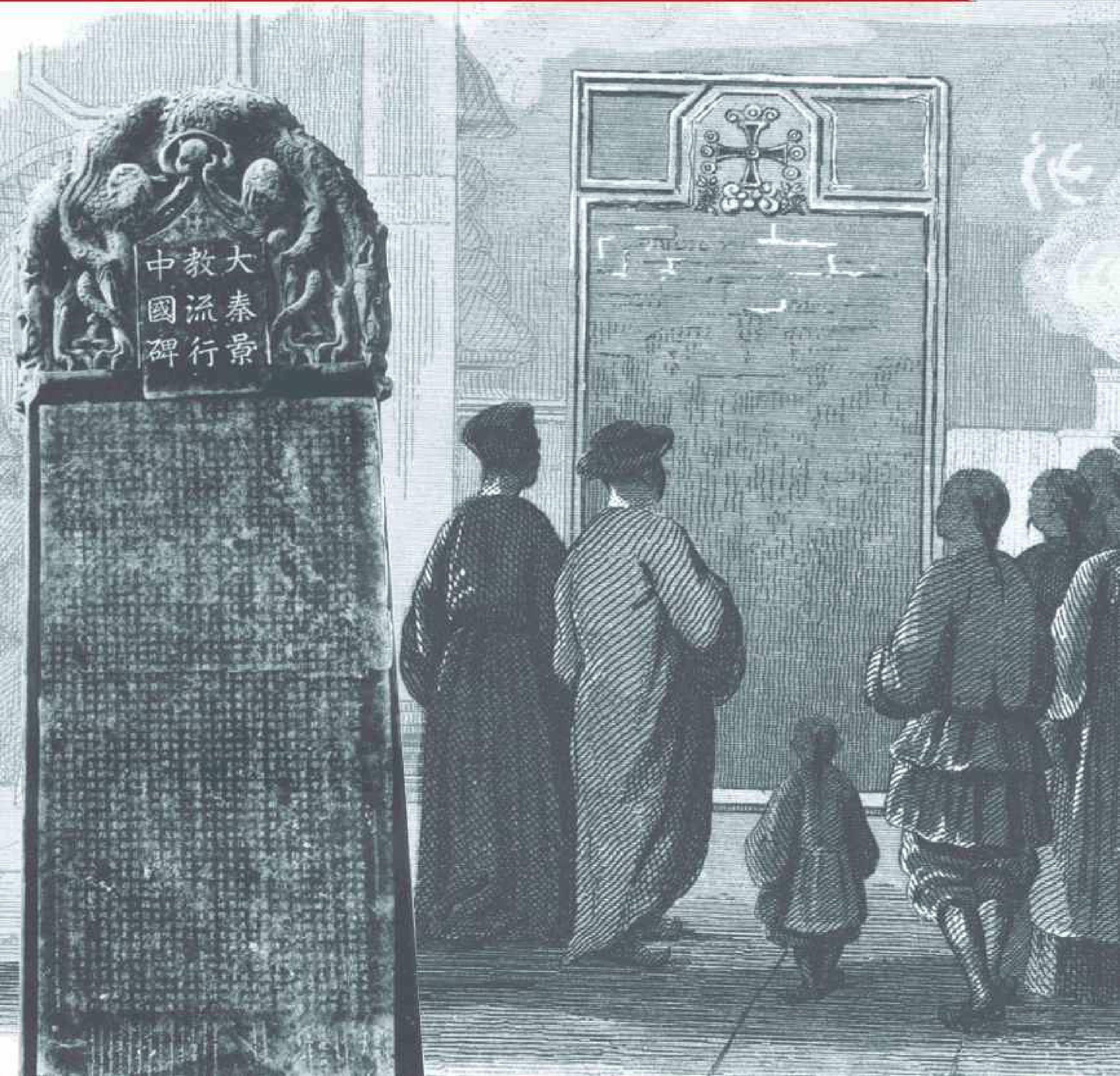
The Story of a Stele

China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625–1916

Michael Keevak



The Story of a Stele

China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625–1916

Michael Keevak

The Story of a Stele

China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625–1916

Michael Keevak

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong

© Hong Kong University Press 2008

ISBN 978-988-220-502-4

All rights reserved.

Contents

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgments

Prologue The Story of a Stone

1 A Stone Discovered

2 The Century of Kircher

3 Eighteenth-Century Problems and Controversies

4 The Return of the Missionaries

Epilogue The *Da Qin* Temple

Notes

Works Cited

About the Author

Endorsement

Illustrations

1. Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library.

2. Rubbing of top of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library.

3. Title page, Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*. National Taiwan University Library.

4. Title page, Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*. National Taiwan University Library.

5. Title page, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata* . National Taiwan University Library.

6. Interpretatio I, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library.

7. Interpretatio II, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library.

8. Interpretatio III, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library.

9. Engraving of Nestorian Monument, Athanasius Kircher, *China llustrata*. National Taiwan University Library.

10. Crux miraculosa, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library.

11. Title page, Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*. National Taiwan University Library.

12. Nestorian Monument with musical notation, Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*. National Taiwan University Library.

13. Wordlist, Christian Mentzel, *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino- sinico-characteristici*. National Taiwan University

Library.

14. French and Chinese dictionary, Athanasius Kircher, *Chine illustrée*. National Taiwan University Library.

15. Appendix, Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces* . National Taiwan University Library.

16. Title page, Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres chinoises*. National Taiwan University Library.

17. Title page, Voltaire, *Lettres chinoises* . National Taiwan University Library.

18. Title page, Joseph de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine* . National Taiwan University Library.

19. Title page, Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the AncientOrthography of the Jews* . National Taiwan University Library.

20. Chinese characters, Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* . National Taiwan University Library.

21. Top of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library.

22. Title of Nestorian Monument, Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*. National Taiwan University Library.

23. St. Thomas cross, Diogo do Couto, *Decadas da Asia*. National Taiwan University Library.

24. St. Thomas cross, João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*. National Taiwan University Library.

25. St. Thomas cross, late sixteenth-century sketch. National Taiwan University Library.

26. St. Thomas cross, early twentieth-century engraving. National Taiwan University Library.

27. St. Thomas cross, mid-twentieth-century photograph. National Taiwan University Library.

28. Cross from Nestorian Monument, Michel Boym, *Flora sinensis*. National Taiwan University Library.

29. Cross from Fujian province, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library.

30. Cross from Nestorian Monument, Manuel Dias, *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan*. National Taiwan University Library.

31. Four crosses, Louis Gaillard, *Croix et swastika en Chine* . National Taiwan University Library.

32. Croix de Si-gnan-fou, Baron Henrion, *Histoire générale des missions catholiques*. National Taiwan University Library.

33. Nestorian Monument, Alexander Williamson, *Journeys in North China*. National Taiwan University Library.

34. Rubbing of Nestorian Monument, Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu* . National Taiwan University Library.

35. Cross and title from Nestorian Monument, James Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu*. National Taiwan University Library.

36. Photograph of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library.

37. Five steles, Edouard Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*. National Taiwan University Library.

38. Holm with Nestorian Monument, Frits Holm, *The Nestorian Monument.* National Taiwan University Library.

39. *New York Times* story on Holm’s expedition. National Taiwan University Library.

40. Replica of the Nestorian Monument being unloaded, Frits Holm, *The Nestorian Monument.* National Taiwan University Library.

41. Yü Show, Frits Holm, *The Nestorian Monument* . National Taiwan University Library.

42. Plaster replica at Yale University, Frits Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure in China*. National Taiwan University Library.

43. Stone replica at Mount Koya, P.Y. Saeki, *Keikyo hibun kenkyu*. National Taiwan University Library.

44. *Da Qin* pagoda, Xi'an. Photo by author.

45. *Da Qin* pagoda, Xi'an. Photo by author.

46. Nestorian Monument, *Beilin*, Xi'an. Photo by author.

Acknowledgments

Research for this book was facilitated by generous support from the National Science Council in Taiwan. Their generosity has been unstinting. I would like to thank the staff at the National Taiwan University Library, the National Taiwan Library (formerly the National Central Library, Taiwan Branch), the British Library, and the library at Penn State University for their kind help at different stages in the production of this book. Inspiration for this project was sustained throughout by the presence of Eugenia Chao. Ronnie Hsia, of the Department of History at Penn State, graciously extended to me an invitation to become a visiting scholar in the Department of History during the spring of 2005. Robert Markley has continued to serve as an intellectual model for me. Richard Burt, Brandy Alvarez, David Ogawa, Jude Wheway, Kirill Thompson, Virginia Jealous, Leif Dahlberg, Eric Jan Sluijter, Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert, and Angela Creager have provided friendship and moral support. Jerry Weng, Paoi Hwang, Chih-ming Wang, Su-ching Huang, Laura Jane Wey, Audrey Jeane Wey, Shen Shiao-ying, and Liu Deng offered extra help in a time of great personal need. My research assistant, Rae Jui-an Chao, has been invaluable. I would like to thank Colin Day of Hong Kong University Press for taking an interest in this project; final revisions were carried out in the realm of academic bliss known as the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

A note on the notes: for the sake of readability, short titles only are employed in individual notes to each chapter. For full bibliographic information, see the list of Works Cited at the end of the volume.

PROLOGUE

The Story of a Stone

My freshman composition teacher taught me never to begin an essay by saying what it is not. “Begin,” he would say firmly and repeatedly, “by saying what your argument is, not what it isn’t.” While obviously I have never forgotten this directive (and like all teachers I find myself repeating it to my own students), I still feel compelled to begin this book with a few nots, owing to the peculiar nature of the subject at hand. *The Story of a Stele* is a book about Western perceptions of a Chinese object, but it is not a book of sinology. My competence in the Chinese language and in Chinese history is exceedingly limited. This book uses no Chinese, apart from a few keywords, and makes no attempt to analyze the two-thousand-character Chinese inscription that is carved onto the front of the stone. It also does not make more than a limited attempt to review the scholarship in Chinese that has been published since the stone’s discovery in 1625, and especially the new and flourishing work that has grown out of recent events in China itself, when such “Western” subjects as the stone were no longer actively discouraged or considered taboo. In short, this is necessarily a Western book by a Western author, and I also make no claims that simply because I have lived and taught in a Chinese- (and Taiwanese-) speaking place for the past fifteen years, I have any more authority to discuss the subject than anyone else.

In fact it is precisely the opposite. If I should work in an East Asian context but still be interested in writing a book about the stone it only serves to prove the point: Why am I, too, so intrigued by this particular object? What has drawn me to it? This is the story of a stone that took Europeans by storm in the seventeenth century, at first mainly among the missionary community but soon spreading to a far larger scholarly audience. It is a story of the life of an object, and as a life story it has had meaning, and continues to have meaning, in the eyes of particular beholders, and according

to certain interpretations that can never be free from prejudice, although one can try to be aware of it as much as possible. My title is also meant to echo a much more famous and important book, *The Story of the Stone*, a standard English translation of an alternate title of one of the most famous novels in all of Chinese literature, *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, composed by Cao Xueqin in the mid-eighteenth century. It is also a book in which a story is prompted by the discovery of a stone with an inscription. In Chinese, however, the difference between definite and indefinite articles is frequently unimportant or unspecified, but since I am writing in English and speaking from a Western point of view I insist on the distinction between the story of that stone and the story of this one, the story of “the” stone that is so celebrated in Chinese literature and the story of “a” stone that has caused such turbulence in the West for nearly four hundred years.

The reason for bringing these two titles together, however, is also polemical. For I would argue that even as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* may be one of the few works of Chinese fiction that a literate Westerner may know about (myself included), the stone that is the subject of the present book is likewise frequently one of the only things known about Chinese history from a Western point of view. The present study is thus a book about Western presumptions and Western self-interest. Even though Westerners have discussed and translated and pored over the stone for hundreds of years, they were never really able to look at it, never able to see that it was fundamentally different from themselves and might never be assimilated completely. Many of these readers had come to China — whether in person or as armchair travelers — not to discover anything about the empire but to “civilize” it. They hoped to find some sign of China’s ability to join the family of (Western) nations and in fact they did. They found a stone that enabled them to see a version of themselves as if looking into a mirror; they did not see it as a Chinese object but as one that was already like themselves. It is hardly accidental that of all the artifacts in China’s immense recorded history, Westerners should be drawn to an object that could have served such a function, and as we will see it continued to live on as a “Western” object during many different eras, even as its meaning continually shifted and changed.

Indeed, what about my own interest? Am I not simply replicating or even reinforcing Western presumptions by turning my Western gaze to this object that remains outside of my grasp? In Taiwan I have frequently run across a certain amount of discomfort (to speak euphemistically) at my work on this project, and not simply because of China-Taiwan tensions. Understandably enough, the first objection raised is that my Chinese proficiency simply is not up to the task, and certainly not up to the sort of ancient and heavily philosophical Chinese that is recorded on the face of an eighth-century stone.

“Can’t you just go back to Shakespeare?” I often hear. As with much else I can only apologize without really being able to offer an apology at all. For this is perhaps a “not” story most of all precisely in the sense that it is a narrative of (my own) know-nothingness: a story of blindness not recognition, non-knowledge rather than comprehension, and missed encounters instead of true comparative inquiry. I realize that this goes against the grain of current trends in both sinology and postcolonial studies, which understandably want to emphasize resistance, two-way influences between colonizer and colonized, and a transculturation that Westerners did not want or expect. Naturally this book will be accused of replicating or reinforcing the very prejudices or silences that it insists upon, even though, I would argue, these gaps are often far more significant than the points of contact.

Of course, these claims are very harsh and one-sided, but I also believe that Westerners (myself included) have yet to come to terms with the fact that during much of our (Western) history very little was ever “known” about China. There was never any lack of information from missionaries and travelers and traders. But what kind of information was it? What kind of knowledge was obtainable via the lenses of religious intolerance, colonial ambition, or Eurocentrism? We like to think of it as cultural difference, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in particular, the very idea of cultural difference was not even in place. Cultural difference is a modern invention. Travel accounts, Jesuit letter-books, or embassy narratives can sometimes seem comparatively dispassionate, even ethnographic, but one is repeatedly struck by a remarkable vagueness when it comes to discussions of the foreign, and such discussions become buried in

a huge mélange of fact and fiction that is then collected, retold, or reintegrated in innumerable ways. The thesis of this book is that when Westerners discussed the stone they were not really talking about China at all. The stone served as a kind of screen onto which they could project their own self-image and this is what they were looking at, not China. The stone came to represent the empire and its history for many Western readers, but only because it was seen as a tiny bit of the West that was already there.

But I also feel compelled to point out that I cannot hope to replace or even to approach the levels of scholarship achieved by my predecessors. The stone is an object that partakes of so many different cultures and traditions, and requires so much linguistic, historical, philological, religious, and cultural knowledge that even to describe it accurately is far beyond my skill as a scholar and a researcher. I can only humble myself before its complexities, and before those other scholars who have worked so hard — indeed often spending their lives — trying to bring out some of these nuances. Rather than trying to explain the contexts in which it was made I am content to attempt to explain the history of its reception, and to stress the complexities of that story rather than the story of the stone itself. Nearly all of the greatest scholars in the history of sinology have attempted to come to terms with this object, and I can only stand in awe of their achievements. In fact, it is a peculiar and in some ways chilling fact that many of them died without completing their work.

This is not to say, however, that the object is cursed or suffused with death. It is merely that its history and its translation into modern contexts (including modern China) is so overwhelming that it is unlikely that any one person could ever complete a full translation and commentary. The two standard books on the stone, by Henri Havret and Paul Pelliot, who died in 1901 and 1945 respectively, are both posthumous publications. Martino Martini, one of the greatest seventeenth-century missionary sinologists, had intended to follow up his monumental summary of Chinese history (which had stopped at 6 B.C.) with a second part that would include a discussion of the stone. But it, too, never appeared. Lesser sinological lights like Andreas Müller, most famous for having tried to produce a “key to Chinese” that would

have “solved” the mysteries of the Chinese language for Westerners once and for all, had apparently begun a long commentary that he burned along with his other papers shortly before his death. And another of his contemporaries in the German-speaking world, T. S. Bayer, intended to produce new work as well. But in each case the stone was just too difficult, too complicated, and had too much to say.

My own study, similarly, is undoubtedly incomplete, inaccurate, and insensitive, but I will allow myself the smallest bit of comfort in the fact that, despite these failings, it has at least been brought to a conclusion.

1

A Stone Discovered

One day in 1625, in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi'an in the province of Shaanxi in northwestern China, a group of workers accidentally unearthed a large limestone stele. An enormous black tablet about three meters high, one meter wide, and half a meter deep, the front and sides were exquisitely carved with a long inscription that included both Chinese and a Syriac script known as Estrangelo. The text, dated 781, eulogized the history and spread of a religion it referred to as *jingjiao* (the "luminous" or "illustrious" or "brilliant" teaching), which had come to China from a faraway land called *Da Qin* . Above the inscription was a title in nine large characters: "A Monument Commemorating the Propagation of the *Da Qin* Luminous Religion in the Middle Kingdom [i.e. China]." The top of the pillar was sculpted in the form of intricately entwined dragon-like figures, between which was a large circular object usually identified as a pearl. As was customary, the discovery was brought at once to the attention of local officials, who set it up on top of a tortoise-shaped pedestal (to keep it from sinking) and had it placed on the grounds of a nearby Buddhist temple [Figure 1, see p. 6].

The tablet was obviously considered worthy of note and given a place of some distinction (and no other culture more reveres or more meticulously documents its history than does Chinese culture). But by the same token, stone monuments of every imaginable size and age were ubiquitous throughout the empire, and not only at temple sites. Symbols such as the dragons and the pearl, sometimes marks of royal favor and found on numerous other sculptures of the time, were also familiar. The pedestal, although not original, was even more common and alluded to the tradition that the world is carried on the back of a tortoise.[1] A literate viewer might also have appreciated the brilliantly allusive and rhetorical nature of the inscription; its calligraphic style, in an almost perfect state of preservation, was lauded from the very beginning. But the Syriac writing was completely indecipherable, and the precise nature of the *jingjiao* religion, if anyone had

bothered to think about it at all, would have remained similarly strange and mysterious.

1 Ca. 1892 photograph of the monument from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, frontispiece to vol. 1. Just visible at the bottom is the monument's base, in the shape of the head of a tortoise. National Taiwan University Library.

What would a Chinese viewer have thought of all of this: a fringe faith that for a brief period of time had been magnanimously tolerated by a few emperors in the distant past of the Tang dynasty, an age when foreign religious sects were greeted with a certain degree of acceptance? What bearing could the *jingjiao* religion have had on the lives of late Ming-era Buddhists, Daoists, or Neo-Confucians? What did the monument have to do with China, the perceived center of the world and the quintessence of human civilization?

It might come as something of a shock to learn, then, that the discovery of this particular object changed forever the course of Western perceptions about China and became a cornerstone of modern sinological study as a whole. For while the stone was quickly forgotten and remained almost completely undisturbed in the Middle Kingdom, news of its discovery spread like wildfire in Europe, first among Jesuit missionaries and then throughout the larger scholarly community, where the tablet was accorded a level of attention that was nothing less than obsessive. Learned debate over its every aspect, from the precise meaning of the inscription to the true date and location of its unearthing, filled innumerable volumes for centuries to come. Already by the 1660s one translator noted that he had eight previous renditions in his possession, and by 1920 there were over forty versions available in Western languages.[2]

The monument, in short, fell upon the European community like a bombshell, and all because of one last detail that I have hitherto left unmentioned, and which to Western eyes had the surprising effect of making the object seem entirely comprehensible — even if almost no one in Europe was able to read what was written upon it. For also on the face of the tablet, prominently centered above the title and placed underneath the dragons within a pyramidal shape, there was carved a large cross. Somewhat difficult to see at first, it was incised with slightly flared arms and circular forms at its center and its extremities, sitting atop what appear to be clouds and flowers [Figure 2, see p. 8].

One can easily imagine how the existence of a cross on an ancient Chinese monument might have captured the imagination of a European audience, even if this particular example is really a

combination of Eastern and Western motifs (clouds can be Daoist or Mohammedan, the flowers might be lotus or lily, Buddhist or Christian). [3] Yet such minutiae mattered little to early modern Europeans. To them a cross was a cross, which is to say a contemporary Christian symbol. In fact, as I will try to show, the existence of something so apparently Western came to *represent* China in premodern Europe, and like the monument as a whole European readings of the cross had little to do with China as it "really was." Like China itself the stone was more of a screen onto which Western presuppositions and preoccupations could be conveniently projected. For finding a cross on an antique Chinese tablet, as we will see, was both an astonishing discovery and something that Europeans had actually been expecting all along.

2 Rubbing of the top of the monument, showing a symbolically ornamented cross surrounded by cloud and flower motifs, from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou* , 1:iii. National Taiwan University Library.

But in exactly what way is this a Christian monument at all? By what terms should we refer to it? The text of the *jingjiaobei*, as it is called in Chinese (*bei* being the word for stone tablet), consists of three main parts, totaling approximately 1800 Chinese characters written from top to bottom and right to left in columns, as well as the Syriac portions, mostly confined to the borders and sides.[4] The opening section (columns 1–8) is a doctrinal introduction. It begins by praising a great, invisible, and ineffable three-in-one God called Aluohe (in modern Mandarin pronunciation; a name usually equated with the Hebrew *elohim*), who created the

heavens and the earth and then man. But man was deceived by Sadan (i.e. Satan) who brought all kinds of evil into the world, until at last the three-in-one God appeared among human beings as Mishihe (the Chinese rendering of the Syriac word for messiah). A virgin gave birth to a holy one in *Da Qin*, and Persians came forth to pay tribute. A new teaching was established, of good deeds and true faith, and Sadan was defeated. Mishihe returned to heaven, leaving twenty-seven scriptures behind him, thus allowing human beings to be cleansed and purified to their former state. His ministers bear the sign of the cross and travel throughout the world asserting love and charity. They let their beards grow but shave their foreheads. They fast, keep no slaves, and accumulate no wealth. They make no distinction between rich and poor and worship (to the east) seven times a day, praying for the living and the dead. On the seventh day they have a special service to cleanse themselves. All of these teachings are difficult to name, this section concludes, but taken together they can be identified as “the luminous religion.”

The next section is historical (columns 8–24). It begins by alluding to the necessity of a wise sovereign for the *jingjiao* religion to spread. Only in this way will the world become enlightened, and such sovereigns duly appear, we are told, in the form of the Tang emperors. The religion first arrived in China through the efforts of a monk named Aluoben, who came from the kingdom of *Da Qin* in 635. His teaching was examined and approved by the reigning emperor, who issued an imperial edict allowing for its dissemination. A monastery was built in Chang’an (now Xi’an) and the religion soon spread throughout the empire. At the beginning of the eighth century, a period of struggle ensued with both Buddhists and Daoists, but by 742 the reigning emperor had accepted the *jingjiao* religion once more, and in 744 the emperor himself composed tablets to be hung on the gates of the chief monastery. Later emperors also helped to rebuild the monasteries, giving them gifts and other forms of support. Finally, the religion’s great benefactor (and apparently the donor of the monument), Yisi, who was one of the emperor’s most highly decorated officials and a top-level military officer, donated his fortune to the monasteries and to the assistance of the poor.

The inscription then concludes with a celebratory poem (columns 24–29), which praises once again the beauty and the eternal truth of the luminous religion, as well as the glory and prosperity of the Tang emperors. At the end the date is given, in both the Chinese and Syriac calendars, along with the name of the calligrapher and a few other officials in both languages. The sides of the tablet feature lists of names from throughout the *jingjiao* religion's 150year history in the Chinese empire.

II

Today the tablet is usually referred to (in the West) as the Nestorian monument, since the luminous religion is now recognized as a branch of the Christian sect known as Nestorianism, an early offshoot of the Eastern Church whose patriarch, a fifth-century bishop from Antioch called Nestorius, had been involved in a bitter dispute over whether the Virgin Mary could properly be referred to as the Mother of God. [5] "Nestorianism" became a somewhat loose and baggy term that could encompass many different doctrinal questions and historical circumstances, but over the next several hundred years the "Church of the East," as it called itself, had spread throughout Western and central Asia into the Chinese empire, via Mesopotamia and Persia and along established trade routes. Its followers were zealous missionaries (they traveled throughout the world, the inscription says); it used Syriac in its liturgy. The number of Nestorians during the Tang period was probably rather small, however, as it remained a foreign community composed mainly of traders and mercenaries.

Later visitors to China, for example Marco Polo in the late thirteenth century, regularly spoke about the existence of Nestorian Christians.[6] Yet these medieval Nestorians were almost certainly not descendants of the ones described on the face of the monument, since in China the sect had died out by the end of the ninth century, following a decree issued in 845 in which all foreign religious sects, Buddhism in particular, were attacked (Buddhists were considered foreigners too). In fact, as far as we can tell the monument was only in place for about sixty years before it was

buried, perhaps in order to protect it from the effects of this decree, in which all priests and monks, including, specifically, more than three thousand belonging to the *Da Qin* and Mohammedan (or Zoroastrian) religions, were ordered to return to secular life.[7] In other words, when the stone was discovered in 1625 it had been underground for eight hundred years.

To a Western reader the *jingjiao* religion certainly seems Christian in character, proclaiming as it does a Biblical creation myth, a three-in-one God, a messiah, and a virgin birth. But the problem has always been how these features should be judged in terms of the Chinese or Syriac nomenclature in which they are expressed, or in terms of the broader Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and Nestorian traditions from which the monument derives. Despite the existence of a cross, very few seventeenth-century Chinese would even have made a connection between the *jingjiao* religion and Christianity, which at the time was merely another form of moral teaching from far away that had been promulgated by a small group of learned men for the past forty years, most of them Jesuit missionaries. A few local scholars did manage to think of Western Christianity, but it is hardly surprising that most of them were Christian converts. The earliest witness we know of, a local scholar named Zhang Gengyu, came at once to see the stone and sent a rubbing (a centuries-old process by which stone inscriptions are reproduced on an inked sheet of paper) to his friend Li Zhizao, one of the highest-ranking Christian converts in early modern China. [8] Li published the text of the tablet in the same year, along with a short commentary called “After Reading the Inscription on the Luminous Religion Monument.”

Importantly, however, even Li could not be entirely sure what he was looking at. “This religion has never been heard of before,” he began. “Might it be the same holy religion of the West that has been preached by Matteo Ricci [one of the pioneer Jesuit missionaries in China]? I have read it through and thought that it is.”[9] He then goes on to list all those things in the inscription that “match” Christianity, thereby allowing him to comment further upon what he reasoned as the monument’s real importance. In other words, it was not necessarily a simple task to equate an eighth-century Sino-Syriac inscription with the doctrines of early modern

European (Catholic) Christianity, and the text required a great deal of interpretation before it could be understood as such. The Jesuits certainly felt this difficulty, too. Their 1625 annual report on the China mission cautiously noted that while the discovery of the tablet was undoubtedly a noteworthy event, the text (or "the poem," as they called it) contained "many equivocal and confused expressions, with a number of pagan terms that were very difficult and obscure, to say nothing of the metaphors and literary allusions." The report translated *jingjiao* as "doctrine Claire" (in the French version), and it wondered whether *Da Qin* might be the same as Judea. It gave a translation of the part of the inscription in which the emperor approved of Aluoben's activities (clearly important for Jesuit purposes, as we will explain later), but the report withheld further judgment until a full and accurate copy of the entire text could be obtained. "Father Trigault [a Belgian Jesuit] has been ordered to the site," it concluded, "because the [Chinese] gentlemen who have brought us the news have omitted many particular details necessary for a fuller clarification." [10]

Yet what were these "particular details" that the Jesuits required, and that they felt had been omitted by Zhang Gengyu and Li Zhizao? My own summary, admittedly, is also extremely cursory and glosses over a number of obscure or otherwise "distracting" fine points, many of which defy translation and remain a matter of enormous scholarly controversy. As in most educated Chinese writing, the text is also exceedingly multivalent and frequently alludes to or otherwise echoes the Chinese Classics and a variety of other ancient sources and idioms, just as it repeatedly makes use of explicitly Buddhist or Daoist terminology in its attempt to characterize the beliefs and the practices of the luminous religion. Indeed, one is often at a loss to translate large portions of the inscription into modern Chinese as well. This untranslatability is crucial, moreover, since it demonstrates the kind of accommodation or adaptation that was necessary not only for early modern readers to understand the text as an explicitly Christian one, but also for the original author of the inscription to characterize the luminous religion in terms of the Chinese language and Chinese cultural traditions. [11] The inscription itself admits that *jingjiao* is only an approximation.

Secondly, I too have probably unfairly emphasized the first part of the inscription since it contains so many "familiar" doctrinal details for Western readers, when in fact it is arguable that much of this material is only vaguely Christian, despite the fact that some form of the Trinity, the sign of the cross, a messiah, a virgin birth, and even a possible reference to baptism are all mentioned.[12] Moreover, my emphasis on the first part of the text is problematic because the historical section is not only much longer but in a sense far more important, since it is able to boast that the sect had been sanctioned and even financially supported by numerous emperors. This was precisely what gave the religion its credibility in a Chinese context. For Chinese viewers, in other words, whose culture was so heavily grounded in a sense of antiquity and ancestral tradition, the notion that the luminous religion had been recognized by Tang dynasty emperors was absolutely central.

This was also a lesson the Jesuits had to learn. According to their own testimony, as well as that of contemporary Chinese converts, when the missionaries arrived at the end of the sixteenth century they soon discovered that the most common objection to their teaching was that Christianity was seen as too modern. "Everyone praises the doctrine and example of the learned men from the West," Li Zhizao observed; "nevertheless, many have still been skeptical because they regard it as something new." An early Jesuit commentator noted that "visitors to the missionaries were wont to say, 'we are grateful for the teachings which you have brought to us from far away; but why were they not brought to our ancestors as well, why have they reached us so tardily?' "[13] At the end of the seventeenth century, the emperor himself was said to have voiced a similar objection, as recorded in the memoirs of Jesuit Louis Le Comte:

If the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST . . . is necessary for Salvation; and if God desires the Salvation of all Men; why has he so long kept us [i.e. China] in ignorance and error? It is now above sixteen Ages since your Religion, the only way Men have to obtain Salvation, has been established in the World; we knew nothing of it here. Is *China* so inconsiderable as not to deserve to be thought of, while so many barbarous Nations have been enlightened?[14]

European readers, of course, could disdainfully think of this as typically “backward” Chinese reasoning, since it represented a way of thinking that placed China and not Europe as the acme of human cultivation. Ricci came up against this same irreducible difference when he tried to present the emperor and his court with a map of the world that did not fix the Chinese empire in its proper position in the center. From a Chinese perspective, however, the emperor’s reasoning made perfect sense, and if Christian knowledge were really so essential to salvation it certainly would have managed to spread beyond the “barbarous Nations” that comprised the Western world. [15]

But now, as the monument supposedly and gloriously proved, this knowledge *had* spread to China nearly a thousand years before, having even been sanctioned by a number of highly respected emperors. “ *China* has not been so much neglected as it thinks,” Le Comte confidently replied, and if Christianity had subsequently died out “the *Chinese* may thank themselves, who by a criminal neglect and voluntary stubbornness did so easily part with the gift of God.” [16] From a Christian point of view, that is, there was now unequivocal proof that the religion’s introduction in the late sixteenth century was not really an introduction at all. It was only a kind of renewal. As Trigault put it very simply, probably the first Westerner to see the tablet in person, “by this we can learn that in ancient times the Law of Christ had penetrated into China.”[17]

III

And yet what did it mean for a Western viewer, in this case a seventeenth-century Jesuit missionary, to conclude that the *jingjiao* religion described on the stone corresponded to “the Law of Christ” as he understood it to be, or that a millennium before his own evangelical journey to the Middle Kingdom a religion “equivalent” to his had already been disseminated in the Chinese empire? What might it mean for Christians (whether European or Chinese) to believe that they had found incontestable proof that their religion had a Chinese past? One of the most influential early European texts to include a discussion of the tablet was Alvaro

Semedo's *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* (1655), originally published in Italian from a Portuguese manuscript in 1643 [Figure 3, see p. 14].

Semedo, the Jesuit procurator of China and Japan, came to inspect the stone personally in 1628, just three years after its discovery. "I took no thought for any thing else," he admitted. "I saw it and read it, and went often to read, behold, and consider it at leisure." He, too, immediately determined it as proof that the Jesuits did not represent "the first establishment of the Christian Religion [in China], but rather a re-establishment of it," and his book featured a separate chapter on the stone along with the first easily accessible translation and commentary of the inscription in toto. But this was also the first time — and certainly not the last — that the monument was placed in the context of a *history* of China (from an entirely Western point of view, of course), where it took on an absolutely fundamental role in a narrative that sought to integrate the country's stereotypically "great and renowned" qualities with its present potential, thanks to the missionaries, to become a properly "civilized" Christian nation. Put another way, the monument quickly became the very means of transition between China's celebrated past and (as Semedo put it) the "great darknesse" of its Godless present. The stone itself was a "spirituall *Jubilee*" and an "irrefragable Testimony of the *Ancient Christianity* in *China*, which had been so much desired and sought after." [18]

THE HISTORY
OF
That Great and Renowned
MONARCHY
OF
CHINA.

Wherein all the particular Provinces are accurately described: as also the Dispositions, Manners, Learning, Lawes, Militia, Government, and Religion of the People.
Together with the Traffick and Commodities of that Countrey.

Lately written in *Italian* by F. ALVAREZ SEMEDO, a *Portughess*, after he had resided twenty two yeares at the Court, and other Famous Cities of that Kingdom.

Now put into *English* by a Person of quality, and illustrated with several MAPPS and FIGURES, to satisfie the curious, and advance the Trade of Great *BRITTAIN*.

To which is added the History of the late Invasion, and Conquest of that flourishing Kingdom by the TARTARS.
With an exact Account of the other affairs of *CHINA*, till these present Times.

LONDON,
Printed by *E. Tyler* for *John Crook*, and are to be sold at his Shop at the Sign of the Ship in S. *Pauls* Church-yard. 1655.

3 Title page from Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*. National Taiwan University Library.

We will return to this important comment later on, but for the moment let us note merely that the discovery of the tablet represented the realization of a dream that had been in the minds of the missionaries since their arrival, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that at last enabled Europeans to "find" Christianity in China in the form of the *jingjiao* religion. This peculiarly circular line of reasoning required considerable effort, despite the fact that the stone displayed a cross and seemed to refer to Christianity with such specificity. As Semedo suggests, the inscription had to be continually reread in order that it might be accommodated into a largely preconceived notion of Christian doctrine and its true history. On his way back to Rome, he adds, he even had to consult with the bishop of Cranganore in southern India to

determine what the Syriac characters were.[19] Naturally enough, interpretations of this sort also produced extremely varied results. Most readers rejoiced in the knowledge that Christian teaching had come to ancient China; but for some, mostly anti-Jesuit in sentiment, the inscription was in a way a little *too* Christian, too Catholic even, leading them to suspect that the whole thing might just be too good to be true.

We will examine these debates further in the next chapter. But we must first pay heed to the fact that by the time of the monument's discovery there was *already* in place a very complex and very old idea of China and what it represented for the European world. In other words, China was not simply a white spot on the West's cultural map. One of the best discussions of this sort of conceptual predisposition is Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat's *Image of the Black in Western Art*, which argues that a long and complicated history of the idea of human blackness preceded any actual encounters with black people, and moreover that these notions continued to influence the way that black people were represented even after Africa became "known" to European colonizers and traders.[20] The idea of China and Chinese people may not have been as ancient or as culturally pervasive as the West's multivalent image of blackness, frequently associated with dirt and barbarity and evil (Satan himself being the only completely black individual), but the power of the Chinese stereotype should also not be underestimated. Europeans had not come to an unknown place when they arrived in China, and the monument and its cross, similarly, had to be integrated into a body of myth already more than a thousand years old. This is precisely why its discovery produced such immediate and such violent reactions in the European context.

In the Western tradition, references to a "silk wearing people" of the land of Seres or Sinim stretch back at least to the Greek and (especially) Roman periods, where they are mentioned in works by Virgil, Horace, Pliny, and Ptolemy, among others. The faraway eastern land of Sinim appears in Isaiah 49:12 as well. Taken together these early allusions to China tend to characterize it as a vast and populous land on the eastern edge of the known world, where the people are civil and polite and reclusive but engage in

trading raw silk with the West. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, after the invasion of northern China by the Mongols in 1215, the idea of China became vastly expanded, thanks to a long line of silk road tales and other travelers' reports that quickly became confused with a variety of legendary material about miraculous "India," which could refer to any of the lands east of the Arab world. Cathay, as the country was now usually known (and sometimes as Manzi, or southern China), had taken on a variety of associations that were well encapsulated by the subtitle of Marco Polo's book as translated into English by Henry Yule: "Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East." [21] Stereotypically a mysterious and secretive land of untold prosperity, innumerable cities, and paper money, Cathay was also a land of magic and exotic spices and inscrutable mandarins ruled over by a despotic emperor. Other fashionable books such as the numerous Alexander romances contributed to this storehouse of allegory and fable, and perhaps no single text contributed more than John Mandeville's thoroughly fictionalized *Travels*, a text that first appeared in the mid-fourteenth century and still exists in almost three hundred manuscript versions in every European language, as well as in innumerable printed editions from the very first years of the incunabular period. [22] The establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368 brought a period of greater isolation for China, but exotic tales in the West continued unabated, and many a European adventurer — Columbus, for one — passed away without ever being able to find the fabled treasures of Cathay. It was not until the arrival of the Jesuits that Westerners had any significant face-to-face contact with China again.

As time went on, travel accounts and books of marvels both fused and burgeoned. The tales themselves became traditions, readers coming to expect a certain basic catalogue of bejeweled palaces and monsters and magical objects. To make matters more complicated, copious fables about Cathay and its marvels had also become mingled with another enormous body of legend concerning a mythical Christian king called Prester John, who had supposedly been cut off from the West and was said to reside in a land of paradise somewhere beyond the countries of the Middle East. This myth was fueled by the appearance in 1164 of a fictional letter — also reprinted and retranslated ad infinitum —

addressed to the princes of Europe, in which he boasted of the treasures of his kingdom in the East as well as the numerous princes subject to his rule. Could Prester John, like the infinite treasures of Cathay, be found somewhere in contemporary China? It has even been suggested that early modern Asian exploration, from Prince Henry the Navigator onward, could be characterized as an attempt to find Prester John somewhere in the East, a location that naturally kept shifting as each new territory became better known to Western invaders. [23]

Whatever the case, the problem of what China signified for a seventeenth-century Westerner is exceedingly difficult to unravel and hardly confined to what travelers were actually able to witness for themselves. In a previous study on Formosan impostor George Psalmanazar, I tried to show that his ability to create a faraway Asian culture out of whole cloth was in some sense paradigmatic of the way that any idea of foreignness was understood in premodern Europe. As far as we know, he was a blond white Frenchman who arrived in London in the summer of 1703 and successfully pretended to be a native of the island of Formosa, or modern Taiwan. I argue that far from being simply amused or surprised that a Frenchman should have been able to pass as Formosan, we need to come to terms with the way that Europeans would have had little means to verify his identity or even the means to prove that he was not who he said he was. Crucially, however, this is not because no actual Formosan ever turned up to dispute the validity of his claims. Rather, Europeans remained separated from East Asia (and not just China) by what I call the Great Wall of Europe, a kind of mental limit that prevented not only armchair travelers but even real ones from being able in any true sense to compare cultures. [24] In other words, even eyewitnesses, for example Jesuit missionaries who came to Xi’an to examine the newly discovered monument, could not necessarily isolate that foreign culture from their own without resorting to preconceptions and expectations already in place, which were, circularly, able to dictate what they were actually able to perceive. A missionary, of course, was not just an informant but was committed to converting the natives to *his own* religion. Merchants and ambassadors wanted profits, and armchair travelers — by far the greatest in number — could relish in the

wonders of the fabled Middle Kingdom without ever having to go anywhere at all.

Long-standing legends and stereotypes about Cathay and/or the Middle Kingdom continued to dictate what and where China was for any European, accompanying and indeed filtering ambassadorial chronicles, Jesuit letter books, and other accounts that might have claimed to offer fresh or corrective information. Details about China quickly became buried in a gigantic mélange of fact and fiction that was collected, retold, and reintegrated into atlases, cosmographies, and travel compendia of every imaginable kind. Eyewitness accounts often used earlier material instead of or as a supplement to their own personal experience, and demand for travel books was so high that individual voyages could produce multiple and often contradictory accounts told by different members of the same entourage.[25] Finally, some of the most influential texts were not even the result of foreign travel; *China illustrata* of 1667 or *Atlas Chinensis* of 1671, to name but two of many candidates, were produced by compilers who had never set foot in Asia.

It was not until the seventeenth century, in fact, that it became commonly accepted that Cathay *was* China, despite the fact that both commentators and cartographers sometimes continued to assert that they were really separate kingdoms, and that Cathay lay somewhere to the north beyond the Great Wall.[26] Finding Cathay had been a major obsession for Ricci, too, just as he was also captivated by the idea of locating Christianity there. But, I would argue, in a vitally important sense these two preoccupations were exactly the same for Ricci, since proving that China was Cathay was at the same time a matter of proving that some trace of the Christianity described by Marco Polo and others was still extant. Perhaps there were even entire Christian communities waiting to be reunited with the Roman church, a fantasy that naturally intermingled with age-old stories about Prester John. A similar motive lay behind the Jesuits' decision to send Bento de Goes on a landmark overland journey from Agra to Beijing beginning in 1603, supposedly in order to prove once and for all that Cathay and China were the same place. [27] For Goes's journey was not just a matter of reconciling the various strands of

legend and hearsay that had already been circulating for the past thousand years. It was a specifically evangelical expedition as well.

This is made abundantly clear in Ricci's diaries, edited and posthumously published by Trigault in 1615, which not only include Goes's narrative but also a long description of the various sorts of Christian "evidence" that could still be found within the empire. Ricci's interest was piqued when in 1605 he met a Chinese Jew called Ai from the province of Henan, an encounter that led Ricci to inquire about traces of Christianity as well, especially when his informant revealed that in his hometown he had once seen certain strangers ("whose ancestors came from abroad") that made the sign of the cross over their food and drink. Nothing further was to come of this, though, even after a Jesuit brother was sent out to Henan to investigate. At the same time, Ricci also reported the discovery of a bell that included, he said, "an engraving representing a temple or a church and in front of this . . . a cross surrounded by an inscription, done in Greek letters." In a letter from 1605 a slightly different version of these two finds is given: the Chinese Jew is also said to have brought a friend who claimed he was descended from Christians, and the bell (if it is indeed the same one) is described as having crosses and Greek letters on it and coming from Henan. The Jew and the bell appear in Semedo's account, too, where they are said to have produced equally discouraging results.

The bell, Semedo notes, may only be a recent import, and as for the possible traces of Christianity represented by the Jew's account, "we have gone about all *China* and founded Churches in severall of the biggest Towns, planting the *Christian Religion* and using all diligence to discover this truth, without having been able to obtain our purpose in the least." [28]

All of this evidence was certainly sketchy at best, and yet Ricci's letter still concludes that "we understand that there is absolutely no doubt now that China is Marco Polo the Venetian's Cathay, and that what he says is quite true that there are Christians in Cathay, for in his day there would have been many." That is, it was the possibility of finding *Christian* traces that made the equation between Cathay and China complete, and the fact that such

evidence was not forthcoming was precisely the problem. “It was no marvell if we were in doubt and perplexitie,” Semedo confesses, “considering . . . the great scarcitie of evident signes for the proving a thing of so great importance.” [29]

The overwhelming desire for such “evident signs” must also have been behind the emergence of a new legend that began cropping up in missionary accounts in the mid-sixteenth century, namely, that the Apostle Thomas had journeyed to China. A similarly curious mixture of fact and fantasy, the St. Thomas myth and “St. Thomas Christians” had long been an inseparable part of the European imaginary about the Eastern world in general. According to legends dating back at least to the early twelfth century, Thomas had gone to India, where he built churches, converted many of the local inhabitants, and was martyred in 52 A.D. But in the new version, first related in 1546 by St. Francis Xavier (the pioneer Jesuit missionary in East Asia whose final unfulfilled dream was to convert China), St. Thomas had journeyed to the Middle Kingdom as well. His tomb at Mylapore on the southeastern coast of India had long been known and seemed to substantiate at least part of the tradition, but it was unclear (to St. Francis, too) if the Apostle had actually journeyed any further eastward. [30] In the 1569 *Tractado* of Gaspar da Cruz, we also read that Thomas had stayed among the Chinese for only a very short time, having quickly realized “that he could not do any good there” — a stereotypical remark about the resolutely “atheistic” nature of the Chinese nation. “If these disciples whom the Apostle had left had made fruit in the land,” Cruz notes, “we do not know it; for generally among them is no notice of the evangelical law, nor of Christianity, nor even of one God, nor a trace thereof.” This information was repeated in Juan González de Mendoza’s immensely popular *Historia . . . del gran reyno dela China* (1585), although here the Apostle’s failure is credited to the fact that China was then occupied with civil wars. In 1609 a third variant reported that Thomas had even arrived in China on a Chinese ship. [31]

But the fact that these versions of the legend were new to the sixteenth century is extremely revealing, since it is evident that they had developed in response to a pressing need not only to

"find" Christianity but also to justify and sustain the missionaries' own evangelical struggle. Medieval travelers to Cathay had mentioned the Apostle in relation to India only, even as they regularly stopped at the site of his tomb before setting out further east. John of Montecorvino, for example, a Franciscan friar writing from China at the end of the thirteenth century, went out of his way to note that "to these regions there never came any Apostle or disciple of the Apostles." [32] Ricci wondered whether the Chinese might have heard about Christianity since the early Apostles preached it at exactly the same time that Buddhism first entered the country, but much more tantalizing were reports from Muslim merchants that in Cathay they had seen white, bearded, robed men who worshipped Mary and Jesus and the cross. Trigault provided a similar rumor in a letter of 1607, but when he edited Ricci's papers for publication in 1615 he added a much simpler and more satisfying explanation in the form of "proof" that the Apostle had been to China after all. The evidence, such as it was, came in the form of several passages in an ancient Chaldean Breviary of St. Thomas (dating from at least the seventh century), which declared that "the Chinese and Ethiopians were converted to the truth" by him, and that "through St. Thomas the Kingdom of Heaven took wing and sped its flight to the Chinese." [33] These references became a standard component of subsequent missionary histories, although they were not always presented as conclusive. [34]

IV

One can easily imagine how the discovery of the Xi'an monument just ten years later could be seen to solve all of these problems at once, by "proving" that Christianity had truly been in China, that the Christians so often mentioned by Marco Polo and other early travelers were historically documented, that the Cathay in which these Christians resided was none other than modern-day China, and that most of all a new chapter in Chinese history could begin in which Christianity — which was not at all new, as the Chinese had complained — might finally be able to take hold. For when legendary Cathay and modern China were at last equated, or at

least recognized as occupying more or less the same geographical space, it was the existence of Christianity that seemed to clear everything up. This was true not only in the eyes of the missionaries whose main purpose was Christian expansion. For them it was as if the monument had been carved precisely according to their own self-image as the true bearers of civilization and salvation. But from the perspective of any European reader, the terms by which the equation was expressed were hardly neutral, and the desire to find Cathay in China was not simply a matter of joining a mythic place in Polo or Mandeville with one in which Westerners were then residing or trading or attempting to colonize. It was instead a matter of defining a foreign place in terms of Christian (that is, Western) presumptions. It was hardly a simple encounter but an imposition of self-interested prejudice, a way of using or manipulating any “native” detail such as the Xi’an monument in terms of Europeans’ overwhelming desire to see themselves in it. And the monument’s cross, more than anything else, became the ground or the launching point for a long line of readers who saw the tablet not as a Tang dynasty object with a lengthy and elegant Chinese and Syriac inscription, with its accompanying dragons and tortoise and clouds and flowers, but instead as an unambiguously European Christian tablet which just happened to include the unwanted excrescence of Chinese (and other) motifs. Semedo mentions that the cross “is encompassed, as it were, with certain clouds,” but it is much more significant for him that its “extremities . . . end in flower deluces, after the fashion of that *Crosse* which is reported to have been found graved on the Sepulchre of the Apostle S. *Thomas* in the Towne of *Meliapor*, and as they were anciently painted in *Europe*.”[35] In fact, as we will see in Chapter 4, the exact shape of the cross played a surprisingly fundamental role in the monument’s reception over the next two centuries.

And yet even if the messy configuration between Christianity, Cathay, and China seemed to be solved by the discovery of the Xi’an monument, there was still the necessity of framing its inscription and its cross into a text that suited European purposes. Thus numerous “parallels” were found between Christianity and local Chinese religious practices. Mendoza is careful to point up similarities between his own religion and those of China — if, that

is, they are “interpreted christianly.” A three-headed Chinese idol reminds him of the “mysterie of the holy trinitie,” images of sages are similarly reminiscent of “pictures . . . with the ensignes of the twelve apostles,” and a Chinese creation myth is said to bear “a similitude of the truth, & a conformity with the things of our catholike religion.”[36] These are predictable maneuvers from a European point of view, but it is far more important to see the way in which anything good or noble among Chinese religious beliefs was perceived, as Ricci put it, as “containing some cognizance of the true Divinity.” According to Ricci, Confucianism seemed “not only to have borrowed from the West but actually to have caught a glimpse of light from the Christian Gospels.” Cruz even wondered whether a female statue he saw in a Chinese temple (probably of Guanyin, the goddess of mercy) might be “the image of our Lady, made by the ancient Christians that Saint Thomas had left there, or by their occasion made.”[37]

Yet the missionaries were not offering their readers or potential converts a relativistic description of Chinese customs in which they could be invested with an alternative integrity (although, in such authors as Ricci, Le Comte, or Martino Martini, this was sometimes the case). On the contrary, Chinese religious practices were seen as a kind of corruption or degradation of the True Faith. This was the missionaries’ reason for being in China in the first place. Chinese religions themselves, according to this line of thinking, were heretical aberrations in need of Catholic intervention and correction. Even if China had been touched by the light of the Gospel in its distant past, as Ricci put it, “it was not difficult to believe that a people so far distant . . . might easily have fallen into various errors.” [38]

The Chinese, in other words, were not seen to exist independently from Christian universal history even if their documented past was so much more ancient than that of the Christian West (and indeed the immense antiquity of China posed a scholarly problem throughout the early modern period). [39] The missionaries who came to China were not dealing with naked natives existing in some sort of “primitive,” apparently lawless culture, but instead a culture of immense learning and elaborate codes of conduct that were even more sophisticated than those in the “civilized” West.

The Chinese may have been pagans but their culture had long been an object of envy, too, and the discovery of the monument helped Europeans to reconcile their often confused and ambivalent attitude toward the Middle Kingdom as a whole, since the text and its cross could be safely perceived as both Chinese and Western at the same time, or as both "properly" Christian and yet able to adapt to and indeed encompass the most faraway atheistic culture.

The monument could also allow Europeans to maintain the oddly backward (but necessary) position that Christianity was also the basis of Chinese beliefs, even if Chinese religious traditions were clearly so much older than, for instance, the Judeo-Christian Bible. A convenient way to see this process at work is to take note of the way the text of the Xi'an monument has been preserved in the Jesuit archives in Rome, specifically in the collection known as Japonica-Sinica I-IV, a library of nearly six hundred mostly seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Chinese texts. Here we find a combination of materials concerning the Chinese Classics and Chinese history, works by the Jesuits written in Chinese, and texts by Chinese Christian converts. We also find Li Zhizao's transcription as well as two copies of a long Chinese commentary by Manuel Dias, Jr., first published in 1644, that also gave the text of the inscription and concluded with illustrations of three other engraved crosses that had recently been found in southern China. [40] Scattered references to the monument or to *Da Qin* occur throughout the collection, but it is much more revealing to see just how important the inscription had become with respect to the Jesuits' view of Chinese culture in general.

An excellent review essay on the archives has recently concluded that the first section in particular (Jap. Sin. I, 1–146), in which the texts by Li and Dias both appear, has been very carefully and deliberately compiled, probably sometime in the early eighteenth century. [41] The section begins with a small corpus of texts of classical Chinese literature (the *Book of Changes*, the *Four Books*, the sayings of Confucius, and so on), followed by Dias's commentary on the monument (Jap. Sin. I, 33). Next come texts in which Chinese Christians elucidate the Classics, Chinese texts by European missionaries, and, finally, religious writings by the

Chinese converts themselves.[42] There are several points of interest here. First, the progression from the Chinese Classics to missionary texts to Christian writings by native converts reflects the general Jesuit policy of accommodation with respect to Chinese history and Chinese culture. In other words, China was to be converted from within, by mastering and appealing to the Chinese tradition and the Chinese language as much as possible, and not simply by imposing Christianity onto religious beliefs that were often so much at odds with those of the West.[43] From the Jesuit point of view, therefore, one had to begin with Chinese literature and Chinese commentary since they would remain the basis for Christianity in China. [44]

But at the same time, the unexpected prominence of the Xi'an monument, as represented by Dias's commentary, shows that the tablet could be made to invest importance in the classical tradition rather than, or in addition to, the other way around. As Ad Dudink writes, "condensed in the arrangement of books, this first part affirms that not only the Xi'an inscription testifies of an earlier presence of Christianity in China, but that the Chinese Classics are even earlier traces of the presence of Christian ideas in China." This is why books on the Chinese Classics by native Christians are placed *before* the missionary texts and catechisms that would form the basis of any actual conversions. The Xi'an monument, moreover, has even come to represent the Jesuit evangelical edifice as a whole, since it is specifically Dias's commentary that is made to provide the link between the corpus of classical Chinese teaching and the Christian principles that must be reestablished within it. Thus there are *two* copies of Dias's text placed in this section, the second one falling within its "proper" place as one of many missionary texts, but the first one representing the very moment of transition from Chinese wisdom to the Christian faith that is supposed to supercede it. [45]

In a later century, the monument would frequently be compared to the Rosetta Stone found in 1799, which featured parallel texts in hieroglyphics and Greek and gave Europeans their first real breakthrough into the decipherment of Egyptian writing. The Xi'an monument, of course, could not hope to provide this sort of purely linguistic solution to the problem of unlocking the mysteries of

written Chinese. But it certainly was an important moment in the history of the interpretation and translation of one culture into another, as well as a moment of transition in terms of the larger question of Catholic universal history and how it should proceed with regard to the Middle Kingdom. But while even central terms like *jingjiao* and *Da Qin* resisted simple translation, it is interesting that in the seventeenth century they became common designations for Christianity as well as terms by which Chinese Christians (at least for a time) identified themselves. In another early Jesuit text in Chinese, the *Kouduo richao* or "daily replies" of Giulio Aleni (Jap. Sin. I, 81), the author is asked to explain the meaning of *Da Qin* and identifies it as the name of the country where Christ was born. Semedo and other early translators give it as Judea without any explanation at all: "this word is written just thus without any other difference," Semedo writes, "but that the Characters are *Chinese*." He continues, "the same is found also in the other words or names, of *Satanas* and *Messias*."[46] And yet *Da Qin* can hardly be said to be such a transliteration. In early Chinese it tended to signify some vague idea of the eastern Roman Empire (though other terms were used for that, too), and by extension it could mean the West in general. As P. Y. Saeki has remarked, the term was used in many different ways by Chinese authors, "but it must be a country near the Mediterranean Sea with a patriarchal form of government as well as a Greco-Roman civilization, and must have included the land lying between Antioch and Alexandria." [47]

The point, however, is that *Da Qin* like *jingjiao* had quickly become *synonymous* with early modern Christianity, even if some early missionary texts, such as the Jesuit annual report we have mentioned above, remained skeptical. The Xi'an monument may not have been able to lay to rest every doubt about whether the Apostle had really been in China or whether Cathay and China were really the same place, but it did have a way of helping each of these elements fit together into a relationship in which each one seemed at least to support the others. The St. Thomas Christians of India may not have been identical with those who migrated to China, but legends about the Apostle and the passages in the Indian Breviary lent credibility to the idea that the *jingjiao* religion might be identical to the form of Christianity described by so many

early travelers to Cathay. And somehow, although it was never quite clear how this should be accomplished, all of these strands could be accommodated into the tenets of early modern Roman Catholic Christianity.

V

I would like to conclude by returning to a question with which we began, namely, why should anyone in China, aside from scholars or those who were already Christian converts, pay much heed to the monument at all? Although of course we cannot answer this query with any degree of accuracy, it might nonetheless be instructive to pause for a moment to review some of the early evidence.[48] European commentators such as Semedo believed that Chinese viewers were attracted to the stone because it was old and because it contained strange writing. According to his account, “there was a wonderfull concourse of people to see this stone, partly for the Antiquity thereof and partly for the novelty of the strange Characters which was to be seen thereon.” In 1667, Athanasius Kircher’s *China illustrata* repeated this story, adding that the governor wanted to “allure and draw many more out of the whole Kingdom . . . to the acquiring of reputation to the City.” Le Comte’s version even noted that the stone “was very nicely examined . . . because on the top of it there was a large Cross handsomely graved. ”[49] Although at risk of unnecessarily homogenizing a “Chinese” as opposed to a “European” viewpoint, I cannot help wondering the degree to which the age of the stone and its Syriac writing and its cross were Western preoccupations and not those of anyone in Xi’an at the time. Both Semedo and Kircher endow the Chinese with a “natural curiosity” or “a certain natural propensity unto things curious,” but who exactly are the ones overcome with curiosity here, and for what sorts of reasons? Certainly, visitors did come to the temple where the monument was eventually set up, but there are also at least three other versions of its discovery that give us a somewhat different picture of the sort of excitement that the stone engendered at the time.

Most European commentators followed Li Zhizao and remarked that the stone was found when digging for the foundation of a

building or a wall. However, Daniello Bartoli's history of the Jesuits in China, first published in 1663, also claimed that in 1639 a French Jesuit was visited by an old man from the area who claimed that for many years local residents were puzzled by the fact that a small space of ground had always remained completely free from snow during the winter. They were convinced that something must be buried there, "or a treasure as they hoped." When digging was finally begun, Bartoli continues, "they found a treasure after all, the very stone we are speaking about."[50] It is hard to imagine that this was the kind of treasure that the villagers had had in mind, and at this point Bartoli lapses into a stereotypical description of the inquisitiveness of Chinese people, how the literati were attracted to the stone on account of its antiquity, and how the local governor, wondering at its age and the mysteries of its foreign writing, had the stone mounted on a pedestal and set up in a nearby temple.

Our second example is a story recorded in a letter from 1653 by a Polish Jesuit, Michel Boym, that was included in Kircher's *China illustrata* . "The Governor of the place," Boym reports, "being certified concerning the finding of the Monument [was] smitten both with the novelty of the thing, and with an Omen (for on that very day his Son departed the World)." [51] A much fuller treatment of the same story forms our third and last example, this time a Chinese account written in 1679 by Lin Tong, a great authority on ancient inscriptions. The passage was excerpted in a massive compilation of nearly one thousand metal and stone inscriptions by another great authority, Wang Chang, published in 1805. "The Prefect of Xi'an," the story goes,

> had a little boy who was endowed with high intelligence at his birth; from the time he was able to walk he began to join his hands in supplication to Buddha, which he did day and night almost without relaxation. In a short time he was taken sick and died . . . The place for his burial was chosen by divination . . . and when they had dug several feet into the ground they discovered a stone, which was a tablet commemorating the spread of the *jingjiao* religion. This monument had been embedded in the earth for a thousand years and now for the first time had reappeared. If one sees this event as proof of

> the succession of direct and indirect causes through the three epochs [i.e. past, present, and future], could it not be said that this child was a pure Dhuta come back into the world [i.e. that he was a reincarnation]?[52]

Owing to its frequent Buddhistic terminology and allusion this passage has proven very difficult to translate, particularly the last sentence as cited here. But the point certainly seems to be that the godliness of the child is somehow signaled or echoed in the religious evidence contained in the inscription, and that the monument's discovery was a divine sign of the child's place in the larger scheme of Buddhist metempsychosis — past, present, and future. The discovery of the stone, in other words, is mystically connected to the departed spirit of the godlike little boy, even if he was seen as a devout Buddhist and the monument was describing a very different kind of religious teaching. The mysterious other writing, Lin Tong added, who apparently mistook it for Sanskrit or Mongolian, was the same as that used in the Buddhist classics. Moreover, his account concludes with a scholarly flourish by recalling a much older tale of a man whose family, when starting to dig in the spot he had chosen for his own tomb, found an inscription with his name on it — showing among other things that his life was the subject of prophecy and that the spot for the tomb was correctly chosen according to the principles of feng shui. [53]

Western scholars have been quick to de-emphasize these details about omens, child Buddhas, reincarnation, and the geomantic placement of tombs. Boym's sentence about the dead child was even excised from the English translation of Kircher's book that appeared in 1669. Two of the greatest authorities on the monument from the early twentieth century, Henri Havret and Paul Pelliot, refer to Lin's and Boym's accounts as "fantasized" and "full of errors." But are explicitly Christian interpretations of the stone as a divine "accident" (Le Comte), God's providential sign (Li Zhizao), or "an irrefragable Testimony" (Semedo) any less imaginary or more factually correct? Why should tales about omens be any more fantasized than those that place the monument as a moment in Christian universal history? Is it any less accurate to see proof of reincarnation in the inscription than to read it as indisputable evidence that Roman Catholic

Christianity had been planted in China a thousand years before and was now being reborn? Aren't Christian readers just as "visibly inclined to believe in the supernatural" as was the dead boy's father?[54]

In the nineteenth century especially, when Chinese source material finally came under discussion, as in the groundbreaking work of Alexander Wylie and Guillaume Pauthier, it was generally to prove that scholars in the Far East, unlike their counterparts in the West, never doubted the monument's authenticity. But what interests me in the "Chinese" versions of the story is the way in which the monument is said to have aroused keen interest in contexts that have nothing whatever to do with Christianity, which is not even mentioned.[55] On the contrary, the discovery of the stone was seen as noteworthy because it might point toward a buried treasure, because the governor of the city had lost his son on the same day, or because a father saw it as an omen of the past and future lives of his beloved child. *These* were the details that seemed noteworthy at the time, not the existence of a cross or even the inscription as such. Similarly, if the monument was accorded a place of honor on the grounds of a local temple (and where it remained until 1907), it may have been because it was thought to be a Buddhist relic, not because of the Judeo-Christian dogma that it appeared to describe. Europeans, of course, recognized this as nothing more than Chinese jealousy, as in Le Comte's version of the monument's fate: "the *Bonzes* who keep it in one of their Temples . . . have erected over against it, a long Table of Marble every way like it, with Encomiums upon the Gods of the Country, to diminish as much as they can the glory which the Christian Religion receives from thence." [56] Once again there is a peculiar blindness at work here, since the "glory" of Christianity is hardly the only reason that might have prompted the monks to set up a monument to their own religion in the same vicinity.

It is not my intention to ridicule nineteenth- and twentieth-century authorities such as Havret, Pelliot, Wylie, Pauthier, Saeki, or James Legge, to whom my scholarly debt is beyond question. It is hard not to stand in awe of their immense learning and indeed the sympathy and love with which they approach the philosophy,

literature, and traditions of China. And yet one might well pause when Wylie comments that Lin Tong, “either intentionally or otherwise, ignores all allusion to the Christian religion,” as if the monument’s suggestions of Christianity — not a foregone conclusion at all — were the only thing worthy of discussion.[57] These sinologists’ contributions to the study of the stone in its Tang dynasty context are absolutely essential, but by the same token one has to wonder why an eighth-century monument to a branch of Nestorian Christianity was seen as so central to that dynasty’s history as well as to the history of China in general. [58] It is probably an overstatement to claim that Western interest in China was inseparable from an interest in the monument, but at the same time it is also no accident that from the very beginning of sinological study in the West, Europeans were drawn to a tablet that was, after all, hardly more than a relic of a very brief moment in a recorded history of China that dates back thousands of years.

To see a cross on the Xi’an monument, similarly, seemed to be necessary for Europeans to be able to understand it at all. Chinese culture was readable precisely insofar as it was also, in its distant past, Christian. And it was only a monument that was perceived as Christian and thus already Western that led many Europeans to think about China in the first place. If, as I am arguing, the stone actually *became* sinology (a Western term, to be sure), it is hardly surprising that the stele also quickly became much less important than the various answers that it seemed to provide — or not to provide. As we will see so often in the chapters that follow, the tablet was not even the real object of attention, just as China or Chinese culture or the Chinese language were constantly being pushed into the background of European preoccupations with religious conversion, cultural superiority, and monetary profit.

2

The Century of Kircher

The previous chapter examined the way in which Western missionaries were preoccupied with the idea of finding traces of Christianity in China even before they had arrived there at the end of the sixteenth century. And with the discovery of the Xi'an stone in 1625, there now seemed to be incontrovertible proof not only that the religion had flourished there in its distant past, but also that it had been openly supported by a line of highly respected emperors. This was doubly fortuitous from the Jesuit point of view, for it allowed them to prove to the tradition-minded scholarly class in China that Christianity was not a recent import, and moreover that there was a clear precedent for an official acceptance of its teachings. It made little difference that the *jingjiao* religion and early modern Catholic Christianity were hardly the same, or that the "luminous religion" was little more than a marginal creed in an ancient dynasty that had tolerated a wide variety of foreign philosophies. The existence of the monument was far more important than what it actually said — especially since no one could read it.

The present chapter will trace how the stone was received once it had become better known to the broader scholarly world, covering the first hundred years of its new life in the West. The stele was thoroughly identified with the Jesuits from the start, particularly since they were the only ones able to see it in person. Xi'an lies to the west in China, on the old Silk Road overland route and thus of little interest to sixteenth- or seventeenth-century European merchants and traders, who came to the empire via Macao and a sea route more than a thousand miles away. It is a vital part of the monument's history, in fact, that before the early twentieth century it was almost completely inaccessible. Furthermore, for many readers the Jesuits were a highly suspicious group. Europeans were naturally attracted to a tablet that purported to record a form of their own religion in the ancient and powerful Middle Kingdom, and they would have been gratified to find proof that Christianity had long ago reached China, thus verifying Marco Polo's narrative

and perhaps even proving that the apostle Thomas had preached there. But when announcements of the discovery also began to be accompanied by much grander statements about the inscription's supposed conformity to modern Roman Catholic doctrine, implying that it was more urgent than ever to renew and refinance Jesuit operations in China, it is hardly surprising if some readers began to question whether the stone was really what the missionaries said it was.

In fact, the earliest responders tended to be attracted to the object precisely because of their antagonistic attitude toward the Jesuits or toward Catholics in general, although I contend that such sentiments do not really account for the whole story. Similarly, a number of readers came to the stone's defense for equally tangential reasons, and it is a marked feature of these early disputes that they occurred in contexts that had little to do with China as such. In other words, if these debates actually led to a deeper knowledge of Chinese history or its cultural and religious traditions, it was often both indirect and unintentional. And yet the monument was in an absolutely fundamental sense a *point of entry* for early sinological study, and one key instance of this, which we will examine at the end of this chapter, is the way that the inscription came to be used as a rudimentary sample for early Chinese linguistic study.

What might it mean, then, if Western scholarly study of China in a sense *began* with an analysis of the Nestorian monument, an object that was largely perceived as being not really Chinese at all? For many Europeans (and, later, Americans) it was only such an object that could lead them to think about China in the first place. It hardly mattered whether anyone could actually see the stone for themselves, and when forty years later they were presented with a more or less accurate reproduction of its inscription in a Western book no one was able to understand it. The stone was regularly cut off from the complex religious and cultural circumstances in which it was originally composed, and even if it was unreadable it was still said to contain "familiar" religious doctrine. The stele was always a reflection of European concerns rather than Chinese ones, and its veracity or lack thereof became integrated into a growing mass of knowledge about China that remained almost completely Westernized,

allowing Europeans to recast the stone according to their own self-image as the center of civilization and bearers of the true religion. As more and more readers became interested in the object, finally, it also emerged as a standard “fact” in Western histories of the empire, to the point where it seemed impossible to write about China at all without making reference to the famous stone of Si-ngan, as it was often spelled. If one looked up China in the great 1910–11 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, one also found there a brief account of the Xi’an stele.

II

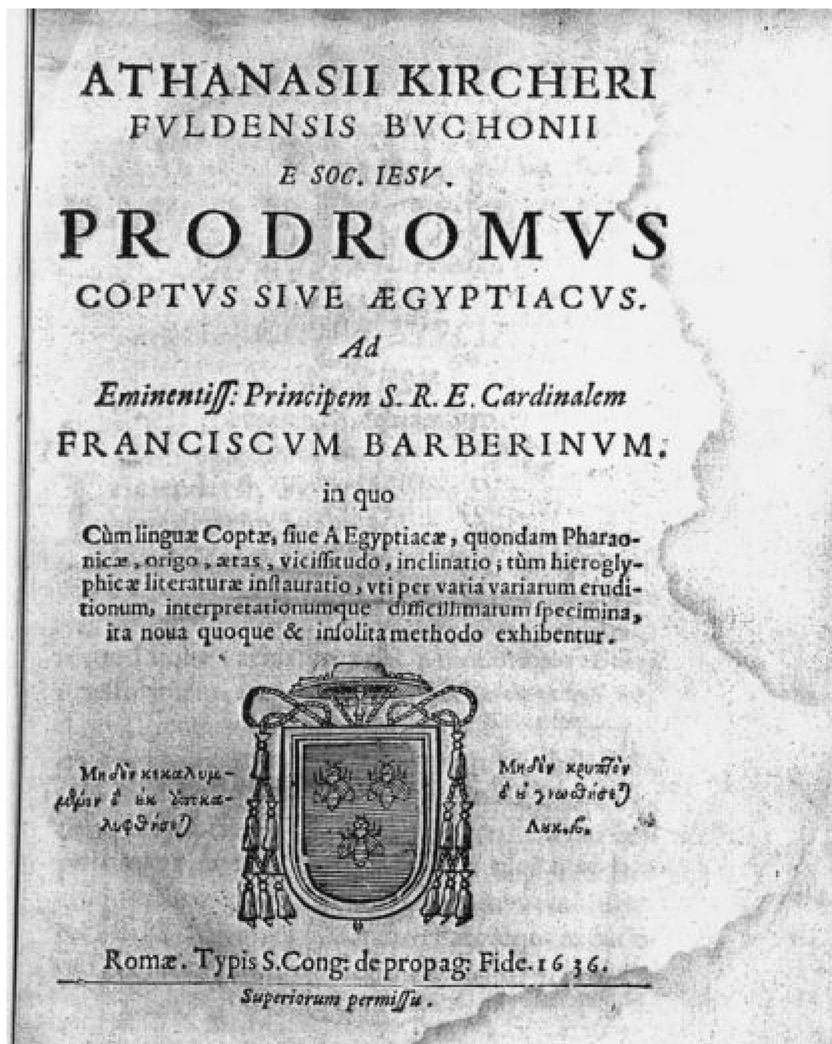
It is of course impossible to align each and every reading in this scholarly grab bag to a precise chronology of contention and subsequent commentary, but a few key dates can be definitively established. By the end of 1625, the year of its discovery, the inscription had been partially translated into both Portuguese and Latin (not to mention Li Zhizao’s Chinese), although these early versions did not circulate beyond the Jesuit community. In 1629, a Jesuit annual letter (signed 1626) announced the stone’s discovery to the European world, and French and Italian translations of the inscription were printed in pamphlet form in 1628 and 1631. [2] These first reactions were somewhat guarded, owing mainly to the difficulty of the Chinese, filled as it is with allusions and references to a variety of classical Chinese and Buddhist and Daoist sources, as well as the Syriac, which very few in Europe were able to decipher. Alvaro Semedo’s presentation, as we saw in Chapter 1, tried to place the stele as both the culmination of China’s past and the foundation for its new place in the larger scope of Christian universal history. But his account was not published until the 1640s. Real credit for the stone’s introduction is due to Athanasius Kircher, a voracious German Jesuit polymath and collector, sometime professor of mathematics and Eastern languages at the Jesuit college in Rome and one of the leading encyclopedic scholars of his day.

Chinese, however, was not among his many talents (and as a Jesuit he had twice expressed interest in being posted to China and had twice been rejected). He knew no Chinese and spent

nearly all of his adult life as a scholar in Rome. Author of more than thirty gigantic volumes on a kaleidoscopic variety of ancient and modern subjects, one of his earliest books, published in 1636 and just eleven years after the monument had been unearthed, included an important section on the stone and gave the first complete translation of the inscription (including the Syriac) that reached a larger and more general audience. But even the book's Latin title, *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus* (Coptic or Egyptian Forerunner), reveals the way in which — and this is entirely typical for the reception of the monument and its fate over the next three centuries — the stone and indeed China were not really the focus of attention at all [Figure 4, see p. 32].

Kircher was strongly influenced by the Renaissance hermetic tradition of scholarship that subscribed to an almost mystical belief in the primacy of ancient Greek and Egyptian culture (Coptic being the liturgical language of Egyptian Christians). Hieroglyphics in particular, which would not be satisfactorily deciphered until nearly two hundred years later, were assumed to contain some sort of cryptic wisdom from remote antiquity that anticipated Christian theology. Kircher's magnum opus, the huge multi-part *Oedipus aegyptiacus* of 1652–54, represented an attempt to unravel the mysteries of hieroglyphics, and *Prodromus coptus*, as its title indicates, was a preliminary volume on this same subject. But it was also an attempt to trace connections between Coptic and hieroglyphic writing as well as the presumed relationship between the originary Egyptian civilization and its "colonies" in other nations.[3] This was how China and the Xi'an monument were thought to fit in; the chapter that discusses the stone is appropriately titled, "On the spread of colonies of the Copto-Ethiopian church into other parts of the world." Kircher's real interest in the monument, in other words, was its Syriac portions, which, he argued, proved that the Coptic church had spread (via Ethiopia) into even the remotest reaches of Asia. There was also a Counter-Reformation polemic at work here, since the worldwide supremacy of the Roman church could supposedly be proven by such far-flung objects as a Chinese Christian monument (and Kircher, as we will see, never doubted that the inscription was Catholic). The book was also published by the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, a council established by the Counter-

Reformation Church in 1622 to supervise foreign missions and attempt to bring “lost” or heretical churches back into the Catholic fold.



ATHANASII KIRCHERI
FVLDENSIS BVCHONII
E SOC. IESV.
PRODROMVS
COPTVS SIVE ÆGYPTIACVS.
Ad
Eminentiss: Principem S. R. E. Cardinalem
FRANCISCVM BARBERINVM.
in quo
Cùm linguæ Coptæ, siue AEgyptiacæ, quondam Pharaonicæ, origo, ætas, vicissitudo, inclinatio; tùm hieroglyphicæ literaturæ instauratio, vti per varia variarum eruditionum, interpretationumque difficillimarum specimina, ita noua quoque & insolita methodo exhibentur.

Romæ. Typis S.Cong: de propag: Fide. 1636.
Superiorum permissu.

4 Title page from Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus* (Coptic or Egyptian Forerunner). National Taiwan University Library.

Thus the discovery of the monument, as far as Kircher was concerned, had little to do with China as such, and although his book duly provided a Latin version of the Chinese text, it was his competence in a myriad of Afro-Asiatic tongues that he so gaudily tried to advertise. The preface lists Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Abyssinian, and Samaritan. Similarly, Chinese characters appear on only two occasions, first in a crudely rendered and not entirely correct image of the cross and the title from the top of the monument, and

secondly amidst a lengthy two-page transcription of the Syriac portions on the face of the tablet (and we can say in Kircher's defense that there was no type font for Chinese at the time). Presentation of the Syriac was accompanied by much more fanfare, especially since this was the first translation of this part of the inscription to be published in Europe. In sum, it is clear that Kircher was not interested in interpreting the stone as a crucial moment in Chinese history, which was precisely what many of the missionaries were attempting to do, but instead as one more link in a network of interrelated specimens of linguistic and philosophic knowledge with Syriac, Coptic, and, ultimately, hieroglyphics at its center.

An indefatigable compiler, Kircher's account also brought together a vast assortment of information about the stone drawn from Jesuit sources as well as a few idiosyncrasies of his own. For one thing, we are told that the cross appears below rather than above the title, an odd slip since he provides an illustration with the correct placement on the very same page (and Kircher's source is also quite clear on this matter). Much more fateful, however, was Kircher's contention that shortly after the monument's discovery the governor of Xi'an wrote a composition in its honor that was carved onto *another* stone. While his source text says merely that the governor's creation was inscribed on "another similar stone" and that both were set up in a temple, Kircher's Latin version renders the governor's composition as a facsimile of the first: "the local governor, marveling at such a vestige of antiquity, immediately wrote a composition in praise of the discovered monument, and on another stone of the same size he ordered to be inscribed all the characters and other marks of the discovered stone as faithfully as possible." Adding to the confusion, on the very next page Kircher also boasts of having in the Collegio Romano "a true copy in nearly the same dimensions as the original." [4] This was almost certainly a full-sized rubbing and not a duplicate stone or a transcription (a common practice that would explain Kircher's ability to offer an illustration of the cross and title, also a first in Europe). But the combined processes of repetition and misinterpretation had already been put into motion as readers, understandably ignorant about the nature of a rubbing (and Kircher offers no help either) began to wonder just what that

“true copy” was and how it had been obtained. And what about that second stone in Xi’an?

In any case, if the governor had written a text in honor of the monument and had it carved onto another stone it was not necessarily just to have a copy of it (why would he want another one?), and certainly not because he, too, had read it as a divine sign that the Chinese empire might one day be won over and rechristianized. As we have seen, Western accounts of the governor’s excited reaction were similarly Eurocentric, since Westerners were unable to recognize that he might have read the inscription as an omen (his son having died on the same day) that had nothing whatever to do with Christianity. And at the end of the seventeenth century, Louis Le Comte had tried to explain the existence of two stones as an expression of Chinese jealousy toward the power of the Christian faith.[5] To make matters worse, Kircher’s description was soon repeated in Martino Martini’s enormously influential *Novus atlas sinensis* , published simultaneously in four different languages in 1655. But now it was also unclear whether the copy in the Jesuit college was taken from the stone made by the governor or from the original.[6] As time went on this story became more and more misconstrued, until in the mid-nineteenth century it was even hypothesized that the second stone was a doctored version of the first that had been forged by the Jesuits in order to replace it!

III

We will examine this particular conspiracy theory in Chapter 3, but first let us concentrate on some of Kircher’s earliest responders, among them Georg Horn, a German Presbyterian professor of history in Holland. His remarks on the stone appear as one of many digressions in a very digressive treatise, *De originibus americanis*, of 1652. The text is one of a number of rejoinders in an ongoing debate on the origins of indigenous North Americans inspired by Hugo Grotius’s *De origine gentium americanarum* (1642), where it had been argued that while many North American Indians were descendants of Norwegians (!), the Chinese were

descendants of Indians from Peru. [7] Horn replied that in fact America had been populated by the Phoenicians and the Scythians, who arrived from the East, and also by the Huns, Tartars, and Chinese, who came via the Pacific. But what did all of this have to do with the Xi'an monument? Very little, except that when coming to the subject of religion in the Americas in the volume's penultimate chapter, Horn found a convenient means to discredit his Jesuit enemies. Christians may well have come to China, he admits, via Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Judea (and this would explain traces of Christianity among the American natives, too), but the Xi'an stone was nothing but a "Jesuit fraud," fabricated "to cheat the Chinese and to strip them of their treasures." It is well known, Horn continues, that Nestorian Christians had come to the empire many centuries previously, where they had even converted the emperors to the Christian faith (and this explains the manifold rumors about Prester John in Europe). But from that time on all traces of Christianity gradually devolved into pagan superstition. [8]

There are of course a number of oddities in this theory, including the claim that there were once Christian emperors, but it was just as odd that Kircher's account had consistently papered over the monument's possible connections to *Nestorian* Christianity, which is exactly what Horn is here alluding to.[9] Polo and other early travelers had often mentioned Nestorians in their narratives of China or Cathay, where they were generally anathematized as schismatics and competitors. And yet when an actual piece of Chinese Christian evidence was found in the form of the Xi'an stone, Kircher myopically saw it not as an expression of "deviant" Syriac liturgy, but instead as an object thoroughly in line with his own brand of orthodox Catholicism, assimilated to a fantasy of the St. Thomas Christians before they had "wandered." Semedo, the first to identify the unknown script as Syriac, noted that it was the language "of those ancient Christians converted by S. *Thomas*."[10] But it was not until the early eighteenth century, and the publication of a landmark compilation of Greek and Syriac manuscripts edited by Giuseppe Simone Assemani, a Lebanese Maronite, that the monument would be firmly integrated into Nestorian history.[11]

This is perhaps all the more surprising since in the seventeenth century the Nestorian church in Asia was also something of a hot issue, since its most thriving branch, the so-called St. Thomas or Malabar Christians in India, had recently been the subject of an intense debate culminating in the Synod of Diamper in 1599, in which the “Malabar rites” were formally condemned. [12] A few Jesuit historians such as Daniello Bartoli had raised the possibility that these early Chinese Christians might be Nestorian, although Bartoli also says that the evidence is inconclusive. [13] But Kircher, like most Jesuit interpreters and translators, barely mentions the Nestorian connection, just as he overlooks the doctrinally unorthodox elements and “pagan” allusions that even the most cursory reading of the monument should yield. An excellent case in point is the 1644 Chinese commentary published by Manuel Dias. As Timothy Billings has put it so well, Dias’s text “presents a catechism of many of the orthodox terms on the monument as though they were perfectly manifest.” [14] Such a position was much easier to assume when all traces of the sect (in China, at least) had already died out, but it is also clear that as far as Kircher was concerned the monument had to be carefully aligned with an idealized notion of a Catholicism that had not yet been “spoiled” by Chinese elements.

One of the things that is so interesting about Horn’s response, however, is that he assumes that the monument is a *fake*. Why? This is in fact a position that would be repeated with countless variations for centuries to come, and it cannot be reduced merely to anti-Jesuit sentiment, although this was certainly on the rise. Precisely what was it that caused so many readers to argue not simply that the monument’s inscription had been incorrectly interpreted, but that the object as a whole must be a fraud or a forgery or a substitute? What did they expect a Chinese Christian monument to be like, and how might the Xi’an stone have differed from their preconceived notions about the fabled Middle Kingdom?

Horn had no trouble accepting the notion that Christians had existed in China’s distant past, but the stone itself could not be what the Jesuits claimed it to be. Other early objectors such as Gottlieb Spitzel, a 21-yearold Lutheran theologian from Augsburg

who had become immersed in mission reports from China, also rejected the stone. His views were published in his *De re literaria sinensium commentarius* of 1660, which tried, as did Kircher and so many of his baroque polymathic contemporaries, to forge relationships between Chinese and other world civilizations (Egypt, Greece, India). While the Confucian religion could easily be accommodated into such a worldview, following the lead of Martini's ground-breaking account of ancient Chinese history in his *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, Spitzel diverged from Kircher on the similarities between Chinese and hieroglyphic writing. And the Xi'an stone, specifically, did not fit this sort of preconception either, since it mentions so many "un-Chinese" elements such as a divine creator, the fall of man, and the Incarnation (all cited via Kircher's *Prodromus coptus*).

Consequently, it must have been composed more recently than was claimed and must have been brought to China by some "semi-Christiano . . . semi-Sinico Doctore." [15]

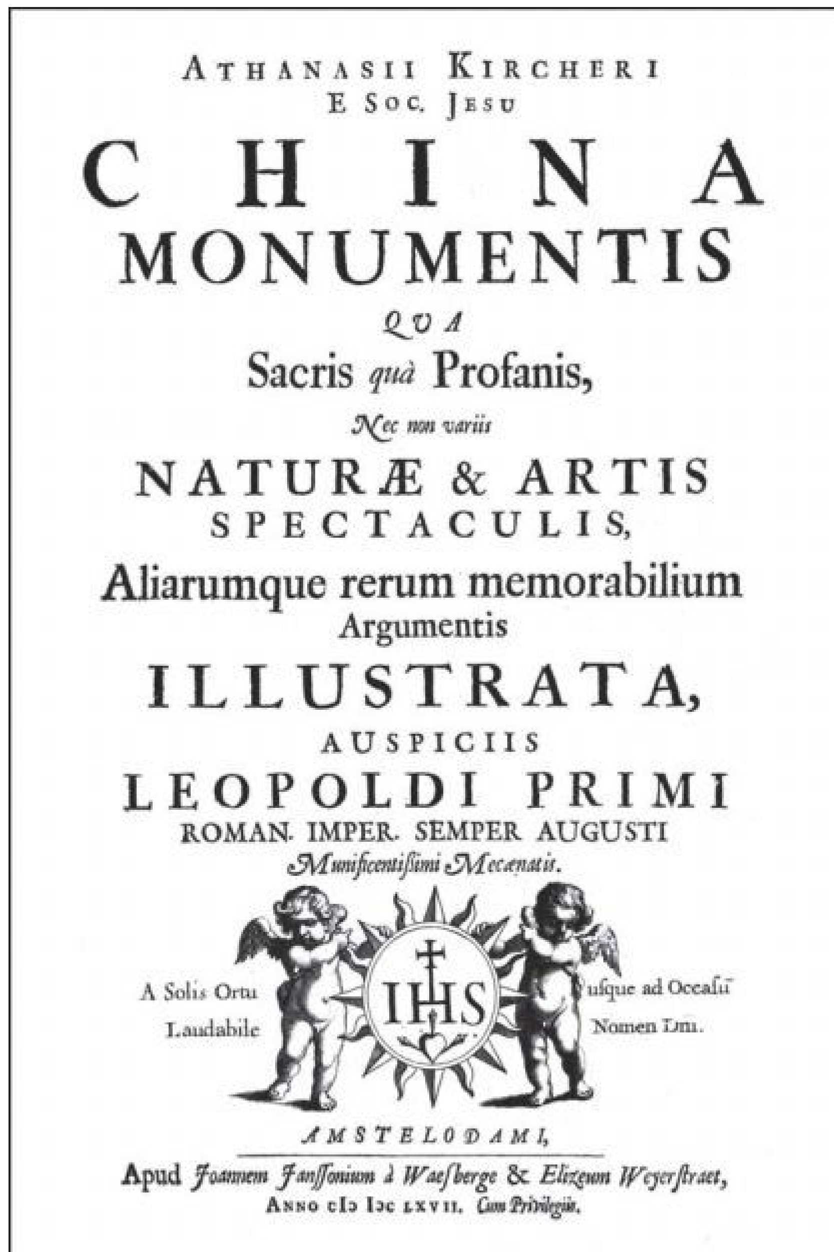
IV

Although these early responses were still for the most part marginal, they provided a basic template of contentions and prejudices that would later be juggled and recombined in innumerable ways. Obviously, Kircher's presentation had caused a number of uncertainties for early readers. On the one hand, the monument was purportedly Christian in nature, but by the same token it was for many readers a little *too* Christian, especially when it was made to speak for distinctly modern Catholic missionary strategies. On the other hand, it was clearly a Chinese artifact, but at the same time it was perhaps not Chinese *enough*, not distant enough from European sensibilities to count as appropriately foreign and exotic.

In any event, the whole debate was to change dramatically once Kircher, nearly thirty years later, decided to respond, and the relatively modest account he had included in *Prodromus coptus*, anchored as it was to larger obsessions with Syriac languages and the primacy of Egyptian hieroglyphics, grew in ostentation

and became a book all its own. This was his *China illustrata*, a sumptuously illustrated folio that appeared in two Latin editions (one was pirated) in 1667, as well as in Dutch (1668), French (1670), and partial English (1669, 1673) translations [16] [Figure 5, see p. 38]. It was a contemporary best-seller, and for most readers of the day it was a standard book about the many wonders of the Chinese empire. Its engravings became touchstones for Chinese-style images that eventually grew into a pan-European vogue for Chinoiserie.[17] It was also a momentous event for further dissemination of information about the stone, which became so commonplace that subsequent writers and critics no longer needed to explain what it was and why it was so significant. In the three decades that had elapsed since the publication of *Prodromus coptus* , moreover, at least two other prominent books about China had also appeared: Semedo's *Relatione* of 1643 and Martini's *Atlas* of 1655, both of which were composed by missionaries who had had considerable first-hand experience in China. Both were duly used by Kircher when he came to compile his own material for *China illustrata*.

Major events in China itself had also occurred in the intervening years: the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644 brought new challenges to the missionary community, as the newly established Qing rulers were less predisposed to accept foreign influence in general and the teachings of Catholicism in particular.[18] Despite some spectacular personal successes for individual Jesuit fathers during the reign of the Kangxi emperor (1661–1722), the position of the Society was becoming ever more precarious, both in China and at home. In addition, narratives of civil conflict and dynastic change (especially Martini's wildly popular *De bello tartarico* of 1654) fueled an already overheated market for travel books, missionary letters, and ambassadorial reports, the result being that China was becoming much better known than ever before — even if, due to a dwindling European presence in the Empire, the same material was simply being regurgitated in a variety of new forms.


ATHANASII KIRCHERI
E SOC. JESU
CHINA
MONUMENTIS
QUA
Sacris quà Profanis,
Nec non variis
NATURÆ & ARTIS
SPECTACULIS,
Aliarumque rerum memorabilium
Argumentis
ILLUSTRATA,
AUSPICIIS
LEOPOLDI PRIMI
ROMAN. IMPER. SEMPER AUGUSTI
Munificentissimi Mecænatis.

A Solis Ortu Laudabile
IHS
usque ad Occasũ Nomen Dni.

AMSTELODAMI,
Apud Joannem Janssonium à Waesberge & Elizeum Weyerstraet,
ANNO CIↃ IↃC LXVII. Cum Privilegiis.

5 Title page from Athanasius Kircher, *China monumentis, qua sacris qua profanis, nec non variis naturae & artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium argumentis illustrata* (China Illustrated By Its Monuments, Both Sacred and Profane, Besides Various Spectacles of Nature and Art and Other Memorable Subjects). National Taiwan University Library.

Along these same lines, *China illustrata* is an anthology of earlier materials put together by a scholar who had himself never been to Asia. Like all period compilations, the book is full of digressions and seemingly tangential material; in addition to details about China we are offered descriptions and frequent illustrations of

Tibetan, Nepalese, Tartar, Mughul, and Brahman people, customs, religions, plants, animals, and language samples. As one of the most prolific collectors and letter-writers of his day, Kircher was also at the center of an immense scholarly reference library and clearinghouse that included exotic objects, published materials, personal correspondence, and private conversations with missionaries who had returned from China and other parts of Asia. The preface lists six such authorities, but there are many more cited throughout the text. Among the most important new influences were Martini (a former pupil), whose *Atlas* is constantly cited, and Michel Boym, who had returned in 1652 with a “perfect exemplar of the Original,” either a transcription or a new rubbing, and who had, as Kircher relates, “in my presence perfected a new and short Interpretation of the whole Table word for word” (6–7; N 6– 7).[19]

Yet at the same time the volume is still in keeping with Kircher’s broader interests in the relationships between the supposedly originary cultures of Greece and Egypt and their “colonies” in other lands to the East. He viewed Chinese writing as pictorial in nature and thus an obvious descendant of hieroglyphics. The doctrine expressed on the stele was likewise judged to be only an import from the West, and if Kircher consistently refers to the monument as Sino-Syrian or Syro-Chinese it is not because he is trying to be sensitive to foreign elements having being synthesized or adapted to Chinese culture and the Chinese language. He is, rather, far more interested in the Syrian or Chaldean or Copto-Egyptian lines of communication that were seen both to precede Christianity and to join China with the rest of the world. As he explains at the outset of the book, “not only the Christian Doctrine, but also the Superstitions of the *Chineses* and their Fables before the coming of our Savior, derived their original from one and the same Region, that is, from *Egypt*, *Graecia*, *Syria*, and *Chaldea*” (2; N 3).

The book also occasionally reworks previous material from *Prodromus coptus*, such as a chapter on “The Egyptian or Coptic Expeditions into India, China, and Other Parts of Asia” (*Prodromus* 86–122), which in *China illustrata* has been integrated into a much longer discussion of journeys to the region that

includes Tibet, Nepal, and the Mughul kingdom (46–128; N 22–72). But Kircher's new book is also ostensibly *about* China, which will be "illustrated" by its monuments and by one monument in particular. In fact, as he relates in his preface, the Xi'an stone was the real reason for undertaking the book in the first place. This also gave him an opportunity to respond to his numerous detractors, such as "a certain Modern Writer," obviously Horn, who "question[s] the truth of this Monument, . . . assert[ing] it to be introduced by a Jesuitical Cheat, . . . that it was a flat and plain forgery of the Jesuits, feigned both to deceive the *Chineses* and also to defraud them of their Treasures" (1; N 2).

It may well be true, as one modern commentator has argued, that nothing was more natural than that Kircher should publish a book about China, owing both to his own Egyptophilic interest and to a growing fascination about the Middle Kingdom — as well as to an explicit desire, mentioned several times in the text, to preserve the findings of his Jesuit colleagues. [20] Yet we should also pay careful heed to the fact that Kircher chose to *begin* with a consideration of the Xi'an stone, a particular point of departure that was typical of the way in which the meaningful part of China's history seemed to commence only with its Christian influence.

In earlier accounts such as Semedo's, the monument had become an integral part of the Jesuit perception of Chinese history as a whole. But in Kircher's presentation this sort of prejudice is greatly expanded, so that the stone becomes an example or a testimony not just of an antique Christian presence, but indeed of a thoroughly orthodox and even Catholic Christianity. As he proudly proclaims in his opening chapter, "no other Doctrine was taught above a thousand years past by the Preachers of the Gospel which is not altogether consonant and conformable, yea the very same with the Orthodox Doctrine now professed, and therefore the Gospel Preached formerly in *China* is the same with that which the Universal Catholick Roman Church enjoineth to be believed at this day" (2; N 2). He provides not one but two new translations, as well as (for the first time) a Romanized transliteration of the inscription arranged in columns and, most remarkable of all, a "true and genuine engraving" of the face of the entire monument, with both its Chinese and Syriac texts, dated

1664 and printed on a large foldout sheet (facing p. 12; not in N) [Figures 6, 7, 8, 9, see pp. 41–44].

CHINA ILLUSTRATA. 13

INTERPRETATIO I.

Quà

Characterum Sinicorum, qui in Monumento Sinico continentur, pronunciatio genuina per Latinos Characteres exprimitur.

6 The first page of the “First Interpretation” from Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, 13. As the title of this numbered grid indicates, this is a list of “the Chinese characters contained on the face of the monument, expressed in their genuine pronunciation using Latin letters.” National Taiwan University Library.

22 ATHANASII KIRCHERI

PRÆFATIO.

Expoſitis in præcedenti Tabula terminis Sinicis; ſeu quod idem eſt, quomodo Characteres Sinici in Lapide comprehenſi, Latinè pronunciandi ſint; jam in ſequenti Interpretatione, voces in præcedenti expoſitas, pari numerorum correſponſu, exponemus. Ita autem res ſe habet.

INTERPRETATIO II.

Verbalis Latina Monumenti Sino-Chaldaici.

Lin. 1. Tab. titulus. De magna *Cyn* (Judæa videlicet) clariſſimæ Legis promulgatæ in *Cum kuè* (id eſt, Sinarum Imperio) Monumentum.

o. Clariſſimæ Legis promulgatæ in Sina Lapis æternæ laudis & prologus. *Tacyn* (id eſt, Judææ) Eccleſiæ Sacerdos, *Kimcym*, retulit.

Columna prima. 1. PRincipium fuit ſemper idem, verum, quietum, primorum primum, & ſine origine, neceſſario idem, intelligens & ſpirituale, poſtremorum poſtremum & excellentiſſimum exiſtens, ordinavit cælorum polos, & fecit ex nihilo excellentiſſimè; perfecti omnium Sanctorum, pro origine adorant, quem ille ſolus perſonarum trium unica perfectiſſima ſubſtantia non habens principium, veritas Dominus *boloy* ſtatuit Crucem per pacificare quatuor partes Mundi, commovit originis ſpiritum & produxit.

Col. 2. 2. Duas mutationum cauſas (Sinicè dicuntur *ym* & *yam*, hoc eſt, materia & forma) obſcurum vacuum mutavit, & cœlum, terram aperuit, Solem, Lunam circumvolvit, & diem noctem fecit, Artifex operatus univerſas res. idem erigere voluit hominem, ornato donavit amabiliſſimam pacificæ unionis ſubordinationem (id eſt, juſtitiam originalem) præcipiebat quietem fluctibus maris, integra originis natura vacua humiliſque & non plena ſuperbaque, ſequi appetituum fluctuationem corde, de ſe, neque leviſſimè deſiderabat, promanavit à *Satan* (id eſt, Diabolo) extenſus dolus, clam ornavit naturam puram & ſimplicem otioſa pace magnificam in

Col. 3. 3. Illius permanentiæ medio odium occultavit ſimul per laudem malitiæ ad intra, iſtud cauſavit ter centum ſexies decem quinque ſectas, humeri hominum ſequebantur ordinem veſtigiorum contendentes texere regularum retia, aliqui monſtrabant res creatas pro credendo princi-

7 The first page of the “Second Interpretation” from Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, 22. A literal Latin translation of the Chinese inscription; the preface states that while the previous table had provided Latin pronunciations of the Chinese characters, this one provides a translation using the same numbering system. Each column is given a separate paragraph, with column numbers given in the margin as well. National Taiwan University Library.

CHINA ILLUSTRATA. 29

INTERPRETATIO III.

Seu

DECLARATIO PARAPHRASTICA

Inscriptionis Sinicæ, primùm è Sinico in Lusitanicam, ex hac in Italicam, & demùm ex Italica in Latinam linguam de verbo ad verbum translata, ut sequitur.

Declaratio *del Xiù Più*, vel ut Commentator ait, facta à Sacerdote Regni Judææ, qui vocabatur *Kim Lim*.

I. DIco itaque hoc modo, ille qui semper verus fuit & quietus, omnis expers principii, intellectus profundissimi, & semper duraturi, excellente potentiâ suâ ex nihilo creavit res omnes, infinita majestate sua & sanctitate fecit Sanctos. Hæc est essentia Divina, trina in personis, & in substantia una; Dominus noster, verus sine principio, *Olò, ò yu* (quod in Chaldæo idem ac *Eloha* significat) in figura Crucis fecit quatuor Mundi partes, commovit Chaos, fecit duo *Kis* (hoc est, duas virtutes, seu duas qualitates dictas *Ingam*, Commentator habet, duo principia) fecit mutationem in abysso, id est, mutavit tenebras, comparuit cœlum & terra, fecit ut Sol & Luna motibus suis noctem & diem causarentur, res omnes fabricatus est. Verùm creando primum hominem ei præterea justitiam largitus est originalem, dominum eum constituendo totius Universi, qui de sua natura primò vacuus erat & vilis, seipso plenus, intellectu plano & æquali, & sine mistura nullum habens appetitum inordinatum.

[Creatio rerum.] [Kis, quid in Sinensi lingua.]

II. Postquam verò Satanas fraudibus suis usus, effecit; ut Adamus id quod ex se & sua natura purum erat & perfectum, inficeret; hoc est, fecit ut malitia in ipsum intrare inciperet perturbatura pacem, & hujus suæ simplicitatis æqualitatem & discordiam illa fraude introduxit. Idcircò trecentis sexaginta quinque sectis unâ post alteram obortis, unaquæque earum maximum quem poterat numerum ad se trahebat. Aliqui creaturam Creatoris loco habebant. Alii principium rerum omnium vacuum ponebant, & ens reale (alludit ad hoc secta Pagodùm & Literatorum Sinensium) quoniam illi asserunt, quod principium, è quo omnia prodière, sit vacuum; quod idem illis est, ac subtile, sensibus imperceptibile, etiamsi in se reale sit & positivum principium. Literati verò dicunt, quod principium rerum non solùm reale sit & positivum, sed præterea quod talis sit figuræ & corpulentiæ, ut sensibus comprehendi queat. Quidam sacrificiis quærebant beatitudinem. Quidam bonitate quadam gloriabantur ad decipiendos homines, qua in re omnem suam scientiam & industriam collocabant, omni diligentia & intentione suis affectibus servientes. Verùm frustra laborabant & sine profectu, semper in pejus progredientes, quemadmodum contingit iis, qui è vase cretaceo ignem elicere volunt, obscuritatem addentes obscuritati, & hoc ipso veram semitam perdentes ad viam vitæ reverti nescientes.

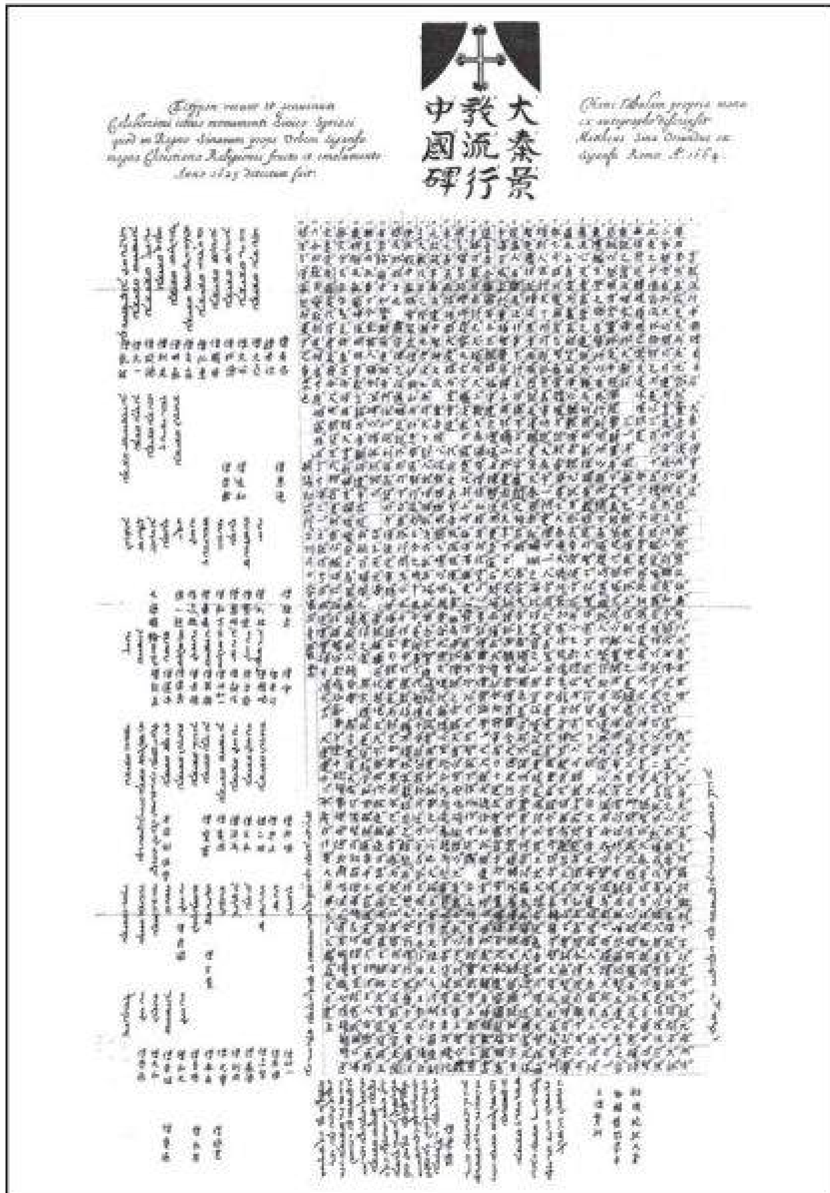
[Lapsus Adami.] [365. sectæ.]

III. Tunc una de Divinis personis sanctissimæ Trinitatis dicta Messias restringendo tegendoque Majestatem suam, & se humanæ naturæ accommodando homo factus est. Quam ob rem

[Incarnatio Filii Dei.]

D 3 ad

8 The first page of the “Third Interpretation” from Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, 29. A “paraphrastical declaration” of the text that notes that the inscription was first translated from Portuguese, then from Portuguese into Italian, and finally from Italian into Latin. The numbering system has disappeared, although the translation is still divided into columns. In the margins are short explanatory notes. National Taiwan University Library.



9 Large foldout engraving with the Chinese and Syriac text from Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, facing p. 12. The explanatory title notes that this “celebrated monument” had been found in Xi’an in 1625, and that the text had been copied by hand in Rome in 1664, by “Mattheus, a Native of China.” Note that the table is carefully numbered so that each character can be compared to the first and second “interpretations” previously provided. This engraving is a milestone in the depiction of Chinese characters in Western books. National Taiwan University Library.

In *Prodromus coptus* , the stone had been expressive of nothing more detailed than “the true God,” “the true law from Palestine,” or “the mysteries of our faith.” Other early Jesuit descriptions were

similarly vague or hesitant on the question of what *kind* of Christianity the stone eulogized: Semedo referred simply to “ancient Christianity,” and the first annual reports mentioned only “preachers of the holy evangelism” or “Christians who wore the tops of their heads shaven,” who “taught the adorable mysteries of the holy Trinity and the Incarnation &c.”[21] But the new translations offered in *China illustrata*, one “literal” and the other a suitably Eurocentric “paraphrastical declaration,” boldly attempted to make the text conform as closely as possible to seventeenth-century Roman Catholic doctrine.

This is apparent not only in the translations themselves, if one takes the trouble to see what has been altered and reoriented along the way, but also in a new chapter devoted to “The Articles of Faith and Other Ceremonies and Rites Contained in the Monument” (37–41; not in N). Here we find the Trinity, the Incarnation, and clerical tonsure, all of which are supported by the inscription. Yet Kircher also attempts to prove (and this would be much maligned, particularly in the eighteenth century) that the inscription referred to communion and to purgatory, with several Syro-Chaldean texts given in support.[22] While Kircher’s multi-part presentation certainly has the effect of making the whole process seem transparent and verifiable (since the engraving, the transliteration, and the word-by-word Latin translation are all keyed to a grid in which each Chinese character is assigned a number), Billings is right to alert us to the variety of circumlocutions and misreadings that frequently occur — even if practically no one in Europe would have been able to detect them.

Billings has also pointed out that perhaps the most egregious new assertion is a visual one, since the simple and relatively modest illustration of the cross provided in Kircher’s earlier account (where it was identified merely as a Maltese cross), has been silently altered into a form supposedly resembling the famous cross of St. Thomas found at Mylapore in India, a sketch of which was also shown in *Prodromus coptus*.[23] In *China illustrata*, the St. Thomas cross is also reworked in a far more elaborate fashion as a “Crux miraculosa” (facing

p. 54; not in N), replete with a barefoot Jesuit father gesturing to adoring East Indian converts [Figure 10, see p. 46]. The implications of this bit of fudge are clear: the monument itself has become a sign of a "pre-Nestorian" Christian orthodoxy that had at one time supposedly been prevalent in India as well.

Kircher bases his Catholic interpretations on a Syriac line at the end of the inscription that mentions (in his Latin transliteration) "Hanan Jesua, or Joannis Josue, Catholic Patriarch" (43; N 19). This must be a reference to the "universal or Catholic" patriarch of Alexandria, Antioch, or Babylon, Kircher avers, but he ultimately leaves the matter undecided (better for him that he did, since by the early eighteenth century it was recognized that this Hananisho was none other than a late eighth-century patriarch of the Chaldean Nestorians).[24] Kircher also took support from a letter from Boym, dated 1653 and quoted in full in the second chapter of *China illustrata* . Boym, too, unabashedly calls the monument a "testimon[y] of the Catholick Verity," from which, he says, "every one may conjecture how true the Doctrine of the Catholicks is, seeing that the same was preached in an opposite Quarter of the World amongst the *Chineses*, *Anno* 636 of our Savior" (7–8; N 8).[25] It is unclear, Boym continues, whether the Apostle had ever been to China, and since the monument does not mention him (and it would if it could, this line of thinking goes), it must be because the followers of the *jingjiao* religion had come from Syria and not Judea.[26]

10 "Miraculous cross of the Apostle St. Thomas in Mylapore, India" from Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, facing p. 54. Note the similarity between this cross and that depicted in Kircher's foldout engraving. National Taiwan University Library.

Once again the question of Nestorianism is carefully avoided, although Boym later admits that in Marco Polo's day Christians lived "mixed with *Sarazens*, *Jews*, *Nestorians*, and *Gentiles*" (9; N 9). "But from what place those *Syrian* Priests came," Boym concludes, "we leave to the industrious disquisitions of the Reverend Father *Athanasius Kircher* , a Person highly meriting of

all Antiquity; which that he may accomplish with the greater fidelity and solidity, unto that end and purpose we have presented also [the inscription] Transcribed in the *Chinese* out of the Book . . . Imprinted and divulged throughout the whole Empire by the *Chinesian* Doctors[,] . . . with my Latine Translation rendered word for word" (10; N 10).

This Chinese book is almost certainly the transcript and commentary published by Li Zhizao in 1625, but it is important to note that Kircher's inclusion of Boym's letter is also a perfect example of the unannotated verbosity endemic to Baroque polymathic scholarship, although certainly not peculiar to it. Kircher bows to the expertise of Boym and his Chinese colleagues (named as "Andreas Don Sin" and "Matthaeus"), who are "Eye-witnesses of the Monument" and "Transcribers of this Table from the Original," just as Boym refers back to Kircher for a fuller explanation of the Syrian connections and for a more precise contextualization of the translation. Even more circularly, in the same chapter Kircher cites the authority of Martini's 1655 *Atlas*, even though that account had been largely taken from Kircher's own *Prodromus coptus* of twenty years earlier! Two dates for the stele's discovery are also given, as well as three different versions of the precise location, discrepancies that still plague scholars to this day.[27] Similarly, Kircher refuses to arbitrate between the growing mass of contradictions regarding copies of the stone, all of which were supposedly superceded by Boym's new version, identified none too helpfully as a "perfect exemplar of the Original" (6; N 6).[28] One can easily understand readers' perplexity when on the next page Kircher also repeats his earlier claim (cited via Martini) that the monument was copied onto another stone of the same dimensions and that a copy had been brought to Rome (7; N 7). [29] And as if all of this were not already bewildering enough, Kircher also implies that his copy in Rome was made of stone as well. [30] Finally, in Boym's letter we are told that the " *Chinesian* Original of the Stone is now conserved in the Library of the *Roman* College," and that "another Copy is to be seen in the Repository of the House of the Profession" (8; N 8). [31] Is it any wonder that an already growing hatred and distrust of the Jesuits might have led to increased speculation about the possibility of duplicity or forgery?

V

Such accusations came not merely from Protestant readers but from some Catholic ones as well. One of the most widely read was Domingo Navarrete, a Dominican missionary stationed in China during the 1660s who frequently criticized the Jesuit mission and its accommodationist policies. His entertaining book of *Tratados* became especially popular in England, where a translation appeared as the opening account in a prominent compilation of voyage narratives published in 1704, and which was reprinted numerous times throughout the eighteenth century. [32] One of Navarrete's key objections was the idea that Catholicism might be made to appeal to the Chinese as some sort of pure or primitive form of their own religious tradition, Confucianism in particular. But according to Navarrete, Christianity had never come to China and thus the Xi'an stone could not be genuine. The meticulous chronicles make no mention of Christian missions in the empire, and thus, he writes, neither the Chinese nor their Western counterparts believe the monument to be true.[33] Both of these contentions were reiterated frequently in the years to come, even as they also proved to be quite incorrect: Chinese annals in fact make numerous references to Christian and other sects during this period, and Chinese scholars have never expressed any doubts about the stele's veracity. [34] The problem, from Navarrete's point of view, was that the Chinese did not seem to mention the stone at all.

This position appealed to Protestant scholars as well. One of the first to repeat it was Jean Le Clerc, a young Remonstrant theologian, in a lengthy review of the recently published *Confucius sinarum philosophus* (1687), a landmark cooperative Jesuit translation of three of the Four Books that launched a European-wide vogue for Confucius and for everything Chinese that lasted well into the next century.[35] The review is highly respectful of Jesuit learning, but when covering the second part of the book, Philippe Couplet's *Tabula chronologica monarchiae sinicae*, Le Clerc also questioned the idea that there were Christians during

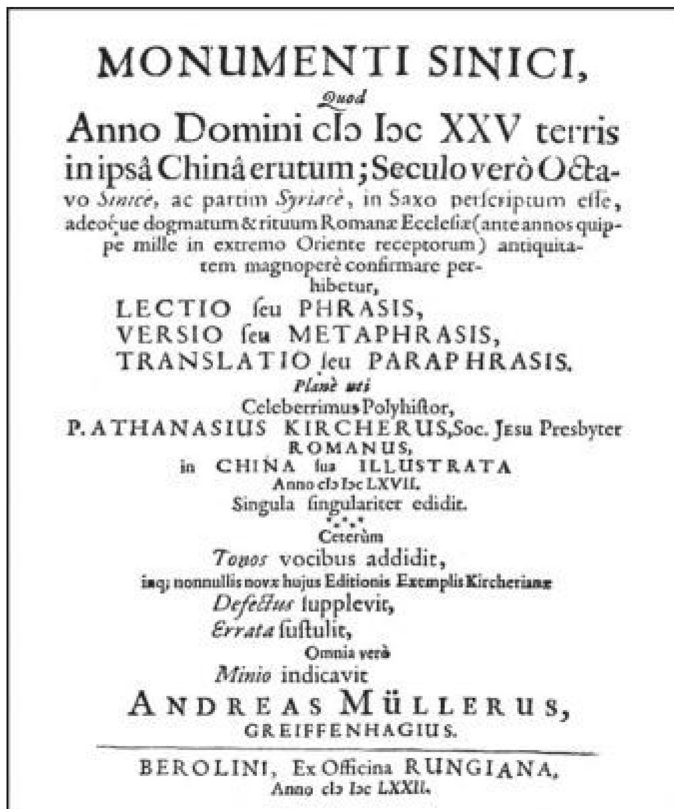
the Tang era. This was in response to a note by Couplet that claimed that in 634, during the eighth year of the reign of the emperor Taizong (one of the Tang emperors featured in the Xi'an inscription), the Chinese chronicles make mention of a legation of people from faraway nations with foreign countenances, red hair, and blue or green eyes. This must be the same group, continues Couplet, mentioned in the famous Xi'an monument found in 1625, and he refers the reader to Kircher's *China illustrata* for further details.[36]

Le Clerc disputed this connection, agreeing with Navarrete that Christianity had never come to China, since even if the annals mention foreign ambassadors they certainly do not deign to mention, as Le Clerc puts it, "such a grand event" as the arrival of Christianity. [37] How could the Xi'an stone be genuine? According to both Navarrete and Le Clerc, although they were writing from very different religious contexts, the arrival of Christianity would have been so central to China and to Chinese history that it would simply *have* to be mentioned. It never occurred to either commentator, blinded as they were by their distrust of Jesuits or of Catholics in general, that the relative silence accorded the object and the events it eulogized might have been due to the fact that, after all, there were considered very trivial subjects.

Similar claims were made by another Protestant reader, M. V. de La Croze, who was one of the leading Coptic scholars of his day and for many years librarian at the Prussian royal library in Berlin. Speaking about the monument at the conclusion of a lengthy essay on the history of the Christian church in the Indies, published in 1707 as the last of his *Dissertations historiques sur divers sujets* , La Croze argued that the Jesuits must have faked the stone. Among his many objections, he contends that a seventh-century mission from Judea would have used Greek rather than Syriac, that the doctrine of purgatory was unknown at the time, and that in any case the Chinese annals are silent on the matter. This is a perfect example, he adds, of the "artificial genius" endemic to the Jesuit order, as well as of the general failure of Roman Catholic missions throughout the world. La Croze would return to this same subject more briefly — but much more famously — in a greatly expanded monograph of 1724, the

Histoire du Christianisme des Indes , where he summarily dismissed the stele as nothing more than “une pièce manifestement supposée.”[38] His words would be frequently repeated by later anti-Catholic or anti-Jesuit doubters, for instance in a 1734 history of Manicheism published by Isaac de Beausobre (another Protestant based in Berlin), who managed to include his objection in a digression about the relationship between Manichean doctrine and the Vulgate New Testament. [39]

Not all Protestant scholars refused to believe in the authenticity of the stone, however. Leibniz, for one, who consistently defended the Jesuit position, accepted it, as did Johann Lorenz Mosheim in his great ecclesiastical history first published in 1737–41. [40] One of the most interesting of this group was Andreas Müller, German orientalist and provost of the Lutheran church in Berlin, who quickly came to Kircher’s defense and in 1672 published the *Monumenti sinici* , a detailed commentary on the Xi’an stone that came out only five years after *China illustrata* had first appeared [Figure 11]. Müller is much better known to early sinology for his work on a so-called *clavis sinica*, or key to Chinese, which, he argued, could reduce the complexities and difficulties of written and spoken Chinese to a series of principles that even women and children could learn in a very short time. [41] During the 1670s this discovery was known throughout Europe, since Müller had published a number of proposals in which he promised to reveal the secrets of his key in return for a substantial payment. Kircher and Leibniz, among others, expressed great interest in the invention, but despite numerous negotiations with potential buyers Müller’s key never appeared, and in accordance with his own wishes all of his papers and manuscripts were burned shortly before his death in 1694.



MONUMENTI SINICI,

Quod

Anno Domini cIↃ IↃC XXV terris in ipsâ Chinâ erutum; Seculo verò Octavo *Sinicè*, ac partim *Syriacè*, in Saxo perſcriptum eſſe, adeoq;ue dogmatum & rituum Romanæ Eccleſiæ (ante annos quippe mille in extremo Oriente receptorum) antiquitatem magnoperè confirmare perhibetur,

LECTIO ſeu PHRASIS,
VERSIO ſeu METAPHRASIS,
TRANSLATIO ſeu PARAPHRASIS.

Planè uti

Celeberrimus Polyhiſtor,
P. ATHANASIUS KIRCHERUS, Soc. Jesu Presbyter ROMANUS,
in CHINA ſua ILLUSTRATA
Anno cIↃ IↃC LXVII.
Singula ſingulariter edidit.

Ceterùm

Tonos vocibus addidit,
inq; nonnullis novæ hujus Editionis Exemplis Kircherianæ
Defectus ſupplevit,
Errata ſuſtulit,
Omnia verò
Minio indicavit

ANDREAS MÜLLERUS,
GREIFFENHAGIUS.

BEROLINI, Ex Officina RUNGIANA,
Anno cIↃ IↃC LXXII.

11 *China illustrata*. It also announces that the transcription of the Chinese text will include tones. National Taiwan University Library. Title page from Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*. The full title announces a complete translation and commentary of the stone discovered in 1625 and discussed in Kircher's

All that remains of the*clavis sinica*, in other words,is what can be surmised from his published work, including the *Monumenti sinici* . It is difficult to determine whether Müller had tried to group written Chinese characters according to the (then newly-developed) system of radicals still in use today.[42] Or it may have had something to do with the tonal system of the spoken language, a notion that he had evidently also borrowed from Kircher, whose presentation was also accompanied by a very brief treatment of tones — and to which, Kircher reports, the missionaries have assigned musical notes (11–12, 235–36; N 105). Müller takes this one step further by not only reprinting Kircher's (or rather Boym's) Romanized text, but also by plotting each character on a scale using musical notation, a feature soon to be the object of some ridicule [43] [Figure 12, see p. 52]. The rest of the book was similarly derivative, consisting of a detailed nine-part discussion of the inscription that mostly reiterated Kircher's presentation. Living in

the relatively isolated regions of eastern Germany, Müller had little new information to offer, and having had no contact with anyone who actually spoke Chinese, his treatment provided few genuine advances in European understanding of the inscription or of China in general.

Another early reader to object to the Jesuit position was Eusèbe Renaudot, a French orientalist and Jansenist theologian. In 1718, clearly in reply to the idealized picture popularized by so many Jesuit authors, he published translations of two ninth-century Arabic descriptions of China that to some degree spoke with contempt of the empire and its culture. And since both of these accounts also made brief mention of Christians during the period, Renaudot included an appendix on the origins of Chinese Christianity, where he also rejected the usual Jesuit version that St. Thomas must have traveled there.[44] The earliest indisputable Christian evidence, he argues, is the inscription on the Xi'an stone, which is unquestionably authentic. Renaudot's book incited many harsh responses from contemporary scholars and missionaries (and particularly when he added another unflattering appendix on Chinese learning).[45] But it is much more important to understand the degree to which the authority of Kircher's presentation of the stone, which Renaudot repeatedly derides, no longer held sway. Even by the time of his death in 1680, Kircher's style of polymathic scholarship was already out of date: his Egyptological theories were the target of increasing mockery, and his celebrated museum of exotica and curiosa, once a standard stop on the scholarly Grand Tour, had been largely dismantled. [46]

12 First page of the inscription from Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*, unnumbered page. The three versions of the text are drawn from Kircher's *China illustrata*, but the center column adds a somewhat baffling musical notation for the Romanized Chinese. National Taiwan University Library.

As more and more of his contemporaries were to do, Renaudot attacked Kircher (and after him Müller) for interpretations of the stone as evidence for a Copto-Egyptian "colony" in the East. Renaudot also took issue with their readings of the inscription; the text, he says, is not orthodox Catholic but Nestorian.[47] These criticisms would be repeated and expanded by Assemani in 1728, whose gigantic 950-page "Dissertatio de Syris Nestorianis" repeatedly faulted Kircher's and Müller's translations and definitively showed that the Christian mission to China was thoroughly Chaldean and Assyrian in nature.[48] Now even the

Jesuits were prepared to concede that perhaps the Christians described on the monument were not Catholic at all. An eminent example was Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, whose huge synthesis of Jesuit materials published in 1735 included a translation of an imperial edict from 845, in which the followers of the *jingjiao* religion (along with all other foreign sects, including Buddhism) were ordered to return to secular life. Du Halde admitted in a footnote that "we cannot easily discover by this Monument whether they were Catholics or Nestorians," but this hardly convinced his English (and presumably Protestant) translator, who icily added that it did not matter since they were condemned along with the Buddhists by the Tang emperors. In fact, as the translator continues, the Jesuits have gone to great lengths to mask the "conformity" between their own faith and that of the Buddhists, and thus the veracity of the monument is suspect as well. [49]

VI

In some sense, then, after one hundred years of discussion and debate we seem to be back where we started, with a critic refusing to consider the monument as anything more than a piece of Jesuit trickery. New information about the history of the Nestorian church had been gathered and published, and there were occasional twists and turns in readers' lines of dissent or support, but from a larger perspective very little had really changed. And how could it? Western knowledge about China or the Chinese language was simply insufficient to prove the authenticity of the object either way. By 1735, the Western presence in China was steadily dwindling, having reached its peak around 1700, yet of course the number of Westerners at any one time — and they were almost entirely missionaries — is hardly an index of what was actually known about China or the way that this information was received and understood.[50] Even if a growing number of commentators were willing to accept the authenticity of the stele, the debates themselves had made very little progress, overshadowed as they were by religious politics and especially by the Rites Controversy, in which scholars and theologians were attempting (or refusing) to accommodate Chinese religious

practices to the tenets of early modern Western Christianity. One such distraction was the debate over whether the emperors mentioned on the stone had been "exalted too much" by Aluoben and his followers. [51] And as a perceived Jesuit object, it was impossible for most readers to separate it, whatever it might have contained, from its presumed function as a tool of the Catholic missionary community.

Yet I think we can also begin to perceive the way in which, for many readers in the West, the inscription had already become a crucial means of access to China and to everything Chinese, and that this was, to say the least, a very peculiar place to begin one's inquiry. What did it mean, in other words, if readers in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Europe relied on this particular inscription as a way to learn about China? Why should they be drawn to this tablet rather than, for example, excerpts from the Confucian Four Books or classical poetry or Chinese histories? One reason for its attractiveness is that it seemed to be Christian, but we also need to understand how Kircher's engraving was by far the most convenient Chinese text available at the time. As it happens, very few Chinese texts were available at all. A few manuscripts and books were held by libraries and private collections, but previous to Kircher's fold-out sheet only a handful of crudely drawn Chinese characters had even appeared in European books (examples include Mendoza, Semedo, Gabriel de Magalhães, and Kircher's own *Prodromus coptus*). As Knud Lundbaek has written, "information about [the Chinese] language . . . contained in the many China books, all the way up to the end of the eighteenth century, can be printed on less than ten pages." [52] But with the publication of *China illustrata*, a long sample with accompanying apparatus was readily obtainable for the very first time. Despite all its errors of transcription, as well as its manifold Eurocentric and Christocentric mistranslations, and despite the fact that the inscription as a whole was far too difficult and multivalent for even the greatest scholars of the day to appreciate, Kircher's four-part presentation was a landmark event.

In an earlier study of the eighteenth-century Formosan impostor George Psalmanazar, I tried to show the way in which his creations in the "Formosan" language, although they were nothing

more than fabrications of his quick and able mind, served as key samples for the developing field of comparative linguistics. This was particularly true for his phony version of the Lord's Prayer, which was soon included in scholarly lists of Lord's Prayer versions (often the only known sample of a given language) that were being obsessively collected and anthologized during the period. [53] The point was that these polyglot collections became increasingly separated from their original aim as theological propaganda, namely, to demonstrate the Christianization of the entire world by means of the texts of conversion being expressed in every known vernacular. The languages themselves now became objects of study, even if they all expressed the same fundamentally Christian message. A similar fate can be perceived for the Xi'an inscription, since by the end of its first hundred years in Europe a number of scholars had already seized upon it in their attempts to acquire proficiency in the Chinese language.

Chinese linguistic study had slowly extricated itself from earlier theories about hieroglyphics — as well as from other fantasies of a so-called universal language that could signify its referents in a purely pictorial way. Even if the vast majority of scholars had few Chinese books and no Chinese speakers at their disposal, they did have the text of the Xi'an monument. It was not until the 1720s, in fact, that a new breed of sinologist like Etienne Fourmont would publish much more accurate information about the language, with the benefit of an extensive Chinese collection in the royal library in Paris. He had also enjoyed frequent contact with a native speaker called Arcadio Huang, a Christian from the Fujian province who had settled in Paris beginning in 1702. But when Huang died in 1716, Fourmont was once again left on his own. [54]

In Müller's Berlin, however, things were different. Like many of his contemporaries he had long been intrigued by the formation of Chinese characters, which Semedo, for one, had described very vaguely as being composed of nine basic strokes. But as soon as he saw the inscription of the monument as it was published in *China illustrata*, Müller began to organize all of its characters into groups. Thus his*clavis sinica* was born.[55] His successor in Berlin, Christian Mentzel, the court physician, also developed an interest

in Chinese in his later years. By 1700 he, too, had devised a never-published *clavis sinica*, evidently much more modest than Müller's and firmly based on the system of radicals. One of the first products of his studies, published in 1685, was a collection of some five hundred alphabetically arranged Latin words and their equivalents given in Chinese characters and Romanized pronunciation, preceded by a few notes on calligraphy, radicals, and variant forms [Figure13, see p. 56]. Unusual as this was for a reference book of the time, closer inspection of Mentzel's little lexicon reveals that it was composed merely from the characters of the Xi'an stone as printed in Kircher, errors and all. [56]

13 First page of the wordlist from Christian Mentzel, *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinicocharacteristici* (Sketch of a Little Lexicon of Latin and Chinese Characters), unnumbered pages. The wordlist consists entirely of characters from the monument arranged according to their Latin translations. National Taiwan University Library.

But at least it was a start. Müller had also been led astray by the idiosyncrasies of Kircher's text, as when he puzzled over the character Romanized as "rigo" that twice appears in the first part of the inscription (column 1, no. 33 and column 4, no. 17), in both cases in the phrase "rigo san ye." But since there is no "r" in Chinese, Müller mused, and no disyllables either (a common misconception), perhaps "rigo" could be linked to the Portuguese

word *rio*, or river, and that the inscription might somehow be referring to the "pure river of water of life" mentioned at the beginning of the last chapter of Revelations![57] This suggestion was understandably derided from the start, and Müller himself soon admitted his mistake: "rigo" was nothing more than a misprint in Kircher's book for "ngo" (now transliterated as "wo"), the first person singular pronoun "I." Thus "ngo san ye" ("wo san yi" in modern Pinyin) is simply "I am three in one," a clear description of some form of Trinitarian God. [58] Kircher's word-by-word Latin translation and paraphrase might have been partly to blame for this error, since the word "I" does not actually appear in either case (the phrase is translated as "personarum trium unica," "trina in personis," and "personis sanctissimae Trinitatis").[59] But what remains most puzzling of all is that Kircher's engraving quite plainly depicts the Chinese character for "I," prompting Müller's contemporaries (as well as later critics) to wonder just how many Chinese characters he actually knew.

An even more elaborate set of inaccuracies flowed from the pen of Philippe Masson, a French Protestant clergyman living in Holland, who in the 1710s attempted to find parallels between Hebrew and Chinese based on the "spellings" of Chinese given in early texts by Semedo, Kircher, and others.[60] The problem was that these were just (generally Portuguese) transliterations and not really Chinese at all, and, like Müller and Mentzel before him, Masson was also quite explicit about the fact that his initial interest in the language was awakened by Kircher — or rather by the Xi'an monument.

Moreover, when Kircher's text was translated into French in 1670, it was accompanied by a Chinese and French dictionary as an appendix, with entries alphabetically arranged according to Romanized Chinese and then subdivided by tones, compound forms, and phrases or idioms [Figure 14, see p. 58]. While no Chinese characters appear here, this wordlist was one of the earliest of its kind to be printed in Europe, and prefaces by both Kircher and his publisher make special mention of its usefulness for commerce and for missionary work.[61] A number of modern scholars have wondered whether this dictionary should be credited to Boym as well, but the Chinese is Romanized according

to a very different system. [62] Unlike Mentzel's dictionary, this wordlist was almost certainly a collaborative work assembled by and for missionaries working in the field. It, too, would soon be surpassed by larger and far more comprehensive lexicons, based on Chinese dictionaries published in China. One of these, begun by Mentzel, was never completed. Another was by T. S. Bayer, with whom we can bring our examination of the monument's first century in the West to a close.

Yet one more (German-born) scholar of ancient Near Eastern languages who had become obsessed with Chinese studies, Bayer was one of the last of the self-taught early sinologists who pieced together what they could without the benefit of a Chinese library or any personal contact with native speakers. He later became even more isolated than his colleagues in Berlin when he moved to St. Petersburg in 1726, to head Peter the Great's newly founded Imperial Academy of Sciences, where there were no Chinese books at all. His *Museum sinicum* , published in two volumes in St. Petersburg in 1730, has a permanent place in the history of sinology since it was arguably the first European example of what we could call a textbook of the Chinese language, including a substantial grammar (based, as always, on the Latin model), a vocabulary (in this case a dictionary organized according to Chinese radicals), and a few practice texts given in Chinese characters with accompanying commentary. The volumes are also filled with numerous plates of hand-drawn characters. The work is prefaced by a long and useful essay on the history of Chinese studies that has preserved many otherwise lost details about his contemporaries' frustrations and fantasies — for example Müller's incredible claim that with his *clavis sinica* he could quickly absorb the whole of Chinese history. [63]

DICTIONAIRE
CHINOIS & FRANÇOIS.

Chinois.	François.
Çà	Mixtionner, meſlanger, meſler, brouiller, trouiller.
Hoèn çà	meſlé, embrouillé, meſlangé, confus.
Çà xù	livre tout faux, c'eſt à dire rempli de fauſſetés.
Çà	evaporer, paſſer ſon feu, & ſa colere.
Çà ſcieu	rafraiſchir ſon corps & ſes membres.
Cai tam	convenable, à propos, ſortable, accordant.
Cài luí	il eſt convenable de traitter de cecy ou de cela.
Cài	changer, corriger.
Cài quo uòn	corriger les fautes.
Xén	ſe torner.
Cài bàn	changer d'office.
Cài piên	changer de coûtume, & de façon de faire.
Cài tam	appeller à la Juſtice, ou au tribunal.
Cài	couvrir, cacher, voiler, cachée, couverte, voylée.
Cài çù	pauvre, indigent, miſerable, diſetteux.
Yè cái	ouvrir tout d'un coup, tout à l'heure, preſte.
Pèu cāi	ouvrir promptement & en diligence.
Cāi	ouvrir, fendre.
Cāi chuên	ſortir de la barque, ſe deſenbarquer.
Cāi piē	la creation du monde, ou la production de toutes choſes.
Cāi cùn	deſcouvrir des mines.
Cāi kèù	ouvrir la bouche.
Pù cāi	eſtendre, eſpendre, dilater, prolonger.

Chinois.	François.
Cāi puē	ouvrir boutique.
Cāi yám	ouvrir, ou franchir les routes de mer.
Çāi tiēn bùàm	ouvrir une feneſtre du toict ou une lucarne.
Çai	calamités, miſeres, afflictions.
Çai lè bō	planter des arbres.
Cái	jadis, autrefois, eſtre, vivre.
Çái ʒmi kiáo	dites encore, repetés derechef.
Çái pú càn	pour peu de choſe, ou rien du tout.
Çái pú çó	je ne feray jamais plus.
Çái pú xenì	jamais, plus que.
Kí cái	pour ſe ſouvenir, en memoire, pour n'oublier pas.
Çai nà lì chú	où demeure-t'il, où loge-t'il, où eſt ſa maiſon.
Çái nà lì cāi	d'où eſt-t'il, de quel païs.
Hién cāi	où eſt-t'il, où demeure-t'il, où tarde-t'il.
Çāi bâm	eſtre pratiqué, expert, experimenté.
Cāi	deviner, predire, preſager.
Çāi cō	ne deviner pas, errer, ſe tromper.
Ngò cāi temi ti ſuì	penetrer juſques à l'interieur, deviner les penſées.
Çāi mì	expliquer les enigmes, & en comprendre le ſens.
Çāi	habilité, aptitude, docilité, richeſſe, fait, action, tout à l'heure, pourlors, alors, en ce temps.
Çāi chè táo	aſtheure je le ſcay.
Çāi	couper comme des habits.

Cāi

14 First page of a French and Chinese dictionary, arranged according to Romanized Chinese and appended to Athanasius Kircher, *Chine illustrée*, 324. Note that no Chinese characters appear here. National Taiwan University Library.

Bayer admitted that *China illustrata* had been essential for him, too. One of his earliest works in manuscript is a list of characters copied from the Xi'an stone, the authenticity of which he accepted without question. And yet when he came to compile practice texts for his *Museum sinicum*, surprisingly enough the inscription was not chosen, despite the fact that it was one of the only Chinese

texts available and certainly just as easy to obtain as the three that were included instead: a life of Confucius, a portion of the first of the Confucian Four Books, and a primer of Chinese mythology.[64] Bayer's modern biographer has suggested that this was due to the fact that Kircher's version was seen as unreliable, and that this is why Bayer's letters to Jesuits residing in Beijing make repeated requests for a more accurate copy. [65] Perhaps the initial usefulness of the inscription, along with much of Kircher's scholarly authority, had already passed. The second and much more influential Chinese textbook to appear in Europe, Fourmont's *Meditationes sinicae* of 1737, had likewise been based on a far more extensive selection of material. But even Fourmont repeatedly admitted that Kircher's presentation (along with Martini's *Atlas*) had been absolutely fundamental. [66]

For a brief but important moment, I would argue, the Xi'an stele had actually become synonymous with textbook (if not spoken) Chinese. Even the original eighth-century author of the inscription was repeatedly troubled by the necessity of finding Chinese equivalents for the basic tenets of *jingjiao* teaching. But for European readers, who had so little else to go on, the inscription and its apparently Christian text conformed very comfortably to Western preoccupations and prejudices. And despite its obvious thematic limitations, like a Lord's Prayer sample it was much easier to assimilate than colloquial wordlists, Confucian extracts, or other types of "authentic" Chinese. Readers were hardly equipped to perceive China in any other way; it was both antipodally foreign and yet still potentially Christian, impossibly difficult and tortuous but still somehow reducible to the realm of the familiar. Kircher's canonization of the stele had already become an indispensable part of the way in which China would become "illustrated" for a European audience, and as seventeenth-century accounts of China gradually gave way to the eighteenth-century *rêve chinois*, the stone continued to play a fundamental role.

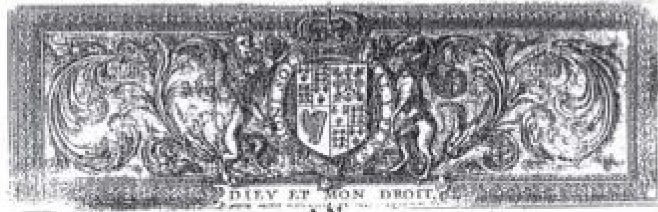
3

Eighteenth-Century Problems and Controversies

It was certainly not the case that every seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century book about China made some kind of reference to the Nestorian monument. One important example was the narrative of the first Dutch embassy to Beijing published in Dutch, French, German, and Latin editions between 1665 and 1668.[1] It is perfectly understandable that diplomatic and mercantile aspirations would have found other kinds of detail to be much more pertinent (and the ambassadorial party never went anywhere near Xi'an). But by the same token, one might have expected at least some kind of reference to the monument in the précis of the Shaanxi province, or in the chapter on Chinese religions that even mentions the St. Thomas legend. When the text was translated into English in 1669, however, it was supplemented by a onehundred-page extract from Kircher's *China illustrata*, which as we have seen was based almost entirely on the discovery of the stone. The translator calls this appendix "Special Remarks Taken at Large Out of Athanasius Kircher's Antiquities of China," and as such it is entirely representative of the way in which China's immense recorded history became interesting to Europeans only when its antiquities purported to intersect with their own[2] [Figure 15, see p. 62]. The monument was a self-interested point of access that appealed to readers since it was so "Western," even if in a larger context it was little more than an obscure piece of eighth-century limestone from a very brief moment when Christianity (in one form or another) had managed to gain a degree of official acceptance. The Xi'an stele seemed to have become the place from which any "illustration" of China really began.

European readers had seized upon the object as a key moment in Chinese history and as a sign of its potential (re-) Christianization. But they also seized upon it (via Kircher) as one of the few Chinese texts available at all. By the middle of the eighteenth

century the monument had been firmly linked both to Kircher's presentation and to the Jesuit order, and thus attitudes toward the stone seemed to depend on one's opinion of Kircher's scholarship or of the Jesuits in general. In this chapter, as we move from the middle of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth, we will find that an interest in the monument continued to be largely coextensive with an interest in China as such, and conversely that surveys of the Chinese empire tended to include some sort of verdict about the alleged existence of Christianity there. What had changed was a new understanding of the country that can be characterized by two very different but inextricably linked phenomena: the rise and fall of European Chinoiserie, and a rapidly dwindling presence of Westerners beyond port cities such as Canton or Macao. In other words, the period of greatest sinophilia in the West occurred at precisely the same moment when China had become a closed country. The monument, similarly, would become the subject of intense fantasy even as it remained unverifiable in remote Xi'an, and the celebratory eyewitness reports of Semedo or Li Zhizao had become lost in a plethora of scholarly annotation.



AN

APPENDIX

OR

Special REMARKS taken at large out of

ATHANASIUS KIRCHER

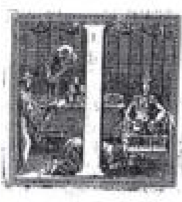
HIS

Antiquities of China.

PART I.

CHAP. I.

The Cause and Occasion of this Work.



T is now about 30 Years ſince, that I produced the Expoſition of a certain *Syro-Chineſian* Monument found in *China* 1625; which although it gained no ſmall applauſe amongſt Readers of a more then ordinary apprehenſion, that were taken with the Novelty, yet notwithſtanding afterwards there were not wanting ſome incompetent Cenſurers or Criticks, who ceaſed not to wound its reputation by ſnarling and trifling objections, ſtabbing it with Critical Steelettoes, albeit they proved in the ſequel leaden and blunted; *viz.* That there was never any Monument of ſuch a kind in Nature, and therefore that it was a meer forgery. This they endeavoured by all means poſſible not only to perſwade themſelves to ſuch a belief, but alſo to raiſe a like credulity in others. Theſe and the like perſons are deſervedly, and ought to be eſteemed for ſuch, who rejecting all divine and humane faith, ap-

The opinion of ſome Archians or Criticks concerning this Monument.

B prove

15 First page of a translation of Kircher's *China illustrata* appended to Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China* , part 2, p. 1. The foldout engraving of the monument does not appear in this version. National Taiwan University Library.

China's place in Enlightenment thinking has never been fully recognized, mainly because its influence is so far-reaching as to defy any sort of meaningful measurement. It became a central focus of almost every conceivable kind of contemporary writing, even as Chinese objects flooded the European marketplace

(porcelain, silk, tea), and as Chinese styles become the rage of international fashion (gardens, architecture, Rococo painting and sculpture). Chinese philosophy had an enormous influence as well, as European scholars, deists, and freethinkers envisioned an ideal society founded upon Confucian ethics and principles of pure rationality. China's state apparatus was said to be headed by emperors who ruled as benevolent fathers, and whose government consisted of individuals whose main qualification was not their noble birth but instead their ability to pass a highly competitive examination — based, once again, on Confucian principles. For many Europeans, these "Chinese" attributes represented models for Western emulation that were superior to the corrupt and debilitating Judeo-Christian monarchies of the West. And as we will see, the monument played a surprisingly important role in these discussions, too, but usually as a negative example of Western contamination.

Yet it is also important to recall that the vogue for Chinese things was based on a distinct *lack* of knowledge about the empire, not a deepened understanding of Chinese culture and the Chinese language, both of which remained almost entirely unknown. This was a *rêve chinois* not a modern ethnography, and Western ideas about China remained thoroughly Eurocentric fantasies filtered through long-standing prejudices and stereotypes about the fabled Middle Kingdom. Moreover, as political circumstances in China forced the Western missionaries to depart, the flood of new information that had been provided throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suddenly stopped. In 1724 all missionaries with the exception of those living at the court in Beijing were banished; churches were closed and Chinese Christians were ordered to renounce their faith. Back home in Europe things were hardly better. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the missionaries had also become the center of the Rites Controversy, eventually leading to the formal dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773. Although it was officially restored soon thereafter, the mission never regained its former power nor its former international influence.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, European knowledge about the Chinese empire consisted mainly of a seemingly endless rehash of previously published material that dated back to

Marco Polo and beyond. A climax of sorts was achieved with the publication of Du Halde's *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine* , a monumental synthesis taken mainly from Jesuit sources published in four folio volumes in 1735. [3] But in the decades to follow, it is arguable that almost no new information was to appear in print until 1776, the date of the first volume of the *Memoires concernant . . . des Chinois* , an encyclopedic collection of Jesuit papers that filled sixteen volumes by 1814 (although many of these reports had been composed before 1750). There was one other prominent collection from the same period, largely edited by Du Halde as well, a gigantic assemblage of Jesuit reports known as the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* , published in thirty-four volumes between 1703 and 1776.[4] Only a portion of these letters had to do with China, and even those that did tended to discuss rather routine mission affairs. The next major eyewitness account was that of the Macartney embassy published in 1797, ushering in a new and very different era of Chinese-European contact far more explicitly interested in trade than in religious conversion. [5]

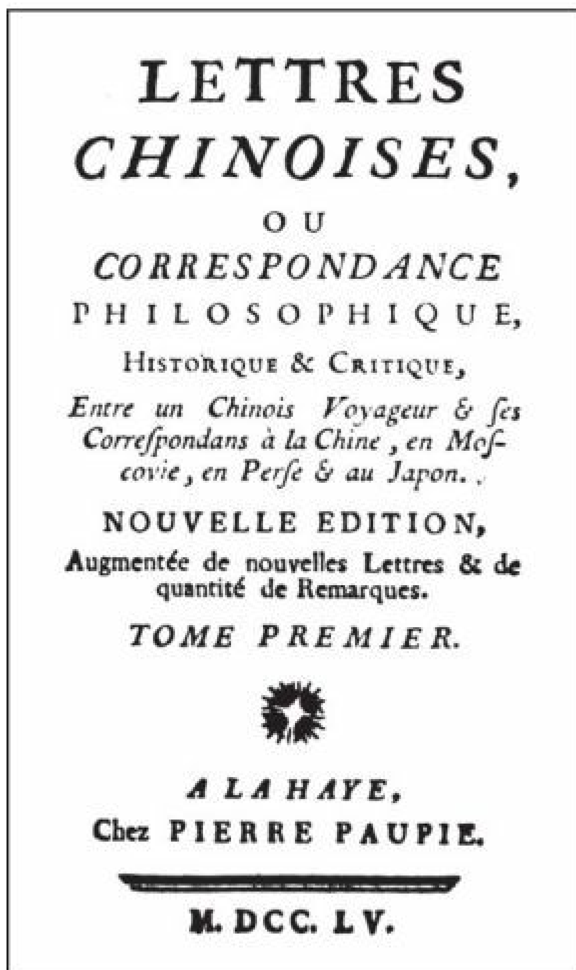
Eighteenth-century European sinophilia was hardly a monolithic phenomenon, however. Like any other fashion it rose and fell at different times in different areas, and some places (notably France), seemed to be more consistently fascinated by Chinoiserie than others. In any case, there was always an equal and opposite sinophobia or anti-Chinese bias that coexisted along with it, and just as one might cite Jesuit paeans to Chinese society or to Chinese history, there were just as many authorities (often Protestant) to whom one could turn for evidence of Chinese oppressiveness, turpitude, or moral hypocrisy. By mid-century one of the most frequently cited sources was the narrative of George Anson's circumnavigation published in 1748, whose brief stay at Canton inspired a long and vitriolic tirade against the art, science, literature, religion, language, history, morality, and government of the entire nation and its people, whose "fraudulent and selfish" nature was entirely "contradictory to the character given of them in the legendary accounts of the Romish missionaries." Such stories, we are told, were nothing more than "Jesuitical fictions."[6]

II

China had become a bifurcated concept that could be made to embody either a moral paradise or a hotbed of human evil, and from the sinophobic point of view Anson's accusations of fraud, legend, or fiction were all but standard, whether they were directed at the (Catholic) missionaries or at the Chinese themselves. Here again we find just as much hatred toward China as enthusiasm; Voltaire, for example, perhaps the most influential figure of the entire age, was positively obsessed with China, while Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Diderot remained much cooler. Voltaire's long and prolific career, in fact, is filled from beginning to end with allusions, references, and appeals to China, Chinese history, and Chinese moral philosophy. It is thus no accident that the Nestorian monument should have had a prominent place in his oeuvre, punctuated by crucial references both early and late in his career.

We will examine Voltaire's comments in a moment, since first we should pay heed to the role of the stele in a work of pure fiction, the *Lettres chinoises* of the Marquis d'Argens, first published serially in 1739 and 1740 [Figure 16, see p. 66]. For as European knowledge of the empire became more and more separated from first-hand source material, China began to appear as a feature of — indeed as a character in — every conceivable variety of popular fiction, largely displacing an earlier predilection for Turkish motifs. [7] China was now a literary style, a mysterious and exotic world of enlightened despotism and sensual pleasure, typified by the figure of the dispassionate, inscrutable, but morally superior Chinese mandarin. It was also the world of quiet, pleasure-loving, smiling faces depicted in porcelain and paint. The *Lettres chinoises* belong to the literary genre of letters from a foreign traveler, in this case an oriental visitor who sends letters back home expressing his opinions about his new life in the West. Such works were a convenient means both to glamorize exotic foreigners and to satirize contemporary European social and religious mores. The genre was pioneered by such works as Giovanni Paolo Marana's *L'esploratore turco* (1684), Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), and David Fassman's *Reisende Chineser* (1721–33).[8]

D'Argens was a libertine freethinker who led a mostly itinerant life in Holland and at the Prussian court, and he capitalized on the enormous success of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. His trilogy of pseudo-oriental travelogues were among the most popular of their day, the first being his *Lettres juives* of 1736–38, which were quickly followed by the *Lettres cabalistiques* and the *Lettres chinoises*. The last of these is familiar to students of English literature as a major influence on Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* (1762), whose own Chinese narrator borrows very heavily from his French precursor. The *Lettres chinoises* had also appeared in English as *Chinese Letters* and *The Chinese Spy* in 1741 and 1752.



LETTRES

CHINOISES,

OU

CORRESPONDANCE

PHILOSOPHIQUE,

HISTORIQUE & CRITIQUE,

Entre un Chinois Voyageur & ſes Correſpondans à la Chine, en Moſ-covie, en Perſe & au Japon.

NOUVELLE EDITION,

Augmentée de nouvelles Lettres & de quantité de Remarques.

TOME PREMIER.

A LA HAYE,

Chez PIERRE PAUPIE.

M. DCC. LV.

16 Title page of the first volume of Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres chinoises, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique* (1755 edition). National Taiwan University Library.

Although the nationality of these narrators may differ greatly — Persians, Turks, Jews, Chinese — they all speak with more or less the same European voice, since of course the whole point is not really to provide local color but instead to critique Western customs. In fact, d'Argens considered his trilogy as three parts of a single work, which he called his *Correspondance philosophique, historique & critique*. And since d'Argens was a deist, special emphasis was naturally placed on Christian affectation and deceit; his non-Christian narrators, far from being uncivilized or heretical barbarians, all tended to be wiser and even more enlightened than their hypocritical European hosts. China was seen as a superior nation in terms of its moral education, and like many others of his generation d'Argens was utterly infatuated by the figure of Confucius. The preface to the *Lettres chinoises* is even dedicated to his departed spirit, and "the greatest man the universe has ever produced" is imagined having frequent conferences with Leibniz and other philosophers in the great beyond. Similarly laudatory in tone, the main text contains 150 letters in all, covering a wide variety of topics and fantasies about China and its highly refined civilization, including the differences between Confucianism and European Christianity.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the subject of the famous Christian monument in Xi'an should have invaded these fantasies. This occurs near the very end of the collection, when the narrator, I-Tuly, remarks to his correspondent in China that the policy of relative toleration practiced by the Kangxi emperor seems to have done much more harm than good, threatening to turn China into a "half Christian" country. But the much stricter policies of the succeeding emperor have not done enough either, although they may have led to the banishment of the missionaries.[9] It is clear that d'Argens's real enemy is not just European Christianity but the missionaries who had come to propagate it, stereotypically seen as inveterate liars. According to I-Tuly, they have placed all their hopes on the fake monument of Xi'an, claiming it as proof that Christianity had come to China in its distant past. [10]

This argument is hardly new. But d'Argens's treatment of the motives of the missionaries is far more fully psychologized than ever before, even if many of the details are farfetched or factually

inaccurate. I-Tuly describes the stone and gives its inscription in full (which d'Argens has copied from Le Comte), and since many Europeans have questioned its authenticity, I-Tuly asks his friend to go to Xi'an to examine the stone for himself — as if this were just a short carriage-ride away. Moreover, he should consult some Dutch or English travelers for their input (but not missionaries, who are biased), even though Europeans would have been confined to the southern seaports at least a thousand miles away.

In the next letter, I-Tuly's friend, Yn-Che-Chan, replies that he has indeed heard of the monument but only as an object that is considered highly suspect. In the first place, Yn-Che-Chan continues, why isn't Christianity mentioned in the Chinese annals, especially since according to the inscription the emperor issued an official edict on the subject? And even if the stone were authentic its religion is hardly the same as that which is practiced today. The inscription says nothing about communion, curing the sick, the Virgin Mary, the saints, or an infallible Pope: all those "puerile and superstitious ceremonies" that are the essence of modern Christianity (the religious satire is palpable). Yn-Che-Chan has also asked a European merchant for his opinion on the matter, and he is told that most people who believe in the veracity of the stele do so out of prejudice, or because they have no way to disprove it. The merchant then proposes to accompany him to Xi'an (how on earth could this happen?), and it turns out that the text has not even been faithfully copied. The real inscription mentions purgatory and the Magi, both of which are anachronistic, and the stone and its writing look too new and undamaged for an object that had supposedly been buried for eight hundred years. The merchant was also puzzled by the Syriac writing, and after comparing it with some fragments of the language that he happened to have with him (!) he concludes that it was not the Syriac of Palestine but rather that of the St. Thomas Christians living in India — another mistake, he says, since the Christians of Judea spoke Greek by this time. Finally, why would a church that had been so persecuted in its own land send a mission to China at all? The letter concludes with a cliffhanger of a promise to reveal the real story in the next installment. [11]

Thus far, d'Argens has simply collected the main objections that had already been published and has reiterated them within a pleasant fiction, but in the next letter his imagination really begins to take over. We begin with another detail borrowed from Le Comte, that the Chinese priests have built a monument to their own religion facing the Nestorian stele, and while Yn-Che-Chan and the European merchant are standing in front of both stones, an old man approaches them and offers a further tale. He reveals that there has been a great deal of rivalry and court intrigue between Chinese priests and the Western missionaries (modern-day Jesuits, not Tang-era Nestorians), and that the missionaries realized that the only way to maintain their credit was to prove that Christianity was not new. This led them to forge a monument. Since they imagined that their predecessors would have come from Judea, they thought that some Syriac would have to be included, but as none of the missionaries understood the language they had to consult their brethren on the Malabar coast. The missionaries chose Xi'an as the best place for the stone to be discovered, since it was the ancient capital, and they commissioned a Western workman in Macao to do the sculpting and inscribing — who, we are told, did not even understand what he was writing. After listening to this long story, the European sadly tells Yn-Che-Chan that some Christians will produce pious frauds to further their own ends. Look at the inscription, he says, and you will see how carefully it has managed to suggest that the same honors bestowed upon the Tang-era Christians should be granted to the modern missionaries! [12]

III

The establishment of such a precedent, of course, is precisely what the inscription's original authors had intended. But in d'Argens's imagination, the responsibility has been shifted entirely to the modern missionaries, and it is not difficult to understand how Henri Havret, himself a Jesuit working in China and author of the still standard study of the monument published between 1895 and 1902, might have become so angry at "abusiveness," "effrontery," "temerity," "cowardice," and "iniquity" of d'Argens's

fable. [13] And yet the *Lettres chinoises* is also very much in tune with the climate of European Chinoiserie in which it was produced, and d'Argens is also arguably the earliest of the stone's objectors actually to fashion a detailed story to explain how and why it might have been created. Indeed, judging by the immense size and weight of the monument and by its lengthy inscription in two ancient languages almost completely unknown to Europeans, it has never been an easy task for the stone's dissenters to account for the Jesuits (usually the culprits) having been able to accomplish such a feat. Why would they have gone to so much trouble?

They would have had to find and shape a huge piece of limestone and carve on its front and sides such a difficult text. They would have had to know enough about Chinese history and Chinese religions to employ such a wide variety of Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian metaphors and allusions, in order to feign an explanation of Christianity to an eighth-century Chinese audience. They would have had to produce a convincing text in an ancient and rare form of Syriac as well. They would have had to find a way to bury a ten-foot high stele in the ground so that it would be conveniently found at just the right moment. They would have had to know enough about the Tang period to have chosen Xi'an rather than another part of the vast Chinese empire, a particularly difficult task owing to the city's remoteness and to the fact that by that time no Jesuit mission had even been set up in the area. Wouldn't it have been much easier to invent some other form of proof than this?

The eighteenth century featured a number of other fanciful readings, including my personal favorite, that the monk Aluoben, whom the inscription credits with having introduced the sect to China and whose name is spelled as Olopuen or Lopuen in Kircher's transliteration, should be read as an anagram of Polven ("Polo Vénitien" or Marco Polo), the inscription's true author! This outlandish theory is mentioned as early as 1719, [14] and even if one were to grant that the name as it is written in Syriac could conceivably be transformed into such a secret cipher, there is still the question of why Marco Polo — of all people — should have felt the need to forge such an object. D'Argens's yarn is equally

ridiculous, but the majority of doubters have understandably shied away from such complicated conspiracy theories, finding it much simpler to rely on La Croze, who as we mentioned in the last chapter found the monument "manifestly" fake without any further explanation. A case in point is Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, where the entry for Xi'an notes that La Croze has proved "without reply" that its famous monument is nothing more than a pious fraud. [15]

Yet any review of the stele's history during this period would remain incomplete without a consideration of the immense influence of Voltaire, who wrote about the stone on two major occasions: relatively early in his career, in the *Essai sur les moeurs* of 1756, a magisterial universal history originally outlined in 1745 and expanded several times thereafter, and again at the end of his life in the *Lettres chinoises* of 1776. The centrality of China for Voltaire's thought has been well documented, a good example being his preface to the *Essai*, which complains that previous attempts on the same subject have failed precisely to the extent that they have ignored the peoples of the East.[16] Voltaire, however, specifically begins with China, emphasizing its unparalleled and unbroken recorded history as well as the purity of its religion. The Chinese are not atheists, he says, a major point of contention during the Rites Controversy, and Confucianism, the religion of the ruling class and the one most worthy of European emulation, has managed to remain unblemished and morally superior despite incursions from Buddhism, Daoism, and, worst of all, Christianity.

The Nestorian inscription is derided as ridiculous, categorically dismissed (citing Navarrete) as "one of those pious frauds that are always too easily permitted." The reasons given are both minimal and show considerable ignorance of the subject at hand: the name of the province in which the stone was found is given as "Kingt-ching or Quen-sin"; both *Da Qin* and the Syriac date are said to be suspicious without any explanation; Aluoben supposedly sounds more like a Spanish name than a Chinese one; and it is impossible that a monk from Palestine would have been allowed to set up a church in Beijing (Voltaire here mistakes Xi'an for the modern capital). In any case, "the Christian religion

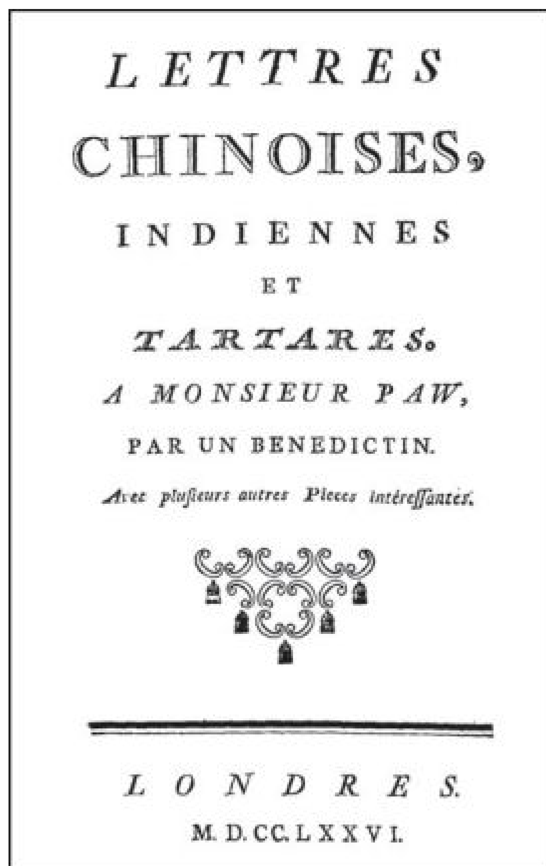
as well as those who professed it was absolutely unknown in China." [17]

For Voltaire, the Nestorian stone represented a kind of crux in which all his complex fantasies about Chinese culture could be conveniently epitomized. His notorious hatred of the Jesuits, whom he attacked on every possible occasion, predictably led him to suspect the authenticity of the monument in the first place. Accusations about their pious frauds were a contemporary stereotype, and it is a subject to which the great *philosophe* repeatedly returned.[18] But the real problem was that the stele did not fit his preconceptions about the Middle Kingdom, and therefore he was simply unable to accept the possibility of Christianity in an empire that had to remain morally untainted and completely free from the deficiencies of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The monument could not be genuine since China — the world of rationality, continuity, and order — could never have been contaminated at such an early date. The stele was just a Western invention and an "absurd lie": another testament to European corruption and prejudice as well as to Jesuit greed and deceit. Like most readers, Voltaire never really paused to wonder how or why it was faked, and as we have seen so many times before, the monument was not really even the object of attention, but instead a figure or a stand-in for whatever one perceived China to be — or not to be — like.

But his views did not go unchallenged either. Defenses and a new translation were published in the *Journal des sçavans* in 1760 and 1761, and in 1764 Joseph de Guignes had supported the validity of the inscription before the French academy.[19] But Voltaire was unyielding. In 1764 he asked for more information from Navarrete's account, and in 1776 he returned to the subject even more vociferously in the *Lettres chinoises* , his last major theoretical statement on the Chinese empire[20] [Figure 17, see p. 72]. Despite the similarity to d'Argens's title, this was not really a fictional letter-book but a philosophical discussion in the form of twelve letters, largely written in response to Cornelius Pauw's *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois*, which had been published in 1773. In the third letter Voltaire turns to the subject of Chinese religion, once again refusing to admit

that Confucianism was atheistic. The fourth letter, on ancient Christianity, takes up the question of the Nestorian monument at much greater length than before, and this new account is correspondingly even more blinded by its virulent prejudices. So forceful are these presuppositions, in fact, that they lead to some rather glaring historical errors, giving credence to Gibbon's claim some ten years later that both La Croze and Voltaire were so "afraid of a Jesuitical fraud" that they had "become the dupes of their own cunning." [21]

Voltaire begins by claiming that the stone was found while Ricci, Semedo, and Trigault were building a house and a church at Xi'an in 1625. But Ricci had died in 1610, and I know of no such claim that the stone was unearthed during the construction of a missionary building, particularly since the Jesuits had not even arrived in Xi'an until shortly after this date. [22] The name of the province is now correctly given, but the proper names engraved on the stone, which "are not easy to pronounce in Italian or French," are also said to be supplemented by seventy modern signatures on a large sheet of paper, all attesting to the fact that they have seen the stone at Xi'an in Ricci's presence! How could the seventy-three Syriac names placed at the end of the inscription and on one side of the stone (sixty-two of which are given in Chinese as well), have been transformed into a modern list of Ricci's confreres, particularly after his death? Voltaire seems to have confused the actual stone with a rubbing, and the whole story has become so garbled as to be almost unrecognizable.


LETTRES
CHINOISES,
INDIENNES
ET
TARTARES.
A MONSIEUR PAW,
PAR UN BENEDICTIN.
Avec plusieurs autres Pieces intéressantes.

LONDRES.
M. D. CC. LXXVI.

17 Title page from Voltaire, *Lettres chinoises, indiennes et tartares* . National Taiwan17 University Library.

The genuineness of Aluoben's pilgrimage is then questioned, and as in the *Essai sur les moeurs* the forgers of the inscription are mocked for failing to realize that such a missionary would have been a heretical Nestorian anyway. Kircher's presentation in *China illustrata* is also derided, particularly since he had never seen the stone in person, having merely "the copy of a copy." Further, there are supposedly many discrepancies between Kircher's version and the one appearing in Semedo, which according to Voltaire reads more like a passage from Cervantes or Quevedo. Parts of the inscription are cited at some length, but what's the difference, he writes, if one consults "the Portuguese Jesuit Semedo or the German Jesuit Kircher"? Both are simply fooling themselves as well as others, and the letter closes with a rhetorical flourish condemning all the "charlatanisms of the world." The Confucian elite, however, are "an immense society of *lettrés* who could never be reproached for ridiculous or sanguinary superstitions." [23]

IV

There is some irony in the fact that Voltaire accuses others of self-deception when his own fantasies have inspired such a long and confused presentation. But his repeated condemnation of the monument also had a long-lasting effect. For while the later eighteenth century produced a few defenses — mostly from Jesuits, as might be expected — a certain silence toward the subject ensued. A few brief references appear in the Jesuit *Mémoires* mentioned above, but these are also rather minor and offer nothing new. Chinese Jesuit Aloys Kao, for instance, mentions in passing that the missionaries have been unjustly accused of having forged the Xi'an stone. On the contrary, he continues, it has been given a place of honor by Chinese authorities, and no one has objected to the Chinese commentary published by Manuel Dias in 1644. Another volume mentions the monument and Dias's text in a footnote to an essay on the Chinese language, and the anonymous author of *Idée générale de la Chine* cites Le Comte and directs the reader to the French translation of the inscription that appeared in the *Journal des sçavans* in 1760. Finally, the last two volumes of the *Mémoires* contain an abridged history of the Tang dynasty composed in 1753 by Antoine Gaubil, which also features a few additional notes on the stone.[24]

The machinery that had produced so many heated reactions during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was clearly showing signs of slowing down. The 1760 translation was by Claude Visdelou, a French Jesuit who had died in 1737 with his manuscript unpublished. It resurfaced in 1779 in slightly different form in the supplement to Barthélemy d'Herbelot's popular *Bibliothèque orientale* , an encyclopedic dictionary of Asia that had first appeared in 1697. [25] D'Herbelot's work was originally much more heavily geared toward Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources, but as European tastes and obsessions moved further eastward, it became necessary to supplement the original volume with materials relating to the Chinese empire. But by this time Visdelou's work was also out of date. Nestorianism goes

unmentioned, which would have seemed impossible to ignore after Assemani's pioneering work of the 1720s. Moreover, Visdelou's introductory note mentions the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation just like Semedo had done in the 1640s, and *jingjiao* is paraphrased simply as "la religion chrétienne" with barely an explanation.[26]

Any further advance was hindered by Europeans' limited competence in the languages concerned, and as the eighteenth century progressed even the missionaries living in China complained that their unpopularity made it difficult to find competent scholars willing to work with them.[27] This was not going to change until relations between China and the West improved, and until the stone could be seen in person there was always a lingering doubt among Westerners that it had been forged or perhaps that it did not even exist. As a last example of this sort of stalemate, it might be instructive to look at another seminal work on China from the period, Joseph de Mailla's *Histoire générale de la Chine* , a monumental translation and expansion of a classic chronicle edited by Zhu Xi in the twelfth century [Figure 18]. De Mailla's work appeared in thirteen volumes between 1777 and 1785, and since it also provided a continuation of the chronicle down to the present day it was the first complete Chinese history available in any European language, far surpassing Martini's *Sinicae historiae decas prima* of 1658, which had stopped at 6 B.C. De Mailla's manuscript had arrived in France in the late 1730s but remained unedited for the next forty years, perhaps because it was difficult to find anyone willing to undertake the enormous task of seeing it into print. Finally, a promoter was found, French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Grosier, but as Grosier knew no Chinese he enlisted the help of Michel Ange Le Roux Deshauterayes, Professor of Arabic at the Collège Royale (there was no professor of Chinese until 1814).

As might be expected, the Xi'an stone is not mentioned in Zhu Xi's history, but when de Mailla's text was prepared for a European audience its editors were simply unwilling to pass up the chance to make some kind of reference to the efflorescence of Christianity during the Tang dynasty. When the chronicle reaches the year 781, the Chinese text is marked by an account of the death of one

of the most illustrious men of the entire period, Guo Ziyi, the highest ranking military officer of the time and a key figure in a number of important campaigns in the north of the country. From a Western point of view, however, the most significant event of 781 was not Guo Ziyi's death but instead the erection of the Nestorian monument, and since Guo is also mentioned on the face of the stone (its benefactor having served under him on a number of occasions), de Mailla's translation is here interrupted by an editor's footnote (almost certainly by Deshauterayes) on "the superb monument attesting to the establishment of the Christian religion in China" from the same year.

HISTOIRE
GÉNÉRALE
DE LA CHINE,
OU
ANNALES DE CET EMPIRE;
TRADUITES DU TONG-KIEN-KANG-MOU,

PAR le feu Père JOSEPH-ANNE-MARIE DE MOYRIAC DE MAILLA, Jésuite François, Missionnaire à Pékin:

Publiées par M. l'Abbé GROSIER,

Et dirigées par M. LE ROUX DES HAUTESRAYES, *Conseiller-Lecteur du Roi, Professeur d'Arabe au Collège Royal de France, Interprète de Sa Majesté pour les Langues Orientales.*

OUVRAGE enrichi de Figures & de nouvelles Cartes Géographiques de la Chine ancienne & moderne, levées par ordre du feu Empereur *KANG-HI*, & gravées pour la première fois.

TOME PREMIER.

A PARIS,

Chez PH.-D. PIERRES, Imprimeur du Grand-Conseil du Roi, & du Collège Royal de France, rue Saint-Jacques.
CLOUSIER, Imprimeur-Libraire, rue Saint-Jacques.

M. DCC. LXXVII.

18 Title page of the first volume of Joseph de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine*. National18 Taiwan University Library.

Deshauterayes's treatment is remarkably scholarly and up-to-date; it is conscious of the fact that the mission was headed by Nestorian priests and that the inscription is accompanied by a list of signatures in the Syriac language. Its summary also stresses the history of the sect and the names of the emperors who supported it, and the note concludes by remarking that when Chinese Christians suffered persecution a century and a half later they were frequently confused with Buddhists. [28] The stone is also mentioned in the *Description générale de la Chine* written by Grosier that was appended to de Mailla's text. Grosier pauses to mention the monument in the context of a description of the Shaanxi province (characteristic of the way in which Christianity is made to intervene in a supposedly neutral sketch of Chinese geography), but his treatment is merely culled from familiar Jesuit sources like Le Comte and Kircher.[29] Yet both Deshauterayes and Grosier imply, as was typical, that the stone was the most significant object of its time as well as the city's most important cultural artifact. Visdelou had gone even further when he confused the praise lavished upon Yisi (the monument's donor) with that of his general, Guo Ziyi, leading to the contention that Guo must have been a Christian — a mistake, in fact, that can be traced back to the very first commentary on the stone published by Li Zhizao (a Christian convert) in 1625. [30]

European annotations of Chinese chronicles seemed in many ways like a nonconfrontation between cultures, a missed encounter that was to play itself out in a spectacular way in the Macartney embassy of 1792–94, famous for its anticlimactic audience before the Qianlong emperor, in which Lord Macartney refused to perform the traditional kowtow ceremony. For while the East India Company had come to open up "free trade" between the two countries, it was clear that China considered England as being little more than a subordinate, tribute-bearing nation. [31] China did not call itself the "Middle Kingdom" for nothing. But by this time the international Western fashion for *chinoiseries* had also clearly worn off, partly because Europe was so preoccupied

with other affairs (the French and American revolutions, the Napoleonic wars), and partly because fantasies about China and its enlightened absolutism were bound to become disillusioned sooner or later. Confucian codes of politeness and morality were increasingly being turned into symbols of oriental duplicity and treacherousness, and the unparalleled antiquity that had once fascinated and challenged the Western world was now a sign of China's backwardness, stagnation, and decay. Universal historians, especially in Germany, were typically becoming much harsher in their assessment of the empire. Herder called it static, unprogressive, and in perpetual infancy, and Hegel placed it at the very lowest point on his scale of freedom and selfrealization.[32]

One area that did make a certain amount of progress, however, was Chinese language study. The sinological torch of talented laymen such as Müller, Mentzel, and Bayer eventually passed into the hands of more professional scholars like Etienne Fourmont and Abel Rémusat, who became the first professor of Chinese in 1814. In this area, too, the Xi'an stone continued to play a surprisingly central role. Rémusat's inaugural lecture of 1815 outlined a study program that included the text of the Nestorian monument for the purposes of learning Chinese grammar. [33] His fullest defense of the stone (first published in 1821) was one of the most authoritative and eloquent of the day; it wondered how the missionaries could have forged such an object in a country "where everyone's eyes are open to the smallest movements, and where authority watches with extreme care over everything that pertains to historical traditions and monuments of antiquity." How could they have made an inscription in Tang-era Chinese and Syriac without contradicting themselves for a single moment? And why would they want to establish that "a certain number of Chinese had embraced the Nestorian or Jacobite heresy, an object little worthy of the means that they were forced to employ?" [34]

V

Yet the early nineteenth century also saw an important new development in the European understanding of China, and one

that brought with it a renewed flurry of interest in solving the "problem" of the Nestorian stone once and for all. This was the return of the missionaries, slowly at first, beginning with Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society in 1807. [35] Since China had remained a closed country, these missionaries were confined to port cities and to nearby islands under European control, and since the majority were Protestant their evangelical program was correspondingly very different from their Catholic precursors. Rather than concentrating their efforts on the court and the scholarly elite, for example, as the Jesuits had done, this new group focused on converting the common people, requiring that both the Old and New Testaments be translated into Chinese (and Morrison was the first to accomplish this, too).[36] It is understandable that the Protestants would be just as drawn to the idea of an ancient Christian monument as their predecessors, but they would also have to overcome the fact that the object was so closely associated with Roman Catholics.

One example was William Milne, one of Morrison's earliest colleagues and head of the Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca (also founded by Morrison). In 1820 he published a *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China*, which broached the subject of the stele in its very first chapter but remained vague on the question of authenticity. There is absolutely no record of Nestorianism having been in China, he claims, and "with the exception of the Stone Tablet of Xi'an, mentioned by some Romish Missionaries, [no] monuments, inscriptions, remains of old churches, &c. [have] been noticed by any Chinese Writer that I have seen or heard of." [37] This silence was of course a long-standing misconception, but what is also left unspoken in Milne's treatment is that no one aside from the Jesuits had ever been able to see the stone in person. This is also why Rémusat expressly reminds his readers that the stone really did exist, and that there was even a copy (an engraving made after a rubbing) at the Collège Royale. Copies — or copies of copies — were frequently mentioned in eighteenth-century Paris, but as we have seen these discussions were hardly reassuring to those who were inclined to place the genuineness of the stone into doubt. [38]

But the return of the missionaries also brought with it a renewed flurry of unresolved commentary, which much as before was often revealingly tangential. Julius von Klaproth, linguist and author of *Asia polyglotta*, repeated Rémusat's arguments verbatim in a précis of Chinese history he published in 1826. In that same year the stone was said to be "free from all suspicion" in a new edition of a history of the Roman empire. But just three years later Isaac Jacob Schmidt ridiculed that position in a footnote to his edition of a seventeenth-century Mongolian chronicle, under the pretext of a name that suggested Prester John. [39] In 1830 a history of ancient India also rejected Rémusat's arguments, this time in the context of the spread of Nestorianism. The sect may well have come to China during that period, we are told, but neither the Mongolian nor the Chinese annals mention it, and the famous monument of Xi'an is highly suspicious. Such a stone would supposedly have to be of mammoth proportions to include more than one thousand Chinese characters and Syriac names, and where is it now? All we have are copies, thanks to the Jesuits and to "the mendacious Father Kircher" in particular. A now familiar list of historical and linguistic "errors" follows. [40]

In the same year Karl Friedrich Neumann, a Munich professor of Armenian and Chinese and the "father of German sinology," published a review of Schmidt's edition in which he, too, interrupted his summary of Mongolian history to take up the question of the monument in greater detail. Neumann agreed that the stone was a fraud and promised to return to the subject in a subsequent essay. The evidence he provided is mostly familiar and shows that anti-Jesuit sentiment had not abated: never would an emperor have accepted a foreign religion; never would the Nestorians have been permitted to build a church in the capital; annals make no mention of the sect; even the Chinese do not believe in the stone's authenticity; and, most importantly, "it is sufficiently known from history" that the Jesuits have always been liars and dissemblers. Neumann's final jab is also a long-standing cliché, that the Jesuits were not averse to hiding Christian symbols (and especially the crucifix) from potential converts whenever possible. [41]

Although readers would have to wait twenty years for Neumann to fulfill his promise of a fuller explication, his views carried great weight in the German-speaking academic world. In 1832 a massive survey of historical geography noted Neumann's objections but remained noncommittal, and two years later a history of Christianity likewise observed that the debate was undecided and that Neumann had promised to investigate. [42] A similar ambivalence seemed to exist even in China. W. H. Medhurst, another pioneer sinologist and translator from the London Missionary Society, cautiously accepted the stone in 1838, but Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff, a Prussian-born missionary who also made several trips up China's east coast in the early 1830s, noted his suspicions in a travel account published in 1834. Despite the fact that Marco Polo and others mentioned the existence of Chinese Nestorians, he remarks, "we rather doubt the authenticity of much of this inscription." In his *Sketch of Chinese History* published the same year, Gützlaff seems to have changed his mind, claiming that the monument "substantiates the evidence of efforts made by the Syrian churches to propagate the Nestorian creed." Yet just four years later, in *China Opened*, he seemed more pessimistic once again, granting merely that the introduction of Nestorianism was "almost proved." [43] One constant factor, however, was Gützlaff's anti-Catholic attitude, which may well have led him to suspect the stele in the first place.

Much the same could be said for Elijah Coleman Bridgman, the first American missionary to China, who in Canton founded the influential *Chinese Repository* in 1832, and which for the next twenty years disseminated a wide variety of news and information about the empire and its culture for the foreign community. The stele came up twice in the journal's very first year, once at the end of a review of Renaudot, and again in a brief essay on the introduction of Christianity in the empire. The book review, in fact, was the first piece for the journal's inaugural issue. It concluded by citing Renaudot's acceptance of the monument's authenticity, but it also hesitantly noted that the sect seemed to be Nestorian and that additional research was required. The essay on Christianity was similarly guarded: "the celebrated monument discovered in 1625, if authentic, furnishes the history of the progress of the gospel from 636 till the date of its erection in 780."

The author is careful to point out that it is almost certainly not a Jesuit forgery (how could they “hope to deceive the pagans by this artifice”?) — unless, he caustically adds, they wanted to counter “the distressing similarity between many popish and buddhistic ceremonies.”[44] In 1845 the journal returned to the question by publishing the first full English translation of the inscription (known to be the work of Bridgman himself), printed in parallel columns with Kircher’s Chinese text, Kircher’s word-by-word Latin version, and the French rendition of Kircher that appeared in 1670. Even in mid-nineteenth-century Canton, perhaps, a more convenient Chinese text was difficult to obtain, and an addendum printed five years later noted that Bridgman now had in his possession “what purports to be a copy of the inscription, printed from the stone monument itself.” He still seemed unwilling to trust that this rubbing was a true facsimile (because it was “given . . . by some of the Roman Catholics”?), but presumably by this time he had also accepted the stone as genuine. [45]

In 1850 Neumann finally returned to the fray with an eleven-page article in the newly established *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, the premier journal of German orientalist studies. More anti-Catholic and anti-Jesuit than ever, the essay begins with a tirade against the Spanish and Portuguese enslavement of the lands of the East. Inquisitions and secret-police tactics are the Catholics’ stock-in-trade, we are told, and the surest means of employing such methods has always been the “recognized masters” of lying and deceit: the Jesuits. The spuriousness of the monument is assumed as if it were a foregone conclusion, and very little new concrete evidence is provided. A God has never appeared to the Chinese people, and no ancient texts mention Christianity. The essay concludes with an editors’ note that they hope to return to the text of the inscription in a later volume. [46] So far as I know this did not occur, although the journal’s yearly review of books repeatedly revisited the question and each time seemed to offer a different verdict. In 1848 it mentioned the republication of the Arabic descriptions first edited by Renaudot as providing useful evidence for the stele’s authenticity, but in 1851 Neumann was said to have proven once again the falseness of the inscription. Five years later, the same reviewer noted that other authorities thought the monument was

genuine, and finally, in 1860 we are informed that its validity had been "undoubtedly decided." [47]

VI

Key events in the 1850s, which we will examine in the next chapter, had finally turned the tables in the monument's favor, but before mid-century things were still very much up in the air. Knowledge of Chinese history and the Chinese language were too limited to have progressed much further, and there is probably no better example of this than the one-hundred-page treatment offered in Charles William Wall's *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* (1835–56), a digressive four-volume work that ceased publication without ever actually coming to the subject advertised in its title [Figure 19, see p. 82]. A professor of Hebrew and Vice-Provost at Trinity College, Dublin, Wall's main aim was to show that the text of the Hebrew Bible was originally unpointed (written without vowel marks), and that the same was true for all ancient Semitic languages. The age of any language specimen, Wall argues, could actually be determined by the degree of its development of an alphabet and the degree to which this orthography included vowels.

One might wonder what the Nestorian tablet had to do with all of this, especially since Chinese does not even have an alphabet in Wall's very limited sense of the term. But like many of his predecessors, Wall was drawn to the stone because of its Syriac portions, which, he duly notes, had also been written using very few vowels. He has no trouble accepting the Syriac as authentically old, but he also comes to the exceedingly odd conclusion that merely the Chinese part has been forged. He admits that his knowledge of Chinese is minimal, and that his competence is confined mainly to what he can glean from recently published dictionaries. But his simplistic notions about the superiority of alphabetic languages — and his overwhelming prejudice for Western cultures, religions, and systems of thought — lead him to formulate not only that Chinese characters are by nature inferior, but also that they are not even capable of conveying a fixed and stable meaning.

What is new here is a particular kind of Western confidence in its own civilizing mission. Earlier readers may have loved or hated China as an exotic or antipodal or rival society on the other side of the globe. But the imperialist viewpoint epitomized by Wall was that China and the Chinese language were hopelessly mired in ignorance and confusion, and, most importantly, that the empire required Western intervention in order to understand its *own* history and culture, both of which had fallen into a period of stasis.[48] As it was argued with increasing frequency, the use of force was required to bring China once and for all into the family of civilized (which is to say Christian) nations. The period of the accommodationist scholar-missionary had forever passed; the Jesuits had slipped into the country disguised as literati and had become versed

AN EXAMINATION

OF THE

ANCIENT

ORTHOGRAPHY OF THE JEWS,

AND OF

THE ORIGINAL STATE

OF

THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE.

PART THE SECOND,

ON

THE PROPAGATION OF ALPHABETS

AND OTHER PHONETIC SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT EASTERN ASIA;

AND ON

THE VAST INFERIORITY OF IDEAGRAPHIC WRITING,

AS DISPLAYED IN ITS EFFECTS UPON HUMAN LEARNING.

BY CHARLES WILLIAM WALL, D. D.,

SENIOR FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, AND PROFESSOR OF HEBREW IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN.

VOL. II.

Πάταξον μὲν, ἄκουσον δέ.

LONDON:

WHITTAKER AND CO.;

DUBLIN: MILLIKEN AND SON, BOOKSELLERS TO THE UNIVERSITY;

CURRY, JUN., AND CO.; AND HODGES AND SMITH.

M.DCCC.XL.

19 Title page of the second volume of Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*. National Taiwan University Library.

in the complexities of Confucian upper-class ritual. But in the nineteenth century, particularly after the First Opium War with England (1839–42), missionaries began to arrive in gunboats, preaching fire-and-brimstone fundamentalism to the masses and disparaging nearly all Chinese traditions as barbaric and in need of total conversion.

Wall does not even get around to the monument until his second volume, the subtitle of which is *On the Propagation of Alphabets and Other Phonetic Systems Throughout Eastern Asia, and on the Vast Inferiority of Ideagraphic* [sic] *Writing, As Displayed in Its Effects Upon Human Learning* . In other words, the marvelous and mystical organizing principles of Chinese script, once so fascinating to European intellectuals, had come to be viewed as nothing more than a semantic chaos. But it was also a language that was seen as injurious to any culture that had come into contact with it — a malevolent reversal of a formerly laudatory stereotype known as "the conqueror conquered," in which Chinese traditions were said to be so strong that even foreign invaders had been gradually sinicized. But even more audaciously, Wall goes so far as to argue that the monument actually sets a limit on Chinese history as a whole, and that the stele is "proof of the total ignorance of the Chinese as to the ancient history of their country." As his chapter on the monument is called, "On the Sino-Syriac Monument, and the Limits it Affixes to the Length of Time Through Which Chinese History Really Extends." [49]

If we are to believe the order in which the reasons for this conclusion are presented, Wall seems to have been led astray by an old error that we examined in Chapter 2, namely, that the governor of Xi'an made a copy of the stone when it was first dug up. We have mentioned that one of the earliest reports, published in Italian in 1631, clearly stated that the governor made a composition in honor of the monument and had it carved onto a similar stone. But we also saw that Kircher's initial presentation, in *Prodromus coptus* of 1636, made it seem that the second stone did not contain the governor's composition but instead a duplicate of the original text, and when his account was repeated by both Boym (1654 and 1656) and Martini (1655) it was also difficult to determine exactly what kind of copy had been brought to Rome. Finally, when the monument was fully canonized in Kircher's *China illustrata* (1667), as well as in the popular translations of that book that appeared in 1668, 1669, 1670, and 1673, the whole question was hopelessly confused by a variety of contradictory statements.

In Chapter 1 we also discussed how accounts of the "natural curiosity" of the Chinese typically assumed that they were just as intrigued by the discovery as their European counterparts — because of the stone's antiquity, because it contained Syriac writing, or because it featured the figure of a cross. Yet the age of the object was hardly unusual in the Chinese context, and while the Syriac script and the cross may have intrigued some viewers, they would almost certainly be far more interested in precisely what Europeans were unable to appreciate: the Chinese text.[50] We saw that the governor may have been drawn to the stone because his son had died on the same day, and that this anecdote — along with the rumor that snow would melt on the spot where the stele had been buried — was regularly played down or ignored in Western commentaries. And finally, if both stones were subsequently set up in a temple it did not have any necessary connection to Christianity at all.

But in Wall's way of thinking, if the stone had really been copied it could only be for some covert and devious reason. "If the second insculpture was really an exact *facsimile* of the first," he wonders to himself, "why incur the trouble and expense of making it? Why was so much labor thrown away in the production of a copy which . . . must still be looked upon as of far inferior value to the original?" Unable to recognize that the second stone could have been a means to honor or preserve or otherwise mark the discovery of the first one, Wall theorizes that the stone was copied because the original had to be suppressed — a bizarre, in-between sort of reading that amazingly allows the monument to be authentic and forged at the same time.[51] For Wall accepts the notion that there was a Nestorian monument and that Christians had come to China during the Tang period; it is simply that what we now have is a doctored version of the original. Yet instead of claiming that the whole thing was simply a Jesuit swindle, as so many others had done, Wall avers that it was the Chinese themselves who were the real perpetrators (although the Jesuits helped). The monument had to be copied, in a word, because "the ancient writing of the Chinese is now wholly illegible, and . . . the mandarins are most anxious to conceal this defect of their graphic system." [52]

When leafing through this one-hundred-page harangue (and so far we have only covered the first two pages), it is sometimes hard to know exactly where to begin one's criticism. Wall's absolutely preposterous position — a breathtaking combination of scholarly self-satisfaction and utter ignorance — is so bereft of even the most basic understanding of the Chinese language, Chinese culture, and Chinese history that one is sometimes tempted to rub one's eyes in disbelief at the extremity of its folly. The idea of a substitute stone is of course little more than a pretext for Wall's obsessions with "defective" non-alphabetic languages, but this still fails to explain why he should believe that the Chinese part was fake. His obvious hatred of the "subtle and accommodating" Jesuits was certainly a contributing factor, since they supposedly wanted any evidence of ancient Christianity to conform as closely as possible to modern Catholic doctrine. [53] But Wall's burden of proof rests on a twenty-page section in which he attempts to prove the modernity of the Chinese portion by comparing some of its characters with examples of ancient forms found in the early nineteenth-century dictionaries of de Guignes and Morrison [Figure 20, see p. 86]. Because the characters on the monument resemble their modern forms rather than the ancient ones, he contends, this part of the inscription cannot possibly be old. Wall cannot accept the fact that "mutable" Chinese could have been written in much the same way for thousands of years. Variations are disallowed, and presumably even the fact that Chinese can have different styles of handwriting just like any other language.

This is not merely evidence of a pious fraud, however. For according to Wall the inscription also proves that it is impossible to "preserv[e] history by means of any system of ideagraphic [*sic*] writing." In fact, "all that is real in the history of China . . . is made up of events which, however far they may have been thrown back into the regions of an imaginary antiquity, must have actually occurred since the close of the eighth century." One could hardly imagine a more blatant instance of Western presumptions about its culture and language as the basis for *all* human civilization. "As to the occurrences in China which preceded the ninth century," Wall writes,

> they are now utterly unknown, and the Chinese have not had the power to preserve any true memorial of them, even if they had the wish to have done so. All that relates to their history before that era is one uninterrupted expanse of darkness, without a single bright spot in it except that which is illuminated by the alphabetic part of the Sino-Syriac inscription. [54]

The monument itself, in other words, by virtue of its imported Syriac alphabet and its Nestorian Christianity, has even become the starting point for Chinese history as such, since everything that purports to be older is either unreadable, misleading, or already destroyed.

These conjectures did not find a very large following, although at least one fellow Irishman, Richard Gibbings, approvingly cites them in his 1862 introduction to a new edition of Johann Lorenz Mosheim's *Authentic Memoirs of the Christian Church in China* , a pamphlet on the Rites Controversy that had first been published in English in 1750. This is all the more surprising since Mosheim does not even mention the monument in this text, and when he discusses it elsewhere its authenticity is unconditionally accepted. Gibbings duly notes that Mosheim (and Gibbon and others) believed in the stone's genuineness, but he also argues that the whole matter has been sufficiently "solved" by Wall, whose arguments are then summarized at some length. [55]

20 Illustration of Chinese characters from Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* , vol. 2, facing p. 203. The top of the plate shows the title of the monument copied after Kircher’s *China illustrata*. At the bottom, a portion of the Syriac inscription is reproduced. At the far right is a line from the inscription, alluding to a sacrifice made once every seven days, that Wall interprets as evidence of forgery. This is because the Chinese characters found there correspond with modern rather than ancient forms, as reproduced in the middle of the plate. National Taiwan University Library.

Wall’s pronouncements also crop up from time to time in other places, as for example in a history of the Nestorian church composed by a long-time Scots missionary to southern India

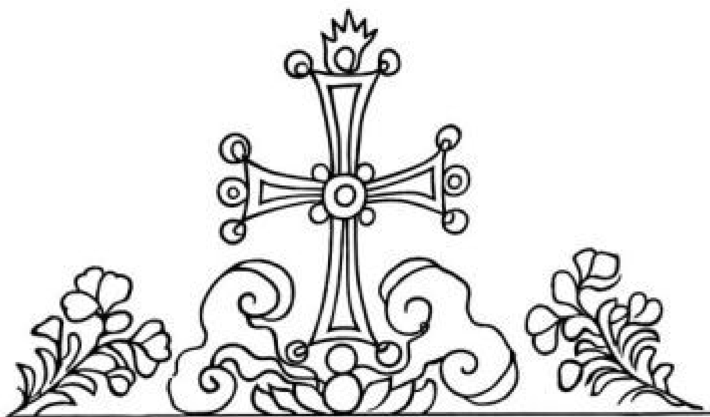
published in 1928 (and republished in 1980). [56] And even today, an unofficial website of the Nestorian church incorporates a page on the monument claiming that "it has been confirmed that most of the Chinese portion of the inscription is a modern fabrication . . . meant to 'save the face' of the Chinese Mandarins, [and that] the Jesuit missionaries had taken part in the alterations." [57]

Old theories die hard, especially in cyberspace. But as we close this chapter we can also see just how far eighteenth-century sinophilia had shifted in the other direction, as not only the Jesuits but even China itself had come to be seen as an inherently deceitful entity. And the Nestorian monument? Was it real or phony or something in between? There were still too many unanswered questions about an object that, after all, no Westerner had actually seen in the past two hundred years. By 1850 the most one could say was that it "probably still exist[ed] . . . in a temple of idols in the vicinity." [58] In other words, it had to be discovered all over again; this is the subject of Chapter 4.

4

The Return of the Missionaries

Thus far we have examined more than two hundred years of controversy surrounding the stone since it was first discovered in 1625. We have seen that Western response was both immediate and agitated, with many readers refusing to believe that the monument was what the missionaries said it was. The problem or the attraction, depending on one's point of view, was that the object was said to be Christian, and it is no accident that readers' obsessions were based on a preconceived idea that whatever else the inscription might have contained, it was not even "Chinese" at all. Despite a growing awareness of the nature of the *jingjiao* religion, in other words, including its marked differences from modern European Christianity, it was really the cross at the top of the stele that remained the focal point of the object's presumed familiarity [Figure 21].



21 Drawing made after a rubbing of the top of the monument from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 2:180. National Taiwan University Library.

In this chapter we will begin in the middle of the nineteenth century, a period of greater Western presence in China than ever before. Five treaty ports had been opened to Western trade and to Western diplomats following the first Opium War in 1842, and two more were ceded by 1860. For the first time in Chinese history the empire was home to increasingly demanding foreign settlements,

and by mid-century Western missionaries were allowed to travel anywhere throughout the country. Some longstanding debates could now be laid to rest, perhaps, particularly those relating to the stone's genuineness, but even this process of rediscovery, as I would like to call it, left most of the original prejudices still in place. For in so many of its aspects, the meaning of the stone did not change simply because ocular proof could now be obtained. A greater visual accuracy was certainly possible, but as the stele became a photographic reality it also became anthropomorphized as a forlorn prisoner crying out for rescue to the Christian West where it "belonged."

Predictably enough, previous to the 1840s the only feature that had ever been illustrated in a Western publication (with one notable exception) was the cross. But strange as it may seem, this detail was not correctly shown until the second half of the nineteenth century, even though complete rubbings had long been available. Perhaps like all obsessions it was just too close to home to be seen with any degree of objectivity, but it had also been the object of considerable confusion ever since the stone was first discovered. The two earliest reports did not mention a cross at all, but the 1631 Italian translation described it as a Maltese cross sitting atop clouds. Kircher used this text for his *Prodromus coptus* in 1636, although he omitted the reference to clouds, and he also provided a simple engraving of a Maltese cross with arms that flared outward, below which was a crudely written (and not entirely correct) rendering of the nine characters that form the title of the inscription [1] [Figure 22]. Semedo's eyewitness account, published in the early 1640s, also noted that the cross was accompanied by clouds, but instead of a Maltese cross he identified it as similar to the St. Thomas cross at Mylapore, "the extremities whereof end in flower-deluces." And when Kircher returned to the subject thirty years later in *China illustrata* (1667), he repeated Semedo's information and provided a correspondingly new engraving that had transformed the Xi'an cross into the cross at Mylapore, with straightened arms and a complicated fleur-de-lis pattern.[2] But Kircher's image had also become a huge foldout sheet containing a numbered grid with the text of the inscription in toto — the only such illustration ever to be offered in a Western book [Figure 9, see p. 44].

Kircher’s two versions became standard, and it has been the subject of some controversy as to why he had twice failed to show the cross accurately, especially since by the time of *China illustrata* he had at least two copies of the inscription in Rome. Was he merely trying to suppress or to overlook those Buddhist or Daoist ornaments (the clouds, the flowers, the pearls, the flames) that interfered with his scholarly purposes? If so, then why choose to depict a cross from the Nestorian church in India, which would presumably bring with it so many counterproductive associations of heresy and anti-Catholic wandering?

Nouem Sinenſes characteres titulum lapidis exprimentes.

22 Cross and title of the monument from Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*, 52. The cross, now framed by a kind of canopy, has been vastly simplified and its accompanying details have been removed. The Latin text states that the title is expressed with these nine Chinese characters, but in fact an error is made in the rendering of the very first character on the upper right. National Taiwan University Library.

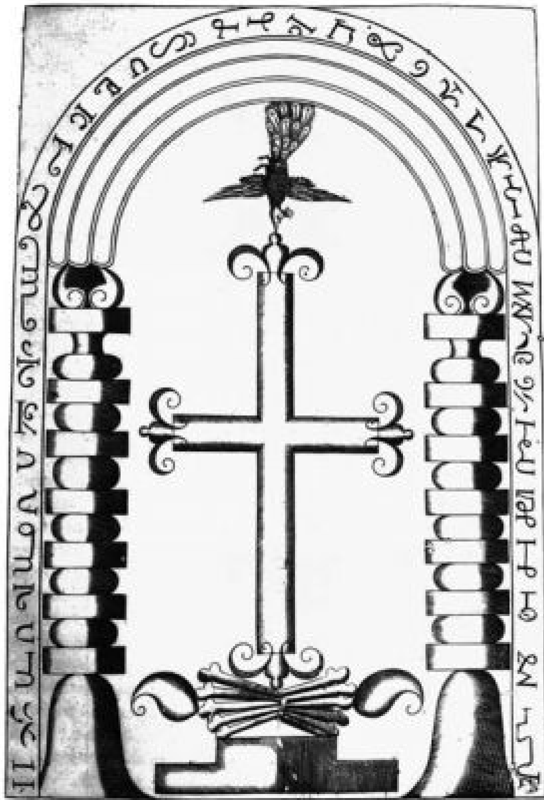
In fact there may be a much simpler explanation: Kircher never had a correct reproduction of the cross in his possession. *China illustrata* refers to “those who studiously view’d it” as if he himself had not, and we also need to remember that even a full-sized rubbing would not necessarily include what for a Chinese viewer would have seemed an extraneous detail (the cross is not, after all, part of the inscription). Even today, rubbings that include the cross always do so on a separate sheet, along with the title. [3] Unfortunately, we are unable to provide a definitive answer, as there is no extant rubbing that can be traced back early enough in

the seventeenth century. [4] We also need to be cautious about approaching this question from an overly anachronistic point of view, as the century of Kircher was hardly an age of photographic or digital reproduction, and book illustrations were never simple replications, in the modern sense, of what was being described.

Illustrations of the St. Thomas cross were equally diverse, even though it was an artifact that existed in a thriving Christian community with a powerful and ongoing European missionary presence. Also square-shaped and with ornamented arms, the St. Thomas cross is surrounded by an inscription in a mysterious writing now identified as Pahlavi, a pre-Arabic form of Persian script that, then as now, has been the subject of repeated attempts at decipherment. The cross was widely believed to be a relic of the Apostle himself, having been carved into the stone with his blood as he lay dying, and it was therefore invested with a variety of apotropaic and curative powers. [5]

But it, too, was never shown the same way twice. Compare the “crux miraculosa” pictured in *China illustrata* [Figure 10, see p. 46] with two Portuguese renderings of the St. Thomas cross from about 1600 [Figures 23, 24], and then compare these to a late sixteenth-century sketch made by an eyewitness [Figure 25, see p. 94], a modern engraving from about 1900 [Figure 26, see p. 95], and finally a mid-twentieth-century photograph [Figure 27, see p. 96]. [6] Each of the many details in this complex image — the cross, its andiron-like base, the bird suspended above it, the pillars, the curving architecture, the inscription — are subject to a surprising degree of variation. Much like visual renderings of its counterpart in Xi’an, the generic details seemed much more important than the manner in which any particular feature was actually depicted. Similarly, it made little difference if the Xi’an cross was shown with fleurs-de-lis or with arms that flared; the most essential attribute was the cross itself. Verbal descriptions may likewise seem vague or contradictory, but to a seventeenth-century reader the cross was plainly understood as being of an antique and an “Eastern” variety, square in shape rather than oblong. And this, too, seemed to be enough.

23 St. Thomas cross from Diogo do Couto, *Decadas da Asia*, 3:293. Compare this and the23 following images with Figure 10. National Taiwan University Library.

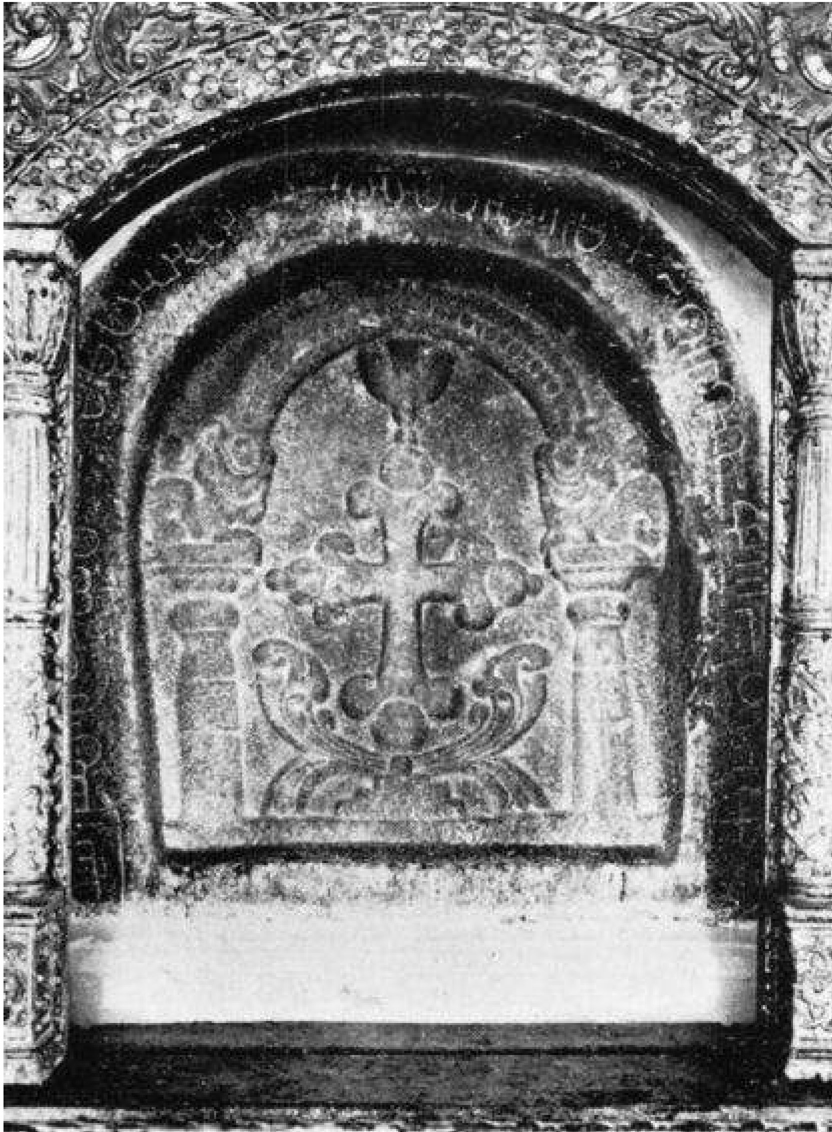


24 St. Thomas cross from João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*,24 facing p. 170. National Taiwan University Library.

25 Late sixteenth-century sketch of the St. Thomas cross from H. Hosten, “St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore,” facing p. 207. National Taiwan University Library.

26 Early twentieth-century engraving of the St. Thomas cross from Yule’s edition of Marco Polo, The Book of Ser Marco Polo, 2:353. National Taiwan University Library.

Even Boym, who is sometimes credited with having brought a rubbing when he returned from China, was remarkably lax when it came to the question of what the cross looked like. In *Briefve relation de la Chine* (1652), he says that the cross is Maltese in shape and cites *Prodromus coptus*. In a letter dated 1653 and reproduced in *China illustrata*, we are given Semedo’s somewhat fuller portrayal of lilies and clouds. And finally, in *Flora sinensis* (1656), Boym reverts to his earlier description and even supplies an image of a cross placed at the head of an effusive dedication to the king of Hungary [7] [Figure 28, see p. 97]. As in *Prodromus coptus*, we see a simple Maltese variety with flared arms, here with an additional circular form at the center and a sort of pedestal with abstracted flowerlike ornamentation.



27 Mid-twentieth-century photograph of the St. Thomas cross, from Herman D’Souza, *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, facing p. 78. National Taiwan University Library.

28 Cross from the monument from Michel Boym, *Flora sinensis*, sig. M1v. This is actually a drawing of a cross found in the Fujian province (see Figure 29), and the title and cross that are shown beneath it are copied after Kircher's *Prodromus coptus*. "I would like to add as a crown," Boym comments, "the most glorious image of that tree *par excellence*, a cross drawn on a very ancient stone planted in the province of Shaanxi." National Taiwan University Library.

Once again, this illustration bears little resemblance to the actual monument. Perhaps Boym, too, never saw a complete rubbing; he only vaguely refers to Chinese and Syriac words "here and there around the cross." And yet Boym's text is a very different kind of

misrepresentation. For *Flora sinensis* has reproduced a copy of a completely different (and probably much later) cross found in 1619 in the Fujian province, a cross that had no real connection to the Xi'an stone and which had already been illustrated in at least two missionary books in Chinese by 1644 [8] [Figure 29]. And incredibly enough, both of these texts also included a meticulous copy of the cross from the Xi'an monument, clearly taken from a rubbing [Figure 30]. So why wouldn't Boym have reproduced this instead? Kircher was not a sinologist and probably would have paid little attention to these volumes even if they had been available to him. But one might have expected more from Boym, who knew Chinese well, especially since in both texts the Fujian cross is accompanied by a caption identifying precisely where and when it had been found. But in Boym's book this information is simply covered up and replaced with the nine-character title from the Xi'an stele, clearly just reengraved from Kircher's *Prodromus coptus*.

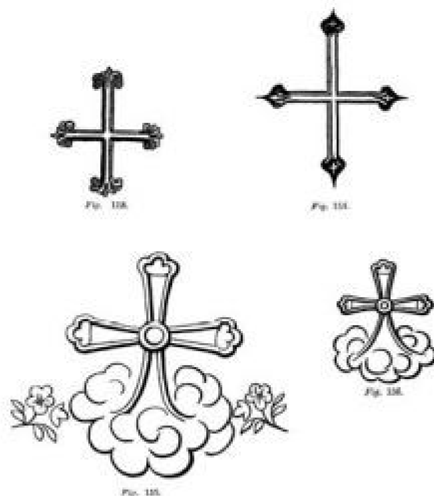
29 Rubbing of a cross found in the Fujian province, from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 2:175. The inscription at the sides states that it was carved into a stone found in 1619 and gives its precise location. National Taiwan University Library.

30 Cross from the monument copied after Manuel Dias, Jr., *Tang jingjiao beisong hengquan* (Commentary on the Tang Nestorian Monument). The top of the image adds: "by the cross the world is judged." This image of the cross is clearly drawn after a rubbing. National Taiwan University Library.

It was thus hardly unusual if Kircher or his engraver should have provided versions of the cross that had been artistically "reworked," as indeed so many other details — where and when the stone had been found, what sort of copies had been made — suffered from the same lack of precision. In *China illustrata* there is a separate chapter on "The Cross Carved at the Top of the Monument" that does not even pause to mention it, much less to give any sort of precise description.[9] Instead, it discusses other crosses found or rumored to be found in China, in Japan, and in Mexico, as well as other purported Judeo-Christian evidence such as surviving Chinese Jewish families, a bell mentioned by Ricci as containing the image of a church, and references to Christians (but not Nestorians) in earlier authorities such as Marco Polo. But

even if we were to excuse Kircher on these grounds, it seems much harder to explain why his engravings were reused for the next two hundred years, even though rubbings that included the cross had certainly become accessible by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Moreover, these fantasized images were used by scholars whose express purpose was to rectify old misconceptions, or at least to provide more historically and culturally sensitive translations of the inscription. An excellent survey of some of these visual detours was carried out by Louis Gaillard in 1893. I have provided a composite of four of them here [Figure 31], beginning with the fleur-de-lis cross on the upper left, which is the version that appears in *China illustrata*. On the upper right we see an equally romanticized variant with a spearhead design published in a French translation of the inscription in 1877, and a nearly identical form turns up in another (much more important) mid-century translation and commentary by Guillaume Pauthier.[10] On the lower left and right are two samples of a somewhat different but still incorrect sort from the same period, in which a cross with no bottom seems to rise out of stylized cloud (and flower) motifs. [11]



31 Four crosses from Louis Gaillard, *Croix et swastika en Chine*, 137–40. Clockwise from upper left: Kircher, *China illustrata*, facing p. 12 (see Figure 9); P. Dabry de Thiersant, *Le catholicisme en Chine au VIIIe siècle de nôtre ère*, unnumbered

page; John Kesson, *The Cross and the Dragon* , 17; Z. F. Léontiewski, “La croix instructive et historique trouvée en Chine,”

But once again, such visual niceties seem to have had little significance, and this ambiguousness is epitomized by an engraving appearing in Baron Henrion’s *Histoire générale des missions catholiques* (1846–47), just before Westerners had returned to Xi’an, where we see a thoroughly exoticized Chinese crowd gazing upon a rectangular block that shows nothing but a cross (no dragons, no inscription), a fitting symbol of the way that this detail was always the real focus for Western viewers [12] [Figure 32]. The image is aptly titled, “Cross of Xi’an Fu,” and it was also the first and only time in the stone’s prephotographic history that it is actually visualized as standing in a three-dimensional space. While the cross in this image is a marked improvement over previous illustrations (and in many respects it is very close indeed), there still seemed to be no consensus about what it really looked like. But at least there was a new concern about the context in which the monument was thought to exist. For the first time the stone was actually imagined as being in China. Although what Henrion offers is a fantasized rendition of the object in its distant past, it would be just another twenty-five years before someone would be able to publish a drawing of how it had really appeared — to Western eyes, of course — in contemporary Xi’an.

32 “Cross of Xi-an Fu” from Baron Henrion, *Histoire générale des missions catholiques* , vol. 1, facing p. 78. The monument has been stripped of all ornament (and all text) except for the cross, which, however, is very accurately represented. National Taiwan University Library.

II

The first such recorded visitor was Alexander Williamson of the National Bible Society of Scotland, who came to Xi’an in 1866 during one of his extended trips to the interior, where he busied himself preaching to the masses and distributing Chinese Christian literature to those who were able to read. Part of the motivation for this journey was an 1853 essay in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* by Edward E. Salisbury, professor of Arabic and Sanskrit at Yale. It was to become notorious for being the last time that the authenticity of the stone would be questioned in a major scholarly venue, and it was particularly infamous for its opening sentence, which noted that in a conversation with Elijah

Coleman Bridgman, the pioneer American missionary to China, Salisbury “expressed [his] belief that the so-called Nestorian monument of Xi’an was now generally regarded, by the learned, as a forgery.” This was of course quite false, and it unfortunately prevented many readers from giving the essay as much credit as it deserved.

For in fact Salisbury does not actually claim that the monument is a fake; he simply weighs both sides of the question, so far as he is able to determine, and makes a few comments about the Syriac portions, a subject in which he does have proficiency. He concludes that the question of authenticity cannot be decided either way, and that the stone needs to be “seen by some disinterested person” — a category that was evidently meant to include neither the Jesuits nor the Chinese themselves. At the end of the essay, the editors note that a new resolution had been passed by the Society, that “the American missionaries in China be required to take some measures, as they may have opportunity, in order that the monument be revisited, its present condition described, and a new facsimile of the whole inscription taken by some competent person and made accessible to the learned.” [13]

A letter was sent to Bridgman in Shanghai, and the immediate result, in addition to new rubbings, was the composition of one of the greatest defenses of the stone ever published, Alexander Wylie’s “On the Nestorian Tablet,” which first appeared serially in the *North-China Herald* in 1854–55, and was then forwarded (by Bridgman) to the Society in order to reach a broader audience. One of the most highly respected and self-effacing missionary-scholars in the entire history of Western sinology, the breadth and the penetration of Wylie’s review of Chinese sources was decisive. He proved that the monument and the *jingjiao* religion were hardly unknown to Chinese savants; even if they frequently disparaged and maligned the stone it appears in a large variety of eminent scholarly collections dating back to the century in which it was discovered. The authenticity of the stele, in other words, was never questioned by Chinese readers, who would certainly have had the means (and the inclination) to detect a modern forgery if that is what it was. Despite a lingering anti-Jesuit bias, Wylie was

able to silence any serious claims that the monument was a pious fraud. He also provides a number of references to Chinese annals that mention *jingjiao* followers and other related matters, thereby putting to rest the old objection, dating back at least to Navarrete in the 1670s, that the stone could not be genuine since there were no traces of Christianity in official Chinese history. The inscription, he adds, contains so many verifiable names, places, and dates that forgery is out of the question; indeed, "if the Nestorian tablet can be proved a forgery there are few existing memorials of bygone dynasties which can withstand the same style of argument."[14]

At exactly the same time, two of the greatest orientalist scholars in France, Ernest Renan and Stanislas Julien, revised their initial doubts and eventually came to accept the inscription as genuine. In his *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* of 1855, Renan repeated familiar objections that the style of the calligraphy was too new and that the annals were too silent. He credits Julien, of the Collège de France and one of the foremost Chinese translators of the period, for providing him a number of texts that seemed to support this view. But while Renan had the honesty and the humility to note his change of heart in the fourth edition of the same work — that the stele's "grave doubts" had "finally disappeared" — Julien was far more reticent, having been caught up in an acrimonious academic feud with Pauthier, who in the meanwhile had published both a long polemical article against all skeptics (including Renan and Julien) as well as a new translation and commentary. [15]

In China itself the increasingly bankrupt Qing dynasty was plagued by periods of intense internal violence and destruction. During the 1850s and early 1860s the Taiping rebellion, centered in Nanjing, unfolded one of the most catastrophic events in all of Chinese history in terms of sheer loss of human life, with tens of millions of people having been killed by the time it was suppressed. This has particular relevance for our story since the rebels were also Christians, although rather like the *jingjiao* doctrine this was a form of Christianity that the West had a great deal of trouble accommodating to its own evangelical program. [16] The leader of the rebellion, Hong Xiuquan, had read some

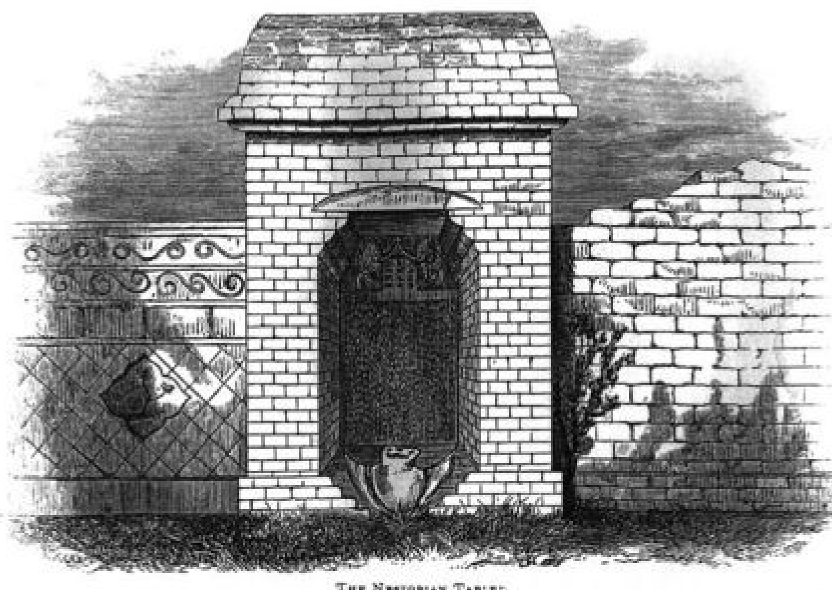
missionary tracts as a young man, and in the 1830s and 1840s he had a series of visions in which he was told that he was the son of God and the brother of Jesus, and that he was destined to found a new dynasty in China, called the *Taiping tianguo*, or Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace. His professed goal was to overthrow the Qing dynasty and to rid the country of the Manchus. His followers, at first mostly disgruntled peasants and members of the Hakka minority, grew in number and eventually became so powerful that for a period of years they set up their own rival government in Nanjing and represented a very real threat to the imperial administration in Beijing.

In the beginning the West maintained an official position of neutrality. But many, and especially the Protestant missionaries, were filled with great enthusiasm in the early years of the uprising, hoping that at last China might become civilized and Christian (the two terms were synonymous). [17] But as the rebellion grew in size and strength Westerners began to question Taiping Christianity more and more, and in the end the Western powers helped Chinese imperial forces to quell the insurrection. [18] Xi'an was mostly spared these tragedies, which were centered in southern China, but in the Shaanxi province there were also a number of Mohammedan uprisings (Xi'an is still home to a thriving Muslim community, as well as an ancient Great Mosque), also leading to frequent and widespread devastation. Indeed, in many ways the West's vision of the Taiping rebels mimicked Western attraction to the Nestorian tablet, since in both cases Chinese Christianity was seen as a convenient means of access to the empire, but only because the West could find an opportunity to read its own preoccupations and prejudices onto something that, in the end, remained fundamentally incompatible. Ultimately, the only way for the West to come into contact with China was through military force, to "save" the country and to "save" the monument by bringing it to a place where it would be protected and given the respect it deserved.

But the upshot was that no one in the West could even be sure that the stone still existed. D. B. McCartee, an American Presbyterian missionary and physician at one of the treaty ports, wrote to the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* in 1855 (just

two years after Salisbury's paper) to assure its members that according to his Chinese contacts the stone was still intact — although no available rubbings showed a cross or the Syriac. The same volume also included a statement from Bridgman, that he had met an Italian who had seen the monument, and in 1857 Abbé Huc wrote about Chinese friends who told him that the stele was still there.[19] But its real fate and its real appearance were still uncertain. There was even some debate about whether there was a cross at all since this detail did not appear in contemporary rubbings. [20]

Williamson's visit, in other words, was a complicated response to growing calls in the West to see the monument again in person, and to verify that it was still standing after so much upheaval in China. When he reached Xi'an Williamson came to the ruins of the Buddhist temple where, evidently, the stone had been brought soon after its discovery. Its anthropomorphosis was now complete: "There it stood perfect," he rejoices, "with not a scratch on it, . . . amid heaps of stones, bricks, and rubbish on all sides." [21] But in Williamson's account, readers were also offered the earliest engraving made after a drawing executed on site [Figure 33]. For the first time there was also an attempt to depict the intertwined dragons at the top of the stele, but the shape of the pedestal, which was presumably always a tortoise, is very difficult to make out.



The Nestorian Tablet.

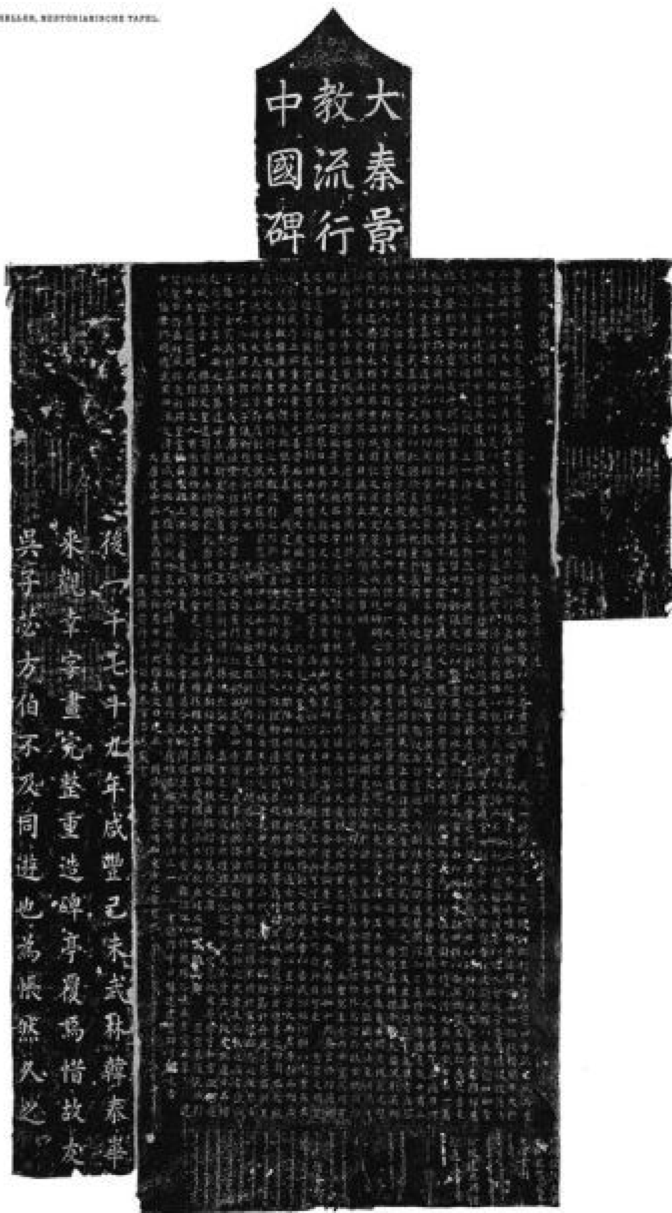
33 The monument as it appeared in 1866, surrounded by a brick niche built or rebuilt by Han Taihua as shown in Alexander Williamson, *Journeys in North China , Manchuria, and Eastern Mongolia* vol. 1., facing p. 380. National Taiwan University Library.

The dragons, in fact, had never been represented before and indeed never even described. Because they are carved in relief they cannot be reproduced in a rubbing, and earlier eyewitnesses may not have bothered to mention them since they are such a common detail on Chinese tablets. [22] Yet the dragons may have been a little too "Chinese" for occidental tastes. Moreover, Williamson's engraving shows that by this time the monument had been built into a sort of niche made of brick, which, as he remarks, mostly covered the Syriac portions on the sides. But enough of the left side was exposed for him to offer one further detail, a second inscription that had been added on top of the original in 1859, which recorded the visit of a man named Han Taihua from Wulin, an ancient name for Hangzhou [Figure 34]. As Han's text records, 1079 years after the erection of the stone "I had come to visit it and had found the characters and ornamentation perfect, and . . . rebuilt the brick covering in which it stood" (Williamson's translation). "Alas!" the inscription concludes, "that my friend Wu Zubi was not with me, that he also might have seen it. On this account I am very sorry." [23]

No rubbings are offered in Williamson's account ("the inscription on the tablet is too long for insertion here," he says), but he does provide two further illustrations of the cross, clearly of supreme importance for him. One is a drawing of the "head of the monument" (again an interesting anthropomorphosis), including the dragons, the cross, and the title, and the other is taken after a rubbing of the cross, although somewhat simplified (no clouds or flowers, no flames at the top) and with shading added. Both of these images were then redrawn and widely disseminated as the frontispiece for James Legge's book on the tablet published in 1888, which for many readers still contains the standard English translation [Figure 35, see p. 108]. In the meantime a new 1875 edition of Henry Yule's translation of Marco Polo provided a detailed lithograph of the entire inscription (but not the sides, presumably since they were now covered), as well as a separate

full-sized rubbing of the cross.[24] Yule credits his new reproduction to a rubbing obtained from the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, who was the next Western adventurer to come to Xi'an in 1872, but there is still some debate about whether he actually saw the stone. In fact, Richthofen began a false rumor that the stele had been overturned during a Muslim uprising that occurred just after Williamson's visit. [25]

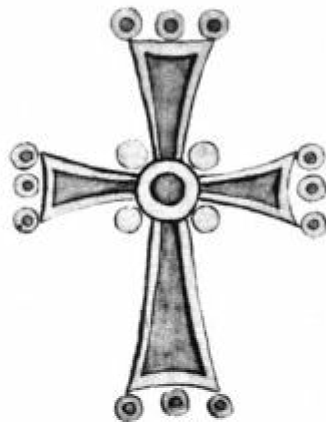
It is predictable that some in the West would be outraged over Han Taihua's "desecration" of the monument. Williamson himself offers no comment, but it was not long before Western criticism would refer to this act of "injury" or "mutilation" as if the stone were a maltreated prisoner of war. It is true that a few Estrangelo characters had been made unreadable after Han's carving had been completed, forcing scholars to rely on earlier rubbings in order to decipher some of the Syriac. [26] But in fact Han showed great respect for the object, which he clearly reveres (we do not know whether he was Christian). Much like the Western missionaries, he also traveled a great distance through very difficult countryside to see it; he knew precisely the year of its erection and appreciates its wonderful state of preservation more than a millennium later; and of course he built or rebuilt the niche itself, clearly hoping to shield the object from all forms of deterioration. It had always been a Western presumption that they and they alone had the ability to understand the object's true meaning, and much like the supposed copy made by the Xi'an governor in the seventeenth century, Han's calligraphy is another example of the fact that in a Chinese context the monument could be honored in ways that had nothing whatever to do with Christianity — or at least Western Christianity.



34 Rubbing of monument from Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu*, unnumbered page. On the left side there is a new inscription carved in 1859 by Han Taihua, in much larger characters, which announces that he had protected the monument with a new shelter of brick. National Taiwan University Library.

MONUMENT (COMMEMORATING) THE DIFFUSION OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS RELIGION OF TÂ TS'IN IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM.

HEAD OF THE MONUMENT.



THE CROSS IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE NAME OF THE MONUMENT.
(Larger View.)

35 Cross and "head" of the monument from James Legge, *Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu*, frontispiece. The drawings had first appeared in Williamson's *Journeys in North China*, 1:382–83. Note that the dragons are still very inaccurately represented. National Taiwan University Library.

Williamson, moreover, became notorious for treating the stele as a *Protestant* artifact, probably the first and only time in the history of the stone's Western reception. The tablet "is a most important witness in favor of our faith in opposition both to the heathen and Romanist," he writes, "as it shows that the Protestant form of Christianity is not of yesterday." This is certainly another example

of the monument's persistent mirror-like effect, but it has also been suggested that Williamson might have been misled by the fact that the inscription mentions one official who was the son of a priest, clearly impossible if the text were as orthodox and as Catholic as Kircher, Boym, and others had claimed. [27] Yet I would also like to call attention to one further detail in Williamson's account that has so far gone unnoticed. After hiring a guide and seeing no fewer than eight mosques in the city, and after visiting the famous *Beilin* (or Forest of Tablets) to see steles from all periods of Chinese history, he was informed that the tablet he sought could be found among the ruins of a temple outside the city, which had been destroyed just four years earlier. Finally reaching this temple, and still not discovering anything of interest to him, an old Buddhist priest simply turns to him and says: " 'This is not your temple, *it is there*,' pointing to a field of devastation away on the south-east."[28]

The frank and dispassionate way in which the monk simply looks and points to what the Westerners so ardently seek is positively breathtaking, and this pattern would recur in subsequent journeys. The same site at which Williamson could reflect on "the preserving care of a wise Providence" might, to a local Buddhist, be nothing but a ruined temple scattered with monuments, and the whereabouts of the stone were no great mystery in a region so rich in history and to people who had lived there all the time. If the monument had been preserved through numerous rebellions, in other words, it could just as easily have been due to a complete indifference to its Christian message.

III

By 1879, the time of the next recorded visit, the Xi'an area had suffered even greater devastation and the brick enclosure was gone. An expedition led by a French naturalist in 1872 had noted the existence of the stone, but since it was deemed scientifically uninteresting the party had decided not to stop and see it. Another French traveler also mentions the monument as he passes through the city in 1874. [29] But in 1879 the stele was an important

and prearranged stop on an extended three-year research trip through western and eastern Asia financed by Count Béla Széchenyi of Hungary. The results, mainly geographical and geological, were published in three large volumes in the 1890s, and a 1000-page narrative of the complete journey was also published by its main guide, Gustav Kreitner, in 1881. [30]

As was the case with Williamson's voyage, when Kreiter and his team reached Xi'an they were informed by a local Chinese priest — but this time Catholic — that the monument still existed. Was it true, they had asked, that the so-called Nestorian tablet had been destroyed or walled in? "O no!" the Catholic priest replied, "the tablet stands in the open, . . . in a temple garden ruined by the Mohammedans. I myself have not been there to see it, but tomorrow I will send a man who will lead you there." Kreitner is evidently puzzled by this last statement, since he adds in parentheses that "the Nestorian tablet does not enjoy good memories among missionaries of the present time," as if nineteenth-century Chinese Catholics would have felt some sort of need to distance themselves from the controversies that had surrounded the monument for the past two hundred years. Why wouldn't a Christian priest, Kreitner implies, have expended every effort to see the stone with his own eyes, since it was an object of such overwhelming importance?

The real reason, however, is unknowingly given in Kreitner's next sentence, when the priest also warns the foreigners that they will have to act discretely lest they arouse the suspicions of the local governor. In other words, nineteenth-century Christians would have been wary of calling too much attention to themselves after the Taiping rebellion (not to mention other nonconformist uprisings); persecutions against the Christian faith were a constant threat. And in any case, Chinese Christians certainly did not approach the stone with the same degree of obsession common to their Western counterparts, who were so anxious to locate an object that seemed to verify their own religion in China's past.

Kreitner and his party believed that the stone should be easy to find since it contained a cross, but when they finally searched the grounds of the razed temple, although they encountered a number

of tablets and other interesting artifacts (including a Jewish cemetery with hundreds of gravestones), the real prize remained elusive. Once again it was a local monk who came to the rescue (probably because he was able to read Chinese), and once again the Westerners' language of fulfillment is very revealing of their own self-absorption. "While we were toiling in vain to find the tablet," Kreitner writes, "the Buddhist priest suddenly surprised us with the wonderful news that he had discovered it. Scarcely believable but it was true: the stone took a place of honor over the others and at once struck the unprejudiced eye with its fine condition and its imposing form. We had sought a plain, weather-beaten tablet and found a renovated monument."[31]

Although there were plenty of other tablets in the vicinity, the one with the cross had exceeded all their expectations, gloriously and magnificently towering above the rest as a gleaming beacon of Christian truth amid the waste and ruin of the Chinese landscape. And since the monument was now freestanding, Széchenyi could make new rubbings of the sides, the most accurate to date. Detailed plates were published in 1897, along with a new translation and commentary by Johannes Heller, an Austrian Jesuit and Syriac expert who was asked to supply a special essay on the monument. Heller did not take part in the expedition and was not a sinologist, which led to occasional objections among scholars of the period, but his work is among the most clear-headed of its day and is of particular utility for understanding the minutiae of nineteenth-century debate.[32]

Meanwhile, news that the stone was again at risk was spreading rapidly among Westerners. Long-time Shanghai resident Frederic Henry Balfour, a businessman turned translator and newspaperman, even sent a letter to the *Times* in 1886 as if it had become a matter of national importance. The shelter built by "an intelligent Chinese" in 1859 had vanished, he reports, and wouldn't the stone "be more worthily housed in the British Museum than left to rot unnoticed and uncared for in a dirty Chinese town?" He specifically mentions the precedent of the Elgin marbles, which were bought for the museum in 1806. And since fewer than "a hundred responsible persons in the whole of China . . . know or care anything" about the monument, it is

“probably to be had for the asking”: “If a man were to go there some fine day with a dozen stalwart coolies and cart it bodily away, I question whether anyone would take the trouble to lift a finger to prevent him.” [33] Racist stereotypes abound here (the coolies, the dirt, the lazy and ignorant Chinese), and unfortunately, in only twenty years someone would indeed show up and try to “cart it bodily away.”

Balfour’s suggestion, in other words, did not fall on deaf ears. The following week another correspondent, identifying himself only as G. W., replied that trying to remove the tablet would be a waste of time since it was not even authentic — as the late Dr. Wall of Trinity College, Dublin, had shown. We have examined Wall’s theories in our last chapter, and indeed one wonders why G. W. is bringing them up again after more than forty years (could his last name be Wall?). [34] At any rate, his remarks led to another response from Albert Etienne Terrien de Lacouperie, professor of Indo-Chinese philology at the University of London, who chided G.W. by pointing out that the stone is unquestionably authentic and that it had been universally judged as such by the scholarly world. Yet Lacouperie, too, excitedly seized upon the idea of bringing it to England so that it might “take a place among the treasures of the British Museum.” Just seven months later, he contributed another letter reporting that he had received many communications in support of his plan, including one from a missionary in the China Inland Mission, who agreed that locals cared nothing about this “silent and solitary witness of God’s truth.” The second letter, from a member of the same mission, was even more emotional about this “crying shame and . . . disgrace to the 19th century,” which had been so “rudely and recklessly exposed to the elements and [to] any stray ‘rough’ who cared to damage it.” Wouldn’t it be better to entrust it to the “safekeeping” of the British Museum? [35]

This was of course an era in which the West busily pillaged the world to bring exotic artifacts to its own shrines of the arts in London, Paris, Berlin, and New York. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Xi’an tablet was the object of similar designs. In fact, there was talk among Western diplomats of trying to buy it as early as 1875. [36] But by 1890 such plans had actually started

to materialize. In that year the China branch of the Royal Asiatic Society published a brief exchange of letters between its president, also the British consul at Shanghai, and the German foreign minister to China, “Doyen of the Diplomatic Body” in Beijing. The exchange was careful to point out that the brick fortification had been removed, leaving the monument “quite unprotected.” The German official contacted the imperial government, who in turn wrote to the authorities in Shaanxi, to “take the necessary steps for the protection of the Tablet.” The result was a small shed with a Chinese-style roof constructed in 1891, a drawing of which appeared in Havret in 1897 [Figure 36]. But this shelter, too, seems to have been very short-lived, since in a drawing published in March 1892 it was out in the open once more. The accompanying description refers to it as “a most important standing witness in favor of the Truth,” and there were equally predictable rumors that the shelter had been destroyed because of the jealousy of the local Buddhist priests. [37]

Yet through all this flurry of activity the stone was still there. I have suggested that indifference could have played a large part in this, but it is just as likely that superstition had also helped to preserve it, since neither Buddhist, Daoist, nor Muslim Chinese would have wanted to destroy any offering to a god or other spirit, whether Chinese or foreign. It has also been suggested that the Chinese had thought it was a Buddhist monument, owing to its unknown language, which was often confused with Sanskrit or Mongolian (in 1679 Lin Tong, a famous authority on stone inscriptions, thought it was one of these, as did Kreitner’s interpreter). The seventeenth-century governor of Xi’an must have also considered it Buddhist or at least conformable to Buddhism, since he had read it as an expression of the reincarnation of his son and had it moved into a Buddhist temple. And of course the inscription itself frequently adopts Buddhist and Daoist terminology, just as it includes Buddhistic imagery such as clouds and flowers (and a cross could be perceived as a Buddhist symbol, too). Even the nineteenth-century Muslim rebels probably thought it was a Buddhist memorial (that is, not Chinese and therefore not objectionable), and the stone also managed to survive the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the express purpose of which was to obliterate all traces of “foreign devils” from Chinese soil. [38]

36 Engraving after a photograph of the monument with a shelter built in 1891, from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, vol. 2, facing p. 162. This shelter lasted less than one year. National Taiwan University Library.

Yet Western panegyrists preferred to believe another version of the same story, which, ironically enough, they were at first able to "solve" precisely because of the non-Chinese writing: for Semedo and for many others, that is, it was the Syriac that convinced them that the intractable text of the monument was Christian, because it enabled them to make a connection with the famous St. Thomas

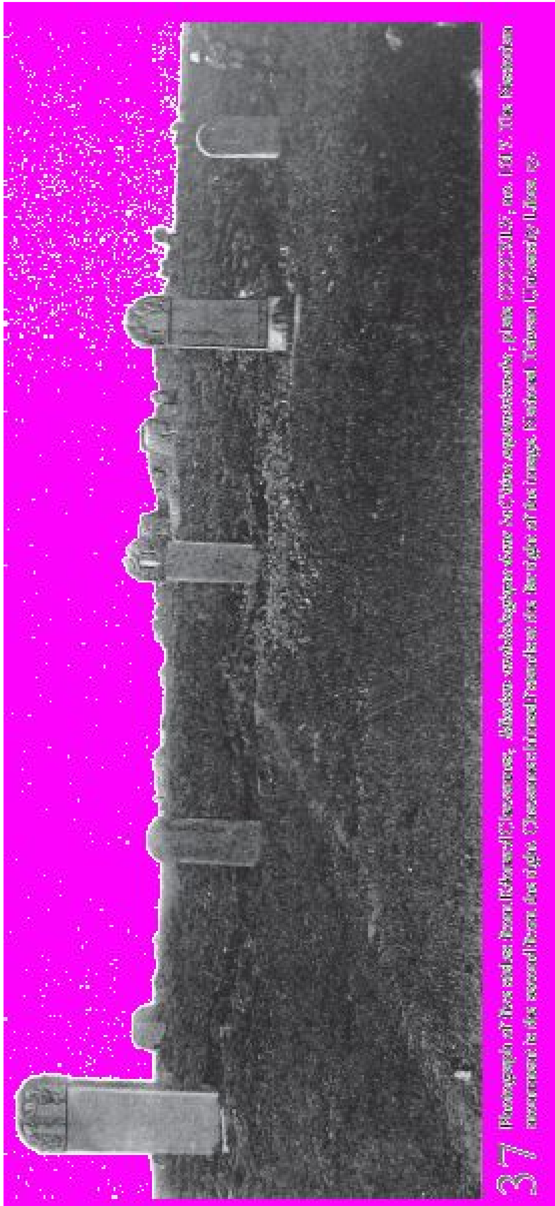
church in India. For Westerners, the stone's "peculiar and unique sanctity was such that it alone commanded respectful treatment," but only because the Chinese had failed to see what it really was. "Ignorance of its real purport and tenor," wrote one reviewer in 1889, "was the most powerful factor in its preservation." But what was its "real purport and tenor"? It was only one of a number of tablets remaining on the grounds of the temple where it had stood for nearly two hundred years, but the same reviewer insisted that it was "the one whole block amidst a surrounding holocaust of ruin." Another contemporary missionary report was more accurate, noting that "there is nothing by which a passer-by could distinguish it from the hundreds of other stones that are to be found in this district." [39] But Westerners, of course, were never just passers-by, and their rhetoric of crisis was becoming more and more urgent as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

IV

Complaints about the stone's "miserable" condition were become shriller all the time.[40] While the Qing government had made an effort to shelter the stele, the Westerners said, it was only after foreign diplomats had intervened, and the resulting structure was so feeble that it had lasted less than a year. Unlike other Chinese monuments, this one was a "Christian" artifact and thus cried out for Western custody. And like so much else in Chinese history and culture, it was considered part of the white's man burden to uphold what was no longer appreciated or understood in a stagnant nation. [41] The arrival of photography made the case even more pressing, since the stone's shattered environment seemed to make it more pathetic and forlorn. The very first published photograph was a close-up of the top of the stele that appeared in Gaillard in 1893, the full-sized version of which was then canonized in the first volume of Havret's magnum opus in 1895, along with a life-sized rubbing of the cross and each and every Chinese and Syriac character from the three faces of the stone. Later images showed the barren surroundings in greater detail, typified by a photo taken during the expedition of Edouard Chavannes in 1907, which shows a row of five old and (to the

Western eye) markedly similar stones, with the explorer himself standing at the far right [Figure 37, see p. 116]. The Nestorian tablet is the second from the right, hardly the towering "center" of the site as it was so often claimed. [42]

But by 1900 the importance of the object had become exaggerated out of all proportion. To some degree it had ludicrously became the most famous artifact in all of China, along with the Great Wall, and it was not uncommon to see references to it as "one of the great monuments of the world," an overstatement at best. It was to reach the height of its popularity in 1907 and 1908, largely because of the mission of a twenty-six-year-old Danish journalist and adventurer, Frits Holm, whose story I would like to examine in some detail. Holm's account exists in two main versions, the first being a speech delivered at the International Congress of Orientalists and at other venues in 1908 and 1909. It was published as "The Holm-Nestorian Expedition" in *The Open Court* in 1909, an important philosophical and religious studies periodical edited by Paul Carus, a highly influential German philosopher who was instrumental in bringing the study of Buddhism to the West. The journal then reprinted the speech in the same year as part of a booklet called *The Nestorian Monument: An Ancient Record of Christianity in China*, also edited by Carus, where Holm's account was supplemented by the Chinese text of the inscription, Wylie's translation, and two brief essays on the Nestorians. A fuller, popular account was not published until 1923, having become elaborated into a "Nestorian adventure" of more than three hundred pages and accompanied by thirty-three photographs.[43] But the expedition was already sensational news even by the time of the *Open Court* story, particularly in New York where Holm had made his triumphant return in the summer of 1908.



The first sign that something was afoot appeared as a tiny item in the *New York Times* for November 15, 1907: “Nestorian Tablet Moved.” The prefect of Shaanxi, it reports, has had the stone taken to the *Beilin* — in order to guard it, the paper’s Beijing correspondent continues, from “the increasing number of European vandals in the province.”[44] Interestingly, it was foreigners and not Chinese who were blamed for potential vandalism, and although it may be that the report was simply trying to stress the xenophobic anxieties of the Chinese government, it turned out to be quite true that the real danger was from a Western intruder like Holm, not a local “stray ‘rough, ’” as the missionaries had feared. The only Chinese person who had even bothered to touch it was Han Taihua, who may have

damaged a few characters but who had also tried his best to shelter it with a sturdy covering of brick. And Holm, perhaps for the first time in the stone's modern history, had not simply stopped in Xi'an as part of a scientific expedition or a grand tour or a geographical survey. He had come to Xi'an and to Xi'an alone, with the express purpose of acquiring the stele for a Western museum (at first, the British Museum), an act that at the time few in the West would have associated with any sort of "vandalism" [Figure 38].

FRITS V. HOLM, M.R.A.S.
Standing by the Nestorian Stone before its removal.

38Photograph of Frits Holm with the monument before it was removed in 1908, from Holm, *The Nestorian Monument*, 22. National Taiwan University Library.

The Chinese government reacted by taking away the monument and placing it in their most important museum of stone tablets — an appropriate end, one might imagine. But the strangest part of Holm's story is that after he realized that he was unable to procure the stele, he decided instead to bring back a copy, or rather a replica that had been carved onto an identical piece of limestone. This is very ironic, of course, considering the number of times that the whole question of copying has already cropped up in the previous chapters of our study, whether it was a rubbing, a second stone, a new inscription, or a deceptive substitute. Holm claims from the beginning that his original idea was either to buy the

stone or to obtain a "true copy" or a "monolith replica," but one also cannot help feeling that the replica was simply an attempt to salvage something from the mission after it had become clear that his real aim — to take the Nestorian tablet to the West where it supposedly belonged — had been thwarted.[45] Why not settle for a full-sized rubbing, which is presumably what he means by "true copy," and which could then be carved into a large piece of stone anywhere in the world? And at some unspecified juncture he also resolved to take the copy to New York instead of London, with the intention of placing it in the Metropolitan Museum. [46]

The New York press was thrilled and played up the story for all it was worth. When the ship arrived in Boston several months later it was already front-page news in the *New York Times*, with the explorer having become glamorized as "Count Fritz [*sic*] Von Holm, a relative to the Danish King" (he was not a count, V. stood for Vilhelm, and no royal connection was ever mentioned). Although only three paragraphs long, the *Times* piece was padded out with a suitably tempting morsel, that upon his arrival Holm had "received a telegraphic warning from a companion in New York to keep his mouth shut about his two-ton monolith and come as soon as possible to that city." The next day's front page, however, also reported that Sir Purdon Clarke, director of the Metropolitan, was less than enthusiastic. "The stone has little value as an art object," Clarke tersely remarked, and "just what object there would be in exhibiting so large a stone . . . of no artistic value in a museum of this sort I don't know." "It is possible that we may accept the stone if it is offered to us," he added, but "as yet no overtures have been made." No doubt Holm's initial intent was rather more mercenary, and by the time his cargo arrived in New York a week later, there was only a blurb on the back page that focused on the trials and tribulations while his copy was being made, including threats of "death and torture." Needing something to pepper up an already dead piece of news, perhaps, the reporter adds that the stone was adorned with "over 2,000 figures of dragons, ancient figures, and mystic hieroglyphs," an amusing bit of metamorphosis for the two-thousandcharacter Chinese inscription that by 1908 should have been very well known.[47]

Holm reached the peak of his New York fame with a full-page spread in the *New York Times* Sunday Magazine section for July 12, which included photographs, a rubbing of the cross, a picture of a flock of Chinese laborers carrying the copy, and another of the local mandarins standing in front of the original[48] [Figure 39, see p. 120]. Ostensibly to announce the stone's arrival at the Metropolitan, where it was given a place of honor in the Fifth Avenue rotunda, the story is suitably much more sober than previous ones and focuses mainly on the object's history. Some of the difficulties encountered during the mission are also enumerated, although by this time it is nowhere mentioned that Holm had at first hoped to procure the real thing instead of a replica. It is now a narrative of espionage, dissimulation, and secrecy, as it had been necessary to operate covertly in order to overcome the complexities of Chinese bureaucracy.

But Holm repeatedly alleges that he had far more trouble with the Western missionaries, who had "taken the attitude that the monument is in the joint custody of themselves and the Chinese Empire." No further details of these confrontations are provided, but it seems hard to imagine that the missionaries would have objected to a replica. In fact, when they came to inspect the copy after it had been completed they offered nothing but praise.[49] They must have assumed — and would have been right to do so — that Holm was originally planning to take away the original. He probably also misread their insistence that the stone belonged in part to them, since it seems obvious that they would wish to keep it as a precedent for their own evangelical efforts. And of course the missionaries were also quite correct, since the monument did indeed belong to China.

After he decided to make a copy instead, then, a similar piece of stone needed to be brought from a nearby quarry, and several artisans were employed to do the carving. The stone was shaped and smoothed and the dragons were carved; rubbings were taken and then re-inked and transferred to the copy, allowing the Chinese and Syriac characters (and the cross) to be "picked out with needle-like chisels." The work was completed in eleven days, but in order to divert suspicion Holm decided to leave the scene for two months, hoping that everyone would think he had simply

given up (it was during this period that Chavannes had also arrived). But it was then necessary to bring the stone more than one thousand miles to the port of Shanghai, the difficulty of which was emphasized by photos of Chinese laborers struggling to move it [Figure 40, see p. 121]. This, too, he says, was plagued by numerous delays and constant interference. “I am convinced now that the mandarins and other high Chinese officials sought to prevent the replica from leaving the country, because they feared that later they might be held responsible for its passage as a Chinese product made of Chinese stone — in theory, the personal property of the

THE NESTORIAN STONE'S MESSAGE OF CENTURIES

More Than a Thousand Years Old These Inscriptions, in Replica at the Metropolitan Museum, Tell of Early Christianity in China.

Tony, the Marine Observer, at Coney Island.

38 *New York Times* story on Holm's expedition, July 12, 1908. National Taiwan University

NESTORIAN REPLICA BEING UNLOADED FROM A FREIGHT CAR AT HANKOW, JANUARY, 1908.
Photograph by Holm.

40 Photograph of Holm's replica of the monument being unloaded in Hankow (modern Wuhan) on its way to Shanghai, from Frits Holm, *The Nestorian Monument*, 31. National Taiwan University Library.

Emperor." This surmise was also quite correct, and one wonders why Holm did not think of it at the time; instead, he was predictably contemptuous and dismissive of Chinese law,

imagining that his “authorization” from the Russian Minister (who also represented the Danish government) should have sufficed. Eventually, the replica was put on board ship, and as Holm notes at the close of the interview, he was proud of the fact that his expedition had had “at least one good result,” since the government was at last spurred into bringing the original into a museum where it would be “suitably protected.” [50]

The version published in *The Open Court* fleshes out a number of these details, including a much clearer statement of the expedition’s chief goal. “I did everything in my power to obtain the original by applying to the local authorities in an indirect manner,” Holm here relates, “but although the Chinese do not care more today for the stone than for any ordinary brick they at once got suspicious; and I might as well have endeavored to ‘lift’ the Rosetta Stone out of the British Museum, or take the Moabite Stone from the Louvre, as to carry away the *jingjiaobei* from Xi’an.” Comparing the Nestorian monument to the Rosetta Stone was becoming something of a commonplace, often accompanied by a claim that the stele was one of the “four most important stone monuments in the world” (along with the Rosetta, Moabite, and Aztec Calendar stones). [51] Holm calls it “the most valuable historical monument in the world that has not as yet been acquired by any museum or scientific society or corporation,” a chilling example of the commonly assumed Western attitude that such things belonged in a place where they would be “suitably” studied and appreciated. There is also a nice irony when he remarks how “the much-discussed cross on the stone is not very plain and must almost be searched after before found.”

A different version, published in German in 1912, also provided a very revealing anecdote about how local officials came to the site to ensure that he had not actually tried to steal the original, with Holm sarcastically pointing out that this was the first time that the mandarins had even bothered to examine an object that had been sitting on the same spot for three hundred years. [52] The story is repeated in the supposedly definitive 1923 version, but here one gets the feeling that much is being elided about exactly when and why Plan A had become Plan B. It is also unclear why *My Nestorian Adventure* took fifteen years to complete, particularly

since it is only in its final brief chapter that the fate of the replica is brought up to date. Otherwise, it is a rather standard traveler's log of coolies and mandarins and Western discomfort, despite Holm's claims that the book represents the consummation of his Nestorian researches. In fact, his only "research" seemed to be a completely unsupported claim that both the cross and the Syriac were added later, "as an afterthought." [53]

I have no doubt that Holm really believed that he was acting on behalf of the advancement of science, and he was quick to condemn people who simply stole relics or cut the heads off statues for a quick profit. He was incensed when the secretary of the China Monuments Society, also founded in 1908 "with the object of preventing foreign vandalism," referred to the Xi'an tablet as having been threatened with "depredations by a foreign adventurer." [54] Yet there remains some disturbing discrepancies about Holm's own attitude toward his right to remove it. He was horrified to learn from one of the local Catholic missionaries that it would be easier to send the stone to the Pope if it were cut into three pieces, proudly replying that "the great Monument belongs, of course, to the Chinese nation." He was also careful to note that the priest of the temple was wrong to suppose that all the monuments on the temple grounds were his own rather than the property of the emperor, and yet by the same token it was the priest with whom Holm had attempted to come to terms. Once again, something unspecified occurs with the Western missionaries, forcing Holm "outwardly to abandon or at least abate [his] ambitions," and "to depart from Shaanxi without finishing [his] Buddhistic negotiations." [55]

These negotiations are never elaborated either, and I cannot help but wonder whether Holm had at one time considered paying the priest to substitute the original stone with the replica once it had been completed, especially since, in his opinion, no one in China (apart from Westerners) would have cared anything about the switch even if they had noticed the difference. And yet we also know that the government's decision to protect the stone had nothing whatever to do with the missionary community, since news of Holm's activities was leaked to the Qing government by his own interpreter, whose kinsman, a local prefect, contacted a

well-known scholar who then contacted the provincial authorities. Coincidentally, a Japanese professor visiting Xi'an at the same time claimed to have heard a rumor that a foreigner had offered such a large sum of money for the monument that it had "startled" the governor of Shaanxi into action, and that he even forbade any further rubbings without prior permission.[56]

Thus, when Holm had returned to Xi'an to begin transporting his copy, he was shocked to find nothing but a hole in the ground. To mark the occasion he took an oddly symbolic photograph of the priest of the temple, identified as "Yü Show," seated on the same spot [Figure 41, see p. 124]. When the copy had finally arrived in New York it was set up as a loan in the Metropolitan, where it remained on view for eight years while its procurer busily tried to find a donor who would reimburse him for his expenses. The final chapter of the 1923 version relates how the likes of J. Pierpont Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, Charles Freer, and the Smithsonian Institution all expressed interest. But no cash was forthcoming. Finally, an American convert to Catholicism decided to donate it to the Pope, and at the end of 1916 Holm arrived at the Vatican to present it to His Holiness, who had it placed across from the main entrance in the Lateran Museum.

YÜ SHOW, THE CHINESE HIGH PRIEST.
Seated where the Nestorian stone had stood before its removal.
Photograph by Holm.

41 Photograph of Buddhist priest “Yü Show,” seated on the same spot where the monument had stood before its removal in 1908, from Frits Holm, *The Nestorian Monument* , 27. National Taiwan University Library.

It is a final irony, of course, that Holm’s replica should have ended up in Rome after all, the very city in which Kircher’s seventeenth-century copies had caused so much confusion. [57] And had it become orthodox Catholic after all? Many in America rued having lost the stone forever, but one result of having a replica in the West was the fact that numerous plaster casts could now be made. Holm’s book lists twelve that had been set up in different parts of the world by 1923. An evocative photograph of the one at Yale (“the only reproduction in the U.S.A.”) testifies to this fact [Figure 42, see p. 126]. In 1911, Elizabeth A. Gordon, longtime English resident in Japan and author of many books relating to Buddhism and its Christian connections, donated another stone replica to a sacred Buddhist temple complex on Mount Koya in

Japan[58] [Figure 43, see p. 127]. Meanwhile, for many years afterward Holm was still giving celebrity lectures throughout the world. He may not have been immortalized by the installation of the "Holm Stone" in the British Museum, but by 1923 he had accumulated an impressive list of international decorations, honorary degrees, and military honors. In 1919 he also married into American high society, and his obituary in 1930, at the young age of forty-nine, seemed to sum up his cavalier life, as he succumbed to double pneumonia "contracted when he returned from the South, and, in keeping with his custom, refused to put on an overcoat." [59]

V

Not everyone was so enthusiastic about the stone's importance, however. Victor Segalen, who made two important archeological expeditions to China in 1914 and 1917, composed a scathing poem for his collection *Stèles* (1914), which seemed to celebrate rather than lament the fact that the *jingjiao* religion had, in his words, "died in peace, obscurely." [60] But this was an exception. After 1911 the new republican government in China also took a different stance, as its leader, Sun Yat-sen, who was also Christian, immediately seized upon the stone as a way of forging an alliance between the West and a new vision of post-imperial China. It is a remarkable fact that Sun's first official republican manifesto, delivered on January 5, 1912, just four days after assuming the presidency, sought to distance the new government from Qing rule by appealing to a fantasized prehistory in which China "was open to foreign intercourse and religious tolerance existed, as is shown by the writings of Marco Polo and the inscription on the Nestorian tablet." The republican period also fostered new scholarship in Chinese, even though many of those who were interested tended to be Christians as well. [61]

Full-size Cast of the Nestorian Replica in Yale University, the only reproduction in the U.S.A. The author has presented a dozen similar Casts to so many countries as mentioned in the text; one or two more may yet be cast from the Replica in Rome for museums or other centres of learning as gifts from Dr. Holm.

42 Photograph of a plaster replica of the monument at Yale University, ca. 1915, from Frits Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure in China* , facing p. 312. National Taiwan University Library.

43 1911 photograph of a stone replica at Mount Koya, Japan, donated by Elizabeth A. Gordon, seated at center left, from P. Y. Saeki, *Keikyo hibun kenkyu* (Studies on the Nestorian Monument), frontispiece. National Taiwan University Library.

The same could be said for the pioneering work of P. Y. Saeki in Japan, whose two large monographs are especially valuable in placing the stone into a broader context of Chinese religious culture during the period, as well as in bringing together all the known documents regarding the *Da Qin* religion in both Chinese and English translation. Scholarly study of the stone, both in the East and in the West, had reached a new age of breadth and maturity, and it was only fringe voices (or those completely uninformed) that continued to raise any suspicions about authenticity. [62] In a sense, with the original safely in a museum and the replica permanently housed at the center of the Catholic world, the stone's life in the minds of Westerners had come to an end. While the scholarship continued the object itself had lost much of its notoriety, and in much the same way the plaster casts, once so treasured, were taken into basements and forgotten. [63] It was not until another Westerner completed a new pilgrimage to Xi'an in 1998, in a very different era of supposed cross-cultural awareness and a professed Christian acceptance of the legitimacy of other faiths, that the monument would be rediscovered all over again — only this time as a New Age "sutra,"

supposedly retaining its true origins as an expression of fundametally non-Western religious beliefs.

But let us leave this story for the epilogue.

EPILOGUE

The *Da Qin* Temple

Once the stone had been placed into the *Beilin* in Xi'an it must have been clear to Westerners that it was not going to be "rescued" to a museum of their own. In the popular imagination, the stone had had its brief moment of fame and then returned to earth just as quickly, and Holm's replica, once front-page news and a major attraction at the Metropolitan Museum, was soon to disappear into the Vatican's little-visited Missionary Ethnological collections. Holm himself managed to maintain a certain celebrity, lecturing on his expedition until he died in 1930 (always credited as "Dr. Holm," since he had received a number of honorary degrees), but for the most part the monument had once again become of interest only to scholars. Perhaps the stone had simply fallen out of fashion as Western tastes (and Western scholarship) grew steadily more secular. Perhaps "yellow peril" rhetoric had changed the West's idea of a Christian China anyway, especially after the communist revolution in 1949. The kind of religious and cultural imperialism that the stone had once seemed to validate had certainly not disappeared, but it had found new objects with which to express itself. Predictably enough, the stone was much less frequently referred to as one of the great monuments of the world, not so much because it was being ignored but because it no longer served the same function as a symbol of the West's truth and superiority. Fantasies about bringing it "back home" had to be given up; it was now a part of China.

It is in this sense that the story of the stone (in the West) had largely come to an end by 1916, when Holm's replica was removed from its place of honor in New York. The scholarship continued, of course, and the monument would certainly remain a well-known artifact. New translations and new commentary were coming out all the time, and the contexts of Chinese Nestorianism were being more fully fleshed out than ever before. Even the missionary community began to be much more careful about emphasizing its historical, geographical, and doctrinal distance. But now the monument was also housed with some three

thousand other steles of at least the same cultural importance, many of which also showed non-Chinese influences, used foreign languages and other symbols, and expressed a myriad of hybridized religious beliefs. What was so special about it now? It might have lain forever dormant in academic books and museum exhibition cases were it not for one final rediscovery made in the late 1990s by Martin Palmer, an English author, translator, and theologian who had been interested in linking Eastern and Western religions for many years.

To be sure, Palmer's assumptions about the position of Christianity were markedly different from previous ones. Rather than trying to emphasize the "Western" qualities that had simply been transported into a Chinese context, Palmer immediately defamiliarizes the inscription as a "Jesus sutra": one that simultaneously incorporates Christian beliefs as well as Buddhist/Daoist doctrine. This is no doubt correct. And yet I would also argue that Palmer's narrative uncannily echoes a number of Western discovery stories, most notably Holm's in 1907–8, or even Williamson's pilgrimage of 1866. Palmer is primarily a religious conservationist, working to help preserve important cultural sites and priceless artifacts from decay or destruction. I have every respect for this labor and have no wish to make light of it. I merely wish to think about the rhetoric in which he presents his story in relation to the larger narrative we have been following since 1625, and to argue that his account fits into a recurring pattern that Westerners seem so hard-pressed to leave behind. And I would like to conclude, finally, with the story of my own fleeting visit to Xi'an in August 2006.

What surprises me about Palmer's work, to begin, is not that he should have been interested in the stone, or that he should have wished to preserve such ancient religious relics from neglect, ruin, or urban development. As director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education, and Culture, based in Manchester, England, and as the secretary general of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, it is only natural that he should have been drawn to an object that so clearly partakes of both Eastern and Western beliefs, and which also exhibits such a fascinating variety of linguistic borrowings. But his Western Christian perspective is also unmistakable. I point this out not to

malign or belittle his faith, but simply as a way of indicating that the appeal of the stone is hardly neutral. His faith also leads him to make some rather surprising overstatements. These may be attributable to the kind of hype that has become such a common feature of the popular press (although this is hardly new), but by the same token such assertions are counterproductive. The West has always had trouble maintaining a sense of perspective regarding the stone, and I have argued that Western readers have regularly invested far more significance in the stone than the Chinese themselves, even Chinese Christians. This is not to say that the artifact has no real historical, cultural, or philosophical importance. It certainly does. But what is the value in claiming that the stone and other Nestorian artifacts "are as important, if not more so, than the Dead Sea Scrolls"? And what are we to make of Palmer's remark that the monument is "a kind of Daoist-Christian Rosetta stone of the spiritual imagination"? [1]

While these statements are not necessarily wrong they are also repetitions of obsessions common to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even if they are now free from the accompanying presumption that such artifacts would be more properly housed in a Western museum. Unlike Holm, Palmer wants to protect rather than pillage, and the hallmark of his interest is that Chinese Christianity was shaped and influenced by Daosim/Buddhism rather than just the other way around. Gone forever is the Christocentic fantasy that a pure and orthodox truth had been introduced to a nation that had failed to appreciate it, and that that truth had ultimately fallen into the worst sort of pagan superstition and irreligion. He is careful, moreover, to place the monument in the context of a number of other Chinese Nestorian texts from the same period, many of which had been discovered (also by accident) in the caves of Dunhuang, a Silk Road town in the extreme northwest of China, in 1900. These, too, had been well known to scholars during most of the twentieth century, having been published in full in the 1930s in A. C. Moule's *Christians in China Before the Year 1550* , and in both Chinese and English translation in P. Y. Saeki's *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* .[2]

Like many before and since, Palmer is particularly impressed by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuits' ability to appreciate the complexities of Chinese history and culture. Theirs was a "serious engagement" between East and West. But Palmer soon realized, he says, that this was not really the first time that this had happened. "In the annals of dynastic history in China," he continues, "I found accounts of an earlier encounter with Christianity, the events of which are as fascinating as any detective story." [3] This is a story that begins with the stone and leads him to discover not only the other "sutras" discovered among the manuscripts of Dunhuang, but a "lost" Nestorian pagoda as well. But what annals had he been reading? Hasn't it always been precisely the problem that discussions of the *jingjiao* religion are difficult to find in standard Chinese histories, although they are certainly there? And why is it a detective story? Precisely what is it that Palmer is trying to find out, and what is this desire based on?

A not entirely accurate summary of the stone's discovery follows (that it was found fifty miles from Xi'an, that it was unearthed while digging a grave, neither of which are necessarily true), and Palmer then admits, strange to my ears at least, that despite his obsession to find a copy of the text it took him two years to track one down through libraries. What was so difficult about that? The text had been just as obsessively translated (and published) continuously since the very first decade of its discovery, and at the time Palmer seems to have been living in Hong Kong, where multiple copies should have been rather easily available. His obsessions simultaneously led him to other Dunhuang texts, which he was "ultimately" able to access as well, and after nineteen intervening years he was finally able to realize a pilgrimage to Xi'an to see the stone in person. "I was so overcome with emotion at this first visit," he relates, "that I wept." Obviously irritated or disappointed by the fact that locals and other tourists at the *Beilin* "cast only a brief glance at this towering stele" before moving on, while he himself "always spend[s] at least an hour alone with it," Palmer is particularly drawn, as most Western viewers are, to the symbol of the cross carved at the top. But for Palmer, the stone's flowers, clouds, and flaming pearls are perceived as reconciling rather than struggling with the basic

symbol of Christianity: “it all looks so natural.” This is now 1998, a “watershed” in his desire to “unravel the Stone’s [capital S] mysteries.” He sees it not merely as a Western import but as the crowning achievement of “Daoist Christianity,” a piece of cross-cultural history that is only waiting to be “rediscovered” (to quote the subtitle of his book). This is the “extraordinary story” that *The Jesus Sutras* now proceeds to tell. [4]

What follows is the book’s longest chapter, and one that also poses what is arguably its most important discovery, or rather rediscovery: the *Da Qin* pagoda in the Zhouzhi district near Xi’an, about two hours from the city center by car, in the village of Ta Yu. Here Palmer managed to find the real object of his search, a genuine example of Chinese interfaith history, a Nestorian temple from the Tang period, still standing although the interior had been ruined and although a sixteenth-century earthquake had sent it precariously leaning. The pagoda also showed readable traces of mud and plaster sculptures that seem to record an ancient ability to mix and to mutually respect Buddhist, Daoist, and Christian symbolism. But the *Da Qin* pagoda, too, was always there, was not unknown to earlier scholars and archeologists, and as his account so clearly points out, the building was never lost to the local people who had lived there all the time.

This narrative is positively breathtaking in its repetitions of earlier pilgrimages, of Williamson, of Holm, and even of a group of Chinese scholars, which we have not yet mentioned, who had come to the same area in the 1930s. In each of these cases, outsiders’ desire to find an undeniable remnant of the *jingjiao* religion is satisfied by a simple gesture of a local resident, who is effortlessly able to point and say, yes, that is where it is, that is something we have known about all the time. If this is a detective story it is a distinctly anticlimactic one, and what are we supposed to do with this particular solution to the crime? The outsiders’ surprise and delight is distinctly one-sided, as if it were merely self-fulfilling, just as Semedo and the other early Jesuits were pleased to find an example of ancient Chinese Christianity only because they had looked for it for so long.

The location of this pagoda had already been given by Saeki, in Japanese in 1932 and in English in 1937, although Saeki himself

had not been there and the sketch map he provided was very vague and difficult to decipher. The location had also been identified by the Chinese scholars in 1933, and their findings were summarized at length in Saeki's book as well as in an article by F. S. Drake, also published in 1937. [5] Again, at least the existence of such a pagoda had long been known; it is simply that since the 1930s, for political reasons as well, no one had bothered to look for it. Palmer, however, recalls the circumstances as a "coincidence [that] still makes me shiver with the strangeness of it." I am afraid I am unable to determine exactly what this coincidence is, unless it is the fact that those who lived nearby knew exactly what it was.

Palmer's party begins, in 1998, by visiting the *Lou Guan Tai* , a temple complex in the same area that is thought to be the site where the philosopher Lao Zi wrote the famous *Dao de jing,* the foundational text of Daoism, in a single night before disappearing to the West in the sixth century B.C. The site had been indicated on the old Japanese map, and the *Da Qin* pagoda was supposedly nearby. Standing at the *Lou Guan Tai* , Palmer turns in different directions until he observes a pagoda about a mile away to the West, rising "like an elegant finger pointing to heaven." He then asks an amulet seller about the temple. After a brief conversation the old woman remarks, again with great simplicity: "it was founded by monks who came from the West and believed in one God." "Her words struck me like some ancient prophesy," Palmer writes, "monks from the west who believed in one God could only mean Christians." It is hard to overemphasize the self-interestedness of this brand of logic, but one cannot really blame him if "local legend" was not enough, and that "physical proof" was also required. [6]

Reaching the pagoda, he and his party meet the caretaker of the site, an ancient Buddhist nun, and after wandering the grounds by himself for a time, he eventually realizes to his joy that the site is oriented from east to west instead of from north to south, as is usual with Chinese temples. He runs toward the others in his group, hardly able to contain himself. The nun asks him what all the excitement is about, and Palmer allows himself to drop his bombshell, nervously wondering how the nun will react. The site

on which we are standing now, he announces, just might be the site of an important Christian church. “Well, we all know that!” the nun proudly retorts, “this was the most famous Christian monastery in all China in the Tang Dynasty.” The Western detective story turns out once again to be common knowledge, and as soon as the nun speaks “the locals nod in agreement.”

A similarly bathetic moment occurs with the group of Chinese scholars in 1933. They, too, begin at the *Lou Guan Tai* and wander to the west, coming to the foot of a ruined pagoda. Seated at the site to rest they recall a mideleventh-century Chinese poem that describes a visit that includes a *Da Qin* temple nestled in the hills (Palmer thinks of his map and Saeki’s translations; the Chinese intellectuals think of their own poetic tradition). The party then laugh to themselves, jokingly wondering whether the pagoda at whose base they now sit might be that same temple, and so they turn to a local boy standing nearby and ask: What is the name of this temple? “The *Da Qin* temple” is the immediate reply.[7]

In Palmer’s case, the nun proceeds to tell him about the site, legends that had always been a source of considerable local pride, including one that claimed the discovery of a great stele in 1625 that was now in the *Beilin*. Palmer and his party are shown a number of fragments and other objects that had been kept, and before parting, as night falls, he is overcome with emotion once again. Facing east at the place where he imagines the original church to have stood (the pagoda is not the church, it is from the Buddhist tradition and normally served as a library), he prays. At first he is embarrassed, and the nun senses this. You want to pray, don’t you? Yes, he replies. “Go ahead then,” she counters, “they will all hear you.”

This moving acceptance of all religions, regardless of their national or doctrinal boundaries, is markedly different from the imperialist attitude so common to Western missionaries, merchants, and armchair travelers for the past four hundred years. And I am not sure in what sense we should read Palmer’s reaction to the nun’s wonderful offer of comfort and her acknowledgment of a common humanity: “I felt I had finally come home after twenty-five years of searching for that home, of never really knowing if it did, in fact, exist.”[8] Although the spirit in which

he writes may differ, I cannot help but think of Semedo's reaction upon seeing the stone for the first time in 1628, as if some "great darknesse" had finally melted away by the "spirituall *Jubilee*" that the stone represented, and precisely because it was an "irrefragable Testimony of the *Ancient Christianity* in *China*, which had been so much desired and sought after." What had Westerners come to find? What kind of need did the stone fulfill? It is no accident that one of Holm's contemporaries regularly referred to it as "the speaking stone." [9]

After Palmer's visit, the provincial government was duly notified and restoration work began. The following year he returns and is shown what had been discovered in the meantime, especially traces of sculpture in the building's interior. The rest of the chapter is taken up with describing these finds, although the precise identification of their subject matter would have to remain somewhat tentative. He even admits that he began to refer to one of them, which might represent a reclining figure of Mary in front of the five sacred mountains of Daoism, as "Our Lady of China," a rather disturbing appellation if the point is to emphasize mutual Eastern and Western influences. The Chinese visitors of 1933 identified the very same sculpture (as well as the one on the floor above, which Palmer suggests is a depiction of Jonah) as the goddess Guanyin, reminding us of the same "mistakes" that had been made since the two cultures first reencountered each other in the sixteenth century. In 1569, conversely, Gaspar da Cruz had wondered whether a statue of Guanyin was really "the image of our Lady, made by the ancient Christians." [10]

The remainder of Palmer's book is given over to understanding this early form of Chinese Christianity, and also to why it had fallen into a state of almost total oblivion for the next twelve hundred years. The first of these aims is no doubt a valuable field of inquiry, but isn't it precisely the point that the *jingjiao* religion had never really fallen into oblivion at all, at least not to local residents, even if they had not remained Christian? Isn't it more accurate to say that this was a state of ignorance that had only plagued the Christian West, and only because they had never really tried to find it, or that they simply did not realize what they were looking at? The historical summary that follows is mostly routine. And the

text contains new translations of the Dunhuang texts (and there are eight Christian ones, as compared to the tens of thousands of manuscripts that were stored in the same cave), as well as a new translation of the stone's inscription, which strangely enough comes only at the end of the volume. As with all these translations, the text is printed in boldface with the insertion of chapter and verse numbers as if it were a Biblical text, or the new Biblical text of "Daoist Christianity." And although they do not contain footnotes, they are certainly written with Daoist and Buddhist references in mind, giving them a very peculiar character with respect to earlier versions.

The translations conclude in a certain elegaic tone, moreover, as if to mourn that this Christianity had unfortunately died out. The only thing that remained, Palmer laments, is that when Ricci had finally returned to China in the sixteenth century, there were a few people who were rumored to have made the sign of the cross before they ate, "but had long forgotten why." [11] This is of course a very revealing conclusion to *The Jesus Sutras*, since it is precisely the question of forgetting, and to whom such forgetting really matters, that informs the whole project of "recovering" texts that had really been available for some time.

And there is even some dispute about the relative importance of the pagoda itself. Palmer repeatedly suggests that it was a major concession from the Tang government to allow it to be built at all, and he asks readers to think of it as "rather like the Hari Krishnas being allowed to build a temple on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral [or, for English audiences, the Canterbury Cathedral]," or "Muslims [being] allowed to build a mosque in the grounds of the White House."[12] It is true that the site of the *Da Qin* pagoda was part of, or at least adjacent to, the once huge complex of the *Lou Guan Tai* , which was the imperial Daoist temple during the Tang dynasty. But these comparisons hardly seem appropriate analogies, whatever their shock value. In the first place there is evidence of numerous Nestorian temple sites, and indeed the first and probably most important one may not be the *Da Qin* pagoda at all, but instead a site mentioned in the inscription on the stone as having been established at the northwestern edge of the city.

There is just as much chance that the stone was buried and later found there, not in Zhouzhi.

According to Saeki, Zhouzhi might have been a site for the encampment of foreign mercenary troops, many of whom could have been of the *jingjiao* faith. In addition to thinking of it as a central and sacred location, in other words, which it certainly was, the Ta Yu site could just as easily have been considered a temple complex constructed for a group of followers of a foreign faith, however important they were militarily, on the margins of the imperial capital.[13] And compared to the Buddhists, who were generally persecuted (or tolerated) at exactly the same time, the number of *jingjiao* followers was exceedingly small, despite the fact that the inscription claims that they had spread throughout China. Perhaps further excavations will reveal more information, but as of now this has not yet occurred. [14]

The Jesus Sutras has proven quite successful, however, its New Age interfaith message seeming to have a great deal of resonance for contemporary readers. It took fifty years for Pelliot's expensive but essential monograph to come out, and Havret's, like so many others, is long out of print and has never been translated, but Palmer's book has already been republished at least once and has also appeared in Dutch, Spanish, German, and French translations (and probably others). It has also spawned other texts such as *The Lost Sutras of Jesus* of 2003 (as well as subsequent reprints), which seem to have accepted many of Palmer's verdicts as if they had now been proven. We read that the stone was found in Zhouzhi by grave diggers, for example, that it functions as a Rosetta Stone linking Christianity, Daoism, and Buddhism, and that it should henceforth be called a sutra (the "Monument Sutra," in fact). As in Palmer, the stone is immediately linked to the Christian texts from Dunhuang, here referred to as "the most significant of all" even though they represent such a tiny percentage of what had been found there. And they, too, have become another tantalizing mystery: "How these unique texts ended up in a remote desert cave halfway across China from [Xi'an] is a question with no answer."

Yet another set of Buddhist/Daoist-style translations is provided, although they are not complete and have now been arranged

thematically, including a brief extract from the monument that is said to convey "the very heart of the teaching [of] the Dao of Jesus." The book concludes with a short section on how the "soul of the scrolls" can provide "guidance for today," including "lessons for daily living." There is nothing wrong with attempting to use these texts for such a purpose, particularly in a world riven by so much fanaticism and religious violence, and yet *The Lost Sutras of Jesus* begins to sound very much like a Western self-help book, in which the cross, which symbolizes "unlimited compassion," is seen to emerge out of "the lotus of the body and the sensuous world." [15]

But where has the story of the stone led us? For whom is it said to have meaning and why? Another effect of Palmer's efforts is that a replica has now been set up at the *Da Qin* pagoda itself, as if its true place of discovery were no longer even a matter of debate [Figure 44, see p. 138]. Aside from the irony of being yet one more copy, there is little question that the cross carved at the top continues to serve as the only fully readable trace of Christianity for most readers. The placement of that stone automatically invests the site with even greater significance as well, and particularly for those who are already predisposed to find it. And what of my own predisposition? Living so near to China my own pilgrimage was easy enough to achieve, and I admittedly treated it as a kind of guerrilla tourism, swooping in on a plane for only two days and staying in a five-star Western hotel replete with all the creature comforts and room service. Before arrival I arranged a private car (a large Buick, in fact) staffed with a driver and an English-speaking guide, and in the early morning after my arrival we set out to find the *Da Qin* pagoda. We knew its approximate location but still had to stop and ask, on numerous occasions, how to get there. As I expected, however, every single person we asked, from farmers hard at work to village women carrying babies to workers sweeping the dust from the roadside, knew exactly what we were talking about and gave very reliable directions. Naturally, the site had received a lot more notice since Palmer's visit in 1998, including a new (mostly paved) road that carried our huge luxury vehicle from the main road almost to the very foot of the structure. The last bit we had to traverse on foot, an easy hike through a path on a hillside covered with cornfields

[Figure 45, see p. 138]. A few farmers asked us if we wanted to rent a horse for a small fee, which was hardly necessary but might have made the ascent more picturesque.

44 Photograph of a replica of the monument at the site of the *Da Qin* pagoda near Xi'an. Photo by author.

45 Photograph of the *Da Qin* pagoda near Xi'an, walking up a slope through a cornfield to45 reach the site. Photo by author.

Upon reaching the top of the hill, in the small plaza in front of the pagoda, things were absolutely deserted. Only an old monk and one or two aged men were sitting at a nearby building, but the site

now included an office and a small museum, in front of which stood the replica with a short explanation of what it was. A very friendly caretaker came out of the office and offered a small book (for sale) that included a longer introduction, in Chinese, as well as the story of Palmer's efforts, with photos of him and his colleagues. When I inquired if it was possible to enter the pagoda she replied that if I wanted to do so a ladder would have to be constructed to climb to the second floor, as that was the only safe way in. She would be happy to provide one but I would have to wait two hours and pay the equivalent of about US$100 (noting that this money went to the government, not her), while a ladder was being constructed. While this seemed a little pricey I would certainly have done it, but we were pressed for time and I simply did not have enough cash with me.

By lunchtime we had arrived at the *Beilin*, within the city walls of Xi'an, where I was able to examine the original stone at great length. But one's first impression upon touring the city itself is that there are an enormous number of surviving Tang-era relics — temples, mosques, art objects — and that this was a time in Chinese history when there was constant foreign contact and foreign religious influence. The stone itself is very difficult to read and to photograph, since it is now covered by protective glass, and unfortunately it also stands with its left side very close to a wall, making it difficult to read the inscription on that side, which includes the text of Han Taihua [Figure 46, see p. 140]. Although the *Beilin* is not a museum that attracts large crowds of Western visitors, except for those interested in Chinese or in Chinese calligraphy, as I was told by my guide, there was indeed some interest in the stone, and every small tour group that passed through the room regularly stopped in front of the monument and were duly told (in Chinese or another language) about the arrival of Christianity during the Tang period. I was also able to purchase a beautiful rubbing of the front and sides in their entirety, divided into a huge sheet with the inscription on the front face, a separate sheet for the cross and the title, and two more for the writing on the sides. It was of course typical that this was the only rubbing I thought of acquiring, despite the dozens of others that were equally available and indeed far more important in the larger context of Chinese history, and I imagined that I could even detect

the saleslady reaching for a copy of the *jingjiao* monument before I had begun to ask for it.

46 Photograph of the monument in the *Beilin* museum, or Forest of Stone Tablets, in Xi'an. Photo author.

What intrigued me most about the stone as I stood in front of it, finally, was how hard it is to make out the figure of the cross even in person — unless, of course, you know exactly what you are looking for. According to a steady stream of eyewitnesses, it was already nearly invisible to the naked eye by end of the nineteenth century, and today the stone has undergone so many rubbings that the whole surface has become somewhat blackened, making it even harder to read. But at least the original remains in Xi'an where it belongs, even as Western preoccupations are continually

being pressed upon it like inked paper. This may have helped nearly to obliterate the cross through constant abrasion, but it is perfectly readable in the rubbing that one can always take home, just as I did. The cross may well serve to bridge two very different worlds and two very different periods of human history, but it continues to serve such a function primarily for those who, like me, had specifically come to find it, and for those who, like me once again, had already known it was there.

Notes

Chapter 1 A Stone Discovered

46. Gabriel de Magalhães, *A New History of China* , 289 (*Nouvelle relation de la Chine*, 306), describes a robe worn by the emperor with a very similar pattern: “Two large Dragons opposite one to the other, with their Bodies and their Tails twin’d and twirling one within another, take up both the sides and the forepart of the Breast [of the robe], and seem as if they would seize with their Teeth and Claws a very fair Pearl that seems to drop from the Skies, in allusion to what the *Chineses* say, that Dragons play with the Clouds and with Pearls.” For examples from other sculptures of the time see Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles*.

47. Daniello Bartoli, *Dell’historia della Compagnia di Giesu, la Cina* , 796; Paul Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou* , 95–146.

48. See P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China* , 14; A. C. Moule, “The Use of the Cross Among the Nestorians in China,” 81–82.

49. The most commonly used English versions are those of Alexander Wylie, “On the Nestorian Tablet at Se-gan Foo,” 280–88 (*Chinese Researches* , part 2, pp. 25–34); James Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu* , 1–31; and Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 162–80.

50. Convenient summaries of Nestorianism and the Nestorian liturgy appear in C. Y. Hsu, “Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument,” 41–46; Aubrey R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches*; John Foster, *The Church of the T’ang Dynasty*; Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 1:170–80; Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East*; Tang Li, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China*;

Matteo Nicolini-Zani, “L’insegnamento luminoso proveniente da Da Qin”; and Philip L. Wickeri, “The Stone is a Mirror.”

51. Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* , 2:66, 74n2, 177, 192. See also the reports of William of Rubruck (Ruysbroeck), Friar Odoric, and John of Montecorvino: Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* , 1:116, 2:117, 2:142, and 3:46.

52. For the Chinese text and a translation into English, see Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 86–89, 281–82.

53. Li is one of the so-called “three pillars” of Christianity in early modern China. See Willard J. Peterson, “Why Did They Become Christians,” 137–42.

54. Li Zhizao, *Da jingjiaobei shuhou* , as reprinted in *Tianxue chuhan* , 1:77. The Chinese text is also reprinted in Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 2:409–11; and Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 302–5. An English translation is given in Hsu, “Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument,” 47. On the disputed question of whether Zhang was also a Christian see Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne*, 9n17; and Ad Dudink, “Zhang Geng, Christian Convert of Late Ming Times,” 67–69.

55. *Histoire de ce qui s’est passé es* [sic] *royaumes d’Ethiopie . . .* , 187–89. The report was also published in the same year in Italian (*Lettere dell’Ethiopia . . .*), from which the French version is translated. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:56– 58; and Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne* , 19n40. A letter from Trigault dated September 13, 1627 mentions his visit to the Shaanxi province but not the Xi’an stone: C. Dehaisnes, *Vie du Père Nicolas Trigault* , 280–84. I would like to thank Nicolas Standaert for sending me a photocopy.

56. On the difficulty and abundance of allusions see Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:215– 18; Ignatius Ying-ki, “A New Translation of the Nestorian Tablet,” 89–90; and Timothy Billings, “Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets,” esp. 24–31. For a concise discussion of accommodation see Moffett, *History of*

Christianity in Asia , 1:306–14; and *Handbook of Christianity in China* , 1:33–37.

57. The inscription's supposed "vagueness" was unsettling to most Western readers. See Legge, *Nestorian Monument*, 54: "we cannot but deplore the absence from the Inscription of all mention of some of the most important and even fundamental truths of the Christian system . . . There is little in it particularly ritualistic, [and] there is nothing at all evangelical." Lionel Giles referred to it as an "emasculated Christianity," "not a real religion but a sham" ("Notes on the Nestorian Monument at Sianfu," 26).

58. *Tianxue chuhan*, 1:86; Manuel Dias, Jr., *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan* . Both are cited in George H. Dunne, *Generation of Giants*, 195. Dias's text as reprinted in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian* (2:653–754) does not include the preface, the place where this quote occurs. See also Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:85–86.

59. Louis Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations* , 346 (*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:157– 58).

60. See especially Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact* . On Ricci's map see Matteo Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane* , 1:207–12, 2:58–62; J. F. Baddeley, "Father Matteo Ricci's Chinese World-Maps"; Helen Wallis, "Missionary Cartographers to China"; and Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., "From Mental Matrix to *Mappamundi* to Christian Empire," 23–27.

61. Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations*, 346–47 (*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:158–60).

62. Cited in Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 30. Cf. Arnold H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin* , 6: "The discovery was of inestimable value to the spread of Christianity since it gave to the Faith an aura of antiquity in a land where ancient tradition was the basis of all respect and ability." Similarly, a 1664 report about persecutions of Christians was able to use the stone as a precedent for the way in which the religion had previously been respected in the empire; see *Sinica Franciscana*, 2:531–32.

63. Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* , 156– 58, 165 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 196–98, 208). A Spanish edition had appeared a year earlier than the Italian text, and the monument is here presented somewhat differently (*Imperio de la China* , 199–220). Apparently, however, this edition was not authoritative; see Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque da la Compagnie de Jésus*, 12:807–8; and *Dictionary of Ming Biography,* 2:1158. The compiler of the Spanish text was Manuel de Faria e Sousa, who also briefly discussed the stone in his *Portugues Asia* (1:520–22), which originally appeared as *Asia Portuguesa* in 1666–75.

64. Semedo, *History of China* , 158 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 198). The first translation of the Syriac was made in 1629 by another Jesuit, but it remained unpublished until 1902: Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 3:75–77.

65. Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, *The Image of the Black in Western Art* , esp. 2:255–58. See also Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*.

66. On ancient references to China see Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* , 1:1–64. On the marvels of the East see Rudolf Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, 45–92. On stereotypes of China in general during the early modern period see William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 3–20; and Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon* , 9–34.

67. See Albert Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen über Johann von Mandeville”; Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*; and Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East*.

68. Friedrich Zarncke, “Der Priester Johannes”; E. Denison Ross, “Prester John and the Empire of Ethiopia”; Malcolm Letts, “Prester John”; Charles E. Nowell, “The Historical Prester John”; Vsevolod Slessarev, *Prester John* ; Leonardo Olschki, *Marco Polo’s Asia* , 381–97; and I. de Rachewiltz, *Prester John and Europe’s Discovery of East Asia* .

69. Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Asian* , esp. 1–34.

70. The best brief discussion of these issues remains Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars*, 162–85. The standard bibliographic work is Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica*, to be supplemented by John Lust, *Western Books on China Published up to 1850*. See also Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*.

71. For example in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* , 12:478; or in Domingo Navarrete, *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete* , 2:341– 42. For the cartographic evidence see Boleslaw Szczesniak, “The Seventeenth-Century Maps of China.” In Peter Heylyn’s *Cosmographie*, Cathay is given separate coverage under the heading of Tartaria (3:198), a tradition continued from sixteenth-century editions of Abraham Ortelius’s *Theatrum orbis terrarum* .

72. The more common sea route would have taken him to southern China via the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Portuguese India, and Macao; Cathay was supposed to lie much further north. For Goes’s narrative see Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 4:167–259; and Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century* , 499–521.

73. Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 111; Ricci, *Opere storiche*, 2:292; Semedo, *History of China* , 156 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 196).

74. Ricci, *Opere storiche*, 2:293; Moule, *Christians in China Before the Year 1550* , 9–10; Semedo, *History of China* , 156 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 196).

75. See Moule, *Christians in China*, 12; Columba Cary-Elwes, *China and the Cross*, 9–10. On the St. Thomas legend, see most recently Jürgen Tubach, “Der Apostel Thomas in China.”

76. *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, 213; Antonio de Gouveia, *Histoire orientale*, 8–9; Juan González de Mendoza, *Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China*, 37

(*Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno dela China*, 397). There is also a modern edition of the English translation edited by George T. Staunton; see 2:290.

77. Cited in Moule, *Christians in China* , 24; Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* , 3:46. See also Cary-Elwes, *China and the Cross* , 10–11.

78. Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century* , 98, 113, 500; Ricci, *Fonti Ricciane* , 1:135n2, 2:141n4, 2:397n2; H. Hosten, “Some Notes on Bro. Bento de Goes,” 138: “[Goes] says he has reliable information that in that great Empire of Cathay there are great vestiges of Christianity; for they have mitred Bishops, confer baptism, keep Lent, and the priests observe celibacy, and other such proofs of our Christianity.” It has even been suggested that these men might have been the Jesuits themselves; see Billings, “Illustrating China,” 107.

79. Examples include Semedo, *History of China*, 155 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 194–95); Bartoli, *Cina,* 135; Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, 9, 57–58; Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations*, 347 (*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:158– 60); Giuseppe Simone Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-vaticana* , 3:2:516–17; and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China* , 2:1 (*Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine* , 3:67).

80. Semedo, *History of China* , 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 197).

81. Mendoza, *Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China* , 24, 37 [1854 reprint: 36–38, 53] (*Historia . . . del gran reyno dela China* , 27–28, 41).

82. Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 99, 106–8; *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, 213. Ricci also provides an interesting anecdote about the Jew Ai assuming that the Jesuits were of his own religion, and mistaking the icons displayed in the Jesuit church for Old Testament figures.

83. Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 499. On the issue of comparisons between Christianity and Asian religions generally, see P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind* , 98–127.

84. For a summary of this immense and complex problem see Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France* , 189–279; and Edwin J. Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History." Some theorists tried to resolve the problem of Chinese antiquity by arguing that there must have been people created before Adam and Eve; see David Rice McKee, "Isaac de la Peyrère"; and Richard H. Popkin, "The Pre-Adamite Theory in the Renaissance."

85. Albert Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome* , 28, 88; Dias, *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan* (*Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian* , 2:653–750). On Dias's text see Maurice Courant, *Catalogue des livres chinois* , nos. 1190–92; Louis Pfister, *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine*, 1:109; and *Dictionary of Ming Biography,* 1:415. See also Louis Gaillard, *Croix et swastika en Chine*, 138; and Saeki, *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* , 434–39.

86. Dudink, "The Japonica-Sinica Collections," 486–88. The collection had already begun forming by 1675, when several of its items are mentioned in a published list of writings by Jesuit authors.

87. As Dudink notes, Li's commentary (Jap. Sin. I, 53.4) appears in the section otherwise reserved for Jesuit texts, which is "irregular" since it should have been included in the section of writings by Chinese converts that follows ("Japonica-Sinica Collections," 488). Dudink surmises that this text was added at a later date than the others in the section.

88. See for example Dunne, *Generation of Giants* ; George L. Harris, "The Mission of Matteo Ricci"; John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*; Paul A. Rule, *K'ung-tzu or*

Confucius; David E. Mungello, *Curious Land*; and Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism*. The relative integrity given to the Chinese tradition in this line of thinking was soon to give rise to the enormous and often violent debates of the so-called Rites Controversy, which were concerned with how to adapt existing Chinese cultural traditions and the Chinese state apparatus to European Christianity. See Pinot, *Chine*, 71–140; Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin* , 119–75; and David Porter, *Ideographia*, 108–21.

89. We possess a number of early texts by Chinese converts that emphasize the way that local traditions (ancestor worship, praying to local gods) can even be retained by a Christian convert as long as these customs are maintained in the proper spirit, and as long as they do not supplant the Christian principles that were now supposed to become the center of one's new life. One example is Li Jiugong, *Zhengli chuyi* ("Remarks on the Justification of Rituals": Jap. Sin. I, 40/8). See Dudink, "Japonica-Sinica Collections," 484.

90. Dudink, "Japonica-Sinica Collections," 484. Another early missionary text from the 1620s included in the archive (Jap. Sin. II, 23), Giulio Aleni's *Xixue fan*, or "Western Study," is an overview of European science and scholarship (medicine, law, philosophy, etc.). It, too, concludes with the text of the inscription of the monument. See Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents* , 303–4.

91. Giulio Aleni, *Kouduo richao*, as reprinted in *Chinese Christian Texts From the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus* , 7:495; Semedo, *History of China* , 163 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 205). On Aleni's text see Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents*, 131–33, and on the literary genre of "answers to the queries of visitors" in early missionary writing, see R. Po-chia Hsia, "Translating Christianity," 89–93. Unfortunately, a new edition of *Kouduo richao* edited by Erik Zürcher appeared too late for inclusion here.

92. Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 181. See also Friedrich Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*; and Edwin G.

Pulleyblank, “The Roman Empire as Known to Han China.” The monument itself gives the location of *Da Qin* as a country between water and mountains, flower groves and “the region of long winds and weak waters.” This has not proven particularly helpful for modern commentators: as Legge wrote, “I could wish that this paragraph about Da Qin had not been in the Inscription, and it is difficult to perceive the object which it serves” (*Nestorian Monument*, 13n3). Such an idealized description, however, was stereotypical, and one wonders why Legge was unwilling to recognize it as such.

93. We should also note the pitfalls of referring to “the Chinese” opinion in such a monolithic way, since there would be just as many determining factors to consider here — ethnicity, religion, region, language, social status, education — as in Europe or anywhere else. The classic study on the historical development of “the Chinese” is Li Chi, *The Formation of the Chinese People* .

94. Semedo, *History of China* , 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 197); Kircher, *China illustrata*, 5, as translated in Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham,* part 3, p. 5; Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations* , 348 (*Nouveaux mémoires* , 2:161).

95. Bartoli, *Cina*, 794; Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:35–36. Bartoli’s text is also provided in Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* , 1:237–41. For a similar story from the 1630s, in which a mysterious light on a piece of ground led to the discovery of another stone with a cross, see Dudink, “Zhang Geng,” 74n69.

96. Nieuhof, *Embassy From the East-India Company* , part 3, p. 8 (Kircher, *China illustrata*, 8).

97. The twelve Dhuta (a Sanskrit word transliterated into Chinese) are the austerities traditionally practiced by Buddhists to attain spiritual merit. According to Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne* , 85, Lin Tong was compiling data in the area about 1660, so the anecdote may also date from that

time. The relevant Chinese text is given in Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , 2:393. Translations differ widely; see Wylie, "On the Nestorian Tablet," 293–94 (*Chinese Researches* , part 2, pp. 38–39); G. Pauthier, *L'inscription syro-chinoise de Si-ngan-fou* , 70–72; Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu*, 12–13; Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:78 – 79; Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 37–38; and Peter Chung-hang Chiu, "An Historical Study of Nestorian Christianity in the T'ang Dynasty," 5–6. Chiu also argues (incorrectly, I think) that the child might even have been seen as the reincarnation of the monk Jingjing, the author of the Xi'an inscription.

98. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:79n3; Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 38n103.

99. Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , 2:64, 80, 411; Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne* , 115; Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations* , 348 (*Nouveaux mémoires* , 2:160); Hsu, "Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument," 47; Saeki, *Nestorian Monument* , 304; Semedo, *History of China* , 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 198).

100. This is certainly not to claim that Christianity is never mentioned in early Chinese commentaries. It is frequently noted in the other excerpts given in Wang Chang's compilation, for example, as well as in his own comments that follow. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:317–22.

101. Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations* , 352 (*Nouveaux mémoires* , 2:166). Cf. Gibbon's claim that "the propagation of Christianity [during the Tang dynasty] awakened the jealousy of the state"; *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 5:159–60 [Chapter 47].

102. Wylie, "On the Nestorian Tablet," 294 (*Chinese Researches*, part 2, p. 39). Similarly, Havret remarks that Lin Tong makes the monument into nothing more than "a formula for the beliefs and the history of Buddhism in China" (*Stèle chrétienne*, 2:318).

103. Similarly, standard histories of China from this period regularly include special chapters on Western Christian missionary efforts in the empire. One of the most influential in its day, S. Wells Williams's *The Middle Kingdom* , begins such a chapter with Wylie's translation of the monument, calling it "the earliest recorded attempt to impart the knowledge of the true God to the Chinese" (2:275). Other readers saw the absence of reliable records as a "conspiracy of silence" that had been "confounded" by the discovery of the stone; see Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 1:III–IV; and E. H. Parker, review of Havret, 418.

Chapter 2 The Century of Kircher

103. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 6:175–76. Another article on "Si-gan Fu" claims while many important historical monuments have been found in the ancient capital city, "of these the most notable is the Nestorian tablet" (25:59).

104. The earliest Portuguese version is mentioned in *Lettere dell'Ethiopia . . .* (*Histoire de ce qui s'est passé es* [sic] *royaumes d'Ethiopie . . .*). The first Latin translation was not published until Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou* , 3:67– 71. See also Paul Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou* , 95–98. The French and Italian translations appeared in *Advis certain d'une plus ample descouverte du royaume de Cataï* , and *Dichiaratione di una pietra antica* .

105. Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus* ; Kircher, *Oedipus aegyptiacus*. See Daniel Stolzenberg, "Kircher's Egypt," esp. 117–18; Peter N. Miller, "Copts and Scholars," esp. 143–45. The classic study of this tradition is Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* .

106. Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*, 50–51; *Dichiaratione di una pietra antica,* 2. Kircher had made a change in his list of errata at the end of the volume but this hardly helped the situation. Johan Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Kunste* ,

37:1128–32, claims that the emperor rather than the governor had the copy made.

107. Le Comte also claimed that the Kangxi emperor had a copy of the monument sent to him (*Memoirs and Observations* , 348 [*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:161]). See also Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 150; and John D. Witek, "Understanding the Chinese," 86.

108. Martino Martini, *Novus atlas sinensis*, 45. I have consulted two facsimiles of the Latin edition, as well as the magnificent copy with German text in the British Library, 47. Martini's text without plates was also printed in 1664 as*Description géographique de l'empire de la Chine*, and then againin 1672 as *Description de la Chine*, 57. All the texts are ambiguous about precisely what had been sent to Rome, and the same confusion occurs in Michel Boym's *Briefve relation de la Chine* of 1652, 29. Four years later, however, Boym claims that the governor did indeed order a fascimile of the stele that had been discovered (*Flora sinensis*, sig. Nv).

109. Hugo Grotius, *De origine gentium americanarum dissertatio*. See also Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah* , 119–132; and Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians* , 110–28.

110. Georg Horn, *De originibus americanis*, 277. Horn was later credited for the Latin translation of Johannes Nieuhof, *Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham* , which appeared as *Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium* .

111. I am grateful to an excellent essay by Timothy Billings for this point: "Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets," 18–20.

112. Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* , 158 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 198).

113. Giuseppe Simone Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-vaticana*, esp. vol. 3, part 2, which includes a 950-page "Dissertatio de Syris Nestorianis," featuring both a

chapter on the Nestorians in China (504–37) and a presentation of the Xi'an monument itself (538–52). Libraries usually catalogue this as volume 4.

114. I am grateful to Brijraj Singh for suggesting this point to me. On the synod see Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 1:268–69, 3:874–79; Leslie Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 11–42; and Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India* , 208–19. An English translation of the synod's objections later appeared as *History of the Church of Malabar* in 1694. See also A. Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity in India."

115. Daniello Bartoli, *Dell'historia della Compagnia di Giesu, la Cina*, 803. A similar sentiment was repeated by Du Halde, whom we will discuss below.

116. Billings, "Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets," 36n21. See also Ad Dudink, "Zhang Geng, Christian Convert of Late Ming Times," 66–67.

117. Gottlieb Spitzel, *De re literaria sinensium commentarius*, 160. On both Horn and Spitzel, see also David E. Mungello, *Curious Land*, 169–70.

118. Kircher, *China illustrata*; Kircher, *Toeneel van China* ; Kircher, *Chine illustrée*; and Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham.* There is a modern English translation by Charles D. Van Tuyl, which is not always accurate. Kircher's response was announced as early as 1654; see Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 116–17.

119. See Haun Saussy, " *China Illustrata*: The Universe in a Cup of Tea," 112. Credit for this trend should also be shared with Nieuhof's lavishly illustrated *Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie* of 1665, which had already appeared in Dutch, German, and French editions before *China illustrata* appeared.

120. John E. Wills, Jr., *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys* ; Wills, *Embassies and Illusions* .

121. Citations from *China illustrata* are keyed to the Latin text and the English translation that appeared in Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company,* here abbreviated as N. I will quote from the English edition where possible.

122. Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher* , 50–51. Note, too, that Kircher's second request to be posted to China occurred in 1637, the year after the publication of *Prodromus coptus*: John Fletcher, "Athanasius Kircher," 2.

123. Kircher, *Prodromus coptus* , 51, 73; Semedo, *History of China* , 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 198); *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé es* [sic] *royaumes d'Ethiopie . . .* , 186; *Advis certain*, 18–19.

124. See Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres chinoises* , 5:215 (letter 147); "Authenticité du monument chinois concernant la religion chrétienne," 401; Joseph de Guignes, "Recherches sur les Chrétiens établis à la Chine dans le VIIe siècle," 814–15; and the texts cited in Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 152 –54. Yet the inscription's "Catholic" qualities were still being enumerated even in the nineteenth century. See René François Rohrbacher, *Histoire universelle de l'église catholique*, 4:423.

125. Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*, 52, 111; Billings, "Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets," 19– 20. Kircher's information is drawn from *Dichiaratione di una pietra antica* , 2. The first two Jesuit reports, published in 1628 and 1629, did not mention a cross at all. We will return to this point in Chapter 4.

126. See Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis*, 2:255, 3:156; and Eusèbe Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts of India and China* , part 2, p. 101 (*Anciennes relations des Indes et de la Chine*, 253). E. H. Parker reminds us, however, that the Nestorians in China certainly did not regard themselves as schismatics, and that their use of the word Catholic "had no such contentiousness or heresy in their minds"; see his *Studies in Chinese Religion* , 290.

127. Elsewhere Boym refers to the inscription as containing merely "the mysteries of our Religion," "the divine law," and

"the principles of the Christian faith": *Briefve relation de la Chine* , 29; *Flora sinensis*, sigs. M2, Nv.

128. The English translator changes this by claiming that they did not come from *India* (N 10), a possible allusion to the Malabar (i.e. Nestorian) Christians that in any case are once again kept at bay. Assemani would make this same point again in the 1720s, but in doing so the Syrian *jingjiao* Christians were at last integrated into the history of Nestorianism rather than excluded from it. See his *Bibliotheca orientalis*, 2:255n2.

129. For reviews of the debates see Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , 2:46–80; and Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 5–57. *Prodromus coptus* gives both 1625 and "a few years before the arrival of the Jesuits in China" (i.e. before 1580!), an obvious slip of the pen, since Kircher should have said a few years before they arrived in Xi'an or the Shaanxi province, not China (50, 71). The mistake was pointed out by Bartoli in 1663 (*Cina*, 794) but was repeated again in *China illustrata* (34; N 17). *China illustrata* also provides three candidates for the location of the stone: the metropolis of Xi'an (from Semedo), the city of Sanyuan (from Martini), and the village of Zhouzhi (from Boym) (6–8; N 6–8). See also F. S. Drake, "Nestorian Monasteries of the T'ang Dynasty"; and P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* , 354–99.

130. This was also accompanied by a garbled sentence about Kircher's earlier copy and that some of it was missing (*China illustrata* , 6). The English translator misread this as a reference to passages that "peradventure were Transcribed from the Authentick Copy only to give a certain specimen or relish" (N 6).

131. The English version says: "the Governor of the place . . . took order to have the whole Inscription of the Monument that was found Engraven on another Stone of the same Magnitude, observing and keeping the same strokes of the Characters as faithfully . . . as . . . might be" (N 6–7). The French text is similar: *Chine illustrée*, 10–11.

132. *China illustrata,* 7: “Lapideum verò Monumentum juxta Autographum ex China allatum . . . incidendum curavi” (7), i.e., “I have taken care to have carved a stone monument taken from the original brought from China.” The problem is the verb *incidere*, to inscribe or engrave, which Kircher may have used to indicate the process by which a rubbing was made. In any event translators did not know what to make of this statement: the French version (*Chine illustrée*, 7) inexplicably refers to “le représentation & le tableau du Monument de Pierre,” and the English translator mentions a “draught of this Monument brought from *China*, the Original of which even now may be seen in my Study to be Insculped” (N 7) — i.e. to be recopied by an interested visitor?

133. See also *Chine illustrée*, 12. This information was repeated in Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China* , 2:2 (*Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, 3:66). See also the anonymous “Description of China,” 4:228.

134. Domingo Navarrete, *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos, y religiosos de la monarchia de China*; Navarrete, “An Account of the Empire of China.” See also Navarrete, *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete* , 1:cxv– cxviii.

135. “What seems to make against a thing so plain [i.e. the inscription of the face of the stone] . . . is that tho the *Chineses* are so very exact in their Annals and Histories, yet not the least memory of it is found there. This makes not only the Heathens, but even the Christians doubtful in this case” (Navarrete, “An Account of the Empire of China,” 103; Navarrete, *Tratados*, 104–5).

136. See Alexander Wylie, “On the Nestorian Tablet at Se-gan Foo”; and Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*. There are a few exceptional Chinese objections to the stone, usually in an anti-Christian vein. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:284–91.

137. See Mungello, *Curious Land,* 247–99; and Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism*.

138. *Confucius sinarum philosophus* , part 2, pp. 55–56.

139. Jean Le Clerc, review of *Confucius sinarum philosophus*, 454–55. On Le Clerc's authorship see Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France*, 152. Couplet's citation was also rejected by Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts*, part 2, pp. 99–100 (*Anciennes relations*, 249–50).

140. M. V. de La Croze, *Dissertations historiques sur divers sujets*, 321–328; La Croze, *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes*, 42. See also the short extract from La Croze printed in John Lockman, *Travels of the Jesuits into Various Parts of the World* , 1:318. Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne* , 155, also cites a later letter from La Croze in which he reveals his excitement at finding similar statements in the *Tratados* of Navarrete. For a very interesting attack on La Croze's position, discussed point by point, see Jean Liron, *Singularités historique et littéraires* , 2:500–24.

141. Isaac de Beausobre, *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme* , 1:295n8.

142. In a letter dated August 4, 1683, Leibniz seemed to share the skepticism of many of his contemporaries: *Leibniz und Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels* , 1:377– 78; Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* , series 1, vol. 3, p. 318. But by the publication of his preface to the *Novissima sinica* in 1697, all doubts seem to have vanished. See Donald F. Lach, *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica* , 84. Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History* , 1:310–11.

143. Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*, commentary p. 12. The text is reprinted in his *Opuscula nonnulla orientalia*. See also his *Propositio clavis sinicae* (1674), reprinted in T. S. Bayer, *Museum sinicum*, 1:182–87. On the fascinating story of Müller's career, see Bayer's preface to the *Museum sinicum* , 1:32–60 (and translated in Knud Lundbaek, *T. S.*

Bayer , 60–76); August Müller, “Eröffnungsrede”; Lach, “The Chinese Studies of Andreas Müller”; Eva S. Kraft, “Frühe chinesische Studien in Berlin,” 97–107; and Mungello, *Curious Land*, 208–36.

144. This was the opinion of Bayer in 1730, although he also excused Müller because he had to work alone (*Museum sinicum*, 1:46–47 [Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer* , 68]). For a brief account of the development of radicals during this period see Mungello, *Curious Land*, 201.

145. Bayer, for one, laughed at Müller for marking the tones “as if we were to imagine a whole nation singing at a party” (*Museum sinicum*, 1:38 [Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 64]). Bayer also blamed Kircher for the idea.

146. Eusèbe Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts* , part 2, pp. 76–123 (*Anciennes relations* , 228–71). Renaudot had also mentioned the Xi’an stone in an earlier work on the Jacobites: *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum* , 188.

147. See for instance a 1724 letter from Joseph de Prémare included in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* , 21:183–237. See also Bayer, *Museum sinicum* , 1:80–84 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 89–91); Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:351–54; and Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne*, 121.

148. Paula Findlen, “The Last Man Who Knew Everything,” 1 –10; Findlen, “Science, History, and Erudition.” We should note, moreover, that even in Kircher’s museum the stone had been integrated into a larger network of objects that featured Egyptian rather than Chinese artifacts; see Giorgio de Sepibus, *Romani collegii Societatis Jesu musaeum celeberrimum*, where the engraving from *China illustrata* is given (facing p. 9) amidst reproductions of hieroglyphics.

149. Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts*, part 2, pp. 83–88 (*Anciennes relations*, 234–38).

150. Assemani, however, also tried to salvage the Christianity expressed in the inscription as both conservative and orthodox, since it was said to precede the Nestorian heresies

that would later become so infamous in the Indies. See *Bibliotheca orientalis*, 4:460–61, 521–22, 538–52.

151. Du Halde, *Description of the Empire of China* , 1:518 (*Description . . . de la Chine*, 2:497). The translator's savage attack on Catholics appears in footnotes throughout Du Halde's chapter on Buddhism (1:650–57). The translator's reasons for thinking the stone a fake were less than convincing, however: since the inscription does not explicitly state that Christ was crucified "this seems to be a Proof of this Monument being Forged," and since the word "law" is used rather than the word "religion" or "faith," "some may make the authority of the Monument questioned" (2:2). We should note that an earlier, much curtailed English translation of Du Halde, published as *The General History of China* in 1736, had omitted these sections entirely. In the French text, the stone is presented at 3:66–69.

152. For a concise analysis see Nicolas Standaert, "The Jesuit Presence in China."

153. Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations* , 352 (*Nouveaux mémoires* , 2:166), and later repeated in Du Halde and Astley, among others.

154. Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 2. The few characters given in Kircher's *Prodromus coptus* appear amidst a Syriac portion of the inscription and they are by far the best drawn (75). The illustration is also reprinted in Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:150. It would be very interesting to find out who had written these characters and how they had been obtained; there is every indication that they had been written by a native Chinese hand. In Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye*, there are also four plates copied after Chinese Buddhist woodblock prints, three of which contained quite readable short inscriptions in Chinese (although in some copies the prints appear in reverse).

155. Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Asian* , 61–97.

156. For a brief account of Huang see Jonathan D. Spence, *Chinese Roundabout*, 11– 24.

157. Bayer, *Museum sinicum*, 1:35 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer* , 62). See also Mungello, *Curious Land*, 211. Later in his career, Müller composed an even longer commentary than that which appeared in his *Monumenti sinici*, but this too was burned along with his other manuscripts shortly before his death (Bayer, *Museum sinicum* , 1:58 [Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 75]). Semedo, *History of China*, 33 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 45–46).

158. Christian Mentzel, *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinico-characteristici*; Bayer, *Museum sinicum*, 1:61 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 77). The similarity between Mentzel's lexicon and Kircher's presentation was also noticed by Abel Rémusat, *Mélanges asiatiques*, 2:69. Mentzel's preface makes no mention of his source. Lundbaek further notes that a few copies of the work were sent to Couplet, who had just returned from China and was serving as the Jesuit procurator in Europe; Couplet replied that he would send them out to missionaries working in China. A manuscript copy from 1806, with additions by one J. W., is held by the library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Mentzel also claimed to have seen a copy of Mentzel's work printed by the Jesuits in Beijing (*T. S. Bayer*, 77n129). Other treatments of Mentzel's work include Walter Artelt, *Christian Mentzel*; Rolf Winau, "*Sylloge Minutiarum Lexici Latino-Sinico-Characteristici*"; Kraft, "Frühe chinesische Studien in Berlin," 107–11; and Mungello, *Curious Land*, 237–44.

159. Kircher, *China illustrata*, 13–14; Müller, *Monumenti sinici*, commentary p. 42.

160. This story is told in full in Bayer, *Museum sinicum* , 1:40–41 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 65).

161. Kircher, *China illustrata*, 29.

162. See Henri Cordier, "Fragments d'une histoire des études chinoises au XVIIIe siècle," 228–32; and J. J. L. Duyvendak, "Early Chinese Studies in Holland," 329–40. Masson believed

that links between Chinese and Hebrew could help scholars to understand difficult passages in the Bible.

163. Kircher, *Chine illustrée* , sig. *4v, **2v, pp. 324–67. Two other new features were an index and a list of (mostly geographical) questions posed by the Grand Duke of Tuscany and answered by Johann Grueber, an Austrian Jesuit who had recently completed an overland journey to China.

164. The attribution to Boym was suggested by Robert Chabrié, *Michel Boym;* Boleslaw Szczesniak, “The Beginnings of Chinese Lexicography in Europe with Particular Reference to the Work of Michael Boym,” 164; and Szczesniak, “Athanasius Kircher’s *China Illustrata*,” 396–98. Pelliot, “Michel Boym,” 136–37, disputed these claims, and the case against Boym was definitively proven by Walter Simon, “The Attribution to Michael Boym of Two Early Achievements of Western Sinology.” See also Federico Masini, “Notes on the First Chinese Dictionary Published in Europe.”

165. Bayer, *Museum sinicum*, 1:45 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer* , 67).

166. Bayer, *Museum sinicum*, 1:4, 85–86 (Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 41–42, 92). For the practice texts, see Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer* , 130–40, and on the manuscript with characters from the monument, see 92n167.

167. Lundbaek, *T. S. Bayer*, 55n55, 130, 157–58, 162. According to Mosheim, Bayer had also planned a new edition of the monument, “but his death has blasted our expectations” (*An Ecclesiastical History* , 1:310).

168. See for instance Etienne Fourmont, *Meditationes sinicae* , 34–35, where the importance of Kircher’s presentation is repeatedly emphasized. See also Cécile Leung, *Etienne Fourmont*, 189–96.

168. Johannes Nieuhof, *Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham*; Nieuhof, *L'ambassade de la compagnie orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'empereur de la Chine* ; Nieuhof, *Die Gesantschaft der Ost-Indischen Geselschaft in den Vereinigten Niederländern an den tartarischen Cham*; Nieuhof, *Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium* .

169. Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham* . By the time of the reports of the so-called second and third embassies published in 1670, however, a new description of China was appended that included at least a brief mention of the stele when covering the city of Xi'an. See Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye,* part 2, p. 46. Dapper's book appeared in English as *Atlas Chinensis*; for the reference to the monument see p. 499. In the German version this sentence was omitted (*Gedenkwürdige Verrichtung der Niederländischen Ost-Indischen Gesellschaft in dem käiserreich Taising oder Sina* , 3:34). A similar allusion to the stone appears in the description of China appended to the account of the Russian embassy in the early 1690s; see Evert Ysbrantszoon Ides, *Three Years Travels From Moscow Over-land to China* , 127. The text first appeared in 1704 as *Driejaarige reize naar China* .

170. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine*. On the composition of these volumes see Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine* .

171. *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois*; *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. The latter collection was re-edited in 1780–83; there were also reprints, published excerpts, and translations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; see Henri Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica*, 2:926– 52.

172. George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy From the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* ; George Macartney, *An Embassy to China* . See also Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination* .

173. George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World*, 359, 375–79. See also the suggestive remarks of Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth* . For England, see Ch'ien Chungshu, "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century"; and William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay* , 157–60.

174. Pierre Martino, *L'orient dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle*.

175. Syrine Chafic Hout, *Viewing Europe From the Outside* ; Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients*; and *Fables of the East* . See also Appleton, *Cycle of Cathay* , 121–39.

176. Under the Kangxi emperor an Edict of Toleration was promulgated in 1692; in 1724 the Yongzheng emperor banned Christianity as "uncanonical."

177. D'Argens, *Lettres chinoises* , 6:15–16 [letters 145–47]. I have used the slightly expanded edition in six volumes published in 1755; in the original edition these letters were numbered 146–48.

178. D'Argens, *Lettres chinoises*, 6:16–38.

179. D'Argens, *Lettres chinoises*, 6:39–52.

180. Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou* , 2:271 –79.

181. See Barthélemy d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel*, 2:188.

182. Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 15:182, under the heading "Si-gan." The entry was written by Louis de Jancourt.

183. Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*, 1:195–203, 849. On Voltaire's sinophilia see Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe*, 87–92; Arnold H. Rowbotham, "Voltaire,

Sinophile”; Basil Guy, *The French Image of China Before and After Voltaire*; A. Owen Aldridge, “Voltaire and the Cult of China”; and Étiemble, *L’Europe chinoise*, 2:207–306.

184. Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs* , 1:225–26.

185. On Voltaire and the pious fraud see Peter Gay, *Voltaire’s Politics*, 263–64.

186. “Traduction du monument chinois, concernant la religion chrétienne”; “Authenticité du monument chinois concernant la religion chrétienne”; “Examen de la question: s’il y a eu des Chrétiens à la Chine avant le septième siècle”; “Histoire du Christianisme de la Chine depuis le septième siècle jusqu’au dix-septième”; Joseph de Guignes, “Recherches sur les Chrétiens établis à la Chine dans le VIIe siècle.” See also de Guignes, “Lettre . . . au sujet de deux voyageurs mahométans.”

187. Voltaire, *Correspondence*, 54:110.

188. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* , 5:160n121 [Chapter 47].

189. Voltaire may be confusing the Xi’an stone with the famous cross of St. Thomas at Mylapore in India, which according to tradition was discovered while digging for the foundation for a new church in 1547. See Chapter 4 below.

190. Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, 29:463–68.

191. *Mémoires concernant . . . des Chinois*, 2:562–63*,* 5:61–62, 8:233–34, 16:378–83. Gaubil mentions the monument at other points in his history as well; see 15:446, 15:449–50, and 16:117–18.

192. D’Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale,* 2:164–90. Unlike the version published in the *Journal des sçavans* , this one included a paraphrase as well as the literal translation, along with some twenty pages of densely packed commentary. On the complicated story of Visdelou’s manuscripts see Paul Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou* , 123–32.

193. D’Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale,* 2:164–65, 183.

194. C. R. Boxer, “Some Aspects of Western Historical Writing on the Far East,” 315.

195. Joseph de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine,* 6:319n1. See also Gaubil in *Mémoires concernant . . . des Chinois* , 16:379.

196. De Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine* , 13:67–68. Grosier’s work was also published separately as *Description générale de la Chine* in 1787, and as *A General Description of China* in 1788.

197. For Visdelou’s biographical note see d’Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale,* 2:182; on Li Zhizao’s error see Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne*, 75. The same mistake was made in the late seventeenth century by Philippe Couplet (see Albert Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome,* 540–41). It reoccurs in Évariste-Régis Huc’s highly influential *Christianity in China, Tartary, and Thibet*, 1:56 (*Le Christianisme en Chine, en Tartarie, et au Thibet* , 1:63n3); and in René François Rohrbacher, *Histoire universelle de l’église catholique* , 5:29– 30.

198. James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men From Afar* . European misunderstandings about their role in meetings with the Chinese court were endemic to earlier embassies as well; see John E. Wills, Jr., *Embassies and Illusions* ; and Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination* , 104–42.

199. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14:4–16. Two extracts are translated in Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon* , 201–3. For Hegel see Donald F. Lach, “China in Western Thought and Culture,” 1:366. Dawson also suggests that the idea of Chinese stagnation may have been due to the constant repetition of the same materials in Western sources (*Chinese Chameleon* , 99). See also Gregory Blue, “China and Western Social Thought in the Modern Period”; and Thomas Fuchs, “The Changing Images of China in German Historical Writings.”

200. Abel Rémusat, *Programme du cours de langue et de littérature chinoises et de Tartare-Mandchou*, 29. For this reference I am grateful to Knud Lundbaek, “The Establishment of European Sinology,” 50.

201. Abel Rémusat, *Mélanges asiatiques* , 1:35–38. The essay (“Coup d’oeil sur les premières années de la mission protestante à Malaca”) had first appeared in the *Journal des sçavans* in October 1821. In the previous year, Rémusat’s *Recherches sur les langues tartares* , 40, 44–45, had cited the monument as an example of Estrangelo script but no further analysis was provided.

202. An indefatigable worker, Morrison translated both the Old and New Testaments into Chinese, compiled a large dictionary and grammar, and founded an Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca. Yet by the time of his death in 1834 he had achieved only ten conversions, and this was also the period famous for its somewhat desperate technique of filling boats with Chinese bibles and casting them adrift in the hope that the volumes might be opened and read. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, 211 –15; and Columba Cary-Elwes, *China and the Cross* , 212.

203. Both the early Nestorians and the modern Jesuits were regularly criticized in Protestant circles for mistakenly having tried to appeal to the Chinese scholarly elite. As examples see E. J. Eitel, review of James Legge; Henry Hayman, “The Si-ngan-fu Christian Monument,” 48–49; and W. J. Lewis, “Nestorianism in China.”

204. William Milne, *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China*, 8.

205. Rémusat, *Mélanges asiatiques*, 1:37. Two copies are mentioned in the library’s catalogue published in 1739 (*Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae regiae*, 1:382–83, 391), and Etienne Fourmont describes one in his catalogue of the same collection made just after that date (*Linguae sinarum mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatica duplex*, 470). The anonymous author of the *Idée générale de*

la Chine, published in the *Mémoires concernant . . . des Chinois* in 1780, also mentions a rubbing in the possession of Deshauterayes (5:62). The fullest discussion of available rubbings appears in Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 66n30.

206. Julius von Klaproth, *Tableaux historiques de l'Asie* , 209–10; Charles Le Beau, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 6:69n1; Chungtaidschi Ssanang Ssetsen, *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen*, 383–84.

207. Peter von Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*, 1:383–87. Interestingly, one of the copies von Bohlen mentions is an otherwise unknown rubbing brought to St. Petersburg in the mid-eighteenth century. See also Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 66n30.

208. Karl Friedrich Neumann, review of Isaac Jacob Schmidt, esp. 591–93. The classic accusation of hiding such symbols appears in 1656 in Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, 76–77. See also George H. Dunne, *Generation of Giants* , 275–80. In fact, the crucifix did present a problem for early missionaries, since the Chinese tended to see it as a form of black magic or a vulgar image of a criminal and not a messiah. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:182–91.

209. Carl Ritter, *Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen*, part 2, book 2, vol. 1, pp. 286–87; August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* , 3:124n2.

210. W. H. Medhurst, *China*, 222–23; Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China* , 390; Gützlaff, *A Sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern* , 2:102; Gützlaff, *China Opened*, 2:229.

211. Elijah Coleman Bridgman, review of Eusèbe Renaudot, 44–45; Bridgman, "Early Introduction of Christianity into China," 449–50.

212. Bridgman, "The Syrian Monument, Commemorating the Progress of Christianity in China"; Bridgman, "Corrections in the Inscription on the Syrian Monument." Bridgman's

translation was influential, having been used in early editions of . Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom* , the most widely read English book about China of the day (see Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu* , 21), as well as in such official publications as Robert Montgomery Martin, *China*, 2:455–60.

213. Neumann, “Die erdichtete Inscrift von Singan Fu.” For an excellent critique of these arguments see N. C. Kist, “Blik op de lotgevallen van het Christendom in China,” 398n1.

214. H. L. Fleischer, “Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1847,” 455n7; E. Rödiger, “Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1850,” 465; Rödiger, “Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1854 and das Jahr 1855,” 696–97; Richard Gosche, “Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1857 und das Jahr 1858,” 173.

215. As David Porter has written, “China, as reflected in her language, is no longer a contented and autonomous bulwark of isolationism, but rather a nation severed from a legacy it no longer understands and bound to surrender to those who do” (*Ideographia*, 54).

216. Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* , 2:159.

217. We know that the stone attracted attention among literati because of its calligraphy and its learned classical style, both of which are highly imitative of earlier models. A number of nineteenth-century Western commentators even mention a thriving trade in rubbings of the inscription, but not for the foreign tourist trade, which did not yet exist (and the rubbings did not include the cross either). See D. B. McCartee, Letter to Editor; and Ferdinand von Richthofen, *China*, 1:553n1. For basic commentary on the linguistic and calligraphic styles, see C. Y. Hsu, “Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument in China,” 54–56.

218. The Western cult of artistic genius is so strong that it perceives any sort of copy as an attempt to mislead the reader or viewer or buyer. In the Chinese tradition, however,

even an exact copy is not necessarily a counterfeit or derivative object; it can also be a gesture of the utmost respect, admiration, and a desire for preservation. If the governor chose to write out his own text and have it carved onto another stone, this, too, could be a gesture of reverence or approval, just as it would have been an act of great pride: to show his generosity and his nobility by having his name permanently inscribed on a matching stele that celebrated or commented upon the first one.

219. Wall, *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* , 2:160–61.

220. Wall, *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* , 2:172.

221. Wall, *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews* , 2:244, 3:336–37.

222. Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History,* 1:310–11. This work originally appeared in Latin in 1737–41. A more elaborate version of Mosheim's verdict appears in *Historia Tartarorum ecclesiastica*, 9–13, and Appendix 4–28. Mosheim, *Authentic Memoirs of the Christian Church in China* , 16–26.

223. John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise* , 167–96.

224. http://www.nestorian.org/the_nestorian_monument_in_chin.html.

225. Joseph Reinaud, "Lettre de M. Reinaud concernant les antiquités chrétiennes de la Chine," 759–60; and repeated in Félix Nève, *Établissement et destruction de la première chrétienté dans la Chine* , 7.

Chapter 4 The Return of the Missionaries

225.1.1.1.1. ***Dichiaratione di una pietra antica,* 2; Kircher, *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus*, 52.**

225.1.1.1.2. Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* , 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* , 197; *Imperio de la China* , 200); Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*, facing p. 12.

226. Kircher, *China illustrata*, 5 (Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham,* part 3, p. 5). Nineteenth-century copies seem to have included a cross only if it was specifically requested; see Ferdinand von Richthofen, *China*, 553n1; and D. B. McCartee, Letter to Editor, 260.

227. See Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 2:164–91; and Paul Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou*, 64–74. Old copies are cited in Giuseppe Simone Assemani, *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-vaticana*, vol. 3, part 2, sigs. D3v–D4 and p. 538; *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae regiae* , 1:382–83, 391; Etienne Fourmont, *Linguae sinarum mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatica duplex*, 470; Angelo Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e vaticanis codicibus*, vol. 5, appendix pp. 112–13; and Andreina Albanese, "La stele di Xi'an, i gesuiti, e Ripa," 74–83. Even in 1895, however, it was still being claimed that "there are no copies or rubbings obtainable of a date anterior to 1859"; see E. H. Parker, review of Havret, 418.

228. C. P. T. Winckworth, "A New Interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross-Inscriptions of Southern India"; Herman D'Souza, *In the Steps of St. Thomas* , 78–87. For other St. Thomas legends see H. Hosten, "St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore."

229. Kircher, *China illustrata*, facing p. 54; Diogo do Couto, *Decadas da Asia*, 3:293; João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier* , facing p. 170; Hosten, "St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore," facing p. 207; Marco

Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* , 2:353; D'Souza, *In the Steps of St. Thomas* , facing p. 78. The St. Thomas cross had also been shown in Kircher's *Prodromus coptus* (111), copied after Lucena's engraving. The bird depicted at the top is probably not a dove or a representation of the Holy Ghost but a peacock, since these birds feature in a number of early St. Thomas legends and Mylapore was also known as the city of peacocks ("myil" in Tamil means peacock). See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India* , 33–35.

230. Michel Boym, *Briefve relation de la Chine*, 29; Kircher, *China illustrata*, 8 (Nieuhof, *Embassy From the East-India Company* , part 3, p. 8); Boym, *Flora sinensis*, sig. M1v–M2v.

231. The first was a miscellaneous collection of poems by literati published as *Xichao chongzhen* in 1639; it included a section on "ancient traces of the study of heaven in China." The second was the Chinese commentary on the inscription published by missionary Manuel Dias, Jr., in 1644 (*Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan* , and reprinted in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian*, 2:653–754). On these texts see Maurice Courant, *Catalogue des livres chinois,* nos. 1190–92, 1322; and Ad Dudink, "Zhang Geng, Christian Convert of Late Ming Times," 73–79.

232. Kircher, *China illustrata*, 35–37.

233. Louis Gaillard, *Croix et swastika en Chine* , 135–44; P. Dabry de Thiersant, *Le catholicisme en Chine au VIIIe siècle de nôtre ère* ; G. Pauthier, *L'inscription syro-chinoise de Si-Ngan-Fou* .

234. Z. F. Léontiewski, "La croix instructive et historique trouvée en Chine"; John Kesson, *The Cross and the Dragon* .

235. Baron Mathieu Richard Auguste Henrion, *Histoire générale des missions catholiques*, facing 1:78.

236. Edward E. Salisbury, "On the Genuineness of the So-called Nestorian Monument of Singan-fu," 401, 410, 419. For a balanced view of Salisbury's contributions see Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 162n90.

237. Alexander Wylie, “On the Nestorian Tablet,” 336 (“The Nestorian Tablet in Singan Foo,” part 2, p. 77).

238. Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*, 269– 72. For the fourth edition I have used his *Oeuvres complètes*, 8:396. On Julien’s participation in these debates see Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne* , 163–66. Interestingly, in an earlier survey of 1837, Pauthier had shown much less interest in the stone, having commented that it had no real importance other than expressing a certain vague sort of Christianity; see *Chine*, 297–300. See also his *De l’authenticité de l’inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou* .

239. Robert James Forrest, “The Christianity of Hung Tsiu Tsuen”; Eugene Powers Boardman, *Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion*; Rudolf G. Wagner, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision* ; and Jonathan D. Spence, *God’s Chinese Son*. Nineteenth-century Western accounts include Charles MacFarlane, *The Chinese Revolution*; Edmund Fishbourne, *Impressions of China, and the Present Revolution*; Thomas W. Blakiston, *Five Months on the Yang-Tsze*; G. J. Wolseley, *Narrative of the War with China in 1860*; and Lindesay Brine, *The Taeping Rebellion in China*.

240. So far as we know the Taiping leaders made no explicit connection between their own religion and the Nestorian monument, although they presumably would have known about it. They could be very accommodating to Western Christians and certainly recognized that there was an alliance between their own religion and that of the Christian West. In his youth, Hong had even been taught by Western missionaries and eventually asked one of them, Issachar J. Roberts, an American Baptist missionary from Tennessee, to come to Nanjing to serve in his new government. There were certainly occasions, however, where official Taiping documents mention Chinese history and its relationship to Christianity. See for instance “The Book of Religious Precepts of the T’hae-ping Dynasty,” as translated by W. H. Medhurst: “according to the histories of both the Chinese and foreign nations, the important duty of worshiping the great God, in the

early ages of the world several thousand years ago, was alike practiced both by Chinese and foreigners: but the various foreign nations in the West have practiced this duty up to the present time, while the Chinese practiced it only up to the Tsin and Han dynasties; since which time they have erroneously followed the devil's ways, and allowed themselves to be deceived by the king of Hades" (*Pamphlets Issued by the Chinese Insurgents at Nan-king*). The texts reprinted in this collection are unpaginated.

241. See John B. Littell, "Missionaries and Politics in China"; S. Y. Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers* ; and *Western Reports on the Taiping* .

242. McCartee, Letter to Editor; Bridgman's letter is excerpted in the introduction to Alexander Wylie, "On the Nestorian Tablet of Se-Gan Foo," 278 (*Chinese Researches*, part 2, p. 24); Évariste-Régis Huc, *Christianity in China, Tartary, and Thibet* , 1:46 (*Le Christianisme en Chine, en Tartarie, et au Thibet* , 1:49). See also J. W. G., "The So-Called Nestorian Monument of Singan-Fu."

243. An 1855 address to the emperor defending (Catholic) Christianity by Bishop Mouly, head of the diocese of Beijing, mentioned the cross as a precedent. But when the speech appeared in English in the *North-China Herald* , a heavily Protestant newspaper, the translator caustically interjected: "There is no sign of the cross at the top of the tablet, though there is a reference to the cross in several pats of the eulogy. This, therefore, is merely an embellishment of the bishop's": Mouly, "Memorial of the Roman Catholic Bishop Mouly to the Emperor of China." The translation has been credited to W. H. Medhurst. For the Chinese text see *Chinese Christian Texts From the Zikawei Library* , 5:2133–74.

244. Alexander Williamson, *Journeys in North China, Manchuria, and Eastern Mongolia*, 1:381. Thirty years earlier, Bridgman had even imaginatively claimed that the monument had been "found covered with rubbish" in 1625: "Early Introduction of Christianity into China," 449; and repeated in

“The Syrian Monument, Commemorating the Progress of Christianity in China,” 201.

245. See Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne*, 69–70. Havret cites an amusing letter from one nineteenth-century commentator who assures his correspondent that the dragons were certainly not “un simulacre de Chérubins” (*Stèle chrétienne*, 2:141n2).

246. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, 1:382. Interestingly enough, in the tablet’s present installation in the *Beilin* museum in Xi’an, this side is also placed very close to the wall, making it almost impossible to read.

247. James Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu;* Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* , 2:27–31. Yule’s first edition of 1871 had used a different and inferior facsimile. See also Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither* , 1:105–12, 235–41, where no illustrations are given.

248. Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , 2:145–47; Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne* , 60n8. Richthofen, *China*, 1:553n1. See also Richthofen’s description of the Shaanxi province in *Baron Richthofen’s Letters* , 139–54.

249. According to one expert, however, only one Syriac name has been rendered completely unreadable, and unfortunately that name differs in the early copies transcribed by Kircher and Assemani; see I. H. Hall, “Proceedings at New Haven,” cxxv.

250. Williamson, *Journeys in North China*, 1:381. Williamson disparages “Romanists” from the beginning; he notes that local Catholic priests are much disliked, while Protestant missionaries are “centers of light and truth and beneficence, better adapted for salutary pioneer work . . . , acceptable to the natives, and never guilty of political intrigue” (1:viii). On Williamson’s interpretation see Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu* , 24n5. In the early Nestorian church, only those of the highest rank — Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and Bishops — were not allowed to

marry; see C. Y. Hsu, "Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument in China," 45.

251. Williamson, *Journeys in North China,* 1:381.

252. Armand David, *Journal de mon troisième voyage d 'exploration dans l 'empire chinois*, 125–26; Léon Rousset, *A travers la Chine*, 312–15. David also mentions a specious rumor that the site had contained a number of other ancient Christian treasures that had been ransacked by the Mohammedans. See also Gaillard, *Croix et swastika* , 119; Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , 2:145–46; and Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 62–64.

253. Béla Széchenyi, *Wissenschaftliche Erbegnisse der Reise des Grafen Béla Széchenyi in Ostasien*; Gustav Kreitner, *Im fernen Osten* .

254. Kreitner, *Im fernen Osten* , 470, 478.

255. Heller's first effort appeared as an essay titled "Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu," with no illustrations. A rather facile response appeared ten years later by Friedrich Kühnert, "Einige Bemerkungen zu Heller's 'Das Nestorianische Denkmal zu Singan Fu,' " followed by Heller's reply, "Beleuchtung der Bemerkungen Kühnert's zu meinen Schriften über das nestorianishce Denkmal zu Singan Fu," as well as another reply from Kühnert, "Entgegnung auf Heller's 'Beleuchtung.' " Heller has been unjustly overlooked in recent criticism, probably because of the relative unavailability of his text, but both Havret and Pelliot immediately recognized his importance and cite him often. According to a note in Havret's posthumously published third volume (he died in 1901), he so valued Heller's work that he was planning to translate it in its entirety (*Stèle chrétienne*, 3:In1); for Pelliot's verdict see *L'inscription nestorienne*, 67.

256. Frederic H. Balfour, Letter to Editor. Legge, *Nestorian Monument*, 31 also refers to Han Taihua as "intelligent."

257. G. W., Letter to Editor.

258. Albert Etienne Terrien de Lacouperie, Letters to Editor (February 4 and September 1, 1886). For a compelling account of Lacouperie's meteoric fame in late nineteenth-century sinology, see Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China* , 384–92.

259. See Havret, who cites a personal communication from Henri Cordier (*Stèle chrétienne*, 2:163).

260. "The Preservation of the Nestorian Tablet and Other Ancient Monuments at Sian-fu"; a summary statement also appeared in the *Times* as "The Nestorian Tablet at Sianfu." Havret, *Stèle chrétienne* , facing 2:162. For the drawing, see "The Nestorian Tablet" (*China's Millions*). Havret cites an 1893 letter to the *North-China Daily News* regarding the priests' supposed jealousy (*Stèle chrétienne* , 2:163). Cordier cites a similar letter from the *London and China Telegraph* of the same year (Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 2:28n). Another missionary remarked that the shelter had either been stolen or just blew away since it was so cheaply made (cited in Gaillard, *Croix et swastika* , 120–21), and a brief write-up in the *Times* agreed ("The Nestorian Tablet in Sevnsi [*sic*]").

261. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal*, 26; Kreitner, *Im fernen Osten*, 478–79. Due to Xi'an's remoteness and its natural defenses, the imperial court sought refuge there during the height of the Boxer uprising, bringing renewed interest in the West toward the city and its history. On the cross as a potentially Buddhist symbol see Henry Hayman, "The Si-ngan-fu Christian Monument," 45; and A. C. Moule, "The Use of the Cross Among the Nestorians in China."

262. Hayman, "The Si-ngan-fu Christian Monument," 44; "The Nestorian Tablet" (*China's Millions*). Similar statements are cited in Gaillard, *Croix et swastika* , 119; and in "Si-ngan-fu" (October 4). Oddly enough, another *Times* piece just two months later contradicted this view by noting that "there are far more interesting things at Xi'an than the Nestorian Tablet"; see "Si-ngan-fu" (December 4).

263. See especially Gabriel Maurice, a Franciscan missionary at Xi'an, as cited in Gaillard, *Croix et swastika* , 120–21: "The tablet is located in the middle of an immense and miserable enclosure on the grounds of a temple, which is also miserable and inhabited only by a few Buddhist priests. It is standing there in an open field, in open air, in broad daylight, in the middle of ancient ruins and monumental stones that stand beside it. . . . The local authorities are not the least bit interested in preserving the monument. Only so as not to contradict the imperial order . . . did the mandarins erect . . . a miserable shanty, incapable of protection against the injuries of the wind and rain, and unworthy of the monument itself. . . . I can affirm that this shanty did not cost more than three or four taels." See also Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 1:4n1; and Parker, review of Havret, 419.

264. See David Porter, *Ideographia*.

265. Edouard Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* , plate CCCCXLV, no. 1017. For a typical description of the other tablets, simply "standing at the sides" of the Nestorian stone, see Gabriel Maurice, as cited in Gaillard, *Croix et swastika* , 120–21.

266. Frits V. Holm, *The Nestorian Monument*; Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure in China*.

267. "Nestorian Tablet Moved."

268. Holm, *Nestorian Monument*, 21.

269. Others agreed about the desirability of a replica, one example being a story printed in the *Shanghai Times* for February 26, 1908, and reprinted in *T'oung Pao* the same year ("Chronique," 289), which lauds Holm for bringing his copy "to a place where Western seekers after Eastern lore can examine the relic and appreciate it at first hand." In the twenty-first century, we are perhaps less interested in the sort of replicas common to Victorian drawing rooms or study collections. One only has to visit the large gallery of plaster casts (opened in 1873) at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to appreciate this cultural difference.

270. “Brings Nestorian Stone”; “May Buy Nestorian Stone”; “Copy of Old Tablet Here.”

271. “The Nestorian Stone’s Message of Centuries.”

272. Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure* , 261–62.

273. “The Nestorian Stone’s Message of Centuries.” Some Western reports also complained, however, about conditions in the *Beilin*. A *Times* correspondent remarked that it was “now housed in a shabby little pavilion”; see “Across China and Turkestan III.”

274. For example, “China’s Nestorian Monument”; A. von Wening and William Heimann, “Das Nestorianer-Denkmal von Sian-fu,” 19.

275. Holm, *Nestorian Monument* , 27–28, 23, 26; von Wening and Heimann, “Das Nestorianer-Denkmal von Sian-fu,” 22–23. See also Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure*, 255–58.

276. Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure* , 151.

277. Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure* , 221, 239–40; Frederick McCormick, “China’s Monuments,” 144, 151.

278. Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure* , 154–57.

279. Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne* , 62n11; the Chinese text, by Luo Zhenyu, is cited in Hsu, “Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument in China,” 71; P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China* , 8.

280. Holm, *Nestorian Monument* , 31–32; *My Nestorian Adventure* , 263–64, 306–7. The monument is in a rather less honorific place now, since the Lateran was moved to the Vatican’s Missionary Ethnological Museum in 1926, relocated in 1973, and, finally, rearranged to open in the summer of 2006. A Vatican press release claims that one of the highlights of the collection is a “19th century [*sic*] stone copy of the Nestorian stele, which was inscribed in 635 and is now preserved in the ‘Stele Forest’ Museum of Xi’an”

(http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/z-Info/Eventi/Eventi_2006_06_20.html).

281. See Holm, *My Nestorian Adventure* , 312; Pelliot, *L'inscription nestorienne*, 68, 490–91; and Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 11–12. Judging by the appearance of the copy in Japan, as well as the fact that it was made after the original stone had been brought to the *Beilin*, it was almost certainly not made in China. A different photo given in E. A. Gordon, *World-Healers*, facing 1:149, shows the monks gathered around the "Stone of Witness," indicating, as the caption puts it, "terms common to both Faiths."

282. Holm and his wife (the only daughter of the president of the American Bank Note Company) appear in the Society Page of the *New York Times* for June 18, 1923, as they were spending the Summer (capital S) in New Hampshire that year (13). Holm's *New York Times* obituary also incorrectly claimed that the Nestorian monument was "a monolithic tablet in the tomb of Nestor"! ("F. V. Holm Dead; Danish Explorer").

283. Victor Segalen, *Stèles*, 89.

284. "Charges Against the Manchus," and reprinted in Herbert A. Giles, *China and the Manchus* , 130. Moreover, in February 1917 another short inscription was added to the right side below the Chinese and Syriac signatures. Unlike Han Taihua's message (which is on the other side) this one does not obscure any of the original, and it records a visit from Li Genyuan, a high-ranking general in the Republican army who was serving as civil governor of Xi'an at the time. The message states that he was sent to examine the stone, emphasizing its symbolic importance for the new government. This new addition, interestingly enough, is almost never photographed or discussed in any scholarly publication. Classic works from Republican China include Feng Chengjun, *Jingjiaobei kao* ; Xu Zongze, *Zhongguo tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi gailun*; and Fang Hao, *Zhongguo tianzhujiaoshi luncong*. For bibliographies of Chinese and Japanese materials see Lin Wushu, *Tangdai jingjiao zai yanjiu*, 286–311; and Matteo Nicolini-Zani and Roman Malek, "A

Preliminary Bibliography on the Church of the East in China and Central Asia.”

285. A surprising example is a modern editor of Voltaire, who in his summary footnote on the stone notes that it “seems to be authentic”; see Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, 1:225n1.

286. One of the most well-known is in storage at the Musée Guimet in Paris, but it is still occasionally set up for special events. The one at Yale, once touted as the sole example in the United States, is now untraceable, although sources at the university have informed me that it probably still resides somewhere in the bowels of the Divinity School.

Epilogue: The *Da Qin* Temple

286. Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras* , 5.

287. A. C. Moule, *Christians in China Before the Year 1550* ; P. Y. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* .

288. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 4.

289. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 6, 8.

290. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 390–99; F. S. Drake, “Nestorian Monasteries of the T’ang Dynasty,” 332–34.

291. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 15, 18–19.

292. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras* , 23; Saeki, *Nestorian Documents* , 392; Drake, “Nestorian Monasteries,” 332.

293. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 25.

294. Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* (London, 1655), 156–57 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* [Rome, 1643], 196– 98). The “speaking stone” is a term from E. A. Gordon, *Messiah, the Ancestral Hope of the Ages* .

295. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 396; *South China in the Sixteenth Century* , 213.

296. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 250.

297. Leslie Camhi, “Ruins of an Old Christian Church on Lao-Tzu’s Turf”; Palmer, “The Da Qin Project”; Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 49.

298. For a review of debates on the location of the stone’s discovery, see Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou* , 2:46–80; and Paul Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou* , 5–57. For Zhouzhi as a military encampment see Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 381–83.

299. It has recently been argued that the archeological evidence does not even prove that the Zhouzhi temple was Nestorian rather than Buddhist during the Tang period. See Lin Wushu, “Zhouzhi Da Qinsi wei Tangdai jingsi zhiyi.”

300. Ray Riegert and Thomas Moore, *The Lost Sutras of Jesus* , 16–17, 22, 61, 121, 130, 135.

Works Cited

"Across China and Turkestan III: The City of Sianfu." *The Times* (March 8, 1910): 5.

Adams, Percy G. *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800* . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962.

Advis certain d'une plus ample descouverte du royaume de Cataï, avec quelques autres particularitez notables de la coste de Cocincina, & de l'antiquité de la foy Chrestienne dans la Chine . Paris, 1628.

Albanese, Andreina. "La stele di Xi'an, i gesuiti, e Ripa." *Caro Maestro . . . : scritti in onore di Lionello Lanciotti per l'ottantesimo compleanno*. Ed. Maurizio Scarpari and Tiziana Lippiello. Venice: Cafoscarina, 2005. 74–83.

Aldridge, A. Owen. "Voltaire and the Cult of China." *Tamkang Review* 2–3 (1971– 72): 25–49.

Allen, Don Cameron. *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science, and Letters*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949.

Anson, George. *A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1740–4*. London: Dent, 1911.

Appleton, William W. *A Cycle of Cathay: The Chinese Vogue in England during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* . New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

d'Argens, Marquis. *Lettres chinoises, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique*. 5 vols. The Hague, 1739–40.

———. *Lettres chinoises, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique* . New ed. 6 vols. The Hague, 1755.

Artelt, Walter. *Christian Mentzel: Leibarzt des Grossen Kurfürsten, Botaniker und Sinologe*. Leipzig: Barth, 1940.

Assemani, Giuseppe Simone. *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-vaticana*. 4 vols. Rome, 1719–28.

“Authenticité du monument chinois concernant la religion chrétienne.” *Journal des sçavans* (June 1760): 397–410.

Baddeley, J. F. “Father Matteo Ricci’s Chinese World-Maps.” *Geographical Journal* 50 (1917): 254–76.

Balfour, Frederic H. Letter to Editor. *The Times* (January 21, 1886): 13.

Ballaster, Ros. *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England, 1662–1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Bartoli, Daniello. *Dell’historia della Compagnia di Giesu, la Cina: terza parte dell’Asia*. Rome, 1663.

Baudet, Henri. *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man*. Trans. Elizabeth Wentholt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

Baum, Wilhelm, and Dietmar W. Winkler. *The Church of the East: A Concise History*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Bayer, T. S. *Museum sinicum*. 2 vols. St. Petersburg, 1730.

Beausobre, Isaac de. *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme*. 2 vols. Amsterdam, 1734–39. Bennett, Josephine Waters. *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1954. Billings, Timothy. “Illustrating China: Emblematic Autopsy and the Catachresis of Cathay.” Ph.D. diss. Cornell University, 1997. ———. “Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets: Athanasius Kircher and the Translation of the Nestorian Tablet.” *Representations* 87 (2004): 1–42. Blakiston, Thomas W. *Five Months on the Yang-Tsze . . . and Notices of the Present Rebellions in China* . London: John Murray, 1862.

Blue, Gregory. “China and Western Social Thought in the Modern Period.” *China and Historical Capitalism: Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge*. Ed. Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 57–109.

Boardman, Eugene Powers. *Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion, 1851–1864*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952. Bohlen, Peter von. *Das alte Indien, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Aegypten* . 2 vols. Königsberg, 1830.

Bovenschen, Albert. “Untersuchungen über Johann von Mandeville und die Quellen seiner Reisebeschreibung.” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* (1888): 177–306.

Boxer, C. R. “Some Aspects of Western Historical Writing on the Far East, 1500– 1800.” *Historians of China and Japan*. Ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961. 307–21.

Boym, Michel. *Briefve relation de la Chine* (1652). *Relations de divers voyages curieux*. Ed. Melchisédec Thévenot. 4 vols. Paris, 1663–72. Vol. 2 [the texts included in this collection are not continuously paginated].

———. *Flora sinensis*. Vienna, 1656.

Bridgman, Elijah Coleman. “Corrections in the Inscription on the Syrian Monument, Erected in A.D. 781, Contained in Vol. XIV.” *Chinese Repository* 19 (1850): 552–54.

———. “Early Introduction of Christianity into China.” *Chinese Repository* 1 (1832– 33): 447–52.

———. Review of Eusèbe Renaudot, *Ancient Accounts of India and China*, and “Early Introduction of Christianity into China.” *Chinese Repository* 1 (1832–33): 6–15, 42–45.

———.“The Syrian Monument, Commemorating the Progress of Christianity in China, Erected in the Year of the Christian Era Seven Hundred and Eighteen [*sic*], at Singan Fu.” *Chinese Repository* 14 (1845): 201–29.

Brine, Lindesay. *The Taeping Rebellion in China: A Narrative of Its Rise and Progress*. London: John Murray, 1862. “Brings Nestorian Stone.” *The New York Times* (May 23, 1908): 1.

Brown, Leslie. *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas: An Account of the Ancient Syrian Church of Malabar* . Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1982.

Camhi, Leslie. “Ruins of an Old Christian Church on Lao-Tzu’s Turf.” *The New York Times* (February 24, 2002): A45.

Cary-Elwes, Columba. *China and the Cross: A Survey of Missionary History* . New York: Kennedy, 1957.

Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae regiae . 4 vols. Paris, 1739–44.

Chabrié, Robert. *Michel Boym, Jésuite polonais et la fin des Ming en Chine (1646– 1662)*. Paris: Bossuet, 1933.

Chan, Albert. *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome, A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica-Sinica I-IV* . Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2002.

“Charges Against the Manchus.” *The Times* (January 6, 1912): 6.

Chavannes, Edouard. *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* . 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1909.

Ch’ien Chung-shu. “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century.” *Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography* n.s. 2 (1941): 7–48, 113–52.

——— [as Qian Zhongshu]. “China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century.” *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Ed. Adrian Hsia. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1998. 117–213.

“China’s Nestorian Monument.” *The New York Times* (September 11, 1909): Book Review 2.

Chinese Christian Texts From the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus. Ed. Nicolas Standaert and Ad Dudink. 12 vols. Taipei: Ricci Institute, 2002.

Chinese Christian Texts From the Zikawei Library . Ed. Nicolas Standaert. 5 vols. Taipei: Fu Jen Catholic University, 1996.

Chiu, Peter Chung-hang. “An Historical Study of Nestorian Christianity in the T’ang Dynasty Between A.D. 635–845.” Ph.D.

diss. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987.

“Chronique.” *T’oung Pao* 9 (1908): 289–92. *Confucius sinarum philosophus* . Paris, 1687. “Copy of Old Tablet Here.” *The New York Times* (June 1, 1908): 16. Cordier, Henri. *Bibliotheca sinica: dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l’empire chinois* . 2nd ed. 5 vols. Paris: Guilmoto, 1904–24.

———. “Fragments d’une histoire des études chinoises au XVIIIe siècle.” *Centenaire de l’école des langues orientales vivantes, 1795–1895*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1895. 222–93.

Courant, Maurice. *Catalogue des livres chinois, coréens, japonais, etc* . 3 vols. Paris: Leroux, 1902–12.

Couto, Diogo do. *Decadas da Asia* . 3 vols. Lisbon, 1736.

Cruz, Gaspar da. See *South China in the Sixteenth Century* .

Dabry de Thiersant, P. *Le catholicisme en Chine au VIIIe siècle de nôtre ère* . Paris: Leroux, 1877.

Dapper, Olfert [incorrectly ascribed to Arnoldus Montanus]. *Atlas Chinensis*. London, 1671.

———. *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* . Amsterdam, 1670.

———. *Gedenkwürdige Verrichtung der Niederländischen Ost-Indischen Gesellschaft in dem käiserreich Taising oder Sina* . 3 vols. Amsterdam, 1674–76.

David, Armand. *Journal de mon troisième voyage d’exploration dans l’empire chinois*. Paris: Hachette, 1875.

Dawson, Raymond. *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization* . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Dehaisnes, C. *Vie du Père Nicolas Trigault* . Tournai: Casterman, 1864.

“A Description of China: Containing the Geography, with the Civil and Natural History.” *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* . Ed. Thomas Astley. 4 vols. London, 1745–47. 4:1–318.

Devisse, Jean, and Michel Mollat. *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Era to the “Age of Discovery .”* 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Dias, Manuel, Jr. *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan* [Correct Interpretation of the Tang Nestorian Monument]. Hangzhou, 1644.

Dichiaratione di una pietra antica, scritta e scolpita con l’infrascritte lettere, ritrovata nel regno della Cina . Rome, 1631.

Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644. Ed. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

Diderot, Denis. *Encyclopédie*. 17 vols. Paris, 1751–65.

Drake, F. S. “Nestorian Monasteries of the T’ang Dynasty and the Site of the Discovery of the Nestorian Tablet.” *Monumenta Serica* 2 (1936–37): 293–340. D’Souza, Herman. *In the Steps of St. Thomas* . San Thomé: Diocese of Mylapore, 1952.

Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste. *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* . 4 vols. Paris, 1735.

———. *A Description of the Empire of China* . 2 vols. London, 1738–41.

———. *The General History of China* . 4 vols. London, 1736.

Dudink, Ad. “The Japonica-Sinica Collections I–IV in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus: An Overview.” *Monumenta Serica* 50 (2002): 481–536.

———. “Zhang Geng, Christian Convert of Late Ming Times: Descendant of Nestorian Christians?” *L’Europe en Chine: interactions scientifiques, religieuses et culturelles aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* . Ed. Catherine Jami and Hubert Delahaye. Paris:

Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1993. 57–86.

Dunne, George H. *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty* . Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962.

Duyvendak, J. J. L. “Early Chinese Studies in Holland.” *T’oung Pao* 32 (1936): 293–344.

Edgerton, Samuel Y., Jr. “From Mental Matrix to *Mappamundi* to Christian Empire: The Heritage of Ptolemaic Cartography in the Renaissance.” *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays* . Ed. David Woodward. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. 10 –50.

Eitel, E. J. Review of James Legge, *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu* . *China Review* 16 (1887–88): 384–86.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. 11th ed. 29 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910–11.

Étiemble, *L’Europe chinoise*. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1988–89.

“Examen de la question: s’il y a eu des Chrétiens à la Chine avant le septième siècle.” *Journal des sçavans* (August 1760): 509–26.

“F. V. Holm Dead; Danish Explorer.” *The New York Times* (March 10, 1930): 16.

Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662–1785 . Ed. Ros Ballaster. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Fang Hao. *Zhongguo tianzhujiaoshi luncong* [Essays on the History of Catholicism in China]. Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1944.

Faria e Sousa, Manuel de. *Asia Portuguesa*. 3 vols. Lisbon, 1666–75.

———. *The Portugues Asia, or, The history of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portugues*. 3 vols. London, 1695.

Feng Chengjun. *Jingjiaobei kao* [Commentary on the Nestorian Monument]. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931; Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1962.

Findlen, Paula. "The Last Man Who Knew Everything . . . or Did He?" *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* . Ed. Findlen. London: Routledge, 2004. 1–48.

———. "Science, History, and Erudition: Athanasius Kircher's Museum at the Collegio Romano." *The Great Art of Knowing: The Baroque Encyclopedia of Athanasius Kircher*. Ed. Daniel Stolzenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Libraries, 2001. 17–26.

Fishbourne, Edmund. *Impressions of China, and the Present Revolution: Its Progress and Prospects*. London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1855.

Fleischer, H. L. "Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1847." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 2 (1848): 447–91.

Fletcher, John. "Athanasius Kircher: A Man under Pressure." *Athanasius Kircher und seine Beziehungen zum gelehrten Europa seiner Zeit* . Ed. Fletcher. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988. 1–15.

Forrest, Robert James. "The Christianity of Hung Tsiu Tsuen: A Review of Taeping Books." *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (1867): 187–208.

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

Fourmont, Etienne. *Linguae sinarum mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatica duplex*. Paris, 1742.

———. *Meditationes sinicae*. Paris, 1737.

Fuchs, Thomas. "The Changing Images of China in German Historical Writings, 1780– 1850." *Sino-German Relations Since 1800: Multidisciplinary Explorations* . Ed. Ricardo K. S. Mak and Danny S. L. Paau. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000. 135–47.

G., J.W. “The So-Called Nestorian Monument of Singan-Fu.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 4 (1854): 444–45.

Gaillard, Louis. *Croix et swastika en Chine*. Shanghai: Mission catholique, 1893; Nedeln: Kraus Reprint, 1975.

Gay, Peter. *Voltaire’s Politics: The Poet as Realist*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Gernet, Jacques. *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* . Trans. Janet Lloyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* . Ed. J. B. Bury. 7 vols. London: Methuen, 1904–14; New York: AMS, 1974.

Giles, Herbert A. *China and the Manchus* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912.

Giles, Lionel. “Notes on the Nestorian Monument at Sianfu.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London* 1:4 (1920): 15–26.

Girardot, Norman J. *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Godwin, Joscelyn. *Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1979.

González de Mendoza, Juan. *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno dela China* . Rome, 1585.

———. *Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China* . London, 1588.

———. *Historie of the Great and Mightie Kingdome of China*. Ed. George T. Staunton. 2 vols. London: Hakluyt Society, 1853–54; New York: Burt Franklin, 1970.

Gordon, E. A. *Messiah, the Ancestral Hope of the Ages* . Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1909.

———. *“World-Healers”: or the Lotus Gospel and Its Bodhisattvas, Compared with Early Christianity*. Toyko: Maruzen, 1913.

Gosche, Richard. “Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1857 und das Jahr 1858.” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 14 (1860): 135–241.

Gouveia, Antonio de. *Histoire orientale, des grans progrès de l’eglise Cathol[ique] Apost[olique] et Rom[ane] en la reduction des anciens Chrestiens, dits de S. Thomas, de plusieurs autres schismatiques & heretiques à l’union de la vraye eglise*. Antwerp, 1609.

Grosier, Jean-Baptiste. *Description générale de la Chine* . 2 vols. Paris, 1787.

———. *A General Description of China* . London, 1788.

Grotius, Hugo. *De origine gentium americanarum dissertatio* . N.p., 1642.

Guignes, Joseph de. “Lettre . . . au sujet de deux voyageurs mahométans, dont les relations ont été traduites & publiées par M. l’Abbé Renaudot.” *Journal des sçavans* (November 1764): 359–60.

———. “Recherches sur les Chrétiens établis à la Chine dans le VIIe siècle.” *Histoire de l’Académie royale des inscriptions et belles lettres* 30 (1764): 802–19.

Gützlaff, Karl Friedrich August. *China Opened; or, a Display of the Topography, History . . . , etc. of the Chinese Empire* . 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1838.

———. *Journal of Three Voyages Along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, & 1833* . London: Westley and Davis, 1834; Taipei: Ch’eng-wen, 1968.

———. *A Sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern: Comprising a Retrospect of the Foreign Intercourse and Trade with China* . 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1834.

Guy, Basil. *The French Image of China Before and After Voltaire* . Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963 [*Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* , vol. 21].

Hall, I. H. "Proceedings at New Haven, October 27th, 1886." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 13 (1889): cxxiv–vi.

Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume One: 635–1800 . Ed. Nicolas Standaert. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Harris, George L. "The Mission of Matteo Ricci, S. J.: A Case Study of an Effort at Guided Culture Change in China in the Sixteenth Century." *Monumenta Serica* 25 (1966): 1–169.

Havret, Henri. *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. 3 vols. Shanghai: Mission catholique, 1895–1902; Nedeln: Kraus Reprint, 1975.

Hayman, Henry. "The Si-ngan-fu Christian Monument." *Calcutta Review* 89 (July 1889): 43–52.

Heller, Joh. Ev. "Beleuchtung der Bemerkungen Kühnert's zu meinen Schriften über das nestorianische Denkmal zu Singan Fu." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 9 (1895): 301–20.

———. "Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu." *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 9 (1885): 74–123.

———. *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu* . Budapest: n.p., 1897.

Henrion, Baron Mathieu Richard Auguste. *Histoire générale des missions catholiques*. 2 vols. Paris: Gaume, 1846–47.

d'Herbelot, Barthélemy. *Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel*. 2 vols. Paris, 1776–80.

Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Sämmtliche Werke*. Ed. Bernhard Suphan. 33 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1903; Hildesheim: Olms, 1994.

Hevia, James L. *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* . Durham: Duke University

Press, 1995.

Heylyn, Peter. *Cosmographie*. 4 vols. London, 1652.

Higgins, Iain Macleod. *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Hirth, Friedrich. *China and the Roman Orient*. Leipzig: Hirth, 1885; New York: Paragon, 1966.

Histoire de ce qui s'est passé es [sic] *royaumes d'Ethiopie, en l'année 1626, jusqu'au mois de Mars 1627, et de la Chine, en l'année 1625, jusques en Feburier de 1626*. Paris, 1629.

"Histoire du Christianisme de la Chine depuis le septième siècle jusqu'au dix-septième." *Journal des sçavans* (February 1761): 101–18.

History of the Church of Malabar . Trans. Michael Geddes. London, 1694.

Hodgen, Margaret T. *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* .

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964. Holm, Frits V. *My Nestorian Adventure in China: A Popular Account of the Holm*

Nestorian Expedition to Sian-fu and Its Results. New York: Revell, 1923; London: Hutchinson, 1924; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001. ———. *The Nestorian Monument: An Ancient Record of Christianity in China* . Ed.

Paul Carus. Chicago: Open Court, 1909. Horn, Georg. *De originibus americanis* . The Hague, 1652. Hosten, H. "Some Notes on Bro. Bento de Goes, S. J. (1583–d. 1607)." *Journal and*

Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 23 (1927): 137–40. ———. "St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore." *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 19 (1923): 153–236.

Hout, Syrine Chafic. *Viewing Europe From the Outside: Cultural Encounters and Critiques in the Eighteenth-Century Pseudo-*

Oriental Travelogue and the Nineteenth-Century "Voyage en Orient ." New York: Peter Lang, 1997.

Hsia, R. Po-chia. "Translating Christianity: Counter-Reformation Europe and the Catholic Mission in China, 1580–1780." *Conversion: Old Worlds and New* . Ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003. 87–108.

Hsu, C. Y. "Nestorianism and the Nestorian Monument in China." *Asian Culture Quarterly* 14:1 (Spring 1986): 41–81. Huc, Évariste-Régis. *Le Christianisme en Chine, en Tartarie, et au Thibet* . 4 vols. Paris: Gaume, 1857–58.

———. *Christianity in China, Tartary, and Thibet* . 3 vols. London: Longman, 1857–58.

Huddleston, Lee Eldridge. *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492– 1729*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.

Ides, Evert Ysbrantszoon. *Driejaarige reize naar China, te lande gedaan door den Moskovischen afgezant*. Amsterdam, 1704.

———. *Three Years Travels From Moscow Over-land to China* . London, 1706. Jensen, Lionel M. *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. Keevak, Michael. *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar's Eighteenth-Century Formosan Hoax*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.

Kesson, John. *The Cross and the Dragon; or, the Fortunes of Christianity in China: with Notices of the Christian Missions and Missionaries, and Some Account of the Chinese Secret Societies* . London: Smith, Elder, 1854.

Kircher, Athanasius. *Chine illustrée*. Amsterdam, 1670.

———. *China illustrata*. Amsterdam, 1667.

———. *China illustrata*. Trans. Charles D. Van Tuyl. Muskogee, OK: Indian University Press, 1987.

———. *Oedipus aegyptiacus*. 3 vols. Rome, 1652–54.

———. *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus* . Rome, 1636.

———. *Toeneel van China* . Amsterdam, 1668.

Kist, N. C. “Blik op de lotgevallen van het Christendom in China.” *Nieuw archief voor kerkelijke geschiedenis inzonderheid van Nederland* 1 (1852): 359–468.

Klaproth, Julius von. *Tableaux historiques de l’Asie* . Paris, 1826.

Kraft, Eva S. “Frühe chinesische Studien in Berlin.” *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 11 (1976): 92–128.

Kreitner, Gustav. *Im fernen Osten: Reisen des Grafen Bela Széchenyi in Indien, Japan, China, Tibet und Birma in den Jahren 1877–1880* . Vienna: Hölder, 1881.

Kühnert, Friedrich. “Einige Bemerkungen zu Heller’s ‘Das Nestorianische Denkmal zu Singan Fu.’ ” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 9 (1895): 26–43.

———. “Entgegnung auf Heller’s ‘Beleuchtung.’ ” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 9 (1895): 321–27 *.*

La Croze, M. V. de. *Dissertations historiques sur divers sujets* . Rotterdam, 1707.

———. *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes* . The Hague, 1724.

Lach, Donald F. “China in Western Thought and Culture.” *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* . Ed. Philip P. Wiener. 5 vols. New York: Scribner, 1973–74. 1:353–73.

———. “The Chinese Studies of Andreas Müller.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 60 (1940): 564–75. ———. *The Preface to Leibniz’ Novissima Sinica: Commentary, Translation, Text* . Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1957. Lach, Donald F., and Edwin J. Van Kley. *Asia in the Making of Europe* . 3 vols.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965–93. Lacouperie, Albert Etienne Terrien de. Letter to Editor. *The Times* (February 4, 1886): 14.

———. Letter to Editor. *The Times* (September 1, 1886): 13.

Landry-Deron, Isabelle. *La preuve par la Chine: la “Description” de J.-B. Du Halde, Jésuite, 1735*. Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2002.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christian Missions in China* . New York: Macmillan, 1929; New York: Russell and Russell, 1967.

Le Beau, Charles. *Histoire du Bas-Empire* . New ed. Ed. Antoine de Saint-Martin. 21 vols. Paris: 1824–36.

Le Clerc, Jean. Review of *Confucius sinarum philosophus*. *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* 7 (1687): 387–455.

Le Comte, Louis. *Memoirs and Observations . . . Made in a Late Journey through the Empire of China* . London, 1698.

———. *Nouveaux mémoires sur l’état présent de la Chine* . 2 vols. Paris, 1696.

Legge, James. *The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu* . London: Trubner, 1888; New York: Paragon, 1966.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Darmstadt: Reichl, 1923–.

Leibniz und Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels: Ein ungedruckter Briefwechsel über religiöse und politische Gegenstände . Ed. Chr. von Rommel. 2 vols. Frankfurt: Literarische Anstalt, 1847.

Léontiewski, Z. F. “La croix instructive et historique trouvée en Chine en 1636 [*sic*] avec une inscription en langue Chinoise et Syriaque.” *Annales de philosophie chrétienne,* 4th series, vol. 7, no. 38 (1853): 139–77.

Lettere dell’Ethiopia dell’anno 1626, fino al marzo del 1627, e della Cina dell’anno 1625, fino al febraro del 1626 . Rome, 1629.

Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères par quelques missionaires de la Compagnie de Jésus . 34 vols. Paris, 1703–76.

Lettres édifiantes et curieuses . New ed. 26 vols. Paris, 1780–83.

Letts, Malcolm. “Prester John: Sources and Illustrations.” *Notes and Queries* 188 (January–June 1945): 178–80, 204–7, 246–48, 266–68; *Notes and Queries* 189 (July–December 1945): 4–7.

Leung, Cécile. *Etienne Fourmont (1683–1745): Oriental and Chinese Languages in Eighteenth-Century France*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.

Lewis, W. J. “Nestorianism in China.” *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 26 (1895): 251–60. Li Chi. *The Formation of the Chinese People: An Anthropological Inquiry*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928.

Lin Wushu. *Tangdai jingjiao zai yanjiu* [New Studies on Tang Dynasty Nestorianism]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003.

———. “Zhouzhi Da Qinsi wei Tangdai jingsi zhiyi” [Doubts About the *Da Qin* Temple at Zhouzhi Being Nestorian During the Tang Dynasty]. *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* (2004:4): 1–12.

Liron, Jean. *Singularités historique et littéraires* . 4 vols. Paris, 1738–40. Littell, John B. “Missionaries and Politics in China — The Taiping Rebellion.” *Political Science Quarterly* 43 (1928): 566 –99. Lockman, John. *Travels of the Jesuits into Various Parts of the World*. 2 vols. London, 1743.

Lucena, João de. *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier* . Lisbon, 1600.

Lundbaek, Knud. “The Establishment of European Sinology, 1801 –1815.” *Cultural Encounters: China, Japan, and the West: Essays Commemorating 25 Years of East Asian Studies at the University of Aarhus* . Ed. Soren Clausen et al. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995. 15–54.

———. *T. S. Bayer (1694–1738): Pioneer Sinologist* . London: Curzon Press, 1986.

Lust, John. *Western Books on China Published up to 1850 in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London: A Descriptive Catalogue* . London: Bamboo, 1987.

Macartney, George. *An Embassy to China, Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney During His Embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung, 1793–1794*. Ed. J. L. Cranmer-Byng. London: Longmans, 1962.

MacFarlane, Charles. *The Chinese Revolution, with Details of the Habits, Manners, and Customs of China and the Chinese* . London: Routledge, 1853.

Magalhães, Gabriel de. *A New History of China* . London, 1688.

———. *Nouvelle relation de la Chine* . Paris, 1688.

Mai, Angelo. *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e vaticanis codicibus*. 10 vols. Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1825–38.

Mailla, Joseph de. *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou annales de cet empire* . 13 vols. Paris, 1777–85.

Markley, Robert. *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1660–1730* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Marshall, P. J., and Glyndwr Williams. *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* . London: Dent, 1982.

Martin, Robert Montgomery. *China: Political, Commercial, and Social, in an Official Report to Her Majesty's Government* . 2 vols. London: Madden, 1847.

Martini, Martino. *Description de la Chine* . Paris, 1672.

———. *Description géographique de l'empire de la Chine* (1664). *Relations de divers voyages curieux*. Ed. Melchisédec Thévenot. 4 vols. Paris, 1663–72. Vol. 3 [the texts included in this collection are not continuously paginated].

———. *Novus atlas sinensis* . Amsterdam, 1655.

———. *Novus atlas sinensis.* Trento: Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali, 1981.

———. *Opera omnia*. Ed. Franco Demarchi. 3 vols. Trento: Università degli Studi de Trento, 1998–2002.

———. *Sinicae historiae decas prima* . Munich, 1658.

Martino, Pierre. *L'orient dans la littérature française au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle* . Paris: Hachette, 1906; New York: Burt Franklin, 1971.

Masini, Federico. "Notes on the First Chinese Dictionary Published in Europe (1670)." *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 283–308.

"May Buy Nestorian Stone." *The New York Times* (May 24, 1908): 1.

McCartee, D. B. Letter to Editor. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 5 (1855– 56): 260–62.

McCormick, Frederick. "China's Monuments." *Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 43 (1912): 129–88.

McKee, David Rice. "Isaac de la Peyrère, A Precursor of Eighteenth-Century Critical Deists." *PMLA* 59 (1944): 456–85.

Medhurst, W. H. *China: Its State and Prospects with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel* . London: Snow, 1838.

Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois. 16 vols. Paris, 1776–1814.

Mentzel, Christian. *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinico-characteristici*. Nuremberg, 1685.

Miller, Peter N. "Copts and Scholars: Athanasius Kircher in Peiresc's Republic of Letters." *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* . Ed. Paula Findlen. London: Routledge, 2004. 133–48.

Milne, William. *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China* . Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820.

Mingana, A. "The Early Spread of Christianity in India." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 10 (1926): 435–510 [repr. in *Missions and Regional Characteristics of the Early Church* . Ed. Everett Ferguson. New York: Garland, 1993. 289– 364].

Moffett, Samuel Hugh. *A History of Christianity in Asia* . 2 vols. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998–2005.

Montanus, Arnoldus. See Dapper, Olfert.

Mosheim, Johann Lorenz. *Authentic Memoirs of the Christian Church in China* . Ed. Richard Gibbings. Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1862.

———. *An Ecclesiastical History, Antient and Modern* . 2 vols. London, 1765.

———. *Historia Tartarorum ecclesiastica* . Helmstadt, 1741.

Moule, A. C. *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930. ———. "The Use of the Cross Among the Nestorians in China." *T'oung Pao* 28 (1931): 78–86. Mouly, Joseph-Martial. "Memorial of the Roman Catholic Bishop Mouly to the Emperor of China." *North-China Herald* (April 5, 1856): 143.

Müller, Andreas. *Monumenti sinici*. Berlin, 1672.

———. *Opuscula nonnulla orientalia* . Frankfurt an der Oder, 1695.

Müller, August. "Eröffnungsrede." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 35 (1881): III–XVI. Mungello, David E. *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.

Navarrete, Domingo. "An Account of the Empire of China, Historical, Political, Moral, and Religious." *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* . Ed. Awnsham Churchill and John Churchill. 4 vols. London, 1704. 1:1–424.

———. *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos, y religiosos de la monarchia de China*. Madrid, 1676.

———. *The Travels and Controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete*. Ed. J. S. Cummins. 2 vols. London: Hakluyt Society, 1962.

Neander, August. *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*. 6 vols. Hamburg: Perthes, 1826–52.

Neill, Stephen. *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to A.D. 1707* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

"The Nestorian Stone's Message of Centuries." *The New York Times* (July 12, 1908): Sunday Magazine 6.

"The Nestorian Tablet." *China's Millions* (March 1892): 38.

"The Nestorian Tablet at Sianfu." *The Times* (May 10, 1890): 9.

"The Nestorian Tablet in Sevnsi [sic]." *The Times* (May 30, 1893): 5.

"Nestorian Tablet Moved." *The New York Times* (November 15, 1907): 4. Neumann, Karl Friedrich. "Die erdichtete Inschrift von Singan Fu." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1850): 33–43.

———. Review of Isaac Jacob Schmidt, *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen*, and Schmidt, *Ueber die Verwandtschaft der gnostisch-theosophischen Lehren mit den Religionssystemen des Orients*. *Jahrbucher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (December 1829): 913–36; (April 1830): 585–96.

Nève, Félix. *Établissement et destruction de la première chrétienté dans la Chine* . Louvain: Fonteyn, 1846.

Nicolini-Zani, Matteo. "L'insegnamento luminoso proveniente da Da Qin: alcune considerazioni sul cristianesimo siriaco nella Cina dei Tang (secc. VII–IX)." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 71 (2005): 387–412.

Nicolini-Zani, Matteo, and Roman Malek. "A Preliminary Bibliography on the Church of the East in China and Central Asia." *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia.* Ed. Malek. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006. 499–698.

Nieuhof, Johannes. *L'ambassade de la compagnie orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'empereur de la Chine, ou grande cam de*

Tartarie . Leiden, 1665.

———. *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China* . London, 1669.

———. *Die Gesantschaft der Ost-Indischen Geselschaft in den Vereinigten Niederländern an den tartarischen Cham, und nunmehr auch Sinischen Keiser*. Amsterdam, 1666.

———. *Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* . Amsterdam, 1665.

———. *Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium, modernum Sinae imperatorem*. Amsterdam, 1668.

Nowell, Charles E. “The Historical Prester John.” *Speculum* 28 (1953): 435–45.

Olschki, Leonardo. *Marco Polo’s Asia: An Introduction to His “Description of the World” Called “Il Milione*.*”* Trans. John A. Scott. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

Palmer, Martin. “The Da Qin Project: Early Christianity in China.” Speech made before the Asia Society, February 23, 2001 [http://www.asiasociety.org/speeches/ palmer.html].

———. *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity* . New York: Ballantine, 2001.

Pamphlets Issued by the Chinese Insurgents at Nan-king; to Which is Added a History of the Kwang-se Rebellion, Gathered From Public Documents . Trans. W. H. Medhurst. Shanghai: North-China Herald, 1853.

Parker, E. H. Review of Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou* , vol. 1. *China Review* 21 (1895): 417–19.

———. *Studies in Chinese Religion* . London: Chapman and Hall, 1910.

Pascal, Blaise. *The Provincial Letters* . Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

Pauthier, G. *Chine, ou description historique, géographique et littéraire de ce vaste empire, d'après des documents chinois* . Paris: Didot, 1837.

———. *De l'authenticité de l'inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou, relative à l'introduction de la religion chrétienne en Chine dès le VIIe siècle de nôtre ère* . Paris: Duprat, 1857.

———. *L'inscription syro-chinoise de Si-ngan-fou, monument nestorien élevé en Chine l'an 781 de nôtre ère, et découvert en 1625* . Paris: Didot, 1858.

Pelliot, Paul. *L'inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou* . Ed. Antonino Forte. Kyoto: Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale; Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1996.

———. "Michel Boym." *T'oung Pao* 31 (1935): 95–151.

Peterson, Willard J. "Why Did They Become Christians? Yang T'ing-yün, Li Chihtsao, and Hsü Kuang-ch'i." *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China 1582–1773* . Ed. Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B. C. Oh. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988. 129–52.

Pfister, Louis. *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine, 1552–1773* . 2 vols. Shanghai: Mission catholique, 1932–34.

Pinot, Virgile. *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640– 1740)*. Paris: Geuthner, 1932; Geneva: Slatkine, 1971.

Polo, Marco. *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*. Trans. Henry Yule. 3rd ed. 2 vols. New York: Scribner, 1926.

Popkin, Richard H. "The Pre-Adamite Theory in the Renaissance." *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* . Ed. Edward P. Mahoney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976. 50–69.

Porter, David. *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* . Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

"The Preservation of the Nestorian Tablet and Other Ancient Monuments at Si-an-fu." *Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24 (1889–90): 136–39.

Pulleyblank, Edwin G. "The Roman Empire as Known to Han China." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 (1999): 71–79.

Purchas, Samuel. *Hakluytus Posthumus; or, Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625). 20 vols. Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1905–7; New York: AMS Press, 1965.

Rachewiltz, I. de. *Prester John and Europe's Discovery of East Asia*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972.

Reichwein, Adolf. *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century*. Trans. J. C. Powell. London: Kegan Paul, 1925.

Reinaud, Joseph. "Lettre de M. Reinaud concernant les antiquités chrétiennes de la Chine." *Le Correspondant* 15 (September 1846): 759–64. Rémusat, Abel. "Coup d'oeil sur les premières années de la mission protestante à Malaca." *Journal des sçavans* (October 1821): 597–608.

———. *Mélanges asiatiques*. 2 vols. Paris, 1825–26.

———. *Programme du cours de langue et de littérature chinoises et de Tartare-Mandchou*. Paris, 1815.

———. *Recherches sur les langues tartares* . Paris, 1820.

Renan, Ernest. *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* . Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1855.

———. *Oeuvres complètes* . Ed. Henriette Psichari. 10 vols. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1958.

Renaudot, Eusèbe. *Anciennes relations des Indes et de la Chine* . Paris, 1718.

———. *Ancient Accounts of India and China* . London, 1733.

———. *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum Jacobitarum* . Paris, 1713.

Ricci, Matteo. *Fonti Ricciane: documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579–1615)*. Ed. Pasquale M. D'Elia. 3 vols. Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1942–49.

———. *Opere storiche*. Ed. Pietro Tacchi Venturi. 2 vols. Macerata: Giorgetti, 1911–13.

Richthofen, Ferdinand, Freiherr von. *Baron Richthofen's Letters, 1870–1872* . 2nd ed. Shanghai: North-China Herald, 1903.

———. *China: Ergebnisse eigene Reisen und darauf gegründeter Studien* . 5 vols. Berlin: Reimer, 1877–1912.

Riegert, Ray, and Thomas Moore. *The Lost Sutras of Jesus: Unlocking the Ancient Wisdom of the Xian Monks* . Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2003.

Ritter, Carl. *Die Erdkunde im Verhältnis zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen* . 2nd ed. 21 vols. Berlin, 1822–59.

Rödiger, E. "Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1850." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 5 (1851): 417–66.

———. "Wissenschaftlicher Jahresbericht für das Jahr 1854 and das Jahr 1855." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 10 (1856): 691–799.

Rohrbacher, René François. *Histoire universelle de l'église catholique*. 12 vols. Lyon: de Briday, 1872.

Ross, E. Denison. "Prester John and the Empire of Ethiopia." *Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages* . Ed. Arthur Percival Newton. London: Kegan Paul, 1926. 174–94.

Rousset, Léon. *A travers la Chine* . Paris: Hachette, 1878. Rowbotham, Arnold H. *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* .

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

———. “Voltaire, Sinophile.” *PMLA* 47 (1932): 1050–65.

Rule, Paul A. *K’ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism* . Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Saeki, P. Y. *Keikyo hibun kenkyu* [Studies on the Nestorian Monument]. Tokyo: Tairo Shoin, 1911.

———. *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* . 2nd ed. Tokyo: Maruzen, 1951.

———. *The Nestorian Monument in China*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916.

Salisbury, Edward E. “On the Genuineness of the So-called Nestorian Monument of Singan-fu.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3 (1852–53): 399–419.

Saussy, Haun. “ *China Illustrata* : The Universe in a Cup of Tea.” *The Great Art of Knowing: The Baroque Encyclopedia of Athanasius Kircher*. Ed. Daniel Stolzenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Libraries, 2001. 105–14.

Segalen, Victor. *Stèles*. Ed. Timothy Billings and Christopher Bush. 2 vols. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007.

Semedo, Alvaro. *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* . London, 1655.

———. *Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina* . Rome, 1643.

———. *Imperio de la China* . Madrid, 1642.

Sepibus, Giorgio de. *Romani collegii Societatis Jesu musaeum celeberrimum*. Amsterdam, 1678.

Simon, Walter. “The Attribution to Michael Boym of Two Early Achievements of Western Sinology.” *Asia Major* 7 (1959): 165–69.

“Si-ngan-fu.” *The Times* (October 4, 1900): 3. “Si-ngan-fu.” *The Times* (December 4, 1900): 4. *Sinica Franciscana*. Ed. Anastasius van den Wyngaert et al. 10 vols. Florence: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1929–.

Slessarev, Vsevolod, *Prester John: The Letter and the Legend*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959.

Sommervogel, Carlos et al. *Bibliothèque da la Compagnie de Jésus* . New ed. 12 vols. Paris: Picard, 1890–1960.

South China in the Sixteenth Century: Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P., Fr. Martín de Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550–1575) . Ed. C. R. Boxer. London: Hakluyt Society, 1953.

Spence, Jonathan D. *Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture* . New York: Norton, 1992. ———. *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* . New York: Norton, 1996.

Spitzel, Gottlieb. *De re literaria sinensium commentarius* . Leiden, 1660.

Ssetsen Ssanang, Chungtaidschi. *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen*. Ed. Isaac Jacob Schmidt. St. Petersburg, 1829.

Standaert, Nicolas. "The Jesuit Presence in China (1580–1773): A Statistical Approach." *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 13 (1991): 4–17.

Staunton, George. *An Authentic Account of an Embassy From the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* . 2 vols. London, 1797.

Stewart, John. *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire* . Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928; New York: AMS Press, 1980.

Stolzenberg, Daniel. "Kircher's Egypt." *The Great Art of Knowing: The Baroque Encyclopedia of Athanasius Kircher*. Ed. Stolzenberg. Stanford: Stanford University Libraries, 2001. 115–25.

Szczesniak, Boleslaw. "Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata*." *Osiris* 10 (1952): 385–411.

———. “The Beginnings of Chinese Lexicography in Europe with Particular Reference to the Work of Michael Boym (1612–1659).” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 67:3 (July–September 1947): 160–65.

———. “The Seventeenth-Century Maps of China: An Inquiry into the Compilations of European Cartographers.” *Imago Mundi* 13 (1956): 116–36.

Széchenyi, Béla. *Wissenschaftliche Erbegnisse der Reise des Grafen Béla Széchenyi in Ostasien, 1877–1880* . 3 vols. Vienna: Hölzel, 1893–99.

Tang Li. *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and Its Literature in Chinese*. 2nd ed. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004.

Teng, S. Y. *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers: A Comprehensive Survey*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian [Documents on the Spread of Catholicism Toward the East]. 3 vols. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1966.

Tianxue chuhan [First Collection of Heavenly Studies]. 6 vols. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1965.

“Traduction du monument chinois, concernant la religion chrétienne, par M. Visdelou, evêque de Claudiopolis.” *Journal des sçavans* (June 1760): 340–52.

Trigault, Nicolas. *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583–1610*. Trans. Louis J. Gallagher. New York: Random House, 1953.

Tubach, Jürgen. “Der Apostel Thomas in China.” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 108 (1997): 58–74.

Van Kley, Edwin J. “Europe’s ‘Discovery’ of China and the Writing of World History.” *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 358–85.

Vine, Aubrey R. *The Nestorian Churches: A Concise History of Nestorian Christianity in Asia From the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians* . London: Independent Press, 1937.

Voltaire. *Correspondence*. Ed. Theodore Besterman. 135 vols. Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1953–77.

———. *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* . Ed. René Pomeau. 2 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1963.

———. *Oeuvres complètes*. 52 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1877–85.

W., G. Letter to Editor. *The Times* (January 29, 1886): 3.

Wagner, Rudolf G. *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion*. Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1982.

Wall, Charles William. *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews, and of the Original State of the Text of the Hebrew Bible* . 4 vols. London: Whittaker, 1835–56.

Wallis, Helen. "Missionary Cartographers to China." *Geographical Magazine* 47 (1976): 751–59.

Wening, A. von, and William Heimann. "Das Nestorianer-Denkmal von Sian-fu ('Der Stein himmlischer Verehrung') und die Holm'sche Expedition von 1907 und 1908." *Orientalisches Archiv* 3 (1912–13): 19–24.

Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents . Ed. Prescott Clarke and J. S. Gregory. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1982.

Wickeri, Philip L. "The Stone is a Mirror: Interpreting the Xi'an Christian Monument and Its Implications for Theology and the Study of Christianity in Asia." *Quest* 3:2 (2004): 37–64.

Williams, S. Wells. *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants*. Rev. ed. 2 vols. New York: Scribner, 1883; Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1965.

Williamson, Alexander. *Journeys in North China, Manchuria, and Eastern Mongolia* . 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1870.

Wills, John E., Jr. *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'anghsi, 1666–1687*. Cambridge: Harvard University

Press, 1984.

———. *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1662– 1681*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Winau, Rolf. " *Sylloge Minutiarum Lexici Latino-Sinico-Characteristici* : Christian Mentzel's kleines lateinisch-chinenisches Lexicon." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der*

Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin: Festschrift für Georg Ushmann . Ed. Kurt Mothes and Joachim-Hermann Scharf. Halle: Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, 1975. 463–72.

Winckworth, C. P. T. "A New Interpretation of the Pahlavi Cross-Inscriptions of Southern India." *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1929): 237–44.

Witek, John D. "Understanding the Chinese: A Comparison of Matteo Ricci and the French Jesuit Mathematicians Sent by Louis XIV." *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China 1582–1773*. Ed. Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B. C. Oh. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988. 62–102.

Wittkower, Rudolf. *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1977.

Wolseley, G. J. *Narrative of the War with China in 1860* . London: Longman, 1862. Wong, Dorothy C. *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic*

Form. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004. Wylie, Alexander. *Chinese Researches* . Shanghai: n.p., 1897; Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1966. ———. "On the Nestorian Tablet at Se-gan Foo." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 5 (1855–56): 275–336.

Xu Zongze. *Zhongguo tianzhujiao chuanjiaoshi gailun* [Introduction to the History of Chinese Catholic Missions]. Shanghai: Shengjiao zazhishe, 1938; Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990.

Yates, Frances. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. London: Routledge, 1964. Ying-ki, Ignatius. “A New Translation of the Nestorian Tablet.” *Bulletin of the Catholic University of Peking* 5 (1928): 87–99. Young, John D. *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* . Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983.

Yule, Henry. *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*. Rev. ed. Ed. Henri Cordier. 4 vols. London: Hakluyt Society, 1913–16; Taipei: Ch’eng-wen, 1966.

Zarncke, Friedrich. “Der Priester Johannes.” *Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Classe der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften* 7–8 (1876– 79): 829–1030, 3–186 [repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1980].

Zedler, Johan Heinrich. *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschafften und Kunste*. 64 vols. Leipzig, 1732–50.

About the Author

Michael Keevak is a professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at National Taiwan University in Taipei, Taiwan. He is the author of two books, *Sexual Shakespeare: Forgery, Authorship, Portraiture* (2001), and *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar's Eighteenth-Century Formosan Hoax* (2004). He has also begun work on a new project: *How East Asians Came to be Yellow: An Essay in the History of Racial Thinking.*

Endorsement

"Michael Keevak has written a story about the way in which places, objects, and even time travel through the imagination and cultures of people. The meticulous description of the problems and controversies that have surrounded the inscription on the Nestorian Stele for centuries results in the fascinating anatomy of one of the formative episodes of the West's engagement with Chinese culture and history. Keevak's reconstruction of the journey of the 'stone' in the intellectual and religious universe of the European early modernity also invites larger questions about the transmission, search for, and uses of knowledge. For all his apologies, Keevak writes splendidly and eruditely, and with a sense for the 'other' that is both delicate and deep. This book will delight anyone interested in the life and vicissitudes of cultural monuments." – Nicola Di Cosmo, Henry Luce Foundation Professor of East Asian Studies, School of Historical Study, Institute for Advanced Study, author of *Diary of a Manchu Soldier in Seventeenth-Century China*

"Michael Keevak, whose earlier studies of the historical/cultural construction of Shakespeare's sexuality and of the fascinating eighteenth-century imposter George Pslamanazar, has written a lively and perceptive account of East/West cultural encounters by way of the history of Western (mis)perceptions of a valuable cultural artifact whose significance it took over four centuries to apprehend. Keevak is particularly good at analyzing the ways Western Protestant, Catholic, and imperialist ideological lenses distorted views of an ancient Chinese artifact. He sheds light also on some of the intellectual limitations of Western archaeological interpretations. This new study is a valuable contribution to an understanding of the broad history of East/West cultural encounters, but also particularly of the West's perception of ancient and modern China." – Arthur F. Marotti, Professor of English, Wayne State University, author of *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England*

"Michael Keevak tells a compelling story of how the European imaginaire of an early Christian China was resurrected with the recovery of the tantalizing Nestorian Stele in the ancient capital of China during the early seventeenth century. This iconic stele, with its Christian message of the cross, probably buried in the eighth century to protect it from anti-foreign persecutions by the imperial court, provided powerful, indisputable proof of an early Christian presence in China for those latter-day European missionaries all too predisposed to find it." – Roger T. Ames, Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i, co-translator of *Daodejing: Making This Life Significant: A Philosophical Translation*