

大秦景教流行中國碑

A MONUMENT TO THE SPREAD OF THE SYRIAN BRILLIANT TEACHING IN CHINA

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[1] 景教流行中國碑頌並序 [2] 大秦寺僧景淨述

§1. [1] In order that the reader may fully admire this Monument to the Spread of the Brilliant Teaching in China, the following exposition has been written by Jingjing (Ching-ching), [2] a monk of the Syrian (Chin. Daqin / Ta-ts'in i.e. 'Roman') Monastery.

[S1] *'d'm qšyš' wqwr'pysqwp' wp'pšy dzynst'n*
*Adam, priest, country-bishop, and spiritual father of China.*¹

[3] 粵若。常然真寂。先先而無元。窅然靈虛。後後而妙有。總玄樞而造化。妙眾聖以元尊者。其唯我三一妙身無元真主阿羅訶。歟判十字。以定四方。鼓元風而生[4]二氣。暗空易而天地開。日月運而晝夜作。匠成萬物然立初人。別賜良和令鎮化海。渾元之性虛而不盈。素蕩之心本無希嗜。泊乎娑殫施妄。鈿飾純精。間平大於[5]此是之中。

§2. [3] In the beginning was GOD (Chin. Āluóhē <Syr. Alāhā)² the eternal, unchanging, and omnipotent; who was there before all things were made, and who will remain when all things have perished; himself supremely good and the source of all wisdom and nobility in men; the master and maker of all things; our mysterious Trinity. He made the four quarters of the world; he set his spirit in motion and created [4] darkness and void. He made light from darkness and matter from void, and separated the earth from the sky. He made all things and saw that they were good, and created the first man. He made him wise and just, and gave him authority over all living things. He made him not proud, but humble; not greedy, but content with what he had. But SATAN (Chin. Suōdān <Syr. Sātānā),³ the father of lies, corrupted him. Disguised as a good angel, he told the man that he could be equal with GOD. The man believed his lies, [5] and evil came into the world.

隙冥同於彼非之內。是以三百六十五種。肩隨結轍。競織法羅。或指物以託宗。或空有以淪二。或禱祀以邀福。或伐善以矯人。智慮營營。恩情役役。茫然 [6] 無得。煎迫轉燒。積昧亡途。久迷休復。

§3. Unity and harmony departed, and there were countless quarrels between men of different ideas, some teaching one thing and others another. Some men set up material things as the

¹*Adam qshisha w'kurapisqupa w'papash d'Sinistan.* *Sinistan* is a well-attested Persian name for China. The normal Syriac name for China was *Beth Sinaye*, 'the country of the Chinese'. The term *Sinaye*, 'Chinese', occurs in the phrase *malke d'Sinaye*, 'rulers of the Chinese', in paragraph 24a. The term *papash*, 'pope' or 'spiritual head', is equally rare.

²*A-lo-ho*, a transliteration of the Syriac *Allaha*, 'God'.

³*Sa-tan*, a transliteration of the Syriac *Tsatana*, 'Satan'.

objects of their worship; some said that all existence was meaningless and did not distinguish between right and wrong; some tried to find happiness through rituals and sacrifices; some rejected goodness altogether and sought only power over other men. Their minds were in torment and their hearts were in agony. [6] They longed for escape from the fires of guilt which tormented them. But the more they struggled, the deeper they sank into darkness. At last, in despair, they stopped looking for truth.

於是我三一分身景尊彌施訶。戰隱真威。同人出代。神天宣慶。室女誕聖。於大秦景宿告祥。波斯睹耀以來貢。圓二十四聖 [7] 有說之舊法。理家國於大猷。設三一淨風無言之新教。陶良用於正信。制八境之度。鍊塵成真。啟三常之門。開生滅死。懸景日以破暗府。魔妄於是乎悉摧。棹慈[8]航以登明宮。含靈於是乎既濟。能事斯畢。亭午昇真。

§4. Then one person of our Trinity, the brilliant and reverend CHRIST (Chin. Mīshīhē <Syr. Mšīhā, i.e. Messiah),⁴ veiling and hiding his true majesty, came to earth in the likeness of man. Angels proclaimed the good news; a virgin gave birth to a saint in Syria (Chin. Daqin / Ta-ts'in i.e. 'Roman'). A bright star told of good fortune; Persians saw its glory and came to offer gifts. [7] The wise prophets of old gave the law to men, teaching that they must practise good works. CHRIST fulfilled this law, but also sent men the spirit of GOD, so that they could find salvation through faith as well as works. He gave men eight rules for living well, and taught them to resist the desires of the flesh, and to seek truth and purity. He told men to trust GOD, to hope for their salvation, and to love their fellow men. He gave men life, and conquered death. He hung up the brilliant sun to storm the halls of darkness, and defeated the snares of SATAN.⁵ In his mercy, [8] he won entrance to heaven for the souls of men, and saved them from the fate which their wickedness deserved. His saving work complete, he returned to heaven.

經留二十七部。張元化以發靈關。法浴水風。滌浮華而潔虛白。印持十字。融四照以合無拘。擊木震仁惠之音。東[9]禮趣生榮之路。存鬚所以有外行。削頂所以無內情。不畜臧獲。均貴賤於人。不聚貨財示罄遺於我。齋以伏識而成。戒以靜慎為固。七時禮讚。大庇存亡。七日一薦。[10]洗心反素。

§5. He left twenty-seven books of scripture, which explain how men can reform their hearts and find salvation.⁶ They tell us that if a man is washed in water and the spirit, he will become clean and pure. We, his ministers, carry the Cross (Chin. 十字 *shizi* lit. 'the character ten') to symbolise that our teaching is open to men in all four quarters of the world. We strike wooden gongs to awaken feelings of love and kindness.⁷ We worship towards the [9] east to show that we are travelling along the road of life and glory. We grow our beards to show that our duties are towards others, and we shave the crown of the head to show that our thoughts

⁴*Mi-shi-ho*, a transliteration of the Syriac *Mshiha*, 'Christ' (literally 'the anointed one'). Cf. English 'Messiah'.

⁵The sole reference to the Crucifixion in the Sian Tablet inscription, and deliberately oblique. Elsewhere the Christian cross is explained as a symbol of the universality of the Christian message, representing the four cardinal compass points (paragraph 5).

⁶'Twenty-seven'. The figure is presumably a mistake, as the East Syrian church recognised the canonical twenty-three books of the New Testament.

⁷Christians living under Moslem rule (as most East Syrian Christians were at this period) were forbidden to compete with the sound of the *muezzin*, the Moslem call to worship, by ringing church bells. However, priests were allowed to beat muffled wooden gongs to call congregations to church services, and this practice eventually became traditional.

are not centred on ourselves. We do not keep slaves,⁸ and we honour rich and poor equally. We do not amass goods and wealth, and we share all we have among ourselves. We seek to purify ourselves by fasting and meditation. We worship seven times a day, and pray for the salvation of both the living and the dead. Once every seven days we hold a public service [10] to cleanse our hearts and rededicate ourselves to purity.

真常之道。妙而難名。功用昭彰。強稱景教。惟道非聖不弘。聖非道不大。道聖符契。
。天下文明

§6. This true and unchanging way is hard to describe, and harder to name. Because it is clearly beneficial and useful, we have tried our best to capture its essence by calling it the 'brilliant teaching'. Nevertheless, just as a ruler can only flourish by following our teaching, so our teaching can only flourish under a sympathetic ruler. Whenever our teaching meets a wise sovereign, it civilises and enlightens the world.

太宗文皇帝。光華啟運。明聖臨人。大秦國有上德。曰[11]阿羅本。占青雲而載真經。望風律以馳艱險。貞觀九祀至於長安。帝使宰臣房公玄齡總仗西郊賓迎入內。翻經書殿。問道禁闈。深知正真。特令傳授。貞觀十有二[12]年秋七月。詔曰

§7. In the ninth Zhenguang (Cheng-kuan) year (635 CE), when the accomplished emperor T'ai-tsung [626–49] was beginning his prosperous reign in glory and splendour, ruling the people wisely and well, bishop [11] Aluoben (A-lo-pen)⁹ from the land of Syria came to Chang'an (Ch'ang-an). Forewarned by the blue clouds and the harmony of the winds, he hurried through difficulties and dangers to China, carrying books which proclaimed the truth. The emperor sent the minister of state, Duke Fang Xuanling (Fang Hsuan-ling), to take an escort to the west suburb to welcome the guest and bring him to the palace.¹⁰ When the books had been translated in the library and the doctrine examined in his private apartments, the emperor was convinced of their propriety and truth and personally ordered their preaching and transmission. In the twelfth Zhenguang (Cheng-kuan) [12] year (638 CE), in the autumn in the seventh month, it was decreed:

道無常名。聖無常體。隨方設教。密濟群生。大秦國大德阿羅本。遠將經像來獻上京。
。詳其教旨。玄妙無為。觀其元宗。生成立要。詞無繁說。理有忘筌。[13] 濟物利人。
。宜行天下。所司即於京義寧坊造大秦寺。一所度僧二十一人

§8. Truth can be recognized, whatever its name. Wisdom can be discerned, whoever its possessor. Every region has its own appropriate doctrine, which by its pervasive influence benefits the inhabitants. The Syrian bishop Aluoben (A-lo-pen) has come to our great capital from afar with the 'brilliant teaching'. We have carefully examined this teaching, and find it challenging, humbling, and comforting. We have studied its principles, and are satisfied that they lay stress on the essentials of life. Its language is spare and elegant, and its thought is coherent. [13] It is without doubt a helpful doctrine: let it be admitted to our empire. Let a

⁸ Slavery was normal both in China and throughout the Arab world at this period. During the T'ang (Tang) dynasty the slave-market in Ch'ang-an was the largest in the world. Red-haired girls, supplied by Arab pirates from Spain and Britain, were particularly prized for their rarity value.

⁹ Perhaps representing the Syriac name Yahballaha, 'Gift of God'.

¹⁰ An extraordinary mark of respect. Fang Hsuan-ling was T'ai-tsung's prime minister at this period, and most important decisions were taken by a closed triumvirate consisting of the emperor himself, Fang Hsuan-ling, and Wei Cheng.

monastery be built in our capital by the relevant board in the I-ning ward, and let twenty-one monks be appointed there.¹¹

宗周德喪。青駕西昇。巨唐道光。景風東扇。旋令有司將帝寫真轉摸寺壁。天姿汎彩。英朗[14]景門。聖跡騰祥。永輝法界。

§9. The glory of the Zhou (Chou) Dynasty departed, and Laozi (Lao-tzu) rode into the west in a dark chariot. Now a brilliant breeze blew towards the east, and the great T'ang (Tang) shone in its splendour.¹² Officers were told to have the emperor's portrait copied on the walls of our monastery. The emperor's handsome features decorated its [14] brilliant gates: the wisdom of his expression was a constant inspiration to our community.

案西域圖記及漢魏史策。大秦國南統珊瑚之海。北極眾寶之山。西望仙境花林。東接長風弱水。其土出火紈布。返魂香。明月珠。夜光璧。[15]俗無寇盜。人有樂康。法非景不行。主非德不立。土宇廣濶。文物昌明。

§10. According to the *Illustrated Records of Western Lands* and the *Histories of the Han and Wei Dynasties* the land of Syria is bounded on the south by the Coral Sea; on the north it stretches to the Mountain of All Precious Things; on the west it looks towards the flowery forests on the Borders of the Immortals; and on the east it lies open to the Long Winds and the Weak Water. The country produces asbestos, spices that restore the soul, bright-moon pearls, and rings that shine in the night. [15] Theft and robbery are unknown, and the people enjoy happiness and peace. No law but the brilliant is permitted, none but virtuous rulers are tolerated. The lands are extensive and broad, the civilisation prosperous and enlightened.

高宗大帝。克恭纘祖。潤色真宗。而於諸州各置景寺。仍崇阿羅本為鎮國大法主。法流十[16]道。國富元休。寺滿百城。家殷景福。

§11. The great emperor Gaozong (Kao-tsung) (r. 649–83 CE) piously followed the policy of his predecessors. A generous and elegant patron of the truth, he caused brilliant monasteries to be built in all the departments. He also raised Alouben (A-lo-pen) (<Syr. Rabban 'teacher'?) to the rank of Great Spiritual Lord for the protection of the state. The brilliant teaching spread through the ten [16] provinces and the kingdom enjoyed great prosperity. Monasteries occupied a hundred cities, and the people enjoyed brilliant happiness.

聖曆年。釋子用壯。騰口於東周。先天末。下士大笑。訕謗於西鎬。有若僧首羅含。大德及烈。並金方貴緒。物外高僧。共振玄網。俱維[17]絕紐

¹¹The text of this imperial decree has been independently preserved in the *T'ang (Tang) Hui-yao*. This version has been slightly amended to harmonise its contents with the current official name for Christianity, the 'Syrian brilliant teaching', *Ta-ch'in ching-chiao*. In the original version, the fourth sentence read 'The Persian bishop A-lo-pen has come to our great capital from afar with the teaching of the scriptures (*ching-chiao*)'.

¹²An interesting and daring passage which links the Han and T'ang (Tang) dynasties and unfavourably compares Taoism with Christianity. The Han dynasty, which had exalted the teachings of the Taoists, modelled itself on the fancied glories of the Chou dynasty, and its extinction in the second century ("the glory of the Chou dynasty departed") had resulted in three centuries of chaos in China, which were only ended with the establishment of the T'ang (Tang) dynasty. The author implies that the teachings of Lao Tzu were unable to prevent the collapse of the Han, and goes on to suggest that the founder of the T'ang (Tang) dynasty was favoured by a 'brilliant breeze' from the West; in other words that the present dynasty, which had restored peace and order to China, was under the patronage of the Christian God.

§12. In the Shengli (Sheng-li) years (698-99 CE) the Buddhists arrogantly criticised us in the Eastern Zhou (Chou) (i.e. Luoyang):¹³ at the end of Xiantian (Hsien-t'ien) year (712 CE) the Daoists (Taoists),¹⁴ puffed up with their own importance, attacked us bitterly in the Western Hao (i.e. Chang'an).¹⁵ But the chief monk Alohan (A-lo-han)¹⁶ and bishop Jilie (Chi-lieh),¹⁷ both noble men from the west, dedicated to spiritual values, came to our aid. They supported together the mystic cord and joined in tying [17] the broken knot.

玄宗至道皇帝。令寧國等五王親臨福宇建立壇場。法棟暫撓而更崇。道石時傾而復正。天寶初。令大將軍高力士送五聖寫真寺內安置。賜絹百[18]匹。奉慶睿圖。龍髯雖遠。弓劍可攀。日角舒光。天顏咫尺。

§13. The devout emperor Xuanzong (Hsuan-tsung) (712–56 CE) ordered the prince of Ningguo (Ning-kuo) and the four other princes to go in person to our blessed monastery to rebuild the altars and courts. The beam of the religion had been weak for a moment but was raised again; the stone of the Way had been thrown down for a time but now stood upright once more. At the beginning of Tianbao (T'ien-pao) (742 CE) he ordered Gao Lishi (Kao Lishih), the commander-in-chief, to send us portraits of the five emperors to hang in the monastery, and to present us with a hundred [18] rolls of silk. We received them with great respect, and admired the wise emperors' portraits. Though the emperor's beard was far away, we could touch his bow and sword: shining in the sun's rays, the divine faces were within arm's reach.

三載大秦國有僧佶和。瞻星向化。望日朝尊。詔僧羅含僧普論等一七人。與大德佶和。於興慶宮修功德。於[19]是天題寺榜。額戴龍書。寶裝璀璨。灼爍丹霞。睿扎宏空。騰凌激日。寵賚比南山峻極。沛澤與東海齊深。

§14. In the third year of Tianbao (T'ien-pao) (744 CE), the monk Jihe (Chi-ho) (Gabriel ?) arrived from Syria. Observing the stars, he travelled to this admirable land; following the sun, he came to do reverence to the emperor. The emperor decreed that the priests Alohan (A-lo-han) (Abraham ?), Pulun (Pu-lun) (Paul) and others, seven in all, along with bishop Jihe (Chi-ho), should offer prayers for the empire in the Xingqing (Hsing-ching) palace. [19] The emperor then composed a motto for the monastery, and its name-board displayed the imperial hand-writing. The precious ornament was like a gem or a kingfisher, and was bright with the scarlet glow of sunset clouds. All could see the wise emperor's words, which shone like the rising sun. His charity was higher than the southern mountain: his kindness was deeper than the eastern sea.

道無不可。所可可名。聖無不作。所作可述

§15. A wise teaching always wins through, and what it achieves we are right to name. A wise ruler never rests, and what he achieves we are right to record.

肅宗文明皇[20]帝。於靈武等五郡。重立景寺。元善資而福祚開。大慶臨而皇業建。

¹³Lo-yang. Reign of empress Wu (Chou dynasty), 690–705.

¹⁴Literally 'the inferior scholars'. A Taoist term of abuse for their opponents, here ironically turned against them.

¹⁵Ch'ang-an. Reign of Jui-tsung, 710–12.

¹⁶Perhaps 'Abraham', 'Abraham'.

¹⁷Perhaps 'Gabriel'.

§16. Suzong (Su-tsung) [756–62], the accomplished and prudent [20] emperor, rebuilt the brilliant monasteries in Lingwu (Ling-wu) and four other departments.¹⁸ As he generously supported us, heaven supported him, and confirmed him in his imperial heritage.

代宗文武皇帝。恢張聖運。從事無為。每於降誕之辰。錫天香以告成功。頒御饌以光景眾。且[21]乾以美利故能廣生。聖以體元故能亭毒。

§17. The accomplished and martial emperor Daizong (Tai-tsung) (*r.* 762–79) increased the empire's power and conducted the affairs of the realm smoothly. Always on his birthday he offered incense to celebrate the empire's good fortune, and gave a royal feast to honour the brilliant congregation. [21] Heaven gives long life to the good: the good emperor gives long life to the empire.

我建中聖神文武皇帝。披八政以黜陟幽明。闡九疇以惟新景命。化通玄理。祝無愧心。

§18. Today, in Jianzong (Chien-chung) (*r.* 780–3), our wise, divinely-favoured, accomplished and martial emperor strenuously pursues the eight great principles of government,¹⁹ degrading the undeserving and promoting the eminent. He thoroughly understands the nine categories of a ruler's duty, and has an unerring instinct for the reforms which he promotes. We can pray for him without any reservation.

至於方大而虛。專靜而恕。廣[22]慈救眾苦。善貸被群生者。我修行之大猷。汲引之階漸也。若使風雨時。天下靜。人能理。物能清。存能昌。歿能樂。念生響應。情發目誠者。我景力能事之功用也。

§19. Despite his elevated rank he remains humble. Despite the comfort of his position he is thoughtful and generous, [22] helping all who are in misfortune, and making just provision for all his subjects. Such has been the influence of our teachings, awakening virtue in all who hear them. That the winds and rains come in their seasons; that the empire is at peace; that men cheerfully obey their ruler and all creatures seek to master their weaknesses; that the living can flourish and the dying can face death with confidence; that men speak and act with sincerity, without disguising their true feelings: all this is due to the beneficial influence of our 'brilliant teaching'.

大施[23]主金紫光祿大夫。同朔方節度副使。試殿中監。賜紫袈裟僧伊斯。和而好惠。聞道勤行。遠自王舍之城。聿來中夏。術高三代。藝博十全。

§20. We acknowledge our great patron [23] the monk Yisi (I-ssu, i.e. Yazdbuzid) officer of the banqueting hall, deputy military governor of Shuo-fang, overseer of the examination hall, and companion of the order of the purple robe. Good-natured and virtuous, a zealous believer, he came from the royal city²⁰ all the way to China (Chin. Zhongxia / Tsung-hsia).

¹⁸Or 'in Wu-chun', the name of a town in the Ling-Wu district in modern Kansu province. Su-tsung marched through the Ling-Wu district during the campaign of 763 in which he recaptured Ch'ang-an from An Lu-shan's rebel army. His army contained a large number of Uighur mercenaries, many of whom (at this period) were East Syrian Christians. Interestingly, many of these mercenaries are said to have converted to Manichaeism shortly afterwards as the result of meeting Manichaean missionaries in the liberated capital.

¹⁹Te-tsung [779–805].

²⁰Probably Merv or Balkh.

He was more knowledgeable than the doctors of the Three Dynasties, and his manners were polished in every respect.

始效節於丹庭。乃策名於王^[24]帳。中書令汾陽郡王郭公子儀。初總戎於朔方也。肅宗俾之從邁。雖見親於臥內。不自異於行間。為公爪牙。作軍耳目。

§21. He first distinguished himself in the Red Hall, and his name was inscribed in the prince's ^[24] tent. When Duke Guo Ziyi (Kuo Tzu-i), secretary of state and prince of the Fanyang (Fan-yang) region, was first put in charge of military operations in Shuofang (Shuo-fang), Suzong (Su-tsung) ordered him to accompany the duke to his command. Though he enjoyed the privilege of access to the duke's sleeping-tent, he made no distinction between himself and others on the march. He was teeth and nails to the duke, and ears and eyes to the army.

能散祿賜。不積於家。獻臨恩之頗黎。布^[25]辭憩之金罽。或仍其舊寺。或重廣法堂。崇飾廊宇。如翬斯飛。更效景門。依仁施利。每歲集四寺僧徒。虔事精供。備諸五旬。饑者來而飯之。寒者來而衣之。病者療而^[26]起之。死者葬而安之。清節達姿。未聞斯美。白衣景士。今見其人。

§22. He gave away all the gifts and rewards he received, scorning to lay up ^[25] treasure on earth. He gave us his retirement present of crystal glasses, and decorated our halls with carpets of golden weave. He restored the old monasteries and doubled the size of the churches. He raised and adorned the roofs of the galleries, so that they appeared like flying pheasants. He used his wealth to support the 'brilliant teaching'. Every year he gathers the monks of the surrounding monasteries together, to hold services and make offerings for a period of fifty days. He invites the hungry to come, and he feeds them. He invites the cold to come, and he clothes them. He heals the sick, and ^[26] raises them up. He buries the dead, and lays them to rest. The Buddhists pride themselves on their purity, but their finest deeds cannot rival the merit of this white-robed priest of the 'brilliant teaching'.

願刻洪碑。以揚休烈。詞曰

§23. We wish to engrave a praise poem to celebrate these wonderful events. The words are:

真主無元。湛寂常然。權輿匠化。起地立天。

The true God is without origin, profound, unmoving, ever the same.
The universe is the work of his hands.
Through him the earth arose and heaven was framed.

分身出代。救度無邊。日昇暗^[27]滅。咸證真玄

One person of his Trinity appeared on earth.
Redemption and salvation knew no limit.
The sun rose and darkness ^[27] fled. All recognised a true mystery.

赫赫文皇。道冠前王。乘時撥亂。乾廓坤張。

The accomplished emperor far excelled his predecessors.²¹
 He crushed disorder beneath his feet.
 Heaven was widened and earth enlarged.

明明景教。言歸我唐。翻經建寺。存歿舟航。百福偕作。萬邦之康

Our brilliant truth then came to T'ang (Tang).
 Scriptures were translated and monasteries built.
 Both living and dead made the voyage of salvation.
 Happiness sprang up everywhere, and all regions found peace.

高宗纂祖。更築精宇。和宮敞朗。遍滿[28]中土。真道宣明。式封法主。人有樂
 康。物無災苦

Gaozong (Kao-tsung) honoured his ancestors, and rebuilt the pure mansions.
 Palaces of harmony shining far and wide filled [28] all China (Chin. Zhongtu / Ts'ung-tu).
 The path of truth was made known, the spiritual lord was appointed.
 Men knew joy and peace, and the land was free from pain and sorrow.

玄宗啟聖。克修真正。御榜揚輝。天書蔚映。皇圖璀璨。率土高敬。庶績咸熙
 。人賴其慶

Xuanzong (Hsuan-tsung) ruled justly, and strove always to realise truth and virtue.
 He sent us a text in his own handwriting, which shone and dazzled.
 He sent us imperial portraits, which glittered like gems.
 The whole land revered him.
 His conduct was a shining example, and his justice was praised by all.

肅宗來復。天威引[29]駕。聖日舒晶。祥風掃夜。祚歸皇室。祆氛永謝。止沸定
 塵。造我區夏

Suzong (Su-tsung) came to avenge him, [29] riding a majestic chariot.
 He rose like the sun and rekindled the light.
 A kind wind swept away the darkness.
 Discontent was stilled and faction muzzled.
 China recovered its former glory.

代宗孝義。德合天地。開貸生成。物資美利。香以報功。仁以作施。暘谷來威
 。月窟畢萃。

Tai-tsung was pious and just, blessed with more than human wisdom.
 He was open-handed, and men enjoyed the fruits of his liberality.
 He regularly burned incense to heaven, and always looked kindly on men.
 From the rising sun to the setting moon crowds came to admire his might.

建[30]中統極。聿修明德。武肅四溟。文清萬域。燭臨人隱。鏡觀物色。六合昭
 蘇。百蠻取則。

²¹T'ai-tsung.

The present emperor (Jianzong / Ch'ien-chung) reigns widely and practises virtue.
 The four seas hold him in awe, and all lands benefit from his culture.
 No secrets are hidden from him, and he sees all the affairs of men.
 He enlightens the whole world; even the barbarians model themselves on him.

道惟廣兮。應惟密強。名言兮演三一主能作兮臣能述。 建豐碑兮頌元吉

How profound is our faith, how widespread its influence!
 How difficult to find a name for our glorious Trinity!
 Our Lord is almighty: his servants must relate his acts.
 We therefore raise this great tablet to praise GOD who has so blessed us.

[31] 大唐建中二年歲在作噩太蔭月七日大耀森文曰建立時法主僧寧恕知東方之
 景眾也

[31] §24. Set up in the Great T'ang (Tang), on the seventh day of the *t'ai-tsou* month of the second year of Jianzong (Chien-chung) (24 February 781). The year-star was in Zuō'è (tso-o), and the day was the great day of the Sabbath (Chin. Yàosēnwén / Yao-sen-wen) (<Pe. *yakšambah*). Our spiritual director the monk Ningshu (Ning-shu)²² was presiding over the brilliant congregations (i.e. the Church) of the East.²³

{Syr.} [S2] *bywmy 'b' d'bht' mry hnnyšw' qtwlyq' ptryrkys*

*In the days of the father of fathers Mar Hnanisho^c catholicus and patriarch.*²⁴

[32] 朝議郎前行台州司士參軍呂秀巖書

§24a. Lu Xiuyan (Lu Hsiu-yen), secretary of state, formerly military superintendent in Taizhou (T'ai chou), was the writer.

[At the foot of the front face of the stone below the Chinese inscription; columns read from left to right]

{Syr.} [S3] *bšnt 'lp wtš'yn wtr̄tyn* [S4] *dyw̄ny' mry yzdbwzyd qšyš'* [S5] *wkwr'pysqwp' dkwmd'n* [S6] *mdynt' mlkwt' br nyh* [S7] *npš' mylys qšyš' dmn* [S8] *blh mdynt' dthwrstn* [S9] *'qym lwh' hn' dk'p'* [S10] *dktybn bh mdrnwth* [S11] *dprwqn wqrwzwhwn* [S12] *d'bhyn dlwt mlk'* [S13] *dzjny'* [33] 僧靈寶 [S14] *'d'm mšmšn' br* [S15] *yzdbwzyd kwr'pysqwp'*

In the year 1092 of the Greeks [AD 781] Mar Yazdbuzid, priest and country-bishop of Khumdan, the capital of the kingdom, son of the late priest Milis, from the city of Balkh in

²²Evidently the Chinese name of the East Syrian patriarch Hnanisho^c II (773–80). See the following sentence in Syriac.

²³The Church of the East called its members 'easterners', distinguishing them from the 'western' Christians of the Roman empire. The 'brilliant congregations of the East' refers not only to the East Syrian communities in China itself but also to Church of the East generally, which at this period had over a hundred dioceses in Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Central Asia, India, China, and Tibet.

²⁴*B'yawmi aba d'abahatha Mar Hnanisho^c qatoliqa patrirqis*. A standard East Syrian dating formula with numerous parallels in other Syriac documents, naming the reigning patriarch. In fact the patriarch Hnanisho^c II (776–80) died early in 780, and his successor Timothy I (780–823), according to the *Chronography* of Eliya of Nisibis, was consecrated in Baghdad on Sunday 7 May 780. The East Syrian Church in China was evidently still unaware of these events in February 781. The name Hnanisho^c means 'Grace of Jesus'.

*Tocharistan, set up this tablet of stone. Written on it are the law of our Saviour and the preaching of our fathers to the rulers of the Chinese.*²⁵ Monk Ling-pao. *Adam, deacon, son of the country-bishop Yazdbuzid.*²⁶

[S16] *mrs̄gys qšyš* [S17] *wkwr'pysqwp'*
*Mar Sargis priest and country-bishop.*²⁷

[34] 檢校建立碑僧 [35] 行通

24b. Supervisor of the erection of the tablet: the monk Hsing-tung.

{Syr.} [S17] *sbrnyšw' qšyš'*
*Sabranisho^c, priest.*²⁸

[36] 助檢校試太常 [37] 卿賜紫袈裟寺 [37] 主僧業利

24c. Assistant supervisor: the monk Yeh-li, chief of the monastery, director of the sacrificial court, honoured with the purple robe.

{Syr.} [S18] *gbryl qšyš' w'rkdyqwn* [S19] *wrš 'dt' dkwmd'n* [S20] *wdsrg*
*Gabriel, priest and archdeacon and head of the church of Khumdan and Sarag.*²⁹

[On the left side of the stone; top row]

{Syr.} [S21] *mry ywhnn 'pysqwp'*
*Mar Yohannan, bishop*³⁰

[39] 大德曜輪
Bishop Yàolún (Yao-lun)

[S24] *'yshq qšyš'*
*Ishaq, priest*³¹

[40] 僧日進
Monk Rìjìn (Jih-chin)

[S25] *yw'yl qšyš'*
Joel, priest

[41] 僧遙越
Monk Yáoyuè (Yao-yueh)

[S25] *mykyl qšyš'*
*Mikha'il, priest*³²

[42] 僧廣慶
Monk Guǎngqìng (Kuang-ch'ing)

[S26] *gyw'rgys qšyš'*

[43] 僧和吉

²⁵*B'shanat alap w'tesh^cin w'tartin d'Yawnaye; Mar Yazdbuzid qshisha w'kurapisqupa d'Kumdan mdinath malkutha, bar nih napsha Milis qshisha d'men Balkh mdintha d'Takhurstan, aqim lukha hana d'kifa. D'ktiban beh mdabranutheh d'paruqan w'karuzuthun d'abahaïn d'lwat malke d'Sinaye.* Until recently the East and West Syrian churches have normally used a dating system counting from 311 BC, the date of the founding of the Greek Seleucid kingdom in the Middle East by one of the generals of Alexander the Great. This system is variously known as the 'Seleucid era', the 'era of the Greeks', or the 'era of Alexander'.

²⁶*Adam mshamshana bar Yazdbuzid kurapisqupa.*

²⁷*Mar Sargis qshisha w'kurapisqupa.*

²⁸The name means 'Jesus is our hope'.

²⁹*Gabriel qshisha w'arkdiqun w'rish 'idta d'Khumdan w'd'Sarag.* 'Khumdan' is certainly to be identified with Ch'ang-an (paragraph 24a) and 'Sarag' very probably with Lo-yang, the two northern capitals of China during the T'ang (Tang) dynasty.

³⁰The Syriac form of the biblical name John.

³¹The Syriac form of the biblical name Isaac.

³²The Syriac form of the biblical name Michael.

*Giwargis, priest*³³

[S27] mhddgwšnsp qšyš'

*Mahadad Gushnasap, priest*³⁴

[S28] mšyh'dd qšyš'

*Mshihadad, priest*³⁵

[S29] 'prym qšyš'

Ephrem, priest

[S30] 'by qšyš'

Abi, priest

[S31] dwyd qšyš'

*Dawid, priest*³⁶

[S32] mws' qšyš'

Mushe, priest

[On the left side of the stone; second row]

[S33] bkws qšyš' yhydy'

*Bakos, priest, monk*³⁷

[S34] 'ly' qšyš' yhydy'

*Eliya, priest, monk*³⁸

[S35] mws' qšyš' wyhydy'

*Mushe, priest, monk*³⁹

[S36] 'bdyšw' qšyš' wyhydy'

*Abdisho^c, priest, monk*⁴⁰

[S37] šm'wn qšyš' dqbr'

*Shem^con, priest of the sepulchre*⁴¹

[S38] ywḥnys mšmšn' wyd'

*Iwanis, deacon and secretary*⁴²

[On the left side of the stone; third row]

[S39] 'hrwn

*Ahron*⁴³

[S40] pṭrws

*Patros*⁴⁴

[S41] 'ywb

*Iyyub*⁴⁵

[S42] lwq'

Monk Héjī (Ho-chi)

[44] 僧惠明

Monk Huīmíng (Hui-míng)

[45] 僧寶達

Monk Bǎodà (Pao-ta)

[46] 僧拂林

Monk Fúlín (Fu-lin)

[47] 僧福壽

Monk Fúshòu (Fu-shou)

[48] 僧崇敬

Monk Ch'ung-ching (Ch'ung-ching)

[49] 僧延和

Monk Yánhé (Yen-ho)

[50] 僧惠通

Monk Huìtōng (Hui-t'ung)

[51] 僧乾祐

Monk Gānyòu (Ch'ien-yu)

[52] 僧元一

Monk Yuányī (Yuan-i)

[53] 僧敬德

Monk Jìngdé (Ching-te)

[54] 僧利見

³³The Syriac form of the name George, the name of a famous Christian martyr.

³⁴One of the few monks with a Persian name, Gushnasap. The Syriac name Mahadad seems to be a shortened form of Mshihadad, 'Christ has given'.

³⁵The name means 'Christ has given'.

³⁶The Syriac form of the biblical name David.

³⁷The Syriac form of the name Bacchus, a famous fourth-century Christian martyr.

³⁸The Syriac form of the biblical name Elijah.

³⁹The Syriac form of the biblical name Moses.

⁴⁰The name means 'Servant of Jesus'.

⁴¹The Syriac form of the biblical name Simon.

⁴²A variant Syriac form of Yohannan, the biblical name John.

⁴³The Syriac form of the biblical name Aaron.

⁴⁴The Syriac form of the biblical name Peter.

⁴⁵The Syriac form of the biblical name Job.

*Luqa*⁴⁶

[S43] mty

*Mattai*⁴⁷

[S44] ywḥnn

Yohannan

[S45] yšw‘mh

*Isho^cammeh*⁴⁸

[S46] ywḥnn

Yohannan

[S47] sbryšw‘

*Sabrisho*⁴⁹

[S48] yšw‘dd

*Isho^cdad*⁵⁰

[S49] lwk’

Luqa

[S50] qwstntynws

*Qustantinos*⁵¹

[S51] nwḥ

*Nuh*⁵²

Monk Lijian (Li-chien)

[55] 僧明泰

Monk Mingtai (Ming-t'ai)

[56] 僧玄真

Monk Xuánzhēn (Hsuan-chen)

[57] 僧仁惠

Monk Rénhuì (Jen-hui)

[58] 僧曜源

Monk Yàoyuán (Yao-yuan)

[59] 僧昭德

Monk Zhāodé (Chao-te)

[60] 僧文明

Monk Wénmíng (Wen-ming)

[61] 僧文貞

Monk Wénzhēn (Wen-cheng)

[62] 僧居信

Monk Jūxìn (Chu-hsin)

[63] 僧來威

Monk Láiwēi (Lai-wei)

[On the left side of the stone; fourth row]

[S52] 'yzdsp's

*Izadsafas*⁵³

[S53] ywḥnn

Yohannan

[S54] 'nwsc

*Anush*⁵⁴

[S55] mrsrgys

*Mar Sargis*⁵⁵

[S56] 'yshq

*Ishaq*⁵⁶

[S57] ywḥnn

Yohannan

mrsrgys

Mar Sargis

[S59] pwsy

Pusai

[S60] šm'wn

[64] 僧敬真

Monk Jìngzhēn (Ching-chen)

[65] 僧還淳

Monk Huánchún (Huan-shun)

[66] 僧靈壽

Monk Língshòu (Ling-shou)

[67] 僧靈德

Monk Língdé (Ling-te)

[68] 僧英德

Monk Yīngdé (Ying-te)

[69] 僧沖和

Monk Chōnghé (Chung-ho)

[70] 僧凝虛

Monk Níngxū (Ying-hsu)

[71] 僧普濟

Monk Pǔjì (P'u-chi)

[72] 僧聞順

⁴⁶The Syriac form of the biblical name Luke.⁴⁷The Syriac form of the biblical name Matthew.⁴⁸The name means 'Jesus is with him'.⁴⁹The name means 'Jesus is hope'.⁵⁰The name means 'Jesus has given'.⁵¹The Syriac form of Constantine, the name of the first Christian Roman emperor.⁵²The Syriac form of the biblical name Noah.⁵³One of the few monks with a Persian name.⁵⁴The Syriac form of the biblical name Enos.⁵⁵The Syriac form of the Roman name Sergius. Sergius was a famous fourth-century Christian martyr.⁵⁶The Syriac form of the biblical name Isaac.

Shem^con
[S61] 'yshq
Ishaq
[S62] ywḥnn
Yohannan

Monk Wénshùn (Wen-shun)
[73] 僧光濟
Monk Guāngjì (Kuang-chi)
[74] 僧守一
Monk Shǒuyī (Shou-i)

[On the right side of the stone; top row]

[S63] y'qwb qšyš'
Ya^cqob, priest

[S64] mrsrgys qšyš' wkw'r'pysqwp' šy'ngtsw'
Mar Sargis, priest and country-bishop of Shiangtsua⁵⁷

[S65] gygwy qšyš' w'rkdyqwn dkwmd'n wmqryn'
Gigoī, priest and archdeacon of Khumdan, and teacher

[S66] pwlws qšyš'
Polos, priest⁵⁸

[S67] šmšn qšyš'
Shem^con, priest

[S68] 'dm qšyš'
Adam, priest

[S69] 'ly' qšyš'
Eliya, priest

[S70] 'yshq qšyš'
Ishaq, priest

[S71] ywḥnn qšyš'
Yohannan, priest

[S72] ywḥnn qšyš'
Yohannan, priest

[S73] šm'wn qšyš' wsb'
Shem' on, priest and elder

[75] 老宿耶俱摩

Yējùmó (Yeh-chu-mo), elder

[76] 僧景通

Monk Jǐngtōng (Ching-t'ung)

[77] 僧玄覽

Monk Xuánlǎn (Hsuan-lan)

[78] 僧寶靈

Monk Bǎolíng (Pao-ling)

[79] 僧審慎

Monk Shěnshèn (Shen-shen)

[80] 僧法源

Monk Fǎyuán (Fa-yuan)

[81] 僧立本

Monk Lìběn (Li-pen)

[82] 僧和明

Monk Hémíng (Ho-ming)

[83] 僧光正

Monk Guāngzhèng (Kuang-cheng)

[84] 僧內澄

Monk Nèichéng (Nei-ch'eng)

[On the right side of the stone; second row]

[S74] y'qwb qnky'
Ya^cqob, sacristan⁵⁹

[S75] 'bdyšw'
Abdisho⁶⁰

[S76] yšw'dd
Isho^cdad

[S77] y'qwb
Ya^cqob

[S78] ywḥnn {Chin.}
Yohannan

[S79] šwbḥ' lmrn

[85] 僧崇德

Monk Chóngdé (Ch'ung-te)

[86] 僧太和

Monk Tàihé (T'ai-ho)

[87] 僧景福

Monk Jǐngfú (Ching-fu)

[88] 僧和光

Monk Héguāng (Ho-kuang)

[89] 僧至德

Monk Zhìdé (Chih-te)

[90] 僧奉真

⁵⁷*Mar Sargis qshisha w'kurapisqupa Shiangtsua*. The word *Shiangtsua* has not been satisfactorily explained. It seems to be a transliteration of two Chinese characters, the first of which is almost certainly *shang*, 'upper'. It perhaps signifies *shangchu*, 'the upper region', possibly the region between Tun-huang and Ch'ang-an.

⁵⁸The Syriac form of the biblical name Paul.

⁵⁹*Ya^cqob qankaya*. The Syriac form of the biblical name Jacob.

⁶⁰The name means 'Servant of Jesus'.

<i>Shubhalmaran</i> ⁶¹	Monk Fèngzhēn (Feng-chen)
[S80] mrsrgys	[91] 僧元宗
<i>Mar Sargis</i>	Monk Yuánzōng (Yuan-tsung)
[S81] šm'wn	[92] 僧利用
<i>Shem^con</i>	Monk Lìyòng (Li-yung)
[S82] 'prym	[93] 僧玄德
<i>Ephrem</i>	Monk Xuándé (Hsuan-te)
[S83] zkry'	[94] 僧義濟
<i>Zakarya</i> ⁶²	Monk Yìjì (I-chi)
[S84] kwrykws	[95] 僧志堅
<i>Quriaqos</i> ⁶³	Monk Zhìjiān (Chih-chien)
[S85] bkws	[96] 僧保國
<i>Bakos</i> ⁶⁴	Monk Bǎoguó (Pao-kuo)
[S86] 'mnw'yl	[97] 僧明一
<i>Emmanuel</i>	Monk Míngyī (Ming-i)

[On the right side of the stone; third row]

[S87] gbry'yl	[98] 僧廣德
<i>Gabriel</i>	Monk Guǎngdé (Kuang-te)
[S88] ywḥnn	
<i>Yohannan</i>	
[S89] šlymwn	[99] 僧去甚
<i>Shlemun</i> ⁶⁵	Monk Ch'u-shen
<i>Ishaq</i>	
[S91] ywḥnn	[100] 僧德建
<i>Yohannan</i>	Monk Déjiàn (Te-chien)

[Through and below the third and fourth rows of names on the left side a modern inscription has been engraved in 47 Chinese characters as follows:]

後一千七十九年咸豐己未武林韓泰華來觀幸字畫完整重造碑亭覆焉惜故友吳子苾方伯不及同遊也為悵然久之

One thousand and seventy-nine years later, in Jiwei (chi-wei) of Xianfeng (*Hsien-feng*) (1859 CE), Han Taihua (Han T'ai-hua) of Wulin (Wu-lin, i.e. Hang-chou) came to see. Fortunately the characters were perfect and complete. He rebuilt the pavilion of the monument to protect it. Sadly, his old friend the Treasurer Wu Zibi (Wu Tzu-pi) did not come with him. Long will he regret it.⁶⁶

⁶¹The name means 'Praise Our Lord'.

⁶²The Syriac form of the biblical name Zacharias.

⁶³The Syriac form of the name Cyriacus.

⁶⁴The Syriac form of the Roman name Bacchus. Bacchus was a famous fourth-century Christian martyr.

⁶⁵The Syriac form of the biblical name Solomon.

⁶⁶A regrettable act of vandalism, which has erased several of the Syriac and Chinese names on this part of the Sian Tablet. Fortunately the names were accurately copied in the seventeenth century by the Jesuits.