

# **The Story of a Stele**

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

**Michael Keevak**



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“At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed.”

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

# Contents

List of Illustrations	vii
Acknowledgments	xi
<i>Prologue</i> The Story of a Stone	1
<i>1</i> A Stone Discovered	5
<i>2</i> The Century of Kircher	29
<i>3</i> Eighteenth-Century Problems and Controversies	61
<i>4</i> The Return of the Missionaries	89
<i>Epilogue</i> The <i>Da Qin</i> Temple	129
Notes	143
Works Cited	169
Index	187

# Illustrations

1. Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library. 6
2. Rubbing of top of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library. 8
3. Title page, Alvaro Semedo, *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*. National Taiwan University Library. 14
4. Title page, Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*. National Taiwan University Library. 32
5. Title page, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 38
6. Interpretatio I, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 41
7. Interpretatio II, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 42
8. Interpretatio III, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 43
9. Engraving of Nestorian Monument, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 44
10. Crux miraculosa, Athanasius Kircher, *China illustrata*. National Taiwan University Library. 46
11. Title page, Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*. National Taiwan University Library. 50
12. Nestorian Monument with musical notation, Andreas Müller, *Monumenti sinici*. National Taiwan University Library. 52
13. Wordlist, Christian Mentzel, *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinico-characteristici*. National Taiwan University Library. 56
14. French and Chinese dictionary, Athanasius Kircher, *Chine illustrée*. National Taiwan University Library. 58

viii *Illustrations*

15. Appendix, Johannes Nieuwhof, *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces*. National Taiwan University Library. 62
16. Title page, Marquis d'Argens, *Lettres chinoises*. National Taiwan University Library. 66
17. Title page, Voltaire, *Lettres chinoises*. National Taiwan University Library. 72
18. Title page, Joseph de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine*. National Taiwan University Library. 75
19. Title page, Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*. National Taiwan University Library. 82
20. Chinese characters, Charles William Wall, *An Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*. National Taiwan University Library. 86
21. Top of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library. 89
22. Title of Nestorian Monument, Athanasius Kircher, *Prodromus coptus*. National Taiwan University Library. 91
23. St. Thomas cross, Diogo do Couto, *Decadas da Asia*. National Taiwan University Library. 92
24. St. Thomas cross, João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*. National Taiwan University Library. 93
25. St. Thomas cross, late sixteenth-century sketch. National Taiwan University Library. 94
26. St. Thomas cross, early twentieth-century engraving. National Taiwan University Library. 95
27. St. Thomas cross, mid-twentieth-century photograph. National Taiwan University Library. 96
28. Cross from Nestorian Monument, Michel Boym, *Flora sinensis*. National Taiwan University Library. 97
29. Cross from Fujian province, Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*. National Taiwan University Library. 98
30. Cross from Nestorian Monument, Manuel Dias, *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan*. National Taiwan University Library. 99

- |     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 31. | Four crosses, Louis Gaillard, <i>Croix et swastika en Chine</i> . National Taiwan University Library.                                  | 100 |
| 32. | Croix de Si-gnan-fou, Baron Henrion, <i>Histoire générale des missions catholiques</i> . National Taiwan University Library.           | 101 |
| 33. | Nestorian Monument, Alexander Williamson, <i>Journeys in North China</i> . National Taiwan University Library.                         | 105 |
| 34. | Rubbing of Nestorian Monument, Joh. Ev. Heller, <i>Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu</i> . National Taiwan University Library.   | 107 |
| 35. | Cross and title from Nestorian Monument, James Legge, <i>The Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu</i> . National Taiwan University Library. | 108 |
| 36. | Photograph of Nestorian Monument, Henri Havret, <i>La stèle chrétienne de Si-gnan-fou</i> . National Taiwan University Library.        | 113 |
| 37. | Five steles, Edouard Chavannes, <i>Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale</i> . National Taiwan University Library.        | 116 |
| 38. | Holm with Nestorian Monument, Frits Holm, <i>The Nestorian Monument</i> . National Taiwan University Library.                          | 117 |
| 39. | <i>New York Times</i> story on Holm's expedition. National Taiwan University Library.  | 120 |
| 40. | Replica of the Nestorian Monument being unloaded, Frits Holm, <i>The Nestorian Monument</i> . National Taiwan University Library.      | 121 |
| 41. | Yü Show, Frits Holm, <i>The Nestorian Monument</i> . National Taiwan University Library.   | 124 |
| 42. | Plaster replica at Yale University, Frits Holm, <i>My Nestorian Adventure in China</i> . National Taiwan University Library.           | 126 |
| 43. | Stone replica at Mount Koya, P.Y. Saeki, <i>Keikyo hibun kenkyu</i> . National Taiwan University Library.                              | 127 |
| 44. | <i>Da Qin</i> pagoda, Xi'an. Photo by author.  | 138 |
| 45. | <i>Da Qin</i> pagoda, Xi'an. Photo by author.  | 138 |
| 46. | Nestorian Monument, <i>Beilin</i> , Xi'an. Photo by author.  | 140 |

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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.<sup>2</sup>

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).<sup>3</sup> 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



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.

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.

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.<sup>4</sup> 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 150-year 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.<sup>5</sup> “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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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?’ ”<sup>13</sup> 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?<sup>14</sup>

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

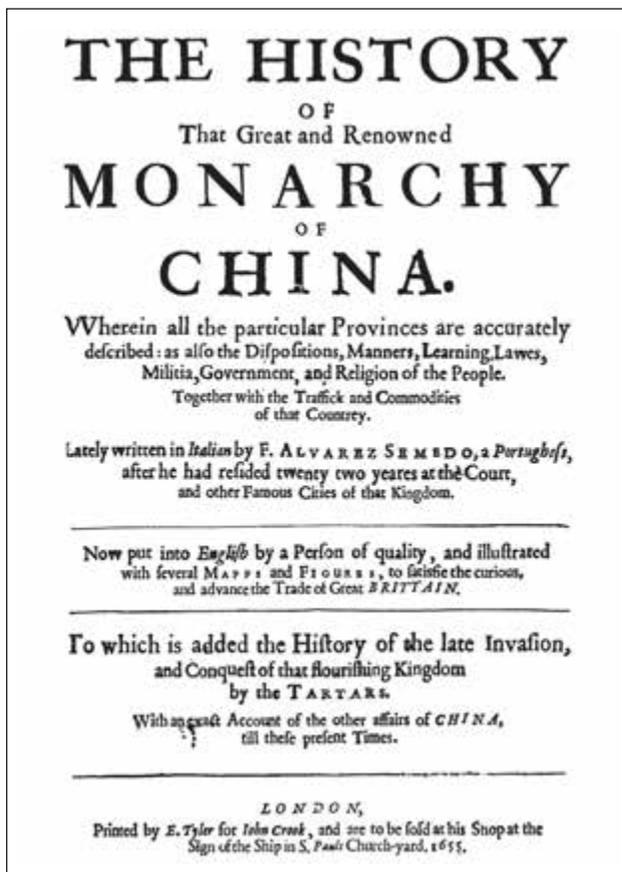
up against this same irreducible difference when he tried to present the emperor and his court with a map of the world that did not fix the Chinese empire in its proper position in the center. From a Chinese perspective, however, the emperor's reasoning made perfect sense, and if Christian knowledge were really so essential to salvation it certainly would have managed to spread beyond the "barbarous Nations" that comprised the Western world.<sup>15</sup>

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."<sup>16</sup> 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."<sup>17</sup>

### 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



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

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.”<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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."<sup>28</sup>

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."<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

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.”<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup> These references became a standard component of subsequent missionary histories, although they were not always presented as conclusive.<sup>34</sup>

## 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*.”<sup>35</sup> 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.”<sup>36</sup> 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.”<sup>37</sup>

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.”<sup>38</sup>

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).<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

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 supersede it.<sup>45</sup>

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*."<sup>46</sup> 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."<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup> 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.”<sup>49</sup> 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.”<sup>50</sup> 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)."<sup>51</sup> 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]?<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup>

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?<sup>54</sup>

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.<sup>55</sup> 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."<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.

## 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”?<sup>1</sup>

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 Daoism/Buddhism rather than just the other way around. Gone forever is the Christocentric 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*.<sup>2</sup>

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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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 mid-eleventh-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.<sup>7</sup>

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.”<sup>8</sup> Although the spirit in which he writes may differ, I cannot help but think of Smedo’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.”<sup>9</sup>

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."<sup>10</sup>

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."<sup>11</sup> 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.”<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

*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.”<sup>15</sup>

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.

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.

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

1. 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*.
2. Daniello Bartoli, *Dell’historia della Compagnia di Giesu, la Cina*, 796; Paul Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou*, 95–146.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.”
6. 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.
7. For the Chinese text and a translation into English, see Saeki, *Nestorian Monument*, 86–89, 281–82.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. *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.
  11. 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.
  12. 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).
  13. *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.
  14. Louis Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations*, 346 (*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:157–58).
  15. 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.
  16. Le Comte, *Memoirs and Observations*, 346–47 (*Nouveaux mémoires*, 2:158–60).
  17. 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.
  18. 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 de 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.
19. 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.
  20. 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*.
  21. 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.
  22. See Albert Bovenschen, “Untersuchungen über Johann von Mandeville”; Josephine Waters Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*; and Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East*.
  23. 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*.
  24. Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Asian*, esp. 1–34.
  25. 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*.
  26. 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*.
  27. 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.
  28. Trigault, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 111; Ricci, *Opere storiche*, 2:292; Semedo, *History of China*, 156 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 196).
  29. 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).
30. 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.”
31. *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.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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).
35. Semedo, *History of China*, 157 (*Relatione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 197).
36. 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).
37. 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.
38. 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.
39. 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.”

40. 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.
41. 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.
42. 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.
43. 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.
44. 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.
45. 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.
46. 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.
47. 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.
48. 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*.
  49. Semedo, *History of China*, 157 (*Relazione 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).
  50. 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.
  51. Nieuhof, *Embassy From the East-India Company*, part 3, p. 8 (Kircher, *China illustrata*, 8).
  52. 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.
  53. See Havret, *Stèle chrétienne*, 2:79n3; Pelliot, *L’inscription nestorienne*, 38n103.
  54. 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 (*Relazione della grande monarchia della Cina*, 198).
  55. 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.
56. 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].
  57. 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).
  58. 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

1. *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).
2. 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 découverte du royaume de Cataï*, and *Dichiaratione di una pietra antica*.
3. 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*.
4. 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 Wissenschaften und Kunst*, 37:1128–32, claims that the emperor rather than the governor had the copy made.
5. 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.

58. 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.”
59. 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”).
60. Victor Segalen, *Stèles*, 89.
61. “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.”
62. 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 mœurs*, 1:225n1.
63. 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

1. Martin Palmer, *The Jesus Sutras*, 5.
2. A. C. Moule, *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*; P. Y. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*.

3. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 4.
4. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 6, 8.
5. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 390–99; F. S. Drake, “Nestorian Monasteries of the T’ang Dynasty,” 332–34.
6. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 15, 18–19.
7. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 23; Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 392; Drake, “Nestorian Monasteries,” 332.
8. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 25.
9. 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*.
10. Saeki, *Nestorian Documents*, 396; *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, 213.
11. Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 250.
12. Leslie Camhi, “Ruins of an Old Christian Church on Lao-Tzu’s Turf”; Palmer, “The Da Qin Project”; Palmer, *Jesus Sutras*, 49.
13. 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.
14. 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.”
15. Ray Riegert and Thomas Moore, *The Lost Sutras of Jesus*, 16–17, 22, 61, 121, 130, 135.

# Index

(Note: Page numbers in italics refer to illustrations.)

- Ai, 18  
Aleni, Giulio, 24  
Aluoben, 11, 54, 69–70  
Aluohe, 8  
Anson, George, 64–65  
anti-Jesuit sentiment, 15, 36, 49, 79, 80, 103  
d'Argens, Marquis: *Correspondance philosophique, historique & critique*, 67; Deism, 67; infatuation with Confucius, 67; *Lettres cabalistiques*, 66; *Lettres chinoises*, 65–69, 66, 67; *Lettres juives*, 66; treatment of motives of Jesuit missionaries, 67–69  
Assemani, Giuseppe Simone, 35; “Dissertatio de Syris Nestorianis,” 53, 74  
*Atlas Chinensis*, 18  
Aztec Calendar Stone, 122
- Balfour, Frederic Henry, suggestion that monument be brought to British Museum, 111  
Baroque polymathic scholarship, 31, 36; out of date by 1680, 53; verbosity, 47  
Bartoli, Daniello, 25–26, 36  
Bayer, T. S., 4, 77; *Museum sinicum*, 57, 59; use of *China illustrata*, 59  
Beausobre, Isaac de, 49–50  
*Beilin* (Forest of Tablets) Museum, 109, 132, 139; photograph of Xi’an monument in, 140  
Billings, Timothy, 36, 45  
Boxer Rebellion, 114, 164n38  
Boym, Michel, 26, 27, 83; avoidance of question of Nestorianism, 47; *Briefve relation de la Chine*, 95, 150n6; cited by Kircher, 39; *Flora sinensis*, illustration of cross from the monument, 95, 97, 98–99; reference to copy of stone in Rome, 48  
Bridgman, Elijah Coleman, 79, 80, 102, 104  
Buddhism, 9, 20, 136, 148n52
- Cao Xueqin: *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, 2  
Carnegie, Andrew, 123  
Cathay, 16  
Chang’an (now Xi’an), 9  
Chavannes, Edouard, 115, 119; *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*, photograph of five steles from, 166  
China: banishment of Jesuit missionaries in 1724, 64; efforts to ensure that Holm had not taken original monument, 122; in eighteenth-century European popular fiction, 65; influence on Enlightenment thinking, 63; invasion by Mongols, 16; Mohammedan uprisings, 104; persecutions against Christians in nineteenth century, 110; reason for interest in Xi’an monument, 83–84; removal of stone to *Beilin*, 117–18; republican government use of stone as bridge with West, 125

- China illustrata* (Kircher), 18, 39–48, 73; alteration of cross to resemble cross of Mylapore, 45, 90–91, 92, 100; “The Articles of Faith and Other Ceremonies and Rites Contained in the Monument,” 45; attempt to make text conform to seventeenth-century Roman Catholic doctrine, 45; attempt to prove that inscription referred to communion and purgatory, 45; on Chinese interest in stone, 25; citation of authority of Martini’s *Atlas*, 47; contradictory statements about second copy of stone, 48, 83; “The Cross Carved at the Top of the Monument,” 99–100; first page of English translation of, 62; first page of “First Interpretation,” 41; first page of “Second Interpretation,” 42; first page of “Third Interpretation,” 43; foldout engraving with Chinese and Syriac text, 44; “Miraculous cross of the Apostle Thomas in Mylapore, India,” 46; monument as sign of pre-Nestorian Christianity, 45; reworking of material from *Prodromus coptus*, 40; standard book about China in Europe, 37; story of governor’s response to stone, 26; text of translated into French in 1670 with Chinese and French dictionary, 57, 58; title page from, 38
- China Inland Mission, 112
- China Monuments Society, 123
- Chinese Christians: nineteenth century, 110; ordered to renounce faith in eighteenth century, 64; retention of local traditions, 147n44
- Chinese language study, and Xi’an inscription, 55–59, 77
- Chinese Letters*, 66
- Chinese mandarin, in European popular fiction, 65
- Chinese Nestorian texts, 131
- Chinese Repository*, 79–80, 80
- The Chinese Spy*, 66
- Chinoiserie, European, rise and fall of, 63
- Clarke, Purdon, 118
- Columbus, Christopher, 16
- Confucian Four Books, 23, 48, 54, 59
- Confucianism, 36, 63, 70
- Confucius sinarum philosophus*, 48–49
- Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, 33
- Coptic, 31
- Counter-Reformation Church, 33
- Couplet, Philippe, 154n56; *Tabula chronologica monarchiae sinicae*, 49
- Couto, Diogo do: *Decadas da Asia*, 92
- Cruz, Gaspar da: *Tractado*, 19, 21–22, 135
- Daoism, 9, 133
- Da Qin*, 5, 8, 9, 10, 23, 127; became common designation for Christianity, 24; equation with Judea, 11, 24
- Da Qin* temple, 129–41; photograph of, 138; replica of Xi’an monument at site of, 137, 138; restoration work, 135; visit by group of Chinese scholars in 1933, 133, 135
- Deshauterayes, Michel Ange Le Roux, 74, 76
- Devisse, Jean, 15
- Dhuta, 148n52
- Dias, Manuel, Jr., 22–23, 23, 36, 73
- Diderot, Denis, 65; *Encyclopédie*, 70
- Drake, F. S., 133
- D’Souza, Herman: *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, 96
- Dudink, Ad, 23, 147n42
- Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste: *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine*, 64; English translation of, 154n49; translation of imperial edict of 845 ordering followers of *jingjiao* to return to secular life, 53
- Dunhuang texts, 131, 132, 135, 137
- Dutch embassy to Beijing, narrative of the first, 61

- East India Company, 76  
 Edict of Toleration, 156n9  
 Elgin marbles, 111  
*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 30  
 Estrangelo, 5, 106
- Faria e Sousa, Manuel de, 145n18  
 Fassman, David: *Reisende Chineser*, 65  
 First Opium War, 83, 90  
 Fourmont, Etienne, 55, 77; *Meditationes sinicae*, 59  
 Freer, Charles, 123  
 Fujian province cross, rubbing of, from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 98, 99
- Gaillard, Louis, 115; four crosses from *Croix et swastika en Chine*, 100  
 Gaubil, Antoine, 73  
 Gibbings, Richard, 85  
 Gibbon, Edward, 71, 85  
 Goes, Bento de, 18  
 Goldsmith, Oliver: *Citizen of the World*, 66  
 González de Mendoza, Juan, 21, 54; *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno dela China*, 19  
 Gordon, Elizabeth A., 125, 127  
 Great Wall of Europe, 17  
 Grosier, Jean-Baptiste, 74; *Description générale de la Chine*, 76  
 Grotius, Hugo: *De origine gentium americanarum*, 35  
 Guanyin, 21, 135  
 Guignes, Joseph de, 71, 85  
 Guo Ziyi, 74, 76  
 Gützlaff, Karl Friedrich August: anti-Catholicism, 79; *China Opened*, 79; *Sketch of Chinese History*, 79
- Hakka, 104  
 Hangzhou, 106
- Han Taihua inscription, 106, 107, 109, 117, 139, 166n61  
 Havret, Henri, 4, 27, 28, 69, 136; *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 6, 89; *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, Fujian province cross, rubbing of, 98  
 Heller, Joh. Ev.: *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu*, 107, 111, 163n32  
 Henrion, Baron Mathieu Richard Auguste: *Histoire générale des missions catholiques*, “Cross of Xi’an Fu,” 101–2  
 Henry the Navigator, Prince, 16  
 d’Herbelot, Barthélemy: *Bibliothèque orientale*, 74  
 hieroglyphics, 31  
 Holm, Frits V., 166n59; attempt to attain monument for Western museum, 117, 122; attempt to be reimbursed for expenses of copy of stone, 123; belief that he acted on behalf of scientific advancement, 123; brought copy of stone to New York, 118–19, 122; copies of monument set up in different parts of world, 125, 165n46; dismissive of Chinese law, 122; *My Nestorian Adventure in China*, 122, 126; *The Nestorian Monument*, 124; *New York Times* story of expedition, 120; photograph of Buddhist priest “Yü Show” on spot where monument had stood, 124; photograph of replica of monument in Hankow, 121; photograph of with monument before removal in 1908, 117; presentation of copy of stone to Pope at Vatican, 124, 129; report of trouble with Western missionaries, 119; two versions of account of monument, 115  
 “The Holm-Nestorian Expedition,” 115  
 Hong Xiuquan, 104, 162n17  
 Horn, Georg, 34–36; *De originibus americanis*, 35; Kircher’s response to,

40; view of Xi'an monument as Jesuit fraud, 35, 36

Hosten, H.: "St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore," 94

Huang, Arcadio, 55

Huc, Évariste-Régis, 104–5

*Idee générale de la Chine*, 73

*Image of the Black in Western Art* (Devisse and Mollat), 15

Indian Breviary, 24

Japonica-Sinica I-IV, 22–23

Jesuit missionaries: accommodation to Chinese history and religion, 23, 81, 83; 1625 annual report on the China mission, 11, 31; banishment from China in 1724, 64; Chinese objections to teachings of, 12; "found" in monument Christianity in ancient China, 15; increasingly precarious position in China, 39; preconceptions about China dictated what they actually perceived, 17

Jesuit order, formal dissolution of in 1773, 64

*jingjiaobei*. See Xi'an monument

*jingjiao* religion, 5, 7, 9, 89, 103, 151n26; became common designation for Christianity, 24; recognition by Tang dynasty, 7, 12; small number of followers, 136; state of ignorance about in Christian West, 135; unrelated to Christianity for seventeenth-century Chinese, 10

John of Montecorvino, 20

*Journal des sçavans*, 71, 73

*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 102, 104

Julien, Stanislas, 103

Kangxi emperor, 39, 156n9

Kao, Aloys, 73

Kircher, Athanasius, 51; attempt to trace

connections between Coptic and hieroglyphic writing, 32–33; barely mentions Nestorian connection to stone, 36; belief in monument as proof that Coptic church spread to China, 33; consistent reference to monument as Sino-Syrian or Syro-Chinese, 39; cross and title of monument from *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus*, 90, 91; had never been to Asia, 39; influenced by Renaissance hermetic tradition, 31; misinformation about copies of Xi'an inscription, 33–34; no knowledge of Chinese language, 31; *Oedipus aegyptiacus*, 32; overlooking of doctrinally unorthodox elements in inscription, 36; *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus*, 31–32, 37, 45, 54, 83, 90; publication of first complete translation of inscription, 31; responders to, 34–37; view of Chinese writing as descendant of hieroglyphics, 39; view of monument as example of orthodox and Catholic Christianity, 40; word-by-word Latin translation of inscription, 56–57

Klaproth, Julius von: *Asia polyglotta*, 78

kowtow ceremony, 76

Kreitner, Gustav, 110–11

Lacouperie, Albert Etienne Terrien de, 112

La Croze, M. V. de, 70, 71; argument that Jesuits faked the stone, 49; *Dissertations historiques sur divers sujets*, 49; *Histoire de Christianisme des Indes*, 49

Lao Zi: *Dao de jing*, 133

Lateran Museum, Vatican, 124

Le Clerc, Jean, 48, 49

Le Comte, Louis, 12, 13, 22, 25, 27, 34, 68

Legge, James, 28, 106; *Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu*, cross and head of monument from, 108

- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 50, 51  
 letters from foreign traveler, literary genre of, 65  
*Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, 64
- Li Genyuan, 166n61
- Lin Tong, 26, 28, 114
- Li Zhizao, 10–11, 12, 25, 47, 76, 143n8;  
 transcription of text of monument, 11, 22, 23
- London Missionary Society, 77, 79  
*The Lost Sutras of Jesus*, 136–37  
*Lou Guan Tai*, 133, 136
- Lucena, João de: *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*, 93  
 “luminous religion,” 5, 9, 11, 12, 29. *See also jingjiao* religion
- Lundbaek, Knud, 54, 154n56
- Macartney embassy, 64, 76
- Magalhães, Gabriel de, 54
- Mailla, Joseph de: *Histoire générale de la Chine*, 74–76, 75
- Malabar Christians, 35, 151n26
- Mandeville, John: *Travels*, 16
- Manzi, 16
- Marana, Giovanni Paolo: *L’esploratore turco*, 65
- Martini, Martino, 4, 22, 83; account of stone taken from Kircher’s *Prodromus coptus*, 47; ambiguity about what was sent to Rome, 150n6; *De bello tartarico*, 39; *Novus atlas sinensis*, 34, 37, 39, 47; *Sinicae historiae decas prima*, 36, 74
- Masson, Philippe, 57
- Maurice, Gabriel, 164n40
- McCarter, D. B., 104
- Medhurst, W. H., 79  
*Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois*, 64, 73
- Mendoza, Juan González de. *See* González de Mendoza, Juan
- Mentzel, Christian, 57, 77, 154n56; *clavis sinica* composed of characters from Kircher’s engraving of stone, 55; *Sylloge minutiarum lexici latino-sinico-characteristici*, 56
- Milne, William: *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China*, 78
- Ming dynasty, 16, 37
- Mishihe, 8
- Moabite Stone, 122
- Mohammedan religion, 10
- Mollat, Michel, 15
- Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, 65; *Lettres persanes*, 65, 66
- Morgan, J. Pierpont, 123
- Morrison, Robert, 77, 78, 85, 158n35
- Mosheim, Johann Lorenz: acceptance of stone’s authenticity, 50; *Authentic Memoirs of the Christian Church in China*, 85
- Moule, A. C.: *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*, 131
- Mouly, Joseph-Martial, 162n20
- Mount Koya, Japan, copy of monument, 125, 127, 166n58
- Müller, Andreas, 77; *clavis sinica* based on *China illustrata*, 4, 51, 55, 59; led astray by idiosyncrasies of Kircher’s text, 56–57; *Monumenti sinici*, 50–51, 52; reprint of Boym’s Romanized text using musical notation, 51
- Musée Guimet, Paris, replica of stone, 166n63
- Nanjing, 103, 104
- National Bible Society of Scotland, 102
- Navarrete, Domingo, 103; *Tratados*, 48; view that Christianity had never come to China, 48, 49
- Nestorian Christianity, 9–10, 35, 53, 78, 87, 129, 151n24, 158n36
- Nestorian monument. *See* Xi’an monument
- The Nestorian Monument: An Ancient*

- Record of Christianity in China* (Carus), 115
- Nestorian temple sites, 136
- Nestorius, 9
- Neumann, Karl Friedrich, 78–79, 80
- Nieuhof, Johannes: *An Embassy From the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 61, 62
- North-China Herald*, 103
- The Open Court*, 115, 122
- Pahlavi, 92
- Palmer, Martin: belief that Chinese Christianity was shaped by Daoism/Buddhism, 131; and *Da Qin* pagoda, 132; new translations of Dunhuang texts, 135; pilgrimage to Xi'an, 132; report of Chinese dispute about importance of *Da Qin* pagoda, 136; success of book, 136; view of monument as crowning achievement of Daoist Christianity, 132; visit to *Lou Guan Tai*, 133; Western Christian perspective of monument as “Jesus sutra,” 130
- Parker, E. H., 151n24
- Pauthier, Guillaume, 27, 28, 100, 103
- Pauw, Cornelius:  
*Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois*, 71
- Pelliot, Paul, 4, 27, 136
- photography, 115
- Polo, Marco: *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 16, 95; mentions of Christianity in China, 10, 18, 19, 20, 30, 35, 47, 79, 100, 125; story of his authorship of Xi'an inscription, 70
- Prester John myth, 16–17, 18, 35
- Psalmanazar, George, 17, 54–55
- pure rationality, 63
- Qing rulers, 37, 39, 103–4, 114
- Rémusat, Abel, 77
- Renan, Ernest: *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*, 103
- Renaudot, Eusèbe: rejection of idea that St. Thomas traveled to China, 51; view of text as Nestorian, 53
- rêve chinois*, 63
- Ricci, Matteo, 11, 12–13, 20, 22, 100; diaries referring to Christian “evidence” found in China, 18, 100; obsession with finding Cathay, 18; view that Confucianism borrowed from the West, 21
- Richthofen, Ferdinand von, 106
- Rites Controversy, 54, 64, 70, 85, 147n43
- Roberts, Issachar J., 162n17
- Rosetta Stone, 24, 122
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 65
- Royal Asiatic Society, China branch of, 112
- Sadan, 8
- Saeki, P. Y., 24, 28, 136; *Keikyo hibun kenkyu*, 127; on location of *Da Qin* pagoda, 133; *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, 131; placing of stone in context of Chinese religious culture, 127
- Salisbury, Edward E., 102
- Schmidt, Isaac Jacob, 78
- Segalen, Victor: *Stèles*, 125
- Semedo, Alvaro, 25, 27, 31, 54; convinced that monument was Christian by Syriac text, 114; first to identify Syriac script, 35; *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*, 13–14, 18–19; placed monument in context of history of China, 13, 14, 40; portrayal of cross on monument, 21, 90, 95; reaction upon seeing stone for first time, 134; *Relatione*, 37; rereading of Xi'an inscription to fit preconceived notion of Christian doctrine, 15; translation of

- Da Qin* as Judea, 24; vague description of Chinese characters, 55; vagueness as to what kind of Christianity stone described, 45
- Seres, 15
- Shaanxi province, 5, 61
- Silk Road, 29
- silk road tales, 16
- Sinim, 15
- Smithsonian Institution, 123
- Spitzel, Gottlieb: *De re literaria sinensium commentarius*, 36–37
- St. Thomas Christians, 19, 24, 35–36, 68
- St. Thomas cross: from Diogo do Couto, *Decadas da Asia*, 92; diverse illustrations of, 92; early twentieth-century engraving of, from Yule's edition of Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 95; from João de Lucena, *Historia da vida do padre Francisco de Xavier*, 93; Kircher's transformation of Xi'an monument cross into, 45, 46, 90–91, 100; late sixteenth-century sketch of, from H. Hosten, "St. Thomas and San Thomé, Mylapore," 94; mid-twentieth-century photograph of, from Herman D'Souza, *In the Steps of St. Thomas*, 96; peacock, 161n6
- Sun Yat-sen, 125
- Synod of Diamper, 36
- Syriac, language of Nestorian liturgy, 10
- Syriac script, 7, 21, 31, 33, 68, 86, 102, 119; date given in, 8, 70; enabled Westerners to connect monument with St. Thomas church in India, 114; fascination of for Westerners, 25, 81, 83, 84, 85; first identification of as Syriac, 35; first translation of, 145n19; known as Estrangelo, 5; list of names in, 72, 76
- Széchenyi, Béla, 110, 111
- Taiping Christianity, 104, 162n17
- Taiping rebellion, 103–4, 110
- Taiping tianguo* (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace), 104
- Tang dynasty, 53; toleration of foreign religious sects, 7
- Ta Yu, 132, 136
- Thomas, St.: Chaldean Breviary of, 20; legend of journey to China, 19–20, 30, 51, 146n30. *See also* St. Thomas Cross travel books, 17–18
- Trigault, Nicolas, 13, 20
- Vatican Missionary Ethnological Museum, 129, 165n57
- Visdelou, Claude, 1760 translation of Xi'an inscription, 73–74, 76
- Voltaire: centrality of China in thought, 65, 70; dismissal of Xi'an monument as fraud, 70–71; *Essai sur les mœurs*, 70, 73; hatred of Jesuits, 71; *Lettres chinoises*, 70, 71–73, 72; long-lasting effect of condemnation of Xi'an monument, 73
- Wall, Charles William, 87, 112; attempt to prove modernity of Chinese portion of inscription, 85; *Examination of the Ancient Orthography of the Jews*, 81, 82, 86; hatred of Jesuits, 84; interest in Syriac portions of inscription, 81; obsession with "defective" nonalphabetic languages, 81, 83, 84; view of Chinese language and history as mired in ignorance and confusion, 81, 83; view of monument as starting point for Chinese history, 85; view that stone was copied for devious reasons, 84
- Wang Chang, 26
- West: confidence in its civilizing mission, 81; eighteenth-century sinophobia, 63, 64; envy of Chinese culture, 22; and legend that Apostle Thomas had journeyed to China, 19–20; long history of idea of human blackness

- preceded actual encounters with black people, 15; long-standing notions about China, 16, 17–18; nineteenth-century return of missionaries to China, 77–78, 83; references to Chinese people in Greek and Roman periods, 15–16; seventeenth-century idea of foreignness, 17; very little knowledge of China, 3; view of Cathay and China as separate kingdoms until seventeenth century, 18, 20–21; view of Chinese religious practices as corruption of True Faith, 22
- West, and Xi'an monument: always a reflection of European rather than Chinese concerns, 30; became of interest only to scholars, 129; became synonymous with textbook Chinese among Europeans, 55–59; Chinese characters confused with Sanskrit or Mongolian, 114; comparisons of to Rosetta Stone, 23–24, 122; demand for Western custody of monument, 111–12, 115; dragons never represented before 1866, 106; fanciful readings of monument in eighteenth century, 69–73; imagination captured by cross, 7–8; importance of monument exaggerated out of proportion by 1900, 115; monument as point of entry for early sinological study, 30; and notion of Christianity as basis of Chinese beliefs, 13, 22–23; perceptions about China changed by discovery of, 7, 14; scholarly use of inscription to learn about China and Chinese language, 54, 55–59, 61; unsettling effect of vagueness of inscription, 144n12; untranslatability of large portions of, 11–12; view of monument as European Christian tablet, 13, 21, 30, 61. *See also* Xi'an monument
- Western missionaries: allowed to travel throughout China by mid-nineteenth century, 90; dwindling presence of in China, 53–54, 63
- Williamson, Alexander, 163n27; account of monument suggests Chinese indifference to Christian message, 109; engraving made after drawing of monument on site, 105; treatment of monument as Protestant artifact, 109; trip to Xi'an in 1866, 102; two additional representations of cross, 106
- Wulin, 106
- Wu Zubi, 106
- Wylie, Alexander, 27, 28, 115; “On the Nestorian Tablet,” 102–3
- Xavier, St. Francis, 19
- Xi'an, 5, 29, 164n38; devastation of, 110; Tang-era relics, 139
- Xi'an monument: Aluohe reference, 8; attracted attention of Chinese literati because of calligraphy and classical style, 159n50; Buddhist and Daoist terminology in inscription, 114; drawing made after rubbing of top of, from Henri Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 89; early Chinese tales of discovery, 25–27; engraving after a photograph of with shelter built in 1891, from Havret, *La stèle chrétienne de Si-ngan-fou*, 113; first published photograph of, 115; French and Italian translations of in pamphlet form in 1628 and 1631, 31; government steps to protect in 1891, 112; honored in Chinese context in ways that had nothing to do with Christianity, 109; inaccessibility before early twentieth century, 29; in Jesuit archives, 22–23; location of *Da Qin*, 147n47; mention of Guo Ziyi, 76; partially translated into Portuguese and Latin in 1625, 31; 1892 photograph of, 6; photograph of in *Beilin* (Forest of Tablets) Museum, 140; removal of to *Beilin* in 1908, 117–

- 18; rubbing of from Joh. Ev. Heller, *Das Nestorianische Denkmal in Singan Fu*, 107; rubbing of top showing ornamented cross, 8; set of Buddhist/Daoist-style translations, 137; story of governor of Xi'an's visit to, 166n61; story that governor of Xi'an interpreted monument as reincarnation of son, 26, 27, 84, 114; story that governor of Xi'an ordered copy to be made, 33–34, 83, 109, 149n4, 150n6, 152n29. *See also* West, and Xi'an monument
- Xi'an monument cross: cross and head of monument from James, Legge, *Nestorian Monument of Hsi-an Fu*, 108; cross and title of monument from Kircher, *Prodromus coptus sive aegyptiacus*, 90, 91; cross from monument copied after Manuel Dias, Jr., *Tang jingjiao beisong zhengquan*, 99; as focal point of interest to Europeans, 7–8, 89; illustration of from Michel Boym, *Flora sinensis*, 95, 97, 98–99; Kircher's engraving of reused for two hundred years, 100; not correctly shown until mid-nineteenth century, 90; portrayal of by Alvaro Semedo, 21, 90, 95; transformation of into St. Thomas cross at Mylapore, *China illustrata*, 45, 46, 90–91, 100; Williamson's representations of, 106
- Yale University, photograph of plaster replica of monument, 126, 166n63
- "yellow peril" rhetoric, 129
- Yisi, 9, 76
- Yongzheng emperor, 156n9
- Yule, Henry, 16; edition of Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 95; lithograph of inscription and rubbing of cross, 106
- Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 80
- Zhang Gengyu, 10
- Zhouzhi district, 132, 136
- Zhu Xi, 74
- Zoroastrian religion, 10