

# NESTORIAN CROSSES AND NESTORIAN CHRISTIANS IN CHINA UNDER THE MONGOLS

*A lecture delivered on December 11, 1961*

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## I. THE NIXON COLLECTION

The purpose of this paper is to introduce, to those who may be unfamiliar with it, the *F. A. Nixon Collection of Nestorian Bronze Crosses* from the Sino-Mongolian Borderland recently presented by the Hon. R. C. Lee and Mr. J. S. Lee to the Museum of the University of Hong Kong, in relation to the great movement which the Crosses represent.

Soon after the attention of scholars was called by the Rev. P. M. Scott<sup>1</sup> to these small bronze objects, fourteen of which he had discovered in the shop of a Chinese curio dealer in Pao-t'ou 包頭 near the great northern loop of the Yellow River, the former home of the Christian Ongut tribe, Mr. Nixon, then Postal Commissioner stationed at Peking, began to make his collection, which by the time he left China in 1949 had grown to nearly 1,000 pieces, the largest collection of its kind in the world, and as far as we know, the only one of the collections then made which has remained intact, and therefore is at the present time unique. The collection includes some crosses given by Fr. Mostaert 'which shepherds had picked up in the sand'.

From the beginning opinion among scholars was divided as to the original purpose of these bronze pendants,<sup>2</sup> of which the majority were shaped like Greek crosses; but Pelliot among others came out strongly in favour of their Christian origin,<sup>3</sup> expressing a view which now predominates. Especially interesting was the opinion of Fr. A. Mostaert, a Belgium missionary and well-known authority on the Mongols, stationed at Borobalgasoun on the

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<sup>1</sup> Discovered August 1929. Described in *The Mission Field*, Feb. 1930, and in *The Chinese Recorder*, Feb. and Nov. 1930.

<sup>2</sup> See letters to Mr. Nixon, now in the University of Hong Kong Museum.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, t. VII, 1931, P. Pelliot: 'Sceaux-Amulettes de Bronze avec Croix et Colombes'.

southern border of the Ordos region within the loop of the Yellow River, as Pao-t'ou was on its northern border. Fr. Mostaert, it appears, was already familiar with the Crosses and he gave some valuable information from his personal observations, as to the use to which they were put by the Mongols of his day:

The Mongols constantly dig them up from old graves and elsewhere; they know nothing about their history, but wear them on their girdles, especially the women. When they leave home to take their sheep to graze, they close their doors, and seal them with mud or clay, in the same way as other people use ordinary seals.<sup>4</sup>

In 1932 during his residence in Tsinan, Shantung, Mr. Nixon committed his collection to the late Dr. J. Mellon Menzies of Shang dynasty fame, then professor of Chinese Archaeology at Cheeloo University, for study and classification. The result was embodied in a monograph entitled *Chinese Nestorian Bronze Crosses* which was published with the help of a grant from the Harvard-Yenching Institute in December 1934 as a double number of the Cheeloo University Bulletin 齊大季刊, 第三、五合期, 青銅十字專號. The volume consists of impressions in red (somewhat in the manner of Chinese rubbings, but not true rubbings) of each of the crosses and seals in the collection, to the number of 979, followed by tables giving the number, weight, measurements and description of each cross, and where possible the provenance of each, the whole being classified in certain clearly defined groups, together with two essays in Chinese: 'Christianity in China in the time of Marco Polo' by Dr. Menzies; 'The Swastika Cross Badges Unearthed in Sui Yüan Province, China' by Professor P. Y. Saeki; and a short Introduction in Chinese on the *Nixon Collection* by Dr. Menzies. This volume has long been out of print, and Cheeloo University itself has been disbanded. The Institute of Oriental Studies at the University of Hong Kong hopes, when funds are available, to publish a complete set of photographs and rubbings of the whole collection with Dr. Menzies' tables, classification and enumeration.

Dr. Menzies classified the 'crosses', which measure from 1½ to 3¼ ins. across, first according to *shape* into four main groups,

<sup>4</sup> Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550*, London, S.P.C.K., 1930, p. 92; Saeki, *Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, Tokyo, 2nd ed., 1951, p. 423; Menzies, *Chinese Nestorian Bronze Crosses*, Cheeloo University Bulletin, 1934, pp. 92-3.



*a*



*b*



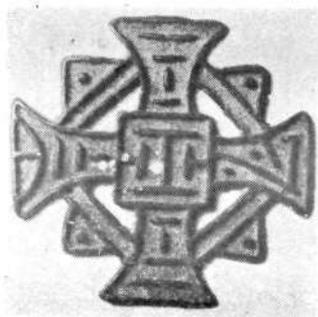
*c*



*d*



*e*



*f*



a



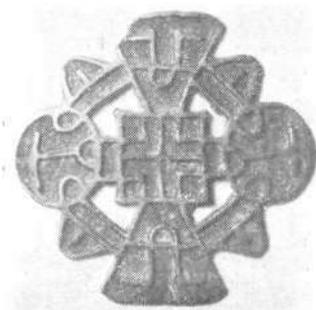
b



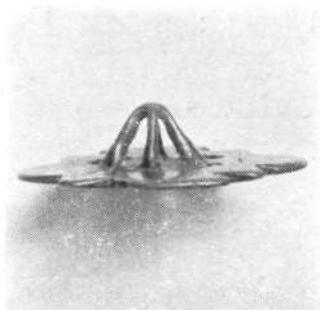
c



d



e



f (Side view of e)



*a*



*b*



*c*



*d*



*Rubbing of b  
(actual size)*



a



b



c



d



*Rubbings of c and d  
(actual size)*

each of which was further subdivided into several types, making in all nineteen types. He then arranged them within each group and type according to the central *design* at the crossing of the arms (where this was applicable), of which he differentiated eight types. This still seems to be the best mode of classification.

The *Four Main Groups* are: I, Cruciform with flat ends (Pl. I); II, Cruciform with circular ends (Pl. II); III, Bird-shaped (Pl. III); IV, Geometrical and Miscellaneous (Pl. IV).

The *Types* into which the Four Groups are subdivided are as follows: the two Cruciform Groups (I and II) are subdivided according to the increasing complexity at the centre—Type 1 is a simple cross (Pl. I, Fig. a and Pl. II, Fig. a); Type 2 has four petals radiating from the centre (Pl. I, Fig. b); Type 3 has four single bands connecting the arms of the cross diagonally (Pl. I, Fig. c and Pl. II, Fig. b); Type 4 has four petals radiating from the four diagonal bands (Pl. I, Fig. d and Pl. II, Fig. c); Types 5 and 6 repeat Types 3 and 4, but with double instead of single bands (Pl. I, Figs. e and f, and Pl. II, Figs. d and e).

The Bird-shaped Group (Group III) is divided into five Types: Type 1 consists of those in which a bird-form or forms is combined with a cross or part of a cross (Pl. III, Fig. a); Types 2 and 3 consist of a single bird, facing to the left or to the right (Pl. III, Fig. b); Type 4 consists of a bird with two heads (Pl. III, Fig. c); and Type 5 consists of two birds joined together (Pl. III, Fig. d).

The Geometrical and Miscellaneous Group includes many forms, which in general can be arranged under four types: Star-shaped types and Rosettes (Pl. IV, Fig. a); Circular Types (Pl. IV, Fig. b); Square or Oblong Types (Pl. IV, Fig. c); and Miscellaneous, as the *p'i-p'a* (mandoline) shape shown on Pl. IV, Fig. d. The Star-shaped types and Rosettes may have been derived from the enlargement of the petals between the arms of the cross. But there is nothing in the shape of the Circular and Square types to indicate a Christian origin; still less in the Miscellaneous types, such as the *p'i-p'a*, which appear to be ordinary Mongol seals, known to curio dealers as *Yüan-ya* 元押.

The differentiation according to eight types of *Design* at the centre, proposed by Dr. Menzies, is as follows: Types 1 and 2,

a swastika, turning to the left or to the right; Type 3, a simple cross drawn vertically; Type 4, a simple cross drawn diagonally; Type 5, a figure similar to a Roman capital I; Type 6, a solid circle or dot; Type 7, a hollow circle; Type 8, Miscellaneous. No attempt has been made to illustrate all of these on the plates.

When the nineteen types according to shape are combined with the eight types according to design, a total of 152 well-defined types is given. But within this total an infinite variety of individual differences is possible; in the present collection not more than one pair of duplicates has been identified as coming from the same mould (No. 463 and the sixth unnumbered seal). It would seem therefore that duplication has been purposely avoided, perhaps for security reasons.

Of the 979 pieces in the Collection about three fifths are cruciform in shape, about one fifth are bird-shaped, some of which, a single bird with spread wings, may suggest a cruciform outline, while the bird itself is also a Christian symbol.

Of the central patterns the greater number are the swastika, whether turning to the left or to the right, a symbol adopted by the Buddhists, but being of older origin, and used also in such Christian monuments as the Nestorian Tablet of Sianfu (A.D. 781). Next in number comes the cross, whether placed vertically or diagonally. Attempts to read Greek letters in the other linear designs have not succeeded.

The backs of the crosses are flat, with a strong loop (or two loops crossing each other) fixed for attaching a leather thong for suspension (Pl. II, Fig. f). Some of these are worn through, as though carried for a long time on the person by a horseman.

The designs are in high relief, too deep for an ordinary seal, but admirable for impressing on a slab of mud.

## II. THE NESTORIAN CHURCH

We may now ask how it came about that these bronze crosses of Mongolian workmanship and of Christian origin became buried in the sands of the Ordos region beyond the memory of living man. We must remember that in the beginning Christianity not only spread westwards from Palestine into Europe, but that it moved eastwards at the same time through Syria to Persia and India. According to ancient Christian tradition St. Matthew and St. Thomas evangelized the East as St. Peter and St. Paul

evangelized the West. To this day there are Churches of St. Thomas on the Malabar coast of India, claiming the Apostle Thomas as their founder. Whether or not the evidence is sufficient for this claim, it certainly indicates a very ancient date for the origin of these Churches of the East.

As the branch of the Church that moved westwards into Europe wrote its Scriptures in colloquial Greek—the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire, so the branch of the Church that moved eastwards first with Antioch then Edessa as its centre, used Syriac as its common language; it was at Edessa that its Scriptures were translated into Syriac, and it was at Edessa that its scholarship developed and a School of Theology was founded. To this day Syriac is the liturgical language of the ancient Churches of South India.

During the fourth century a Theological controversy arose in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire concerning the manner in which the Divine and the Human natures were related in Jesus Christ. The leadership of the thought of the Church at the time was with the Church of Alexandria in Egypt, where great emphasis was laid upon the Divine nature of Christ. In the province of Syria the Christian leaders feared lest in the current trend of thought the Humanity of Jesus should not be sufficiently recognized. A presbyter in the Church at Antioch, Nestorius, who was soon afterwards made Patriarch of Constantinople—the highest position in the Eastern Church—began to preach the doctrine of two complete natures—the Human and the Divine—existing side by side in the person of Jesus Christ. This doctrine which became known as ‘Nestorianism’ was rejected by an irregular Council of the Church held at Ephesus in A.D. 431, and Nestorius was deposed and driven into exile. His followers were persecuted and fled eastwards, first to Edessa ‘the headquarters of Syrian Christianity’,<sup>5</sup> beyond the Euphrates, then across the frontier to Nisibis in Persia, where the scholars gathered and where a Theological School ‘essentially Nestorian in character’<sup>6</sup> was established. The Nestorian doctrine, partly perhaps because Persia was at enmity with Rome, found favour with the Persian Churches.

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<sup>5</sup> Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, T. & T. Clark, 1908, p. 461.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 480.

In A.D. 489 the Theological School at Edessa was closed by the Roman Emperor Zeno. In A.D. 496 the Nestorian Catholicos (or Archbishop) of Nisibis was made 'Patriarch of the East' with his seat at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of Persia on the Tigris, and the Persian Churches with their own Patriarch were henceforth independent of the Patriarch of Antioch.

It is doubtful how far the split was due to theological differences, and how far to patriotic motives. Although the name 'Nestorian' is commonly applied by others to this ancient independent Syro-Persian Church, it is not the name by which they describe themselves. And in fact they were probably little conscious of the theological differences indicated by the name. They were conscious rather of being a Church outside the bounds of the Roman Empire; their Patriarch was the 'Patriarch of the Christians of the East', and they called themselves the 'Church of the Chaldees'. Some still call them the Chaldaean Church. But this name has now become attached to a section of them that has become incorporated in the Church of Rome. Some call them the Assyrian Church, and this perhaps is the name least liable to cause confusion. Their centre was in fact, and is, the mountainous country of Kurdistan, east of Mosul (the ancient Nineveh) and of Arbela, where Alexander defeated Darius and commenced the conquest of Persia (331 B.C.). The sturdy peasants, who under the Persian Empire after an initial acceptance, endured a period of bitter persecution, and who maintained their primitive faith and life derived from the early days, are in all probability the descendants of the ancient Assyrians.

After the conquest of Persia by the Moslem Arabs, the seat of the Patriarch was moved in A.D. 762 to Bagdad the new capital, at that time 'a centre of learning and science' where at first they

lived on good terms with the Mussulman despot . . . During the next five hundred years the Nestorian Church was allowed to go on its own way, sometimes with kindly recognition from liberal caliphs, sometimes harassed by harsh tyrants, but still all the time a recognized institution within the territory of Islam.<sup>7</sup>

With the Mongol invasion Hulugu, grandson of Genghis, took Bagdad in A.D. 1258 and put an end to the Eastern Caliphate.

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<sup>7</sup> Adeney, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

He himself was the son of a Christian mother and he had a Christian wife, both from the Kerait tribe in north-eastern Mongolia, whose king had been converted by Nestorian missionaries in A.D. 1007. The era of communication between the Mongol Khans and the Popes and Princes of Europe commenced.

At the end of the 14th century Bagdad was sacked by Tamerlane, as also were Aleppo and Damascus. 'He savagely attacked the Syrian Christians . . . many of whom fled to the inaccessible mountains of Kurdistan, where they have lingered to the present day'. . . . 'It was the break-up of the ancient Syrian Church'.<sup>8</sup> About which Harnack writes :

The Syro-Persian Church deserves our unqualified sympathy. It was the only large Church which never enjoyed the official protection of the state. It maintained the traditions of Antiochene exegesis, it translated the works of Christian antiquity into Syriac with great assiduity . . . It also assimilated Greek philosophy and science which it transmitted to the Arabians. At the present day it is crushed, impoverished, and down-trodden, but it can face its downfall with the consciousness that it has not lived in vain, but upon the contrary that it has filled a real place in the history of civilization.<sup>9</sup>

Claudius Rich visited the remnants of this Church in the mountains north-east of Mosul in 1820, including the 4th century Convent of Rabban Hormuz in its rocky gorge, and left a graphic description of the austere life and primitive worship of the dusky monks pursuing their manual labour in the remote solitude.<sup>10</sup>

Henry Layard made a more extended visit to the same region a few years after the great massacre of the Assyrian Christians in 1842 by a fanatical Turkish Bey, when the threat of a second attack was already impending. He saw the ruined homes and churches, and the bleached bones still lying at one of the worst scenes of massacre; and he attended the simple worship and sacrament of the people a few days before a second indiscriminate massacre took place. He described with approbation the 'unadorned and imageless walls', 'the simple and primitive rites', 'the hospitality and simple manners of the priests'

<sup>8</sup> Adency, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

<sup>9</sup> Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, Vol. 2, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> C. R. Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, London, 1836.

working with their hands in the well-kept vineyards, the cherished penmanship and the care of ancient manuscripts reminiscent of 'the knowledge and zeal, which once so eminently distinguished the Chaldaean priesthood'.<sup>11</sup>

This is the Church which evangelized the greater part of Asia during the ancient and mediaeval periods, truly it has been called 'a Church on Fire', and 'the Great Missionary Church of Asia'.<sup>12</sup> But that the fruit of its labours are no longer manifest is because no Church has suffered martyrdom as this Church has; it has become the great martyred Church of the world.

### III. THE NESTORIAN CHRISTIANS OF THE ORDOS REGION

The story of the Nestorian missionary movement before the Mongols conquered Central Asia and established the Yüan Dynasty in China (A.D. 1260 to 1368) can be pieced together with difficulty from scattered references in the Syriac records;<sup>13</sup> but during the Mongol domination vivid descriptions of their activities have been left to us in the pages of the Mediaeval travellers from Europe to the courts of the Mongol Khans. These can be divided into two groups: Franciscan Friars and travelling merchants.

It was the time of the Crusades, and the great widening of men's horizons that these brought about. The enlightened policy of the Arabs had been followed by the restrictive measures of the Turks, now converted to Islam. Europe was stirred by the danger. The astonishing success of the First Crusade (1096-1104) was followed by the failures of the Second (1146-1187), and Third (1189-1192). The Fourth Crusade was diverted against Constantinople (1200-1205); shortly after, the Mongols appearing from the ends of the earth ravaged Armenia, and crossing the Caucasus, penetrated into Southern Russia in 1232. The great invasion followed in 1238—Russia, Poland, Hungary. At the

<sup>11</sup> A. H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, London, Murray, 1849.

<sup>12</sup> Stewart, *The Nestorian Missionary Enterprise*, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> These have been collected by Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, Rome, 1728 (4 vols.). See also Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East*, Manchester Univ. Press 1925, and Bull. of John Rylands Library, July 1925.

battle of Lignitz (1241) the knights of Europe were mown down. Europe lay helpless before the invaders, when the Great Khan Ogotai suddenly died, and the Mongol princes hastened back to be present at the grand assembly in Mongolia for the election of a successor. Europe was saved. But meantime through travelling merchants and friars contacts with the Mongols had been established in the Near East and, no doubt as a result of the Nestorian missions, and the conversion of the king of the Keraits 克烈部 in 1007, rumours grew of the rise of a great Christian Potentate in Central Asia called 'Prester John'. Availing himself of the respite afforded by the withdrawal of the Mongols, the Pope conceived the idea of sending emissaries to the Mongol rulers, on the one hand to avert the threatened Mongol invasion by appealing to the reports of their common faith, and on the other to enlist their aid against the Moslem Turks in the Holy Land.

The emissary chosen by the Pope was Friar John of Pian de Carpine (Plano Carpini) who was despatched with a letter to the Mongol rulers in A.D. 1245. Proceeding with his companion Friar Benedict the Pole through South Russia and Central Asia, he arrived at the camp of Kuyuk Khan in northern Mongolia at the time of his election by the great assembly, and was received in audience by him. Friar John returned to Europe in 1247, and met King Louis IX of France in Paris preparing for the Fifth Crusade (1248-1254). He has left a short but valuable account of his journey and a history of the Mongol tribes.<sup>14</sup>

During the disastrous Fifth Crusade King Louis was accompanied by Friar William of Rubruck, and he received several travellers returning from the nearer Mongols and despatched several emissaries, the most important of whom was Friar William of Rubruck himself whom he sent in 1253 on a personal mission to the Great Khan. Friar William travelled from Constantinople via South Russia and Central Asia to Karakoram near the present Urga, as Friar John had done, and returned through Asia Minor. He has left a long and detailed account of his journey, which for accurate observation, and balanced judgment is a document

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<sup>14</sup> Rockhill, *The Journey of William Rubruck with two accounts of . . . John of Pian de Carpini*, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, No. IV, 1900. D'Avezac: *Relation des Mongols ou Tartares par le frère Jean du Plan de Carpin*, Paris, 1938.

of prime importance for information upon the Mongols and Central Asia in Mediaeval times.<sup>15</sup>

Half a century later a solitary and apparently illiterate Friar from a Franciscan house in Italy, Odoric of Pordenone, set out on his own charges as 'a traveller for Jesus Christ' and performed one of the most remarkable of the journeys of his time. Travelling via India to China he landed at Ch'üan-chou on the Fukien coast, where two houses of Franciscans were already established, and proceeded to Kambaluc (Peking), where he remained for three years. On the return journey he travelled first to what he called mistakenly 'Prester John's country', but which can be identified with the region north of the Yellow River bend, the home of the Christian Onguts, and then by Tibet, which he names and describes briefly and accurately, but he gives no further identifiable details for the remainder of the journey home in 1330 after an absence of twelve years.<sup>16</sup>

These travellers all make mention of the Nestorians—priests, laymen, members of the nobility, and even of the Royal House, whom they came across in their journeys through Central Asia or in China. Sometimes it was a solitary priest with a shrine near the Royal tent, sometimes a group officiating at a Royal procession, sometimes a Nestorian village in the wilds of Mongolia, sometimes a Nestorian church in a Chinese city, as at Yangchou on the Yangtse; these all testify to the widespread character of their mission. William of Rubruck gives the fullest details, combining with them sharp criticism of the conduct of the Nestorians and disapproval of their methods, which suggest considerable deterioration in their religious life during their sojourn in Central Asia; unless indeed his criticism is sometimes prompted by ecclesiastical rivalry. It has already been pointed out that some of the ladies of the Royal House were Nestorian Christians; and there were even hopes of an Imperial convert.

But of chief interest for our present purpose is Odoric's mention of the Christian Mongol tribe settled at the northern bend of the Yellow River, for this is the region from which our Bronze Crosses come. John of Montecorvino, the Franciscan Bishop who resided in China from 1288 to 1329, and who became the first Catholic Archbishop of China, also speaks of this

<sup>15</sup> Rockhill, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, revised Cordier, Hakluyt Society (4 vols.), 1914.

Nestorian community in his letters, and their king George, whom he converted from Nestorianism to the Catholic faith.<sup>17</sup>

The scattered references to the Nestorians in the accounts of the friars are confirmed by Marco Polo (1271-1295) who with his father and uncle can represent for us the second group of travelling merchants. Everywhere through Central Asia and China Marco found Nestorian Christians, usually in the service of the Court, and probably more often than not of Syrian, Persian or Turkish race, employed as administrative officials by the alien government on account of their high standard of literacy.

Marco Polo also confirms the existence of a Nestorian Christian tribe with their Christian king George (whom he confuses with Prester John as Odoric also does) at the Yellow River bend. It seems likely that the name 'Tenduc' which he gives to the region is the early pronunciation of *T'ien-tê* which was an old name of the present city of K'uei-hua 歸化 in that region, near which is the important market town of Pao-t'ou in which Mr. P. M. Scott found the first fourteen crosses of our paper. Similarly the Tozan of Odoric may be identified with *Tung-shêng*, an early name for the same region. The Christian Mongol tribe situated by the Ordos bend of the Yellow River is known from various sources to have been the Onguts (Wang-ku pu 汪古部), to which Marco Polo refers, though confusedly, in calling their king Ung-Khan.<sup>18</sup>

These facts are confirmed in a remarkable way by a Syriac document describing a pilgrimage of two Eastern Nestorian monks—one an Ongut, the other of Uigur stock—from their monastery near Peking to the seat of the Nestorian Patriarch in Mesopotamia in A.D. 1278. In the course of their journey they visited the Christian Ongut tribe by the Yellow River bend, and from them received a touching farewell.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. NESTORIAN RELICS IN CHINA AND MONGOLIA

With the expulsion of the Mongols from China at the fall of the Yüan dynasty in A.D. 1368, the Christianity both Nestorian and Franciscan that had been associated with their regime dis-

<sup>17</sup> Letters of Montecorvino, see Yule, *op. cit.*, and Moule, *op. cit.*, pp. 171 f.

<sup>18</sup> Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, revised by Cordier, London, Murray, 1903.

<sup>19</sup> Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan*, London, R.T.S. 1928.

appeared also. But a number of relics have come to light from time to time, such as the crosses which are the subject of this paper, confirming the statements of the travellers.

The first great discovery of Nestorianism in China is a relic in fact of the T'ang dynasty, long before the Mongol era commenced, the famous Nestorian Stone Tablet of Sianfu, which was erected in A.D. 781 and describes how a group of Nestorian missionaries from Syria or Persia reached the capital of China in A.D. 635; it describes how a monastery was built for them by the Emperor and recounts the fortunes of the Church and its off-shoots until A.D. 781 when the monument was erected. The name given to the foreign religion is 'Ching-chiao' 景教 (The Bright or Luminous Religion) and the text is composed in classical rhythmic style imbued with Chinese traditional religious thought. The script is an example of the masterly calligraphy of T'ang times. This and other later discoveries show that the T'ang Nestorians endeavoured to express their faith in relation to the intellectual and religious environment in which they found themselves. In addition to the text in Chinese the names of the foreign monks are engraved on the sides in Syriac, and on the head-piece above the title is engraved a Greek Cross similar in shape to the bronze Mongol Crosses we have been considering, with three circles at each end, and circles at the angles between the arms, no doubt indicating flowers—the blossoming Cross. The Cross stands upon a lotus, Buddhist symbol of purity, at each side of which are Taoist symbols, the *ling-chih*, or fungus of Longevity.

The Tablet of Sianfu was discovered in A.D. 1623, and through the interest of Chinese scholar-friends of Matthew Ricci, who had died in 1610, it was identified as a Christian relic. Through the same interest attention was called to three other Crosses engraved on stone (probably tomb stones), which had been seen by Chinese Christians in 1638 at Ch'üan-chou (Marco Polo's Zayton) in Fukien. Wood-cuts of these were printed in a publication on the Sianfu Tablet in A.D. 1644.<sup>20</sup> A fourth stone cross, similar to the above, was found at Ch'üan-chou and photographed in 1906.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Moule, *op. cit.*, Figs. 9, 10; Diaz, *Inscriptio Si-ngan Fou*, 1644.

<sup>21</sup> Moule, *op. cit.*, Fig. 11; and Ecke and Demienville, *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1935, Pl. 70b.

From this time on discoveries were frequent. In 1885 two Nestorian cemeteries were discovered in Tokmak (Semirechinsk) with stones from about 610 graves, some engraved with the outline of the now familiar Nestorian Cross, associated with inscriptions in Syriac dating from A.D. 1267 to 1316.<sup>22</sup>

In 1890 stones engraved with Nestorian Crosses were found at Hsi-wan-tzu<sup>v</sup> in Sui-yüan province, north-west of Kalgan.<sup>23</sup>

But perhaps the most important Nestorian relics in China, after the Tablet of Sianfu, are the T'ang dynasty manuscripts found in 1908 in the sealed cave-library at Tun-huang, commencing with the '*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*' with its important *List of Scriptures* and *Historical Note* (probably dating from about A.D. 781), the '*Jesus Messiah Sutra*' dated A.D. 641, the earliest Nestorian document preserved in China, and three other T'ang Nestorian manuscripts, written probably between that date and the period of the Sianfu monument (A.D. 781).<sup>24</sup>

In 1919 two beautifully carved Nestorian crosses, with short Syriac inscriptions, possibly from the chancel of a church, were found at Fang-shan in a Buddhist monastery called to this day 'The Monastery of the Cross' 十字寺 (perhaps the one where Mark and Barsauma dwelt) south-west of Peking.<sup>25</sup>

In 1933 several Chinese scholars sought for and found the ruins of a 'Ta-ts'in Monastery' 大秦寺 (Nestorian Monastery) at Chou-chih 盤屋縣 in Shensi province, described in poems by the famous Sung dynasty poet Su Tung-p'o in 1062.<sup>26</sup>

In 1935 gravestones engraved with Nestorian crosses similar to those from Fang-shan were found at Pai-ling Miao 百靈廟 in Sui-yüan province (on the edge of Mongolia).<sup>27</sup>

In a number of places, too numerous to note in detail here, stone tablets have been found engraved with dated edicts of Yüan dynasty times, sometimes in the Mongol language, sometimes in Chinese, and sometimes in both, for the protection of

<sup>22</sup> Saeki, *Nestorian Documents and Relics*, 2nd ed., 1951, Part II, chap. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Saeki, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

<sup>24</sup> Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 53; Saeki, *op. cit.* chs. III to XIII.

<sup>25</sup> Saeki, *op. cit.*, p. 430, and Moule, *op. cit.*, Fig. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Hsiang Ta, *T'ang-tai Ch'ang-an yü Hsi-yü wên-ming*, App. II, 'Notes on the Ta-ts'in Monastery at Chou-chih' 向達著，唐代長安與西域文明，Yenching Monograph Series II, 1933.

<sup>27</sup> Saeki, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-4.

the property and exemption from taxes of members of religious orders, including the Nestorians, called by the Mongols 'Yeh-li-k'o-wen' 也里可温 (Arcaon).<sup>28</sup>

These and other scattered references to Nestorianism and to Nestorian Christians mentioned in Chinese records of the Yüan dynasty have been collected and published by Dr. Ch'ên Yüan in *Yüan Yeh-li-k'o-wen k'ao* 元也里可温考.<sup>29</sup>

## V. THE CH'ÜAN-CHOU CROSSES

The latest discovery of Nestorian relics in China is a remarkable one and takes us back to Ch'üan-chou once more, the great international port of Ibn Batuta and Chao Ju-kua, the Zayton of Marco Polo and Odoric, with its Buddhist monasteries and Twin Stone Pagodas, its great Mohammedan mosque, and two Franciscan houses, and as we shall now see, its many Nestorian relics.

Here a local scholar, Mr. Wu Wên-liang 吳文良, became interested in the many fragments of stone with foreign writing and designs that strewed the ground, 'the very pavement stones mingled with inscribed Arab tomb slabs' (Ecke and Demiéville, p.4). For some thirty years, commencing in 1928, Mr. Wu collected these inscribed stones for his private study. During the war, it appears that the city wall of Ch'üan-chou was demolished, and from it many inscribed stones came to light, which added greatly to Mr. Wu's collection. By 1957 the number had reached 160 and included those with Islamic, Nestorian, Manichee, Brahman and other inscriptions. He made rubbings and photographs of these, which he published in that year with explanatory text in Chinese: *Ch'üan-chou tsung-chiao shih-k'o* 泉州宗教石刻 ('Stones from Ch'üan-chou with Religious Inscriptions').<sup>30</sup>

In this book he illustrates twenty-seven stones with Christian inscriptions or designs. Foremost among these are four slabs carved with Christian Crosses, of which two (Nos. 72 and 73) are the very ones illustrated by wood-cuts in Emmanuel Diaz's book on the newly discovered Nestorian Tablet, published in

<sup>28</sup> Saeki, *op. cit.*, pp. 418 and 420.

<sup>29</sup> Ch'ên Yüan, Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1923. See also Moule, *op. cit.*, and *T'oung Pao*, Vols. XVII, XVIII, 1916-17; Cordier, 'Le Christianisme en Chine et en Asie sous les Mongous'; and Vols. XII, XXI, 1914 and 1934; Pelliot, 'Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême Orient'.

<sup>30</sup> Peking, K'è-hsüeh ch'u-pan shé 科學出版社, 1957.

1644, but not seen since then until now! A third, No. 74, is the stone discovered in 1906 and illustrated by Ecke and Demiéville in 1935 (*op. cit.* Pl. 70b). A fourth stone (No. 74) is similar to these, but not seen before. Mr. Wu from the style of the carving judges these four stones to be relics of the Franciscan mission in Ch'üan-chou in Mongol times. A fifth stone (No. 75) with a Latin inscription largely illegible, can clearly be assigned to the Roman church. Dr. John Foster, who published a preliminary paper on these stones in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1954) based on a set of rubbings which he received from China, has deciphered on this stone the name and date of Andrew of Perugia, Bishop of Zayton, who died in A.D. 1326.

In contrast to these, the twenty stones, Nos. 70 to 89, which include six with Syriac inscriptions, and which for the most part have the characteristic Nestorian Cross with its blossoming ends, can be ascribed to the Nestorians, who evidently had an establishment in the city. One of these Syriac inscriptions (No. 77) is dated A.D. 1349; while two with Mongol inscriptions (Nos. 85, 86) are dated A.D. 1311 and 1324. The remaining seven (Nos. 90 to 96) are slabs for covering tombs engraved with the characteristic Nestorian Cross, reminiscent of those found in Mongolia and Turkestan.