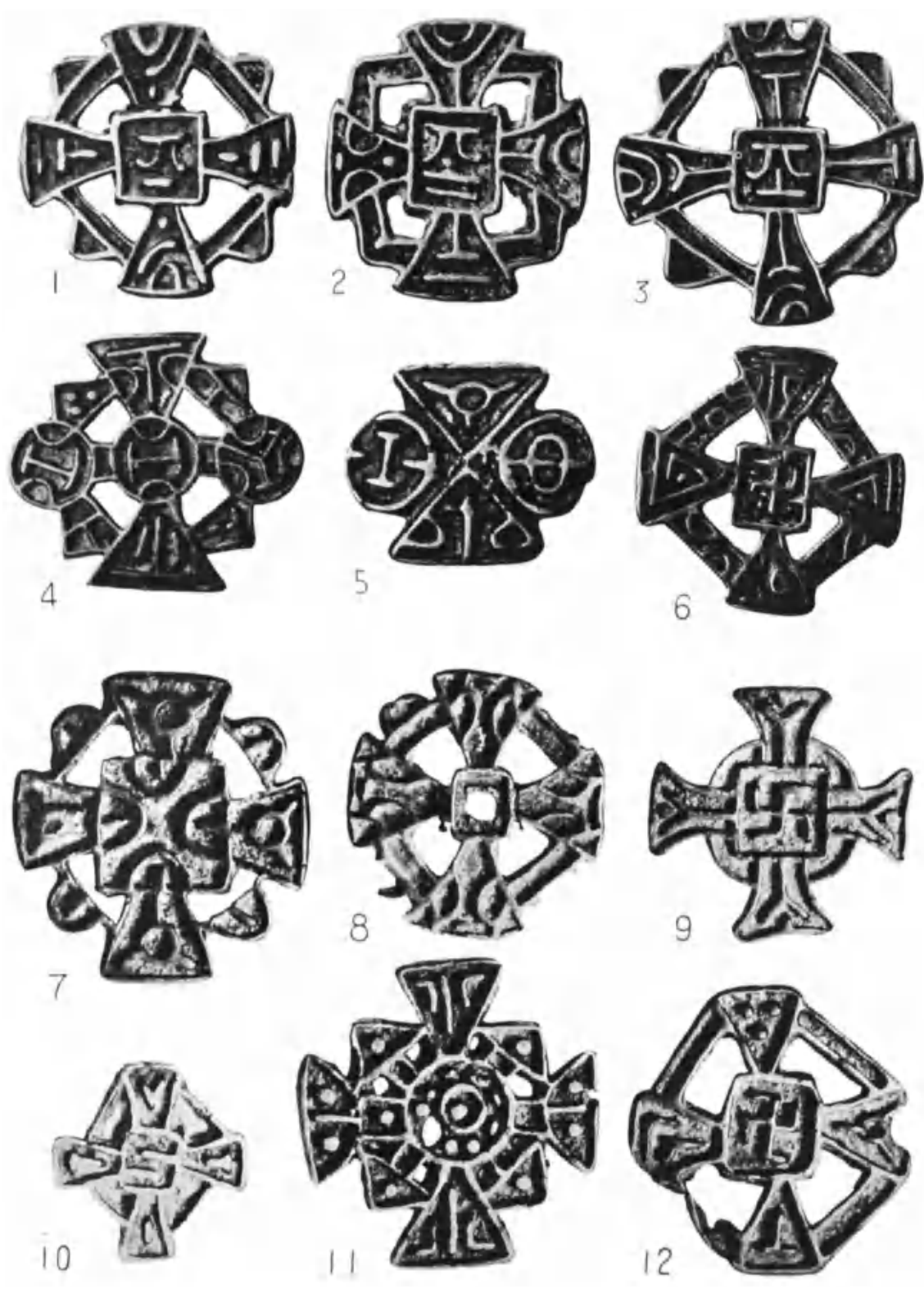
E.



F.



G.



H.



I.



J.



К.



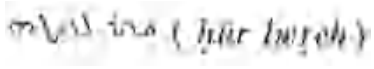
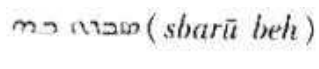
L.



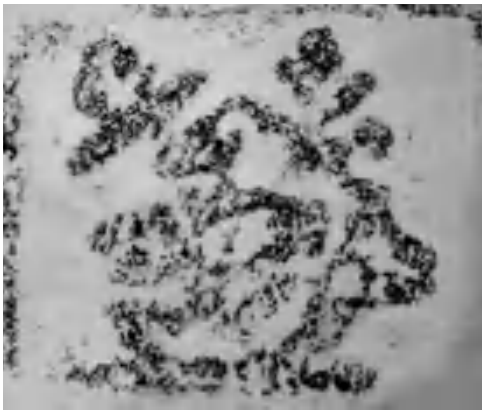
9. Catalogue of other Nestorian relics found in Inner Mongolia

I-Other-1



- Object:** Nestorian Bronze Mirror
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Inner Mongolia
- Material:** Bronze
- Technique:** Casting
- Dimensions:** The mirror: 10.4 cm in outer diameter, 8 cm in inner diameter
The cross: 5.2 (W) × 4.5 (H) cm
- Location:** National Museum
- Description:** A cross with arms terminating in pearls. A ring in the middle. Two pairs of propitious clouds in the upper and lower parts. Two lines of Syriac script on the four quadrants of the cross.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script**
- | | |
|---|--|
| Upper left | Upper right |
|  |  |
| English Translation | English Translation |
| Look ye unto it. | Hope in it. |
- Reference:** Niu, 2017:57-63. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

I-Other-2



a. Left panel



b. Front panel



c. Left panel and left tail



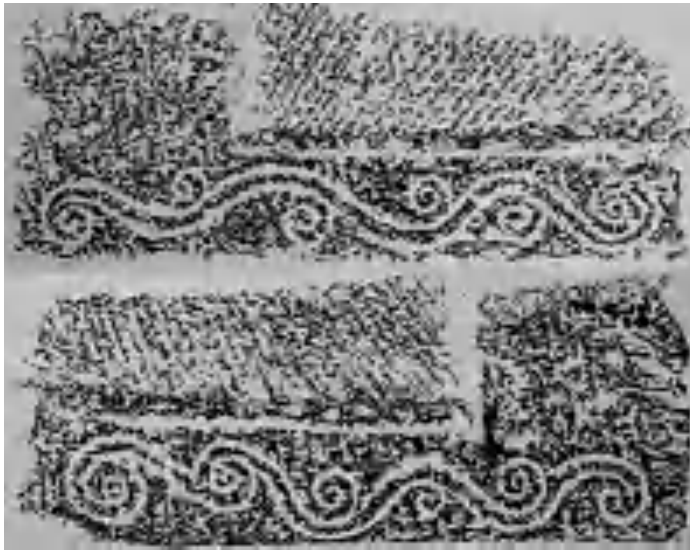
d. Left tail

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, flower design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Missing by 2004

Description: a. Flower design in square frame.
b. A cross rising from base.
c. Flower design in square frame and interlaced floral design.
d. Interlaced floral design.

Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:129-131, gravestone 1.

I-Other-3



a. Left tail



b. Front panel



c.

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, simple wave motif
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Unknow
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 20.5 cm in diameter (the cross)

Location: Unknow
Description: a. Simple wave motif.
b. Cross in square frame.
c. Simple wave motif. Cross in square frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:131-134, gravestone 2.

I-Other-4



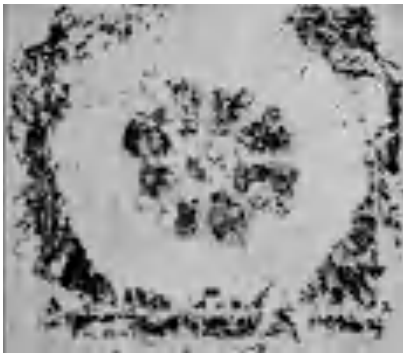
a. Left side



b. Front panel

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, arched frame
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Unknow
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Unknow
Description: a. Simple wave motif.
b. Cross rising from square base in arched frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:135-136, gravestone 3.

I-Other-5



a. Top panel



b. Front panel

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, flower
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Wang Mu Liao
Description: a. Flower in circular frame.
b. Cross in circular frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:137-138, gravestone 4.

I-Other-6



- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Simple wave design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Si Shi Qing Di
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Si Shi Qing Di

Description: Simple wave design.

Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:139-140, gravestone 5.

I-Other-7



Right panel and right tail

Object: Nestorian Gravestone

Subject: Cross

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Unknow

Material: Granite

Technique: Carving

Location: Unknow

Description: Cross in rectangular frame.

Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:141-142, gravestone 6.

I-Other-8



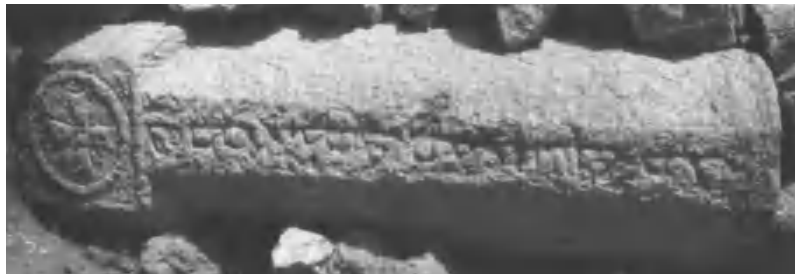
a. Left panel



b. The rubbing

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Marble
Technique: Carving
Location: Wang Mu Liao
Description: Interlaced floral design.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:142-144, gravestone 7.

I-Other-9



a. Top panel and top tail



b. The rubbing

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Mao Du Kun Dui
Description: Cross in circular frame and a line of inscription
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:145-146, gravestone 7

I-Other-10



a. Right panel and right tail



b. The rubbing of the right panel

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 20 cm in diameter (the cross)

Location: Mao Du Kun Dui
Description: Cross in rectangular frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:147-148, gravestone 9.

I-Other-11



a. Right panel and right tail



b. The rubbing

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, interlaced floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Mao Du Kun Dui
Description: Cross with dots between arms in circular frame and interlaced floral design.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:149-150, gravestone 10.

I-Other-12



Top panel

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Dimensions: 22 cm in diameter (the cross)
Location: Ha Ri Nao Ru
Description: Cross in circular frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:150-152, gravestone 11.

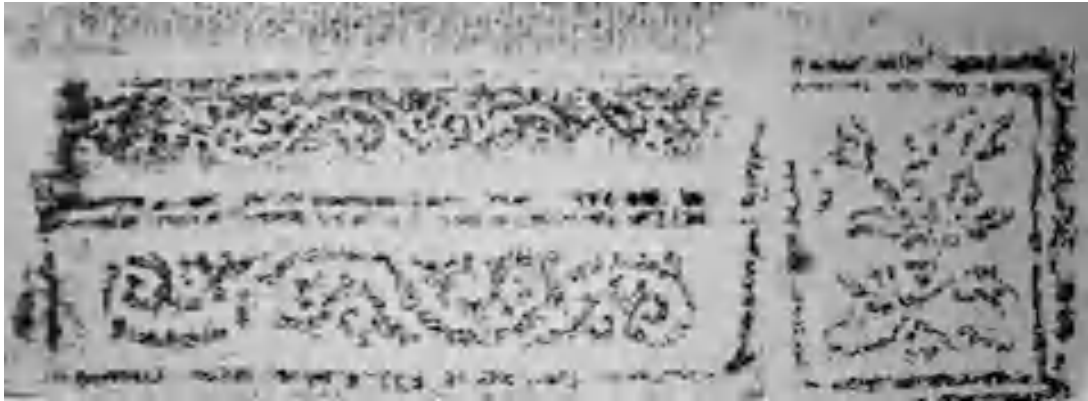
I-Other-13



a. Top panel



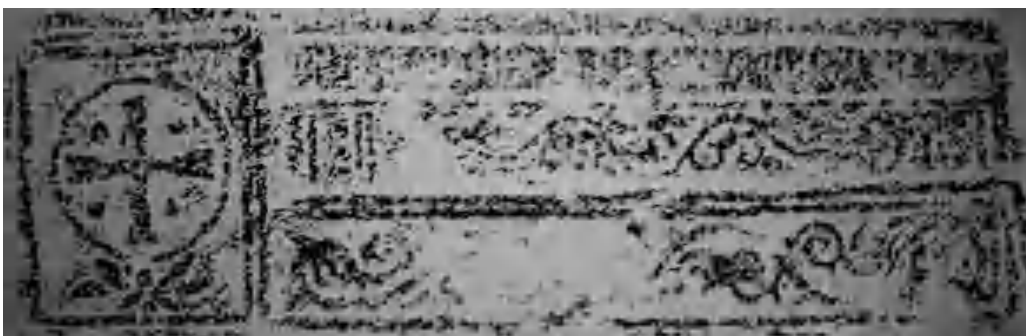
b. Front panel



c. Right panel and right tail

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
- Subject:** Cross-lotus, interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Carving
- Dimensions:** 21 cm in diameter (the cross)
- Location:** Ao Bao Wu Su
- Description:**
- a. A flower in circular frame.
 - b. A Cross with dots in four quadrants in circular frame rising from a lotus flower.
 - c. A floral design in square frame and interlaced floral design in two rectangular frames.
- Reference:** Halbertsma, 2008:152-154, gravestone 12.

I-Other-14



a. Left panel and left tail



b. Front panel

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
- Subject:** Cross-lotus, interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Carving
- Location:** Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
- Description:** a. A cross with dots in four quadrants in circular frame rising from a lotus flower and interlaced floral design in two rectangular frames.
b. A cross with dots in four quadrants rising from a lotus flower in lantern window frame.
- Reference:** Halbertsma, 2008:157-158, gravestone 14.

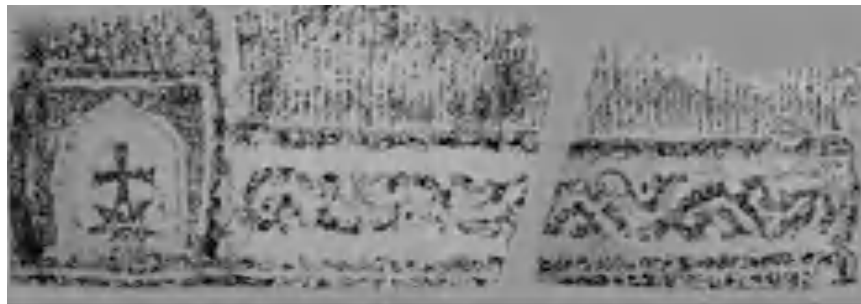
I-Other-15



- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
- Subject:** Cross-lotus, interlaced floral design
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Bai Ling Miao
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Cross with dots in four quadrants in circular frame rising from a lotus flower and interlaced floral design in two rectangular frames.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:165-166, gravestone 18.

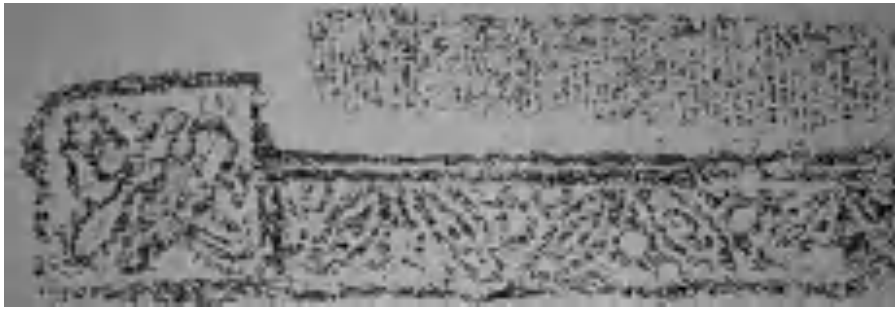
I-Other-16



Right panel and right tail

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross-lotus, interlaced floral design
Date: 13th-14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Cross with dots between arms in Islamic lantern window rising from a lotus flower and a line of interlaced floral design.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:167-169, gravestone 19.

I-Other-17



Left panel and left tail

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Floral design, leaf design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Floral design in square frame and leaf design
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:169-170, gravestone 20.

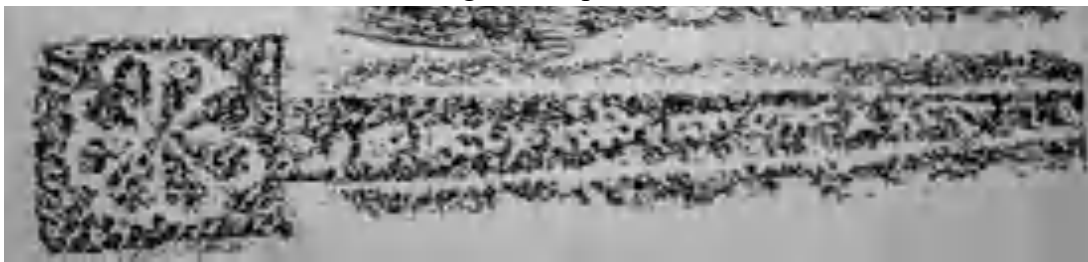
I-Other-18



a. Left panel and left tail



b. The rubbing of Left panel and left tail



c. Top panel and top tail

- Object:** Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Cross, floral design, wave motif
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Zhao He temple compound Xi La Mu Ren Zhen
Description: a & b. Cross in lantern window frame (?) and wave motif.
c. Flower with ten elongated petals
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:175-178, gravestone 23.

I-Other-19



Front panel

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Grass like floral
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Khundiin Gol
Description: Grass like floral motif
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:199-200, gravestone 35.

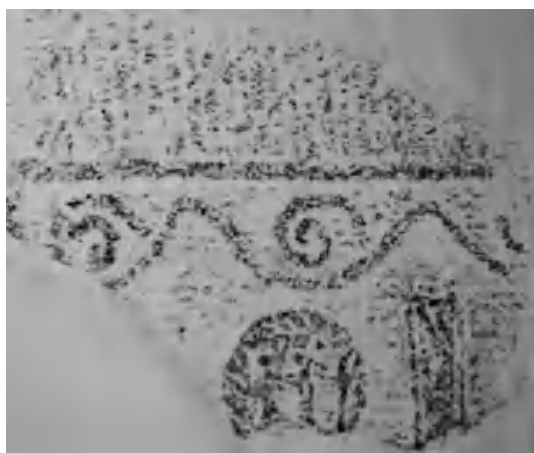
I-Other-20



Front panel

Object: Nestorian Gravestone
Subject: Floral design
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Floral design in square window
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:201, gravestone 36.

I-Other-21



Front

- Object:** Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Possible one arm of a cross, wave pattern
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:206-205, gravestone 40.

I-Other-22



Front

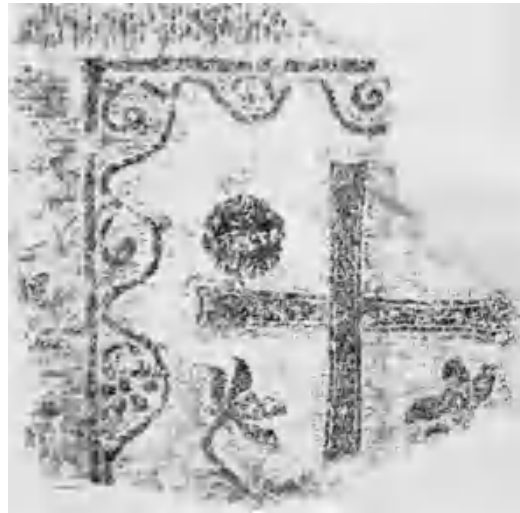
- Object:** Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Wave pattern
Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Wave pattern
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:207, gravestone 42.

I-Other-23



a. Front



b. The rubbing

Object: Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Cross, flower
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: A cross with dots and flower between arms, wave pattern
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:208, gravestone 43.

I-Other-24



Front

- Object:** Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Wave pattern
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Wave pattern
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:210, gravestone 45.

I-Other-25



Front

- Object:** Nestorian Stone slab
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Bai Ling Miao, inside cultural relics courtyard
Description: Cross standing on table shaped altar
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:210-211, gravestone 46.

I-Other-26



a. Left panel and left tail



b. Front panel

Object: Nestorian gravestone
Subject: Flower, wave/floral design, cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Material: Granite
Technique: Carving
Location: Baotou Cultural Relics Bureau yard
Description: a. Flower in square frame and wave /floral design in rectangular frame.
b. A cross in square frame.
Reference: Halbertsma, 2008:227-231, gravestone 67.

I-Other-27



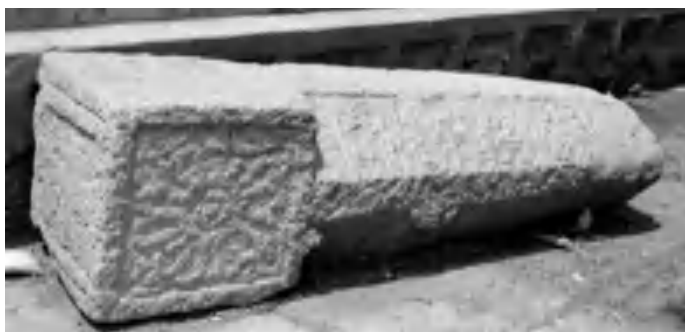
a. Left panel and left tail



b. Front panel

- Object:** Nestorian gravestone
- Subject:** Flower, wave/floral design, cross
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Carving
- Location:** Baotou Cultural Relics Bureau yard
- Description:** a. Flower in square frame and wave /floral design in rectangular frame.
b. Cross in square frame.
- Reference:** Halbertsma, 2008:232-236, gravestone 68.

I-Other-28



a. Right panel and right tail



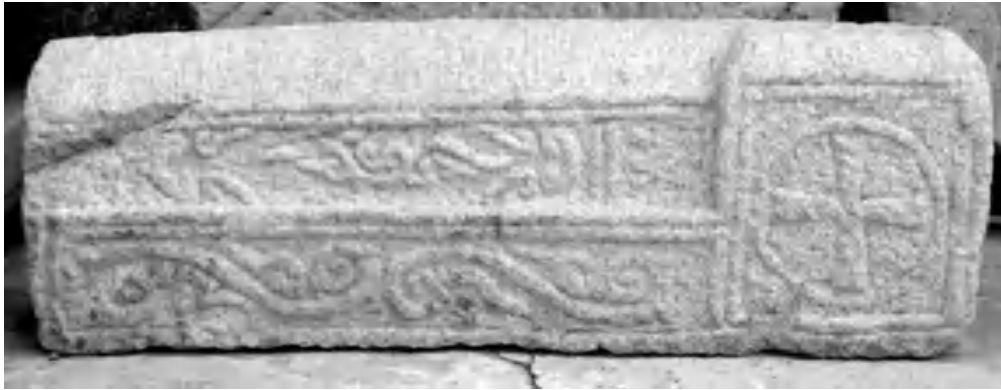
b. Front panel

- Object:** Nestorian gravestone
- Subject:** Flower, cross, wave /floral design (?)
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Carving
- Location:** Baotou Cultural Relics Bureau yard
- Description:** a. Flower in square frame and wave /floral design in rectangular frame.
b. Cross in square frame.
- Reference:** Halbertsma, 2008:237-239, gravestone 69.

I-Other-29



a. Front panel



b. Left panel and left tail



c. Top panel and top tail

- Object:** Nestorian gravestone
- Subject:** Cross, wave /floral design, Islamic lantern window
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Marble
- Technique:** Carving
- Location:** Baotou Cultural Relics Bureau yard
- Description:**
- a. Cross in Islamic lantern windows.
 - b. Cross in circle in square frame and wave /floral design in two rectangular frames.
 - c. Cross in square frame and a line of inscription.
- Reference:** Halbertsma, 2008:240-244, gravestone 70.

I-Other-30



This Nestorian staff earthed at Hohhot was exhibited at the exhibition of “Embracing the Orient and the Occident-When the Silk Road Meets the Renaissance” in Chinese National Museum in 2018. There is no more information about it.

10. Catalogue of Christian tombstones found in Shizhuziliang

S- 1



a.



b.

- Object:** Nestorian stone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Firstly, found in Shizhuziliang Inner Mongolia, 1890; afterwards removed to the premises of the Bishop's residence at Xiwanzi.
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Xiwanzi, Suiyuan Province (?)
- Description:** A cross-lotus stands on five steps
- Reference:** 1.Saeki, 1951:427. (Photo a)
2.Li & Niu, 2014:91-99.
3.Halbertsma, 2008: 54+202, Appendix 2.2.2 (Photo b)

S-2



Al de zerken zijn uit een blok en in zwarten steen, zooals de Chineszen dien hoeten. Alleen het voetstuk, n^o 8, is wit marmor. - N^o 3 verbeeldt den oostkant van n^o 1. - N^o 7 ligt plat voor een rechthoekigen steen zonder kruis. Het voetstuk, n^o 8, is 4 voet lang: de chineesche voet heeft 32 centimeters.

Description: The Dutch caption reads: “All gravestones are from one piece and of a black stone ... Only the base in Nr. 8 is of a white marble. - Nr. 3 depicts the east side of Nr. 1.–Nr. 7 is positioned horizontally before a standing stone without a cross. The base in Nr. 8 measures four feet in length: the Chinese foot equals 32 centimeters.” De Brabander, who interpreted the image as a lamb, prove to be misleading. (English from Halbertsma)

Source: Halbertsma, 2008:202, Appendix 2.1

S-3



Description: The cross seems to be depicted on top of a mountain of stones.

Source: Halbertsma, 2008:202, Appendix 2.2.1

S-4



Description: A cross above a potted flower standing on an altar table.

Source: Halbertsma, 2008:202, Appendix 2.2.1

S-5



a. The back



b. The front

Description:

- a. A cross
- b. A cross is rising from a lotus flower with the depiction of its stem or root.

Source:

Halbertsma, 2008:202, Appendix 2.2.2

S-6



a. The back



b. The front

Description:

- a. A cross positioned inside a circle.

b. A second cross marked by two circles at its centre, standing on a flower with several steps.

Source: Halbertsma, 2008:202, Appendix 2.2.3

11. Catalogue of Nestorian relics found in Beijing

B-1



a. The left side /the front /the right side



b.

- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stones
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** Five Dynasties or Early Yuan Dynasty
- Found:** Discovered by Sir Reginald F. Johnston, Kt., at Fangshan Cross Monastery, Beijing, 1919
- Material:** Marble
- Technique:** Engraving

Dimensions: 68.5 (H) x 58.5 (W) x 22 (T) cm

Location: Nanjing Museum

Description: a. (the left side) A pot of chrysanthemums. (?)

(the front) A cross with a lotus base and a pair of propitious clouds. Two lines of Syriac script.

(the right side) A pot of chrysanthemums. (?)

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

Upper left

ܡܠܟܐ ܝܗܘܐ ܕܢܫܐܘܬܐ (*hār lūjāh*)

English Translation

Look ye unto it.

Upper right

ܡܠܟܐ ܝܗܘܐ ܕܢܫܐܘܬܐ (*sbarū beh*)

English Translation

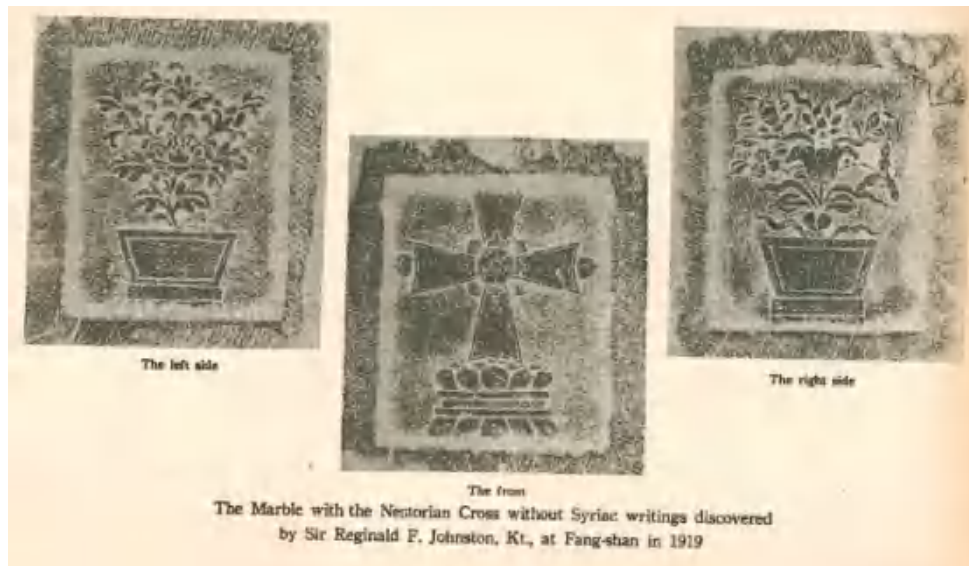
Hope in it.

Reference: 1.Saeki, 1951:430-431, pl. XVII.

2.Niu, 2008:24-28. (The photo, transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

3. Namio, 1980:40-50.

B-2



The left side /The front side /The right side

Reference: Nestorian Carving Stones

Subject: Cross, Lotus

Date: Five Dynasties or Early Yuan Dynasty

- Found:** Discovered by Sir Reginald F. Johnston, Kt., at Fangshan Cross Monastery, Beijing, 1919
- Material:** Marble
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 68.5 (H) x 58.5 (W) x 22 (T) cm
- Location:** Nanjing Museum
- Description:** (the left side) A pot of chrysanthemums. (?)
 (the front) A cross with gems at the ends of the arms and a lotus in the center, standing on the base of three steps
 (the right side) A pot of chrysanthemums. (?)
- Reference:** 1.Saeki,1951:430-431, pl. XVIII.
 2.Niu, 2008:24-28.
 3. Namio, 1980:40-50.

B-3



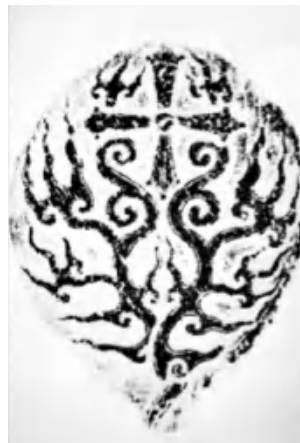
- Object:** Nestorian Carving Stones
- Subject:** Cross, plants
- Date** Jin (1115—1234) and Yuan Dynasties

Found: Beijing Paomachang
Material: Marble
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 94 (L) x 29 (W) x 24 (T) cm
Location: Missing
Description: A cross with the decorations of plants and flowers.
Reference: 1.Saeki,1951:429, pl. XVI
2.Niu, 2008:24-28.
3. Namio,1980:40-50.

B-4



a.The motif of the Cross and Flame on the Mounment of Yuan Dynasty



b.Rubbing of cross depiction⁸¹⁰

⁸¹⁰ Halbertsma, 2008:50.

12. Catalogue of Nestorian relics found in Yangzhou

Y-1



- Object:** Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus, Angels
- Date:** 1317
- Found:** Yangzhou, 1981
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 29.8 (L) x 25.8 (W) x 4 (T) cm
- Description:** A cross-lotus flanked by two winged angels
- Inscription:** Text in Syriac Script

1. ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 1
2. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 2
3. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 3
4. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 4
5. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 5
6. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 6
7. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 7
8. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 8
9. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 9
10. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 10
11. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 11
12. ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ . 12

English Translation

(Syriac) In the name of my Lord Jesus. (Turkic) In the year 1628 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1317), in the year of the Snake of the Turkic Calendar, on the 9th day in the third month, pekingese, the companion of Yoanis Sam-ša, Ališbay fulfilled the command of God at the age of 33 and died. She was buried here. May her soul be with the holy princesses, Sarahrest, Rebekka, Rahel (...) and rest in peace in heaven! May she have an illustrious name forever! May she have a niche in the temple of fame! (Syriac) Amen! Amen!

Chinese

岁次丁巳延裕四年三月初九日
三十三岁身故五月十六日明吉
大都忻都妻也里世八之墓

English Translation

This is the tomb of Elizabeth (yelishiba), wife of Hindu from Dadu(Khanbaliq/Beijing). She died in her thirty-third year (age 32)and was buried on the sixteenth day of the fifth month(25th July). She died on the ninth day of the third month(20th May) of the Dingsi Yanyou year (1317) .

Reference:

- 1.Zhu, 1986: 68-69.
- 2.Niu, 2008:114-121. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Syriac inscription)
- 3.Franzmann, 2013: 83-92.
- 4.Thomas Ertl, 2015. (Photo)

Y-2



a. The front



b. The back

- Object:** Nestorian Syriac Tombstone
- Subject:** Cross, Lotus
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Jiangdu, 1929
- Material:** Stone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 11 cm in arm length (the cross)
- Location:** In a Mohammedan Temple
- Description:** a. A cross-lotus and plant patterns
b. Peony flowers?
- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:30.
2. Saeki,1951:434-436, Fig.19.

13. Catalogue of Nestorian tombstones (relics) found in Quanzhou

Q-1



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone erected by Wang Shier Xiaoniang
- Subject:** Cross, Clouds, interlaced floral design
- Date:** 1277
- Found:** Unearthed in Quanzhou in 1994
- Material:** Diabase
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 52.5 (L) x 25.5 (W) x 8.5 (T) cm
- Description:** Divided into three parts.
Upper part: Interlaced floral design between the decorations of Humen. A cross with the diameter of 9 cm, supported by cloud patterns.
Central part: Seven lines of Chinese characters in the middle, mostly distributed in the left half.
Lower part: A line of interlaced floral design.
- Inscription:**
- | Text in Chinese | English Translation |
|-----------------|---|
| 至元丁丑 | In the year of Zhiyuan (1277 or 1286)
Dingchou |

郭氏十太孺	Madam Guo, mother, the tenth senior according to the seniority (of the Dai family)
故妣二亲	The two deceased mothers
陈氏十太孺	Madam Chen, mother, the tenth senior (of the Dai family)
正月日吉	On the auspicious day of the first month
戴舍王氏十二小娘	(dedicated by) Madam Wang, ranking the 12 th senior (among siblings) of the Dai family
丙戌仲秋壬申	On the ninth day Renshen of the eighth month (Zhongqiu) of the Bingxu Year (1286 or 1346)

- Reference:**
1. Wu, 2002.
 2. Li, 2013:13, pl. 1.
 3. Tang, 2011:72-74. (Translation into English of the Chinese inscription)

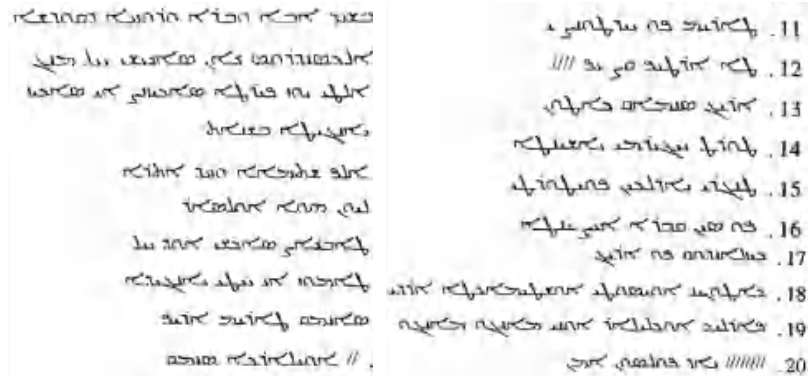
Q-2



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone in the Syriac Script (in maintenance)
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Interlaced Floral Pattern
- Date:** 1289
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the Tonghuai Gate of Quanzhou in 1946
- Material:** Granite

Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 92 (L) x 29 (W) cm
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: A cross-cross with arms terminating in pearls, flanked by two winged “angels”. 21 lines of Syriac script. Cloud patterns on the two sides.

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the 8th day of the 8th month in the year 1601 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1289), or the 7th day of the 7th month in Chinese Calendar, the offspring of King Philip of Macedonia, the pure princess, Shenmark fulfilled God’s mission at the age of 20. May her soul forever rest in peace in Heaven! All her offspring will cherish the memory of her. We always remember her! Amen!

Source: a. <https://www.douban.com/note/657151198/>
 b. Wu, 1957:31, pl. 78/2

Reference: 1.Wu, 1957:31, pl. 78/1,78/2.
 2.Niu, 2008:140-149. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 3.Zhu, 1997, pl. 9.

Quan-3



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Interlaced Floral Pattern
- Date:** 1296
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1947
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 90 (L) x 30 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian (in maintenance)
- Description:** A cross-cross with arms terminating in pearls, flanked by two winged “angels”. 25 lines of Syriac script. Cloud patterns on the two sides.
- Inscription:** Text in Syriac Script

1. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	13. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
2. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	14. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
3. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	15. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
4. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	16. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
5. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	17. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
6. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	18. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
7. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	19. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
8. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	20. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
9. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	21. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
10. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	22. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
11. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	23. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
12. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ	24. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ
	25. ܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܢܩܘܢܐ

English Translation

Forever in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the year 1608 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1296), the offspring of King Philip of Macedonia, or on the 10th day of the 12th month in

the Monkey year in Turkic Calendar, the happy clergy woman, Madam Aye-Keduer fulfilled God's mission at the age of 32. May the soul of the general's wife forever return to the native place with those pure princesses, Sarah, Rebekka, Rahel and others...May her name last forever...She is buried in this grave. May her soul rest in peace in Heaven! May her reputation have a niche in the temple of fame! Amen!

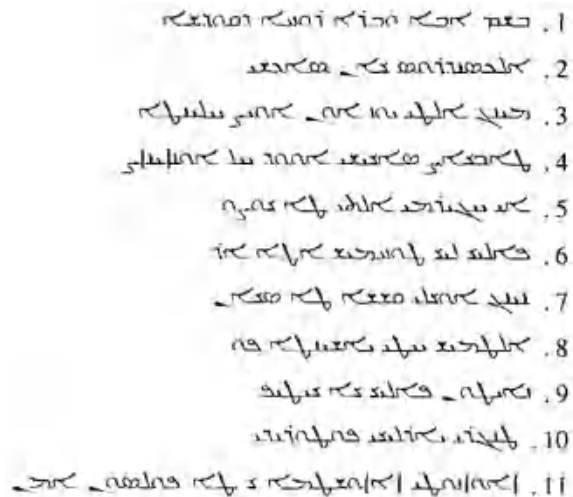
- Reference:**
- 1.Wu,1957:31, pl. 79.
 - 2.Niu, 2008:140-149. (Photo, transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 - 3.Zhu,1997, pl. 10.

Quan-4



- Object:** Nestorian tombstone
- Subject:** Cross
- Date:** 1301
- Found:** Unearthed outside Renfeng Gate of Quanzhou in 1943
- Material:** Granite

Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 23.5 (L) x 20 (W) cm
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: A cross with arms terminating in pearls. Humen decoration on the top (?) 11 lines of texts in the lower part. The first line is in Syriac, and the rest lines are Uighur.
Inscription: Text in Syriac Script



English Translation

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the year 1613 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1301), or on the 26th day of the 10th month in the Ox year of the Peach Stone Calendar.

Wustik·Tashan, the son of Tukmixi·Ata·Aier, came to Quanzhou from Gaochang, and he fulfilled God's mission at the age of 67. His soul will rest in peace in Heaven. Amen!

Reference: 1.Wu,1957:28, pl. 76/1, 76/2.
 2.Niu, 2008:124-127+241-244. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 3.Zhu, 1997, pl. 6.
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-5



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone in the Syriac Script
- Subject:** Lotus Flowers, Interlaced Floral Pattern
- Date:** 16th, October 1304
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1951
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 72 (L) x 27 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** Two symmetrical columns on the two sides decorated by bases of lotus flowers. 15 lines of texts surrounded by simple interlaced floral design. Lines 1-3 are Syriac and 4-15 Uighur in Syriac script.

Inscription: Text in Syriac Script

ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 1	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 9
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 2	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 10
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 3	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 11
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 4	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 12
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 5	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 13
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 6	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 14
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 7	ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 15
ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ . 8	

English Translation

Forever in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen! In the year 1616 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1304),

the offspring of King Philip of Macedonia, or the 16th day of the 10th month in the Dragon year in Chinese Calendar, or ... the 10th month in Syriac Calendar...

- Reference:** 1.Wu, 1957:32, pl. 84.
2. Niu, 2008:127-130+244-247. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-6



- Object:** The Stone Stele of Arkagun in Xingming Temple
- Subject:** Interlaced Floral Pattern
- Date:** 1306
- Found:** Unearthed in Tumen Street of Quanzhou in 1984
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 60 (L) x 25 (W) x10 (T) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** 14 lines of Chinese in central part is surrounded by fine interlaced floral design.
- Inscription:**
- | Chinese | English Translation |
|---------|--|
| 1.于我名門 | 1. At my gate of light |
| 2.公福陰裏 | 2. Protected by justice and blessing |
| 3.匪佛後身 | 3. Being no subsequent incarnation of Buddha |

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 4.亦佛弟子 | 4. I am the disciple of Buddha |
| 5.無憾死生 | 5. Having no regret of life and death |
| 6.升天堂矣 | 6. I will ascend hence to heaven |
| 7.昔 (?) 大德十 | 7-9. On the first day of the third month of |
| 8.年歲次丙 | the 10 th emperor-year Dade (March |
| 9.午三月朔 | 23,1306), the sign of the year being Bing |
| | Wu |
| 10.日記 | 10. Dedicated by |
| 11.管領泉州路也 | 11-14. Anduonisi (Antonius) Wu, |
| 12.里可溫掌教官 | Supervisor of Yelikewen being in charge |
| 13.兼住持與明寺 | of Quanzhou District, also abbot of the |
| 14.吳啞哆呢思書 | Xingming Monastery. |

Reference:

1. Wu, 2005:418, B51.
2. Tang, 2011:71. (Translation into English of the Chinese inscription)
3. Zhu, 1997, pl. 20.

Source:

Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2008

Quan-7



a.Original



b.Duplicate

Object:	Christian Tombstone in the Phagspa Script (incomplete)	
Subject:	Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Censer	
Date:	1311	
Found:	Unearthed from the wall of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1940	
Material:	Granite (by Wu Wenliang) / Diabase (by Niu Ruji)	
Technique:	Engraving	
Dimensions:	45 (L) x 30 (W) cm (by Wu Wenliang, Niu Ruji)/ 42.5 (L) x 32.6 (W) x 9.5 (T) cm (by Mankind in Xiamen University)	
Inventory Number:	5137	
Location:	The original entered in Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University in 1981. The duplicate is now conserved in Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian.	
Description:	<p>The curved tip of the monument has been cut off. The main part is surrounded by the pattern of interlaced floral design. A cross-lotus with censer under the Humen decoration, flanked by two “angels” wearing crowns. Two lines of Phagspa script in the middle. A line of Chinese on each side of the Phagspa script.</p> <p>This is the first time to excavate Nestorian tombstone carved with Phagspa script.</p>	
Inscription:	Phagspa Script	English Translation
	kaj san dzen jen ko dzi yin mu(transcription)	Tomb of Yun, the daughter of Kaishanjuyan.
	Chinese	English Translation
	1.至大四年辛亥	Inscribed on the first day of the 8 th
	2.仲秋朔日谨题	lunar month in the 4 th year of Zhida in the Xinhai year.
Reference:	<p>1.Wu,1957:32, pl. 85.</p> <p>2.Niu, 2008:159-160. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Phagspa inscription)</p> <p>3.Zhu, 1997, pl. 4.</p>	
Source:	<p>a. Photo from Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University</p> <p>b. Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018</p>	

Quan-8



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross
- Date:** 1312
- Found:** Chidian of Quanzhou in 2002
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 41.5 (L) x23.5 (W)cm (by Niu Ruji) / 42 (L) x 23 (W) cm (by Tang Li)
- Location:** Quanzhou South Architecture Museum (by Niu Ruji)/ Quanzhou City Museum (by Tang Li)
- Description:** A pillar decorated by lotus petals on the left. The right part is missing. A “angel” wears a crown with a small cross standing above and holds a cross-lotus with censer. 21 lines texts in the lower part, the first three lines are Syriac, and the lines 4-21 are Uighur in Syriac script.

Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
		Forever in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
	Text in Syriac - Uighur	English Translation

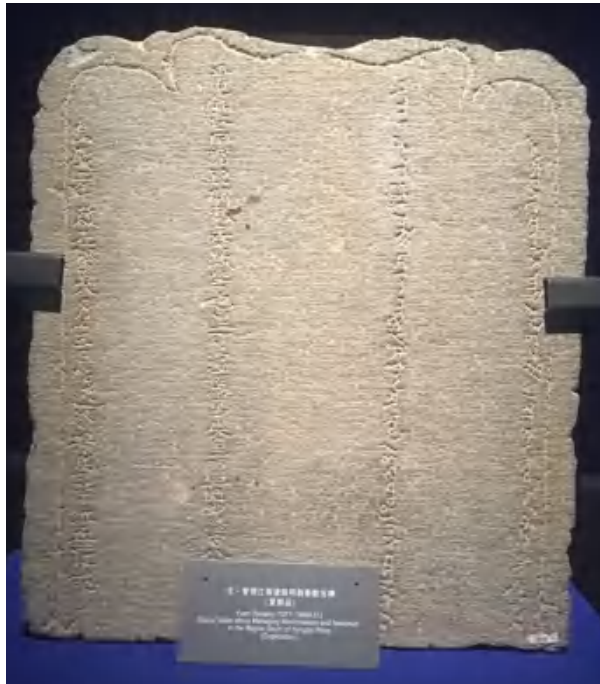
4
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 21

In the year 1624 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1312), the offspring of King Philip of Macedonia, or on the 6th day of the 10th month in the Ox year in Turkic Calendar, female pastor Barqamča fulfilled God's mission, her soul will rest in peace in Heaven. May people miss her!
 Amen!

Reference: 1.Niu, 2008:152-156. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
 2.Tang, 2011:68-70.
 3.Wu, 2005:417.

Source: Photo by Xie Bizhen, 2003

Quan-9



- Object:** Stone TabeL about Managing Manichaeiam and Nestorian in the Region South of Yangtze River (Duplication)
- Subject:** Decoration of Humen
- Date:** 5th, September 1313
- Found:** Unearthed from the Tonghuai Gate of Quanzhou in 1954
- Material:** Granite (by Wu Wenliang) / Diabase (by Niu Ruji)
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 66 (L) x 45 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** The top of the monument has been damaged. Two lines of Chinese on the left, and two lines on the right, surrounded by the decoration of Humen.
- Inscription:** Uighur

1. 1313 9 5 1313 9 5 1313 9 5 1313 9 5
2. 1313 9 5 1313 9 5 1313 9 5 1313 9 5
1313 9 5 1313 9 5

English Translation

This is the tomb of Mar Bishop (Mar) Solomon, Episcopal (in charge) of Manicheans and Yelikewen. On the 15th day of the eighth Moon of the ox year, Sauma, leading (the group), carried out (this) and inscribed.

Chinese

管理江南诸路明教、秦教等，也里可温，马里失里门，阿必思古八，马里哈昔牙。

皇庆二年岁在癸丑八月十五日，贴迷答扫马等，泣血谨志。

English Translation

(to) Yelikewen Mar Shilimen (Solomon), Supervisor for Religious Affairs of the Religion of Light (Manichaeism), the Religion of Qin (Nestorianism), etc. for various Circuits (Lu) of Jiangnan, and Abisguba (the Episcopal) Mali Haxiyya (Bishop).

Dedicated with tears of blood by Tiemida Saoma (Timothy Sauma) and others on the 15th day of the 8th month of the second year of Huangqing (September 13, 2013), Guichou.

- Reference:**
1. Niu, 2008: 150-152. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Uighur inscription)
 2. Tang, 2011:60-63. (Translation into English of the Chinese inscription)
 3. Xia, 1981(1): 59-62.

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-10



Object:	Christian Tombstone in the Phagspa Script	
Subject:	Lotus Flower, Cross	
Date:	1314	
Found:	Unearthed from the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1985	
Material:	Diabase	
Technique:	Engraving	
Dimensions:	41.3 (L) x 27 (W) x 7.8 (T) cm	
Location:	Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian	
Description:	The top of the monument has been damaged. The main part is surrounded by propitious cloud patterns, then decorated by Humen depiction. A cross with cloud pattern in the upper middle, two lines of Chinese and two lines of Phagspa script in the lower part.	
Inscription:	Phagspa Script	English Translation
	un se jan si mu taw (transcription)	Tomb of Madam Yang, Mr. Ye's wife.
	Chinese	English Translation
	1.延祐甲寅 (right)	In the year of Yanyou Jiayin (1314),
	2.良月吉日 (left)	on an auspicious day in a good month.

- Reference:** 1.Niu, 2008:158-159. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Phagspa inscription)
2.Zhu, 1997, pl. 14.
3.Tang, 2011:75-77.
4.Chaonastu, 1994:119-124.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-11



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone in the Syriac Script (duplicate)
- Subject:** Lotus Flowers, Interlaced Floral Pattern
- Date:** 1318
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1945
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 63 (L) x 25 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** The main part is surrounded by simple interlaced floral design. 19 lines of texts in the central part. The first three lines are Syriac and lines 4-19 are in Uighur in Syriac script.
- Inscription:** Text in Syriac Script

ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .1	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .10
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .2	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .11
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .3	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .12
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .4	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .13
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .5	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .14
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .6	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .15
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .7	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .16
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .8	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .17
ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .9	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .18
	ܩܘܡ ܩܘܡ .19

English Translation

(Syriac) In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and forever.

(Uighur) In the year 1630 of Alexander the Great Calendar (1318), the son of King Philip from Macedonia, in the year of the Sheep of the Turkic Calendar, on the eighth day in the tenth month. Priest George fulfilled the command of God. May his soul rest in peace in heaven! Remember him! Amen!

Reference: Niu, 2008:130-136+247-250. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-12



- Object:** Christian Tombstone in the Phagspa Script
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross
- Date:** 1324
- Found:** Unearthed from the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1948
- Material:** Granite (by Wu Wenliang) / Diabase (by Niu Ruji)
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 34 (L) x 31(W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** The top of the monument has been damaged. The main part is surrounded by propitious cloud patterns, then decorated by Humen depiction. A cross with cloud pattern in the upper middle, two lines of Chinese and two lines of Phagspa script in the lower part.
- Inscription:**
- | | Text in Phagspa Script | English Translation |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| | ji gun liw si mu dzi ⁸¹¹ (ji
gun iiw Si mu dzi) | Tomb of Madam Liu, Mr.Yi's wife. |
| | Chinese | English Translation |

⁸¹¹ The recognition of the Phagspa Script of Chaonastu and Tang Li is slightly different, see Chaonastu 1994:119-124, Tang, 2011:74-75.

- 1.时岁甲子 (right) An auspicious day of Mid-autumn in
2.仲秋吉日 (left) the year of Jiazi.

- Reference:**
- 1.Wu,1957:32, pl. 86.
 - 2.Niu, 2008:161-162. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Phagspa inscription)
 - 3.Tang, 2011:74-75.
 - 4.Wu, 2005:407, B42.
 - 5.Chaonastu, 1994:119-124.
 - 6.Zhu, 1997, pl. 12.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-13



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone in the Uighur Script (duplicate)
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Canopy
- Date:** 1331
- Found:** Unearthed from the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1941
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 66 (L) x 29 (W) cm
- Location:** The original has been conserved in Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University since 1955. The duplicate is now conserved in Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian.

Description: A cross-lotus with parasol in the middle and upper part, flanked by two “angels” with wings. Lotus patterns on both sides. Eight lines of Uighur texts under the rectangular frame.⁸¹²

Inscription:	Text in Syriac Script	English Translation
	(transcription)	
	1. qur-luγ xuβ(γ) lγ-(a)	Happy and pure princess Melda,
	2. ārkägün-nīng xadun-	Christian fulfilled God’s mission on
	3. γ marda lārim	the 2th day of the 12 th month of the
	4. qoyn yīl caxšapuda	Goat year (1331). May her soul rest
	5. ay man iki-kä	in peace in Heaven.
	6. lāngri yarlıγ-γ	
	7. bütirdi aγīr	
	8. cšmd-qa aγar ol	

Reference: 1. Hamilton & Niu, 1995:270-281.
2. Niu, 2008:156-158. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)
3. Zhu, 1997, pl. 5.

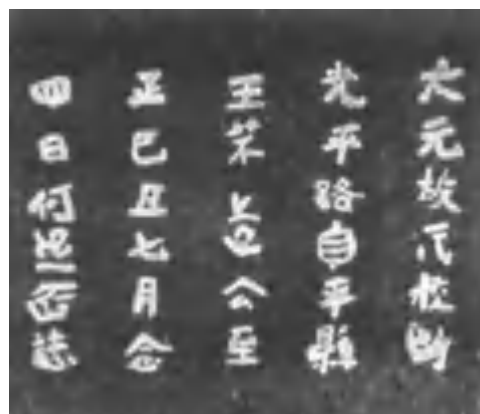
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

⁸¹² According to Niu, there are also: “21 lines of Syriac language are engraved under the banner.” But it is suspected to be wrong, because there are only eight lines of Uighur texts on the tombstone, see Niu, 2008:157.

Quan-14



a.



b.

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone in the Syriac Script (duplicate)
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross
- Date:** 1349
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1946
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 57 (L) x 32 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** Humen decoration on the top. A cross with arms terminating in pearls and a pair of clouds patterns in the upper part. 12 lines of texts in the lower part, the first two lines are Syriac, and the rest are Uighur in Syriac script. Five lines of Chinese on the reverse side.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script** **English Translation**

ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 1	In the name of the Father, the Son
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 2	and the Holy Spirit.
ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 3	In the year 1660 of Alexander the
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 4	Great Calendar (1349), or on the 14 th
ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 5	day of the 7 th month in the Ox year in
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 6	Turkic Calendar. Siria fulfilled
ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 7	God's mission at the age of 20. May
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 8	his soul rest in peace in Heaven.
ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 9	Always remember the 7 th month.
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 10	Amen!
ܟܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ . 11	
ܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ ܕܩܘܕܩܘܢܐ . 12	

Chinese

- 1.大元故氏()校尉
()
- 2.光平路自平縣
- 3.王莽道公至
- 4.正己丑七月念
- 5.四日何熙() □誌

English Translation

Wang Fudao from Guangping road, Ziping Country died in the 7th month of the year of Zhizheng Jichou in the Yuan Dynasty, inscribed on the 4th day by He Xi □.

Reference:

- 1.Wu, 1957:29, pl. 77/1-3.
- 2.Niu, 2008:136-139+250-253. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the Syriac inscription)
- 3.Tang, 2011:64-70.
- 4.Zhu, 1997, pl. 7-8.

Source:

- a. Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018
- b. Zhu, 1997, pl. 8

Quan-15



- Object:** Nestorian Syriac Incomplete Stone Tomb Mound
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels
- Date:** 1368–1369
- Found:** Excavated from Foundation of Quanzhou’s East Gate in 1960.
Donated by Wu Wenliang
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 23.5 (L) x 20 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** Incomplete, an “angel” and 8 lines of texts. The first two lines are in Syriac, and the rest are Uighur in Syriac script.
- Inscription:** **Text in Syriac Script** **English Translation**

כסא כבוד . 1	In the name of the Father, the Son
והרוח הקדושה . 2	and the Holy Spirit. In the year
של המלך אלכסנדר הגדול . 3	1680 of Alexander the Great
הקיסר, בן המלך פיליפוס . 4	Calendar, the offspring of King
המלך פיליפוס . 5	Philip of Macedonia...
בשנת ה'תתקס"ח . 6	
ביום ה'אדר . 7	
ביום ה'שבת . 8	

Reference: Niu, 2008:139-140+253-255. (Transliteration, transcription and translation into Chinese of the whole inscription)

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-16



Object: Nestorian Tombstone Buttress (incomplete)

Subject: Cross, Lotus flower, Angel, Clouds

Date: 1318

Found: Unearthed under the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1945, only the half of the right

Material: Granite

Technique: Engraving

Dimensions: 90 (L) x18 (W) cm

Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian

Description: An “angel” with wings wears a crown standing a small cross above, holding cross-lotus with censer (?). Clouds are on the right.

Reference: 1.Wu,1957:31, plate 81.

2.Niu, 2008:39&131.

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-17



Object: Nestorian Tombstone Buttress (duplicate)

Subject: Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Clouds

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Unearthed near the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1948

Material: Granite

Technique: Engraving

Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian

Description: An “angel” holds a lotus-censer. Cloud patterns are on the left.

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-18



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone Buttress
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Clouds
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Unearthed under the base of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1946
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 100 (L) x 27 (W) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** The right part has been lost. An “angel” wears a crown and holds a “holy object” (missing). Cloud patterns are on the left.
- Reference:** Wu, 1957:32, pl. 83.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-19



a. Original⁸¹³



b. Duplicate

- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone Buttress (incomplete)
Subject: Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Censer
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Unearthed near the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1948
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 78.6 (L) x 27.6 (W) x 9.4 (T) cm
Inventory Number: 2048
Location: The original has been conserved in Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University in 1956. The duplicate is now conserved in Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian.

⁸¹³ There is another tombstone like this which is recorded in Zhu, 1997, pl. 16, unearthed in Houmao village near northern suburb of Quanzhou in 1988.

Description: Columns are on the two sides. Two “angels” with small crosses on the top of their heads hold a cross-lotus-censer.

Source: a. Photo from Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University
b. Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-20



Object: Nestorian Tombstone Buttress

Subject: Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Censer

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Unearthed near the Tonghuai Gate of Quanzhou in 1946

Material: Granite

Technique: Engraving

Dimensions: 80 (L) x 74 (W) cm

Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian

Description: Columns are on the two sides. Two “angels” with crowns hold a cross-censer.

Reference: 1. Wu, 1957:31, pl. 80.
2. Tang, 2011:58-59.
3. Zhu, 1997, pl. 15.

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-21



- Object:** Nestorian Angel Stone Carving
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Censer
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found** Discovered in Kaiyuan Temple of Quanzhou in 1961
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** There is only a winged “angel” on the left holding a cross-lotus with censer. A small cross erects on his crown. Cloud patterns are on both sides.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-22



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone Buttress
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving

Dimensions: 73 (L) x 29 (W) x 11 (T) cm
Inventory 5139
Number:
Location: Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University
Description: Two “angels” hold a cross-lotus.
Source: Photo from Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University

Quan-23



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Cross, Clouds, Flames
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Unearthed near the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1940
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 52 (L) x 53 (W) cm (by Wu Wenliang)/55 (L) x 53.5 (W) x 8 (T)
(by Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University)
Inventory 1083
Number:
Location: Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University
Description: Decoration of Humen. A cross erects above the clouds, surrounded by the patterns of flame.

Reference: Wu,1957:27, pl.72.
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-24



Object: Nestorian Stone Carving
Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross, Clouds, Flames
Date: 13th – 14th Centuries
Found: Unearthed outside the East Gate Tower of Quanzhou in 1939
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 48 (L) x 52 (W) cm
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: Decoration of Humen. A cross erects above the clouds, surrounded by the patterns of flame.
Reference: Wu,1957:27, pl. 71.
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-25



- Object:** Christian Stone Carving
- Subject:** Cross, Clouds, Flames
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Unearthed in Dongyue Temple in the eastern outskirts of Quanzhou in 1987
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** Decoration of Humen. A cross erects above the clouds, surrounded by the patterns of flame.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-26



- Object:** Gothic Arched Tomb Stone with Four-winged Angels Patterns
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Clouds, Flames
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Excavated from Renfeng Street in 1975, Quanzhou
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** It has a decoration of Humen. A four-winged “angel” with a crown sits above the clouds with lotus position. A cross-lotus on the chest of the “angel”. Clouds and flame patterns are around his feet.
- Reference:** Zhu, 1997, pl. 17.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-27



- Object:** Christian Tomb Stone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross, Canopy
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Excavated from the Foundation of Quanzhou's North Gate
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** It has a decoration of Humen. A cross-lotus with a parasol above.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-28



- Object:** Christian Four-winged Angel Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Clouds
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Discovered in Zoukui Temple in Tonghuai Street of Quanzhou in 1926
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** It has a decoration of Humen. A four-winged “angle” with a crown sits above the clouds with lotus position. A big cross is on the upper part. A cross-lotus on the chest of the “angel”. Clouds are around his feet.
- Reference:** 1.Wu, 1957:27, plate 74.
2.Tang, 2011:58-59.
- Source:** Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-29



- Object:** Christian Four-winged Angel Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Angels, Cross, Clouds, Flames
- Date:** 13th –14th Centuries
- Found:** Discovered in Houmao village, Northeastern Suburb Zoukui of Quanzhou
- Material:** Bluestone
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 56 (L) x 51 (W) x 7.5 (T) cm
- Location:** Quanzhou Museum⁸¹⁴
- Description:** It has a decoration of Humen. A big cross-lotus with clouds and censer is on the upper part, flanked by a pair of four-winged “angels” with small crosses on the heads. Clouds and flame patterns are around the “angels”.
- Reference:** 1. Halbertsma, 2008:48, pl. 1/1.
2. The website of Quanzhou Museum.
- Source:** Photo from Halbertsma/ mt.sohu.com

⁸¹⁴ According to Halbertsma, the gravestone is stored at the History Museum of Quanzhou, but the information of the gravestone is found on the website of Quanzhou Museum, see http://www.qzmuseum.net/info_19.html.

Quan-30



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross, Canopy
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Unearthed from the wall of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1947
- Material:** Diabase
- Technique:** Engraving
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** Interlaced floral design is between the decorations of Humen. A cross- lotus with parasol is in the middle. Two lines of Chinese is inscribed on the fan 幡 at the lower part.
- | Inscription: | Chinese | English Translation |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| | 1.大德黄公 ⁸¹⁵ | Dade, Mr. Huang, |
| | 2.年玖叁岁 | died at the age of 93. |

⁸¹⁵ Buddhist term. Here it refers to the clergy of Nestorianism.

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-31



- Object:** Christian Tombstone in the Phagspa Script Yuan Dynasty (in maintenance)
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Found:** Unearthed from the wall of the North Gate of Quanzhou in 1954
- Material:** Granite (by Wu Wenliang) / Diabase (by Niu Ruji)
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 49 (L) x 28 (W) cm (by Wu Wenliang) /42 (L) x 28 (W) cm (by Niu Ruji)
- Location:** Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
- Description:** The top of the monument has been damaged. The main part is surrounded by propitious cloud patterns, then decorated by Humen depiction. A cross-cross in the upper middle, two lines of Phagspa script at the lower part.

Inscription:	Phagspa Script (transcription) je si mu dzi	English Translation Tomb of Miss. Ye.
Reference:	1.Wu,1957:33, plate 87. 2.Niu,2008:160-161.	

Quan-32



a. Original

b. Duplicate

Object:	Tombstone of Ke Cuncheng
Subject:	Lotus Flower, Cross
Date:	13 th – 14 th Centuries
Found:	Unearthed under the base of the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1955
Material:	Granite
Technique:	Engraving
Dimensions:	42.5 (L) x 27 (W) x 9.3 (T) cm
Inventory	5138
Number:	

- Location:** The original entered in Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University in 1981. The duplicate is conserved in Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian.
- Description:** The main part is surrounded by propitious cloud patterns, then decorated by Humen depiction. A cross-cross in the upper middle, two lines of Chinese at the lower part.
- Inscription:**
- | Chinese | English Translation |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 柯存诚 (right) | 1. Ke Cuncheng |
| 2. 侍者长 (lift) | 2. Head of priests |
- Reference:**
1. Tang, 2011:70
 2. Wu, 2005:405, B40
 3. Zhu, 1997, plate 13.
- Source:**
- a. Photo from Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University
 - b. Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-33



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone Buttress (incomplete)
- Date:** 13th – 14th Centuries
- Material:** Granite
- Technique:** Engraving
- Dimensions:** 77 (L) x 27 (W) x 8.5 (T) cm
- Inventory Number:** 5140
- Location:** Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University

Description: A circle in the middle, surrounded by scattered crosses and small dots.

Source: Photo from Museum of Mankind in Xiamen University

Quan-34



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross

Date: 13th – 14th Centuries

Found: Discovered in the Renfeng Street outside the East Gate of Quanzhou in 1988

Material: Granite

Technique: Engraving

Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian

Description: A cross-lotus in the middle

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-35



- Object:** Christian Tombstone
Subject: Cross
Date: 13th – 14th Centuries
Found: Discovered in Jintoupu Village of Quanzhou in 1978
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: A cross in the upper middle
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-36



Object: Christian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Unearthed from Quanzhou in 1937
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Dimensions: 22 (L) x 52 (W) cm
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: A cross-lotus in the middle
Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-37



Object: Nestorian Tombstone
Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross
Date: 13th – 14th Centuries
Found: Unearthed from Quanzhou in 1937
Material: Granite
Technique: Engraving
Location: Quanzhou Maritime Museum Fujian
Description: A cross-lotus

Source: Photo by Zhou Yixing, 2018

Quan-38



Object: Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross

Date: 13th–14th Centuries

Found: Yard of a citizen

Material: White Granite

Technique: Engraving

Dimensions: 55 cm high and 49 cm diameter

Location: China Port Museum

Description: A cross-lotus with a parasol above. Plants pattern (?) is under the lotus.

Source: <https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/FJC2014092906635005>

Quan-39



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross
- Date:** 13th-14th Centuries
- Found:** Wurong Mountain in 1619 by Zheng Hairu
- Technique:** Engraving
- Description:** A cross-lotus stands on an altra table.
- Reference:**
1. Manuel Dias the Younger, 1878.
 2. Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.
 3. Saeki, 1951:436-439, fig.21.

Quan-40



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone
- Subject:** Lotus Flower, Cross
- Date:** 13th–14th Centuries
- Found:** Outside of the Renfeng Gate in 1638
- Description:** A cross with the patterns of clouds and flames
- Reference:**
1. Manuel Dias the Younger, 1878.
 2. Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.
 3. Saeki, 1951:436-439, fig.23.

Quan-41



- Object:** Nestorian Tombstone

Subject: Lotus Flower, Cross
Date: 13th–14th Centuries
Found: Shuilu Temple in 1638
Description: A cross-lotus with the patterns of plants
Reference: Manuel Dias the Younger, 1878.
Reference: 1. Manuel Dias the Younger, 1878.
2. Klimkeit, 1994: 477-484.
3. Saeki, 1951:436-439, fig.22.

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Title: Studies on Nestorian Iconology in China and part of Central Asia during the 13th and 14th Centuries

Abstract:

The Christian communities of Central Asia and China are known under the label of “Nestorianism”. This dissertation is devoted to the Nestorian iconographic tradition which is formed by the selection, appropriation, adaptation, combination and transformation of forms from different cultural backgrounds.

Part Introduction consists of the origin and the “heresy” of Nestorianism, as well as the relevant terminology. The terms “Nestorian or “Nestorianism” are less appropriate, but useful for the study of early Christianity in Central Asia and China.

Part 1 describes the spread of Nestorianism among the Central Asia tribes and South China during the Mongol era, including the Öngüt, the Kerait, the Naiman, the Merkit and the Uighur. Most of the Nestorian believers in South China are immigrants from Central Asia.

Part 2 provides the main textual sources concerning the use of images in Christian Nestorian contexts. They are Chinese sources, Syriac, Sogdian and Uyghur sources found from Turfan, Dunhuang, Khara-Khoto and Beijing, as well as the travelogues of the medieval travelers.

Part 3 gives an overview of documented material remains (mostly represented by tombstones), the archaeological excavations and field investigations in the areas of Semirechye, Almaliq, Inner Mongolia, Beijing, Yangzhou and Quanzhou.

Part 4 is devoted to an analysis of the single most recurrent iconographic motifs on Nestorian tombstones.

Chapter 4.1 focuses on the motif of cross.

Chapter 4.1.1 classifies all the about 137 Nestorian crosses into six types: Cross Pattée, Greek Cross, Occitan Cross, Malte Cross, Formée Branchée and Cross Potent. **Chapter 4.1.2** explains the possible reasons for Nestorian Christians choosing the “plain cross” and gives an interpretation of these Nestorian crosses—it has the cosmic meaning and

often used as the strong amulet or magical symbol by Nestorian Christians at the time. **Chapter 4.1.3** analyses the symbolic meaning of the small spheres at the ends of the arms of the cross, as well as the steps where the cross stands. **Chapter 4.1.4** explores the use of the cross in Manichean art and concludes that the cross appearing in Manichaeism is likely to be the result of the triple influence of Nestorianism, Buddhism, and Manichaeism. **Chapter 4.1.5** lists some unpublished manuscripts containing crosses which kept in the Berlin Turfan-Sammlung.

Chapter 4.2 focuses on the cross-lotus motif.

Chapter 4.2.1 describes the pattern of cross-lotus (cross) with censer in Inner Mongolia and Quanzhou. As a symbol, incense symbolizes the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Saints rising to heaven. The depictions of censers may come from the influence of the worship or liturgy in Nestorianism. **Chapter 4.2.2** describes the patterns of cross-lotus with clouds and cross-cloud (flame). This chapter connects them with the pillars of cloud and fire which symbolize God's presence and provide great comfort and strength for the frightened people as mentioned in *the Bible*. Then it analyzes the pattern of cross-lotus with parasol which could be considered as a symbol of power. **Chapter 4.2.3** introduces the similar cross-lotus motifs in Xi'an, Luoyang, Tibet, Ladakh and India before the Mongol era. Historical sources prove that the motif of cross-lotus has achieved a perfect combination in China through the appropriation of local elements, such as Buddhist Apsaras, clouds, parasol, censer. No matter how it changes, cross-lotus is always the main theme of Nestorian iconology. **Chapter 4.2.4** discusses the lotus as a decorative motif. This chapter lists the mainstream concept that cross-lotus is influenced by Buddhism and refutes the new idea that the origin of the lotus motif is from ancient Persian or Egyptian tradition.

Chapter 4.3 focuses on the "angels" motif.

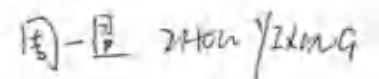
Chapter 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 give an overview of the "angels" in different regions, as well as the clothes, accessories and decorations of "angels" in Quanzhou. **Chapter 4.3.3** interprets the religious function of the "angels" from Nestorian literature and concludes that it will be more reasonable to understand them from the perspective of folk decorative patterns. **Chapter 4.3.4** compares the winged celestial beings in India, in Central Asia influenced by Gandhara art and in Midwest China. The presence of winged

Nestorian “angels” are not the only examples. In the Christian context, it exists as a form completely different from the previous cases, and in this sense, it is an innovation or an artistic revival.

Chapter 4.4 discusses the “Nestorian bronze crosses”.

The mainstream ideas about the “Nestorian bronze crosses” are controversial. Some bear the distinguishable Nestorian iconographical characteristics might be identified as Mongolian Nestorian artefacts temporarily. However, the others still need to be discussed further.

The **appendices** at the end include the catalogue of Nestorian relics unearthed in different sites. The dating, subject, size, description and English translation of the Syriac script are given.



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