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Re-dating the seven early Chinese Christian manuscripts : Christians in Dunhuang before 1200

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Chapter 6 A documentary history of Dunhuang Christians

The above is the catalogue of the sutras. The headquarters in *Daqin* house 530 *bu* (volumes) of the sutras. All are written in Sanskrit on patra leaves. In the ninth year of the Tang Taizong Emperor, Great Virtue from the Western Region, Aluoben, came to China and submitted a petition in his native tongue. Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng [two ministers] announced permission for their translation. Later, Great Virtue of Our Teaching, Jingjing was summoned [to translate the sutras] and translated the above 30 *bujian* (rolls). The great majority all remain in their leather cases and are still not translated. (謹案諸經目錄大秦本教經都五百卅部並是貝葉梵音/唐太宗皇帝貞觀九年西域太德僧阿羅本屆于中夏並奏/上本音房玄齡魏徵宣譯奏言後召本教大德僧景淨譯/得已上卅部卷餘大數具在貝皮夾猶未翻譯)

— The colophon of P.3847

Although this colophon of Christian manuscript P.3847 suggests that the Christians in Dunhuang knew about the history and legacy of their Tang ancestors, the historical presence of Dunhuang Christians remains curiously understudied. The reason is twofold. Most importantly, as indicated in the Introduction to this dissertation, the majority of present-day scholars, either implicitly or explicitly, think that Dunhuang was a Chinese town and resort to Dunhuang Christian religious texts to reflect the overall picture of the Christian presence in China proper. The second complication, as discussed below, is that the Dunhuang manuscripts are written in several languages, and some produced in the ninth and the tenth century have only recently been identified by Nicholas Sims-Williams and a few other scholars.

Lately, this gap in knowledge seems to have been recognized by a young Chinese scholar, Wang Lanping. He has gathered the Chinese Christian manuscripts, including a few more Dunhuang Chinese fragments, and has built up a picture of the Christians residing in Dunhuang from the seventh to the early fourteenth century.¹ Unquestionably, his study is a sterling service but Wang Lanping has been influenced by the traditional view of reading the sources, especially *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*. As a consequence, he has excluded the Sogdian and Tibetan manuscripts. The upshot of his choice is that his depiction, the seventh-century presence in particular, is rather inaccurate.

In this chapter, my principal argument is that Dunhuang Christians should be understood in their own right. It is essential that the local presence be properly depicted and analyzed before it can be used as a source to examine the ancient Christians in China. With this idea in mind, I propose to build up a new picture of Dunhuang Christians by undertaking an

¹ Wang Lanping 王蘭平 2016a, 2008.

exhaustive rereading of all the sources. This chapter is not restricted to the Christian manuscripts, religious and non-religious, alone but will also extend its remit to images found in Chinese and non-Chinese texts. For the sake of completeness, it will incorporate the recent archeological discoveries that have failed to attract sufficient attention in the West. On the basis of the sources available, this chapter argues that a seventh-century presence is not confirmed. Its contention is that the presence of Dunhuang Christians began in the eighth century and was continuously maintained well into the early eleventh century.

6.1 The presence in the eighth century

When Christians first arrived in Dunhuang remains unknown. There is every chance that people of this faith were among the merchants who made up the caravans that were passing through this oasis before 635, and that Christians might establish a presence in Dunhuang after the Chinese court officially allowed Aluoben to propagate Christianity in the Tang Empire in 638. However, these assumptions are still imponderables that could later be substantiated by concrete evidence.

By the eighth century, the presence of Christians is unequivocal. Four Chinese manuscripts, Kojima Manuscripts A and B, *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* and *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao*, are predicated to have been written by Christians in the course of this century. As intimated earlier, I cannot concur with this postulation. Below, I shall demonstrate that the first two, that I shall call Kojima Forgeries A and B, are modern products, before I proceed to argue that the latter two are authentic and were copied between 745 and 786.

6.1.1 Kojima Forgeries A and B

Although Kojima Manuscripts A and B have been seen as evidence of an early Christian presence in Dunhuang ever since their first publication, recently several scholars have adduced arguments that these sources should be counted as twentieth-century forgeries. I agree with the latter and propose to add three more arguments to the exposure of their inauthenticity. I have drawn these from a careful reading of the earliest publications that were already suggesting that the Japanese collector Yasushi Kojima might have been involved in the forgery business.

6.1.1.1 Description and the earliest publications

The Kojima forgeries are two short, signed and dated documents that contain a number of incomplete and illegible characters — for their dates and scribes, see below. The former seems to have survived in a complete form and runs to eighteen columns. In contrast, the latter is very much damaged and only its final thirty columns have survived.

Allegedly, both came from Dunhuang Cave 17 and, after their removal, were obtained by Li Shengduo. Yet for some time they mysteriously remained unknown to the outside world. In the early 1940s, it is said, Yasushi Kojima just happened to find them among the Li family's collections. He purchased them and mailed photos of them to both P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru. In gratitude, P.Y. Saeki used Yasushi Kojima's name to designate these sources in 1949 when he first announced their presence by including a preliminary study as an appendix to his book, *Studies of Christianity in China: the Qing Dynasty* 清時代の支那基督教.²

Sadly, the Kojima Forgery A was stolen by an unknown person in 1945 at the time Yasushi Kojima was leaving China at the end of WWII.³ He supposedly took Kojima Forgery B to Japan, where it has remained inaccessible ever since. As far as can be gleaned from the evidence, P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru never had the opportunity to examine either of the original manuscripts. The only scholar who has ever had access to the original B manuscript is Kazuo Enoki. "In March 1963, by the courtesy of Professor Tomoo Uchida" of the Doshisha University, Kazuo Enoki wrote in 1964, "I studied the original manuscript" that was "kept in the safe of the Doshisha [Doshisha] University Library in Kyoto".⁴ The rub is that the manuscript examined by Kazuo Enoki exhibits very obvious differences from the photo published by Haneda Toru — see below. Moreover, none of today's researchers like Lin Wushu and Rong Xinjiang (and the present writer) has been able to locate this source.⁵ The original Kojima Forgery B, if such a source exists, was therefore probably also lost.

Despite their chequered history, both sources were introduced to the West by P.Y. Saeki as early as 1951.⁶ As the following colophons state that the two manuscripts were written in the early eighth century in the *Shazhou Daqinsi* (Daqin Monastery in Dunhuang) by two converts, by and large mainstream scholars have accepted P.Y. Saeki's study, and have taken them as genuine Tang sources. The text of the colophons runs as follows:

² P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1979:1-24.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴ Kazuo Enoki 1964:68. This Japanese university is 同志社大学. Its website is <https://www.doshisha.ac.jp>.

⁵ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:157-167. In 2014, I emailed the Library and was told that it does not hold this manuscript.

⁶ P.Y. Saeki 1951: Kojima Manuscript B: 313A-313E (English), 97-100 (Chinese), Plate 14 (photo); Kojima Manuscript A: 314A-314C (English), 100-101 (Chinese), Plate 15 (photo).

Kojima Forgery A: “Suo Yuan, believer from the Shazhou Daqinsi, copied and taught how to chant [it] on the second day of the fifth month in the eighth year of the Kaiyuan reign (720)” (沙州大秦寺法徒索元/定傳寫教讀/開元八年五月二日);

Kojima Forgery B: “On the twenty-sixth day of the tenth month in the fifth year of the Kaiyuan reign (717), the believer Zhang Ju copied [it] in the Shazhou Daqinsi” (開元五年十月廿六日法徒張駒/傳寫于沙州大秦寺).

6.1.1.2 Convincing arguments for forgery

Lately, Li Wushu, Rong Xinjiang and Chen Huaiyu have rigorously investigated the authenticity of the Kojima manuscripts and convincingly concluded that the two documents were forged by unknown Chinese dealers in the first half of the twentieth century.⁷ As indicated by their following summary, their arguments range from more practical aspects like the initial collection, the publication and theology to more esoteric issues like the key theological terms employed.

In the first place, the information about their whereabouts before they were purchased is not accurate. P.Y. Saeki, who based himself on information supplied by Yasushi Kojima’ himself, said that the manuscripts were found among Li Shengduo’s Dunhuang collections and were purchased by Yasushi Kojima in “1943”.⁸ The snag is that other evidence indicates that Li Shengduo knew nothing about the two sources. He neither catalogued these two manuscripts nor disclosed the slightest indication that they had ever been in his possession. In the 1930s, Li Shengduo sold his collections not once but twice. Neither of these two manuscripts appears either in the auction lists published by the *Central News Weekly* 中央時事周報 (15 and 21 December, 1935) or in the influential Chinese journal *Xuegu* 學觚 (1936).

The second piece of damning evidence is that all the photos of the manuscripts we know today were those published by P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru. However the photos released of Kojima Forgery B plainly exhibit differences — see Figs. 6.1 and 6.2. In the photo in Haneda Toru’s article, attached to the right edge of Kojima Forgery B is a slip of paper that will be discussed below.⁹ In P.Y. Saeki’s photos published in 1949, 1951 and 1955, no such slip is

⁷ Chen Huaiyu 陳懷宇 1997; Lin Wushu 林悟殊 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 1992. The latter two scholars’ original article in Chinese (1996) has been translated into English and was published in *China Archaeology and Art Digest*. The Chinese version of their article to which I refer has been republished by Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2003:156-174).

⁸ P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1979:1.

⁹ Haneda Toru 羽田亨 1951: Plate 2.

visible.¹⁰ Between the left edge of the photo and the first column of the manuscript, occupied by the slip in Haneda Toru's photo, is only an empty space.



Figure 6.1 Haneda Toru's Photo of Kojima Forgery B



Figure 6.2 P.Y. Saeki's Photo of Kojima Forgery B

The third issue is that, contrary to certain claims, there are several sound reasons to assume that the slip was not added by Li Shengduo himself. The text on the slip is: "[This is] the Sutra of the Origin of the Origins of Jingjiao, thirty columns dated to the *Kaiyuan* reign. This precious rarity is mounted and was discovered by me. Unquestionably, [it is] priceless" (景教宣元至本經卅行開元年號/此稀珍品乃裱經背者余所發現/至足寶貴也).¹¹ Cogently, this 'Li Shengduo' did not adhere to the common practice followed when writing a Chinese commentary. Time-honored tradition allows that a comment like this can be jotted down on

¹⁰ P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1955: Plate 1; 1979:16. See also P.Y. Saeki (1951: Plate 14).

¹¹ Haneda Toru 羽田亨 1951:10.

the source itself, even though the course of the process might render some of the original characters illegible. If a separate slip is inserted, it will never be left loose but glued to the manuscript. Even more remarkably, the handwriting on the slip (including the seal) is not Li Shengduo's personal calligraphy. To cap the whole improbable story, Kazuo Enoki, who examined the original manuscript in 1963, says that by the time he looked at the manuscript the slip had mysteriously been lost.¹²

The fourth reason to pause and look before one leaps is that the textual deviations are conspicuous. Kojima Forgeries A and B differ from other Christian sources above all in terms of their application of some key theological terms like Messiah and Alaha. Even more problematic is their use of the appellation referring to the Christian church buildings, *Daqinsi*. According to their colophons, there can be little doubt that at least one *Daqinsi*, if not two, had been constructed in Dunhuang in the 710s – 720s. The fly in the ointment is that this use antedates all the other sources, both Christian and Chinese, most importantly the Tang edict, that, as said in Chapter 1, ordered that the name of the Christian church be changed from *Bosisi* to *Daqinsi* in 745. The purport of this edict contains a strong suggestion that, prior to 745, throughout the Tang Empire any Christian church building had been designated *Bosisi*. Had this not been the case, there would have been no reason to promote the appellation *Daqinsi* and order the abandonment of *Bosisi*.

6.1.1.3 Three more arguments in support of the forgery claim

In light of these puzzling inconsistencies, the forgery claim is already a very strong one. However, three more arguments that have so far remained unnoticed by others will be adduced in this section.

The first of these reasons is that their authenticity has remained controversial since the early publication. Although P.Y. Saeki confidently identified the Kojima manuscripts as the genuine sources in 1949, Haneda already expressed some concerns about their authenticity in 1951. His suspicion was mainly aroused by the anachronistic use of the above-mentioned term *Daqinsi*. Sadly, Haneda did not pursue this matter further, and his voice was ignored by mainstream scholars.¹³

The second reason that arouses disquiet is that exactly when P.Y. Saeki was first apprised of (the photos of) the manuscripts from Yashushi Kojima remains up in the air. In 1949, he

¹² Kazuo Enoki 1964:68.

¹³ Haneda Toru 羽田亨 1951:9-11.

announced that the photos had been sent to him at “the end of the same year” (同年末, 1943) in which Yashushi Kojima had bought the two manuscripts.¹⁴ In 1951, he changed his story, claiming that the photos “*came into my hands in the year 1947*”.¹⁵ In 1955, he changed his story yet again, declaring that Yashushi Kojima had obtained the manuscripts in 1944, “the nineteenth year of the Shōwa reign” (昭和十九年).¹⁶ Furthermore, as Haneda Toru admitted that he received the photo from Yashushi Kojima in “1945”, P.Y. Saeki’s inconsistency is far from reassuring.¹⁷ So far, I have not found any clue that might help to find a way out of this confusion.

The third piece of evidence is the mystery that enshrouds the Japanese collector Yashushi Kojima. In their discussions of the forging the two sources, as said the above, scholars have focused their attention on putative elusive Chinese forgers. This is as it may be, but in order to discover more about the forgery issue, perhaps the best way ahead would be to examine the figure of Yashushi Kojima more closely, because he was involved more deeply than any other player in this game. Strictly speaking, Yashushi Kojima is the person who initiated the research by fishing these two sources out of Li Shengduo’s collections and later sending the photos to P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru.

At this point, we seem to run up against a brick wall as it is an uphill battle to turn up any concrete evidence about this elusive person. P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru said very little about him, in spite of the fact they both mention Yashushi Kojima in passing, saying that he was a friend. Although P.Y. Saeki does offer a few more clues than Haneda Toru in his acknowledgments, these are scattered throughout his books and when gathered together still do provide any convincing evidence. What P.Y. Saeki’s remarks can be added up to is that Yashushi Kojima was his “*friend then in China*” who had spent “many years” (多年) in the northern Chinese city Tianjin 天津, where he met the Li family from whom he purchased the sources.¹⁸ The only other fact about this Japanese collector that can be gleaned from P.Y. Saeki is that he left Tianjin to return to Japan in September 1945.¹⁹ At this point the sources of information dry up. Any personal information about Yashushi Kojima — like profession, family, social status or any details of the transaction — like the payment and the contact — is shrouded in obscurity.

¹⁴ P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1979:1-2, 15.

¹⁵ P.Y. Saeki 1951:313A, original italics.

¹⁶ P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1955:54.

¹⁷ Haneda Toru 羽田亨 1951:1.

¹⁸ P.Y. Saeki 1951:313A, original italics; P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1955:54.

¹⁹ P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1979:2.

The strangest part of this mystery is that Yashushi Kojima's actions are inexplicable. As remarked above, Yashushi Kojima sent photos that are obviously different to P.Y. Saeki and Haneda Toru at more or less the same time. Oddly, he did not inform the one recipient that the photos had also been sent to the other. Haneda Toru had absolutely no idea that P.Y. Saeki had received the photos. In fact, in 1951 when he learnt that P.Y. Saeki had first published the sources (in 1949), Haneda Toru seems to have been surprised. He took pains to stress that he had received the photos in 1945 and had already made a preliminary study the results about which he later delivered in a speech in the Kyoto Branch of the Institute of Eastern Culture 東方學會京都支部 in 1950.²⁰ Meanwhile, Haneda Toru decided to edit his old speech notes and publish them in the journal *Tohogaku* 東方學, in spite of the fact that he was just recovering from an illness and candidly admitted that some parts would demand "revision" (補正).²¹

On the grounds of all the cumulative evidence, it seems a reasonable assumption that the dated Kojima manuscripts are not eighth-century sources but the early-twentieth-century forgeries. Although there is still no solid proof for this inference, Yashushi Kojima seems to have been directly engaged in the forging of the two manuscripts. Even if he was not the mastermind behind the whole project, he does at least seem to have been more deeply involved than anyone else.

6.1.2 Two other eighth-century Christian manuscripts: *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* and *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao*

The Mysterious Bliss Sutra (catalogue number, 羽 013) and *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* (catalogue number, 羽 431) are believed to have been written by Jingjing who oversaw the erection of the Xi'an Stele in 781. However, neither source bears an author's name and both are undated. I cannot verify the authorship although I agree with the chronology in general. Taking into account the to-be-discussed clues, I have tried to narrow this dating down, proposing that the two manuscripts were copied sometime between 745 and 786. Hence these two manuscripts suggest that Christians might have already established themselves in Dunhuang by the second half of the eighth-century.

6.1.2.1 Description and the earliest publications

²⁰ Haneda Toru 羽田亨 1951:1.

²¹ *Ibid.*

The Mysterious Bliss Sutra is a long roll of 159 columns, measuring 26.2 centimeters in width and 282.7 centimeters in length.²² The manuscript is in a good condition and has survived almost complete. Only the lower parts of the first ten columns have been broken off.

As the name indicates, this text extols the bliss of believing in Christianity. It appears to have been catechetical material to explain the underlying theology but its purpose was also to win more converts. Besides its borrowing of Buddhist terms, this source has also adopted the Buddhist style of writing a sacred text. The disciples like Simon (岑穩) sit around their teacher the Messiah (彌施訶), asking a series of questions.²³ In His turn, the Messiah replies at length and teaches how bliss can be attained.

The first English translation, prepared by P.Y. Saeki in 1934, was published with Chinese texts that were based on the earliest version edited by Haneda Toru in 1929.²⁴ As Lin Wushu points out, Haneda Toru had made a number of errors, and P.Y. Saeki compounded these by adding some so-called missing characters and by incorrectly breaking the Chinese up into the “one hundred and eighty-eight columns” of which this source has long been said to consist.²⁵ As the photos of the complete manuscript were finally released for the first time in 2009, all the English translations can now be updated.²⁶

Like *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra*, *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* consists of a roll of yellowish paper. However it is much shorter than the former as the roll measures 26.5 centimeters by a mere 47.7 centimeters.²⁷ The first surviving twenty-six columns adopt the Buddhist dialogue style in an imagined setting in which Patriarch Jingtong (景通法王) is teaching a group of monks eager for knowledge that all has been created by Alaha (阿羅訶).²⁸

It is worth pointing out that *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* has been misunderstood for some time. Since the publication of Kojima Manuscript B, the two sources have erroneously been associated inextricably with each other and believed to be two parts

²² Takeda Science Foundation 武田科学振興財団 2009:128.

²³ These names occur rather frequently. For the edited Chinese texts, see Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2011b:314-321).

²⁴ P.Y. Saeki 1951:281-311 (English), 77-95(Chinese), 1934a:105-132. For Haneda Toru's Chinese texts, see Haneda Toru 羽田亨 (1929). A. C. Moule (1930:58) appears to have been the first scholar to introduce *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* to English readers when he mentioned the name of the source in 1930.

²⁵ F.S. Drake 1935:739. For the general critique of the textual inconsistency of transcriptions, see Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2011b:284-323).

²⁶ For these photos, see Takeda Science Foundation 武田科学振興財団 (2009:128-133). Before 2009, only two photos of this source (the beginning and the end) were available. They were published posthumously by Haneda Toru 羽田亨 in 1958 as Plate 6.

²⁷ For the measurement and photo, see Takeda Science Foundation 武田科学振興財団 2011:396-397.

²⁸ For the original Chinese, see Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2003:176, Col.2; 177, Col.18).

of a longer text, whose middle section is missing.²⁹ As Kojima Manuscript B has now been exposed as a forgery, this assumption will have to be abandoned.

6.1.2.2 Authenticity, authorship and chronology

Although both sources are anonymous and undated, there is little doubt that *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* and *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* are genuine ancient manuscripts. Information about how they were collected is clear. Their previous owner, Li Shengduo (and his family), not only made notes and affixed several seals on them, and they also granted a number of scholars permission to examine the original manuscripts.³⁰ After he had investigated the original manuscript *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* in 1930, for instance, Chen Yuan copied the first ten columns and sent them to P.Y. Saeki, who published the first English translation in 1934.³¹ In the 1920s-1930s, Haneda Toru, with assistance of several famous scholars including Chen Yuan, visited Li Shengduo and purchased the originals that he took with him to Japan.

Moreover, the authenticity of *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* has now also been attested by the other version carved on the 815 Luoyang Pillar discussed in Chapter 1. Although the Pillar version and the Dunhuang manuscript do contain some minor deviations, their contents match each other almost perfectly. On the basis of these two versions, scholars are now reconstructing a full Tang version.³²

As said, the two manuscripts are now accepted as texts that were created by Jingjing by scholars in the field. P.Y. Saeki, for instance, briefly argues that *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* was made in “750-850”.³³ Recently, Lin Wushu has conducted more detailed textual studies of the theological expressions, transcribed names and other phrases like *Daqin*, and reached the conclusion that *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* could have been translated by

²⁹ P.Y. Saeki 1951:313A-313D; P.Y. Saeki 佐伯好郎 1979:17-22.

³⁰ For more detail, see Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2003:147-149, 166-170)

³¹ P.Y. Saeki 1934b:133.

³² Nie Zhijun 聶志軍 2010: 020, 360-361; Lin Wushu 林悟殊 and Yin Xiaoping 殷小平 2008:329-335.

³³ P.Y. Saeki 1934a:105. Meanwhile, he (1934b:133) also asserted that *The Sutra of Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* could have been made “between 750-900”. In 1937 (264), he slightly re-phrased his words, claiming that the two sources “must have been composed after 786-788” by Jingjing. But when the dated Kojima Forgery B was found, he completely changed his mind. Believing that *The Sutra of Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* and the Forgery B may belong to one source, he (1951:248-264) argued that *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* and *The Sutra of Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao* might have also been made in the early eighth century by a priest named “Cyriacus”, whose Chinese name is Jilie, a name which appeared in the 781 Xi’an Stele quoted in Section 1.3.2 of Chapter 1. Lately, Hidemi Takahashi (2013:14) has pointed out by P.Y. Saeki was “apparently misled” by the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese name and “Gabriel” shall be the correct interpretation.

Jingjing no later than 781.³⁴ At this juncture, I propose that they were copied at some place between 745 and 786.

On the basis of the evidence of the observance of the name taboo, *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* could have been written no earlier than the reign of Tang Ruizong, who initially ruled as a puppet of Empress Wu in 684–690 and was fully reinstated in 710–712. To avoid Tang Ruizong's name, *dan* 旦, Tang people also tabooed the homophone *dan* 但, often by removing the middle horizontal stroke, 𠂔. This taboo form can be found in F.096, P.3757, S.4642, P.2617, P.2859A and S.692.³⁵ The same form also occurs twice in *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra*: 𠂔 (c53w4) and 𠂔 (c76w10).³⁶

Known historical events also give some clues by which to date *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Dunhuang was conquered by the Tibetan Empire in 787 and was restored to Tang rule only in 848. Since there would have been no need to observe a name taboo under Tibetan rule, it seems probable that *The Mysterious Bliss Sutra* was composed before 787.

Turning to *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao*, it would seem that this was composed after 745. The strongest evidence for this assertion is the use of the phrase, *Daqin* 大秦, promoted by the 745 Tang edict promulgating the name change. Should it have been made earlier than 745, this source might have used *Bosi* rather than *Daqin*.

Lastly, as “the handwriting is the same” (同一手筆), the two sources seem to be made by one and the same person between 745 and 786, a time at which this area was under the control of the Tang.³⁷

6.2 Dunhuang Christians between the ninth century and 907

Between roughly the ninth century and 907 when the Tang court collapsed, the number of Dunhuang Christians seems to have increased slightly. Not only were they producing theological texts and artistic works, they are also known to have maintained contacts with the outside world. All these sources are discussed below.

³⁴ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:183-185.

³⁵ The first three are quoted from Huang Zheng 黄征 (2005:75-76). The latter three are examined by Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:244-245).

³⁶ These two forms are copied from the original manuscript (Takeda Science Foundation 武田科学振興財団 2009:130). In the manuscript, *dan* 但 occurs five times. The other three occurrences – c58w15, c105w13, c113w1 – are in the orthodox form. I am grateful to Prof. Hidemi Takahashi, Prof. Samuel N.C. Lieu and Dr. Chen Huaiyu for assisting me in having these scanned pages.

³⁷ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:177.

6.2.1 Christian Manuscripts

A few fragments, private (secular) and public (religious), seem to have been made by the Dunhuang Christians in this period. Two (Or.8212/86, Or.8212/182) have been identified. Three more pieces (Or.8212/89, Pelliot Chinois 2782, and Pelliot Chinois 3134) still await confirmation. All these five sources are written in Sogdian. None uses either Chinese or Turkish. I shall introduce them one by one.

6.2.1.1 Two confirmed Sogdian fragments: Or.8212/86 and Or.8212/182

The Sogdian part of Or.8212/86 (Fig. 6.3) has been translated into French by Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton as F text. These two scholars report that this fragment is a business letter drafted in either the eighth or the first half of the ninth century.³⁸ The drafter was a priest named Sargi (Sergius) in Line 1, and the recipient was El Bars who, as suggested by his name in Line 2, appears to have been a Turk.³⁹ The interesting part is the postscript that was written jumbled up with the Chinese text on the other side of the fragment. In this postscript, in Line 20 (verso) Sargi urged El Bars to take a “monk” named David under his wing.⁴⁰ Although it is impossible to know where either El Bars or David resided, this source suggests that the Dunhuang Christians, ecclesiastics as well laymen, maintained contacts with other Christians.



Recto



Verso

Figure 6.3 Or.8212/86: a business letter drafted by Sargi

³⁸ Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton 1990:51-61. The Chinese is the Buddhist text, *The Da banniepan jing houfen* 大般涅槃經後分, that was translated in the middle of the seventh century. The plate is downloaded from http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=1554442813;recnum=12446;index=1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 52 F1.1, F1.2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 60 F20.1.

Or.8212/182 (Fig. 6.4, cursive Sogdian, verso blank) appears to be the “only” non-Chinese Christian religious source that was found by Aurel Stein among the manuscripts in Dunhuang Cave 17.⁴¹ It has been introduced as Fragment 18 by Nicholas Sims-Williams who identified it as “a Christian divination text” on the basis of its style and content.⁴² More specifically, this fragment is an oracular text of a type that was used throughout Central Asia to predict the supplicant’s fate. Although it is a fragment, the gum along the bottom margin suggests that it was once piece of a longer roll consulted by Dunhuang Christians. It is neither signed nor dated. Nicholas Sims-Williams suggests that it is a ninth-to-tenth-century fragment.⁴³

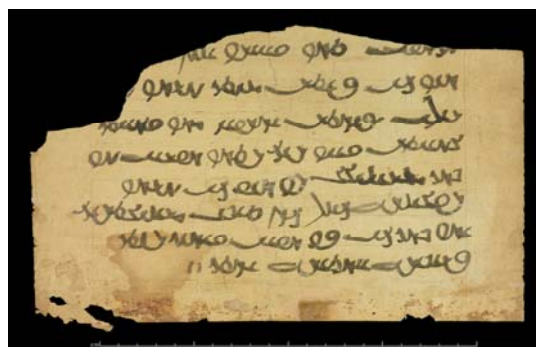


Figure 6.4 Or.8212/182: a Christian divination text

6.2.1.2 Three possible fragments: Or.8212/89, Pelliot Chinois 2782, and Pelliot Chinois 3134

The following are three possible Christian fragments. They all contain some clues to their origin, for instance, Christian names. However the information is insufficient, and the interpretation is inconclusive. At this moment, it is impossible to confirm that they are Christian sources.

Or.8212/89 (Fig. 6.5) is a long Sogdian letter introduced by Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton as Text G.⁴⁴ The recto has 21 lines; the verso 3. Nicholas Sims-Williams claims that several typically Christian names suggest that this letter was either written by a Christian or at least sent to a Christian. Firstly, the recipient bears the Syriac name Giwargis (George) in Line 5; secondly, in Line 14 the letter also mentions a priest who has a Sogdian name, Wanu-čor, but bears the Syriac title *reš 'edtā* (the head of the church). Furthermore, there is mention of

⁴¹ Nicholas Sims-Williams 1992b:55. See also Nicholas Sims-Williams (1976:63). The plate is downloaded from http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=1140712710;recnum=2956;index=1.

⁴² Nicholas Sims-Williams 1976:44.

⁴³ An oracle book is known in many languages such as Turkish, Tibetan and Sogdian. For more information including how people used the texts, see Nicholas Sims-Williams (1976:44, 64-65; 1992b:55).

⁴⁴ Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton 1990:63-76. This plate is downloaded from http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=423545377;bst=651;recnum=12630;index=680.

a certain monk whose name might be interpreted as Sogdian (Kwr'k?), Turkish (Küräg?) or Chinese (Guang? 廣/光/曠) in Line 20.⁴⁵



Recto



Verso

Figure 6.5 Or.8212/89: a possible Christian letter

The verso of Pelliot Chinois 3134 (Fig. 6.6) contains 25 lines of a commercial document introduced by Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton as Text A, that was written in “Sogdian or Turkish scripts with the ninth-to-tenth century features” (sogdienne ou ouïgoure aux forms caractéristiques du IX^e-X^e siècle).⁴⁶ The Christian attribution of this document is suggested by the phrase “pr βγ’y n’m” (in the name of God) in Line 7.⁴⁷

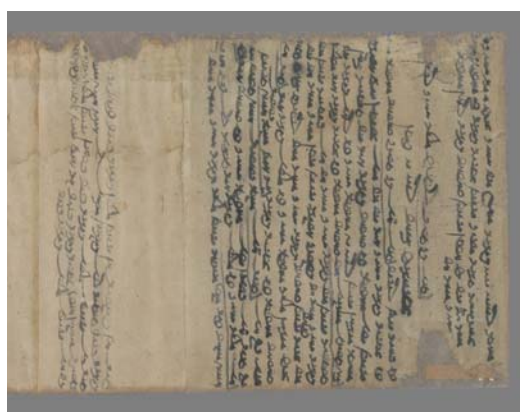


Figure 6.6 Pelliot Chinois 3134: a possible Christian business document

Pelliot Chinois 2782 (Fig. 6.7) has two short Sogdian lines written preceding its Chinese Buddhist text, *The Da banruo boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經. As the Buddhist source

⁴⁵ Nicholas Sims-Williams 1992b:55. See also Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton (1990:68 fnG5.1, 72 fnG14.1, 76 fnG20.2).

⁴⁶ Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton 1990:23. This is downloaded from http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=431976876;recnum=60353;index=4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

appears to have been made in “the second quarter of the ninth century” (deuxième quart du IX^e siècle), the Sogdian must have been written no earlier than the first half of the ninth century.⁴⁸ Once again, the Christian attribution of this source is indicated by the phrase “pr βγ’γ n’m” (in the name of God) in Line 1.⁴⁹ In Nicholas Sims-Williams and James Hamilton’s study, the Sogdian part is Text D.⁵⁰

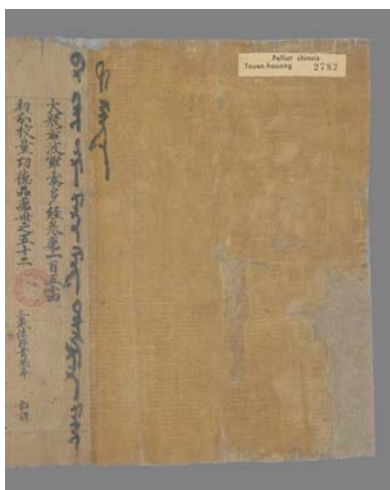


Figure 6.7 Pelliot Chinois 2782: two possible Christian lines

6.2.2 A late-ninth-century Christian painting: Ch. xlix. 001

The figure in Fig.6.8 is depicted standing with its head turned toward to the left. The right arm is raised from the elbow. The left hand, mostly broken away, clasps a long staff close to the breast. It (ink and colors on silk; severely damaged; height: 88.0 centimeters; width: 55.0 centimeters) was originally taken out of Cave 17 by Aurel Stein in 1908 and is now housed in the British Museum (catalogue number: Ch. xlix. 001).⁵¹

Arthur Waley published one of the first complete reproductions in 1925.⁵² In 1937, P.Y. Saeki offered a full-size color version plus a reconstruction intended to show what the original might have looked like, introducing it as a painting made by the Church of the East.⁵³ Roderick

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 39-40. For the plate, visit

http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=432537617;recnum=59938;index=5.

⁵¹ For a detailed description, see M. Aurel Stein (1921:1050-1051). This figure has been has been downloaded from http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_scroll_h.a4d?uid=3795503310;recnum=40482;index=2.

⁵² Arthur Waley 1925:5.

⁵³ P.Y. Saeki 1951: frontispiece, 409. For the recent publications, see Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams 2004:124, Fig.11; Roman Malek 2002: cover (right); Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit 1999: Plates 24 and 25; K. Parry 1996: Fig.7(b); Roderick Whitfield 1982: Plate 25.

Whitfield, who has examined the narrow flame border of the halo and the configuration of the mouth, argues that “this painting dates from the end of the ninth century.”⁵⁴



Figure 6.8 Ch. xlix. 001: a Christian painting

The identification of the figure (in the painting) remains controversial.⁵⁵ At first glance, the figure very much looks like a bodhisattva. Conspicuously, the raised right hand is held open with the palm uppermost with the thumb resting on the index finger. This hand gesture (the gesture of instruction) appears to be a typically Buddhist *mudra* that can be seen in many figures found in Dunhuang and statues erected in the Chinese central plains.⁵⁶ Moreover, as observed by K. Parry, the halo, the bracelets and the small flowers scattered in the background are also iconographically Buddhist.⁵⁷

Despite the evidence of the Buddhist iconography, the Christian elements feature so prominently they have prompted other scholars to claim that the drawing was a treasure of the Church of the East. I endorse this view and would also like to argue that this painting was

⁵⁴ Roderick Whitfield 1982:322.

⁵⁵ For this conclusion, see also Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams (2004:124), and Arthur Waley (1925).

⁵⁶ Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit 1999:223.

⁵⁷ K. Parry 1996:160.

most likely made by the Church of the East. I adduce three important reasons for my conclusion.

The first is that the non-Buddhist elements are a significant enough intimation that the painting could not be made by the Chinese Buddhists. The figure's face has non-Far-East Asian features. "The nose is slightly aquiline."⁵⁸ The eyes in particular are not Far-East Asian. Aurel Stein stated that the surviving eye (right) is "blue" rather than black, and it is the "only instance" in his collection.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the figure wears a cross that is "a fairly unambiguous Christian icon."⁶⁰ Aurel Stein firstly observed one cross on the headdress; Arthur Waley saw a second one on the breast and K. Parry has recently found "the cross pattern on the collar".⁶¹ The headdress cross, silhouetted against the black background, is clearly visible. It is resting on an unclear base whose extremities terminate in two small pearls and the apex of the arms that form a triangle is also decorated with a large pearl. Basically, it is a "Maltese cross", a plain cross with four arms ending in eight points used in the Byzantine Roman Empire and from Iraq to India and China.⁶²

The second ground for arguing for a Christian origin is the fact that the crosses are decorated with pearls, a motif that strongly suggests the painting was created by the Church of the East. Regardless of the use of a number of pearls, crosses decorated with pearls have been found from the Euphrates to the Pacific shores of China, and their large quantity indicates that embellishment with pearls was an enduring specific style preferred by the eastern provinces of the Church of the East. In Sasanian Iran, Christians had already been using pearls for this purpose for a long time. On seals dated no later than the sixth century, a cross is often adorned with one, two and sometimes even three round objects.⁶³ In India, Christians also used pearls to decorate the cross. In the seventeenth century, for instance, the Jesuit Álvaro de Semedo noted the round objects on the "extremities" of the cross carved on the newly found Xi'an Stele, and he concluded that this "fashion" was "graved on the Sepulchre of the Apostle S. *Thomas*" in Malabar.⁶⁴ In Central Asia, pearl-encrusted decoration tended to be rather lavish. Not only were the arms set with two or three pearls but the join at the center

⁵⁸ Arthur Waley 1931:82.

⁵⁹ M. Aurel Stein 1921:1050.

⁶⁰ Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams 2004:124.

⁶¹ K. Parry 1996:160; Arthur Waley 1925:5; M. Aurel Stein 1921:1050.

⁶² Arthur Waley 1925:5, 1931:82; M. Aurel Stein 1921:1050. As two large leaves arising from the base often flank the cross, this kind of cross is also known as the leaved-cross. For more detail about the leaved-cross, see K. Parry (1996:142-162).

⁶³ For the images of these seals, refer to J.A. Lerner's study (1977: Plate I.3, 4, 5 and 6).

⁶⁴ Álvaro de Semedo 1655:157, original italics. The pearls are so elaborately arranged Álvaro de Semedo believed that the extremities ended in flowers.

was sometimes embellished with more than one round object. On three gravestones found in Kyrgyzstan (Fig.6.9a), Uzbekistan (Fig.6.9c) and Xinjiang (Fig.6.9c), each triangular limb is set with several pearls, and their apexes are all joined by a circle; as attested by Syriac scripts, these stones were undoubtedly erected by the followers of the Church of the East sometime in the thirteenth-to-fourteenth century.⁶⁵

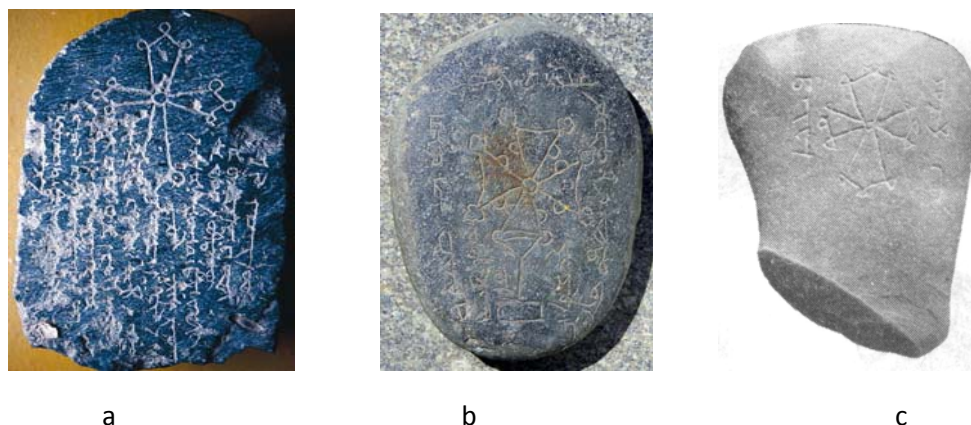


Figure 6.9 Crosses decorated with pearls found in Central Asia

Farther to the East, decoration with pearls was even more lavish. Specifically, the number of pearls increased sharply. In the 781 Xi'an Stele, the cross (Fig.6.10a) is carved with “no less than seventeen circles (one in the middle, one in each angle, and three at the end of each arm) of which eleven contain each a smaller more or less concentric circle, making a total of twenty-eight circles.”⁶⁶ On the recently-discovered Luoyang Pillar erected in 815, the extremities of the two crosses (Figs.6.10b, c) also have three pearls chiseled on them. In particular, the central concentric pearls in Fig.6.10b have also been embellished with so many smaller round objects that it might be impossible to count them all accurately – there are at least nine tiny pearls (my estimation). In the thirteenth and again in the fourteenth century, a cross decorated with pearls was also favored by Christians in China. The cross (Fig.6.10d) unearthed in Quanzhou 泉州, a southeastern port city that flourished between the eleventh

⁶⁵ Fig.6.9a (22x23 centimeters) is the front cover of the book published by Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang (2009), and it is dated to the early fourteenth century and housed in the Village Museum Novopokrvka of Kyrgyzstan. Fig.6.9b (28.5x20.5 centimeters, dated 1261/62) has been reexamined by Mark Dickens (2009:29). Fig.6.9c, unknown size, was found by Chinese scholars in Almalik (today's Ili 伊犁, one of the westernmost cities in Xinjiang). According to Huang Wenbi 黄文弼 (1963:558, Plate 3.2), Fig.6.9c can be dated to the fourteenth century. Between 1957 and 1958, Huang Wenbi surveyed several places in Xinjiang. He found a few more of these tombstones that were released in his archeological report published posthumously in 1983 (Plate 8.7). Lately, Fig.6.9c was restudied by Niu Ruji 牛汝極 (2008:57-58).

⁶⁶ A.C. Moule 1931:81.

and the fourteenth century, for instance, is embellished with thirteen pearls, both large and small — the tombstone was dated 1349.⁶⁷

Most importantly, the configuration of the headdress cross in the painting under discussion seems to have been a specific stylistic trait of Christians in ancient China, who had probably been influenced by Buddhist practice. In the Dunhuang painting, the headdress cross rests on a base and is flanked by flowers — neither the base nor the flowers are clearly delineated — and hence it is arranged in almost exactly the same way as all the crosses mentioned above used by the Church of the East in China. On the 781 Xi'an Stele (Fig.6.10a), for instance, the cross is set on a lotus platform (a Buddhist icon) that is flanked by two clouds and two branches bearing leaves. However, this arrangement was not used in Central Asia. As attested by Fig.6.9, as a whole the images on the Central Asian stones are fairly simple; either the cross has no a base, or the base is not surrounded by flowers.

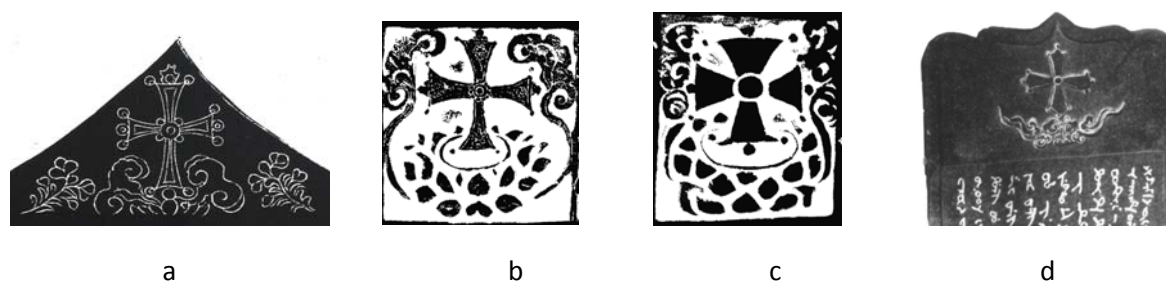


Figure 6.10 Crosses decorated with pearls found in China

6.3 Post-Tang Christians (before the twelfth century)

In stark contrast to the traditional understanding, namely that the Tang church was extinguished after 845, Christians did continue to maintain a presence in Dunhuang between 907 and the seal-off of Cave 17. Their presence is attested by Christian manuscript P.3847 and a bronze cross B105:2. Although many details are as yet unknown on account of the paucity of the evidence, the presence seems to have been modest but the Christian community might still have been using a church building (monastery?). Some Christians at least were fully aware of the legacy of their Tang ancestors. This presence strongly suggests that the Tang church was not wiped out after 845, and the post-Tang church might have been a continuation of its predecessor. The implications of this postulation will be discussed in the Conclusion to this dissertation.

⁶⁷ Fig.6.10a is scanned from the rubbing published by Paul Pelliot (1996: Fig.1). For Figs.6.10b/c, see Ge Chengyong 葛承雍 (2009: Plates 11 and 12). For the photo of Fig.6.10.c, see also Figure 1.3. For Fig.6.10d, see Wu Wenliang 吴文良 (2005:383 Plate B 21.2), K. Parry (1996:Fig.5(c)), and Niu Ruji 牛汝极 (2008:124-127).

6.3.1 Christian manuscript P.3847

P.3847 is a source of great interest. It is the first known and the least contested Christian manuscript. More often than not, it is taken to be a Tang source. On account of the limited information available about it, it is still very hard to verify this claim. Below, I make the case that the manuscript was copied after the Tang court collapsed, and I argue that it must be used to analyze the post-Tang church.

6.3.1.1 Description and the earliest publications

P.3847 is a short roll that is 105 centimeters long and about 27 centimeters wide. It was removed from Dunhuang Cave 17 by Paul Pelliot in 1908. As Paul Pelliot was preoccupied with the overwhelming number of Buddhist texts, its earliest study (editing and translation) was offered by scholars in China (Luo Zhenyu), Japan (P.Y. Saeki) and the West (A.C. Moule and F.S. Drake).⁶⁸

In terms of contents, this manuscript is divided into five parts. Part I (Fig.6.11) consists of only five characters, *san wen meng du zan* 三威蒙度讚 (Praise of the Three Majestics), that is the abridged title of the second part. As these characters are written in the top right corner on the verso of P.3847 and have been very much worn by the teeth of time, this part has not received too much attention.⁶⁹ Judging by the handwriting, it was jotted down by the same hand as that of the person who wrote the recto side of P.3847.

Part II is entitled *The Praise of Jingjiao Three Majestics*. The contents appear to be a translation of the Syriac source *tšbwḥt' d-mīk'*, that is the equivalent of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* used in the West. Interestingly, the Sogdian version has been identified by Nicholas Sims-Williams who has pieced together several fragments discovered in Turfan. However, this Sogdian text is much shorter but yet closer to the Syriac original, apparently a straight translation, whereas the Chinese edition is an adaptation rather than a translation, and the translators added more sentences, probably to meet the metrical requirements. Given that the Sogdian version was made no earlier than “the eighth century” and P.3847, as will be discussed, was copied after the Tang collapse in 907, this discovery of two versions of a same

⁶⁸ F.S. Drake 1935b; A.C. Moule 1930:52-57; P.Y. Saeki 1916:65-70 (English), 272 (Chinese); Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 1909:1-3 (45-47). Some of Paul Pelliot's works briefly mention this source (1914:626, 1911:664 fn.3). See also Éd. Chavannes and Paul Pelliot (1911:503). The roll consists of six pieces of paper made of mulberry bark (*chu* 楮). For more detail, see Wu Qiyu 吳其昱 (1986:411) and Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2003:137-138).

⁶⁹ For instance, P.Y. Saeki (1951:71 (Chinese), 1916:272) does not note this title. Nonetheless, Wu Qiyu 吳其昱 (1986:411) appears to be one of the earliest scholars to have observed this part. But he publishes in Chinese.

source provides a unique opportunity to understand how the religious documents of the Church of the East spread along the Silk Road and to attempt a description of how Christians adapted themselves to the local culture.⁷⁰



Figure 6.11 Verso of P.3847

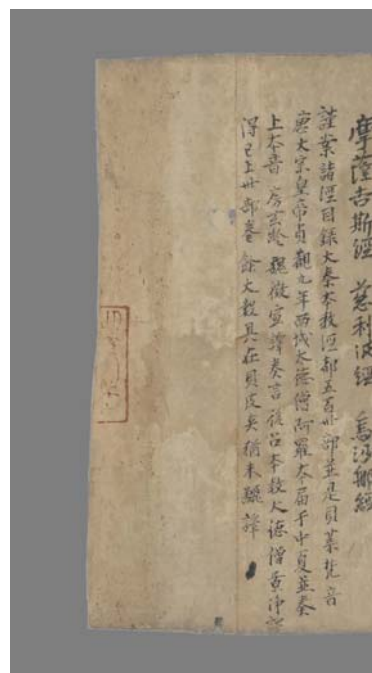


Figure 6.12 Seal and colophon of P.3847

Below Part II is the other religious text, *The Sutra of Reverence*. The text opens with a brief summary of the nature of the Trinity.⁷¹ It then lists thirty-one saints, among them Luke and Mark, and thirty-five titles of documents allegedly used (translated) by the Tang Christians.⁷² P.Y. Saeki claims that *The Sutra of Reverence* is “the Nestorian Diptychs used in China”, dedicated to the living and the dead.⁷³

Part IV (Fig. 6.12) is the colophon quoted at the beginning of this chapter. It was written in small characters below Part III, and runs into four columns. As suggested by its contents, for instance, ‘The above is the catalogue of the sutras’ translated by Aluoben and Jingjing, the colophon was added by the scribe after he had read through (written) Part III. This colophon confirms that some post-Tang Christians in Dunhuang knew about the legacy of the Tang

⁷⁰ Nicholas Sims-Williams 1995:257. According to A.C. Moule (1930:52), A. Mingana seems to have been the first scholar who associated this Chinese source with the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*. However, A.C. Moule did not give the precise reference, and I have not been able to trace A. Mingana’s article. Moreover, there are other Syriac versions. One of the early Syriac copies (dated 1692) is housed in Bibliothèque nationale de France (No. 185) and has been published by Wu Qiyu 吳其昱 (1986:430-432).

⁷¹ For more details, see P.Y. Saeki (1951:273, 277 fn.2), and A.C. Moule (1930:55).

⁷² The names of these saints and the titles of the sources are very difficult to decipher. For the latest study, see Duan Qing 段晴 (2003) and Wu Qiyu 吳其昱 (2001).

⁷³ P.Y. Saeki 1951:277, *sic*.

church, suggesting that they might have been local descendants of the Tang church in Dunhuang.

The final part of P.3847 is a red seal (Fig. 6.12) that measures 5.2 centimeters in height and is attached below Part IV. The greater part of the seal has been broken off. Only the right-hand side has survived. The characters are completely illegible. Setting this seal in the larger context of the use of seals in Dunhuang, especially the use of seals on the Buddhist sutras to indicate the ownership, a number of scholars have speculated about the whole seal and the ownership of P.3847. Wu Qiyu, with whom Lin Wushu agrees, suspects that the right side is “Daqin Monastery” (大秦寺), Chen Huaiyu suggests that the whole seal is “Daqin Monastery in Shazhou [Dunhuang]” (沙州大秦寺) and Wang Lanping proposes that it is the “Sutra Collection Seal of Daqin Monastery” (大秦寺藏經印). Despite this disagreement, all scholars believe that the seal does confirm that Christian monastery was the putative owner of P.3847.⁷⁴ The seal was first observed by Wang Renjun in 1909 but has drawn little attention from the Western scholarship thus far.⁷⁵

6.3.1.2 Dating P.3847

Given that P.3847 is made up of different parts, scholars do not agree with each other on the dating of P.3847. P.Y. Saeki thought that the different parts of P.3847 were created at different times. In his work, he asserts that *The Praise of the Jingjiao Three Majestics* was composed “before 717”, whereas *The Sutra of Reverence* and the colophon were written in “the 10th century”.⁷⁶ Some researchers are adamant that the manuscripts should be dated as a group. A.C. Moule is one who accepts that all the parts were produced at the same time. He alleges: “Internal evidence shows, as will be seen, that the date must be not long before or after the year 800.”⁷⁷ Given the paucity of the information, I do not have the means to delve into the time of creation of its different parts. At this moment, I would argue that the whole manuscript was copied after 907.

⁷⁴ Wang Lanping 王蘭平 2016:32-35; Chen Huaiyu 陳懷宇 2012:47; Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:138; Wu Qiyu 吳其昱 1986:411.

⁷⁵ Wang Renjun 王仁俊 1909:11. I have cited this book from Chen Zuolong 陳祚龍 (1982:347).

⁷⁶ P.Y. Saeki 1951:253, 264. Before the discovery of the Kojima Fogery B, P.Y. Saeki (1931:253, 264) claimed that *The Praise of the Jingjiao Three Majestics* was composed by Jingjing before the erection of the 781 Xi'an Stele and that *The Sutra of Reverence* and the colophon were written in “the 10th century”. See also Footnote 33 of this chapter.

⁷⁷ A.C. Moule (1930:52) does not explicitly reveal the internal evidence.

My reasons for concurring are that all the parts (of course, with the exception of the seal) are written in the same hand. In the past, some scholars have argued that the colophon had been jotted down in another hand.⁷⁸ However, a close examination of the manner in which certain characters are written leads to the irrevocable conclusion that the colophon is the work of the same person who wrote all the other parts.⁷⁹ The difference, as shown by Fig.6.12, is that the colophon was executed in fairly small characters, whereas the other parts were written down using a thicker brush.

The second reason for my agreement is that the clue to the chronology lies in the said colophon, particularly the phrase *Tang Taizong huangdi* 唐太宗皇帝 (Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty). In the imperial China, a phrase of this nature was very rarely used at the time at which that dynasty was still in power. Only a few sources ever placed the name of a dynasty before that of the emperor. Almost without exception the name of the ruling dynasty would have been preceded by some laudatory character like *da* 大 and *ju* 巨. If this were not the case, the dynasty's name would have been replaced by such phrases such as *guochao* 國朝 and *wochao* 我朝. I am not aware of a single Tang text that ever employed the phrase *Tang Taizong huangdi* 唐太宗皇帝. The 781 Xi'an Stele, for instance, scrupulously avoids to use the dynasty's name, Tang. When it does mention the reigning dynasty, it employs an acclamatory character, most frequently, "*jutang*" (巨唐), "*datang*" (大唐); it might also use the phrase "*wotang*" (我唐).⁸⁰ When it refers to the incumbent of the Tang throne, the Stele never places the name Tang in front the name of the emperor. In the case of Tang Taizong, the Stele consistently uses "Taizong" (太宗).⁸¹ In other words, phrases like Tang Taizong emperor and *Tangchao* 唐朝 (the Tang Dynasty) were only commonly used after the Tang dynasty had collapsed. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that P.3847 was copied after 907.

6.3.2 A bronze cross: B105:2

The bronze casting below (Fig.6.13, 6.3 centimeters in diameter, catalogue number B105:2, housed in Dunhuang Academy) is a typical Maltese cross with four arms of equal length.⁸² In each space between the two arms is a bird's head. The cross was broken into two in the lower

⁷⁸ F.S. Drake 1935:297; A.C. Moule 1930:57, Footnote 66.

⁷⁹ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:140.

⁸⁰ These three phrases are found in Cols. 13, 32 and 27 respectively. See Paul Pelliot (1996:Fig.2).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Col.10.

⁸² Fig.6.13a is downloaded from Dunhuang Academy's website, <http://public.dha.ac.cn/content.aspx?id=254220305002>. The rubbing (Fig.6.13b) is the back side of the cross. It is quoted from Peng Jinzhang *et al.* 彭金章等 (2004a:44, Fig.26.2).

section. One bird's head has been slightly damaged. According to the archeological report, this cross was found in 1988 in Cave B105 by the Chinese team led by Peng Jinzhang, who conducted a massive excavation in Dunhuang between 1988 and 1995.⁸³ To the best of my knowledge, this cross has not attracted much attention in the West.

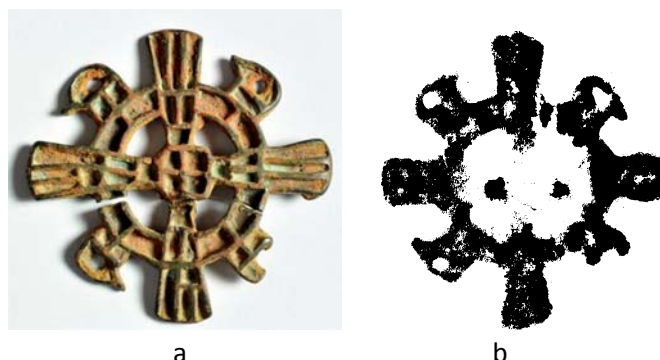


Figure 6.13 The bronze cross unearthed in Dunhuang

Several factors indicate that the cross seems to have been a private badge worn by its owner to display his identity. Firstly, the birds' eyes and the elaborate hollow segments indicate that the cross was once luxuriously decorated. Secondly, its obverse, as shown in the rubbing (Fig.6.13b), has two small projections that resemble pins to which a clasp would have been attached. Lastly, Cave B105 is a hollowed out tomb (瘞窟).⁸⁴ In this cave, the archeologists have found human skulls, jaws, pelvises and limb bones that belonged to three individuals: one male who probably died aged fifty, one female who was between fifty and fifty-five at the time of her decease and another female who was forty-five at her death.⁸⁵

Datewise, the Chinese coins suggest that the cross was buried before the twelfth century. In total, Cave B105 has yielded seven copper coins, of which six are well preserved and one severely damaged. They are two *Kaiyuantongbao* 開元通寶, Tang coins first put into circulation in 621 but reminted many times throughout the Tang Dynasty, and four Song coins: one *Xiangfutongbao* 祥符通寶 cast in 1008-1017, one *Jiayoutongbao* 嘉祐通寶 minted in 1056-1063, one *Zhipingyuanbao* 治平元寶 issued in 1064-1067 and one *Shaoshengyuanbao* 紹聖元寶 introduced in 1094-1098.⁸⁶ As Cave B105 was not disturbed before the excavation

⁸³ Peng Jinzhang 彭金章 2013:52-54.

⁸⁴ Peng Jinzhang *et al.* 彭金章等 2004a:45.

⁸⁵ Peng Jinzhang *et al.* 彭金章等 2004a:43. The examination of the skulls indicates that one of the females was a Mongolian. For the examination report, see Pan Qifeng 潘其風 (2004b:484). For the photos of the excavation site, see Peng Jinzhang *et al.* 彭金章等 (2004a: Plate 14, Frames 3-6).

⁸⁶ For the rubbings and catalogue numbers, see Peng Jinzhang *et al.* 彭金章等 (2004a:44). For the different times of minting *Kaiyuantongbao* coins, see Yang Xinmin 楊心璿 (2015:18-31), Feng Xinbin 馮馨彬 and Feng Minjie 馮明傑 (2011), and Xu Diankui 徐殿魁 (1991).

and has not yielded any other later coins, the *Shaoshengyuanbao* can be taken as solid evidence that the cross was used before 1094-1098.

6.4 Christians in Chinese and Tibetan sources

Lately scholars have found a number of Chinese and Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts that also contain interesting information about Christians. They either mention Christianity by name or have sketches of crosses drawn on them, suggesting that the local people seemed aware of the presence of Christians. These sources offer a unique chance to understand the Dunhuang Christian community from another point of view. They tell us how non-Christians reacted to Christians and are a very good source for attesting the existence of Christians in Dunhuang. Below, I shall discuss the appellations collectively and then introduce the sketches of crosses.

6.4.1 Five appellations relating to Christianity

Thus far, five appellations have been found: *Mishihe* 彌施訶, *Bosifo* 波斯佛, *Bosi(jiao?)* 波斯(教?), *Bosiseng* 波斯僧 and *I si Myi si ha* (the Tibetan transcription of Jesus Messiah). In their contexts, and also attested by the use in the above-mentioned Chinese sources, these appellations all relate to Christianity.

6.4.1.1 *Mishihe* 彌施訶

In the Chinese sources, *Mishihe* 彌施訶 is associated with one of the many ‘heresies’ in the West and is used to refer to Christianity. Chronologically, the earliest usage can be traced to *The Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經. This source recounts that Laozi, the legendary founder of Daoism, rode a blue ox as he traveled to the West where he converted ‘barbarians’ who indulged in ninety-six heresies. In S.6963v, the only extant fragment of the second roll of *The Laozi huahu jing*, *Mishihe* is the fiftieth heresy and recounts stories of many ghosts and gods:⁸⁷

The fiftieth heresy is named Mishihe (Messiah). It recognizes 1,200 ghosts and gods. They enter into human bodies and excite the five desires. [The teaching] accounts killing sinful and claims that it can govern all heretics. Anyone who practices it for a long time will be seduced by the heresy. (第五十外道名彌施訶有一千二百/鬼神以為眷屬入人身中若行五欲說煞生得罪/能治眾邪久事之者令入邪道)

⁸⁷ Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 2008:114. There are a few more fragments of *The Laozi huahu jing* — like S.1857, P.2007, P.3404 and P.2004, but these fragments do not mention the Messiah. See also Liu Yi 劉屹 (2011:36-53).

As other fragments of *The Laozi huahu jing* do not use *Mishihe* to designate Manicheanism and Zoroastrianism, we would seem to be on safe ground in assuming that here *Mishihe* refers to the Christian faith. In S.6963v, for instance, the twenty-fifth heresy is *Daxian* 大祆 (Zoroastrianism) that recognizes ten thousand ghosts and gods and reveres fire.⁸⁸ S.6963v, according to T.H. Barrett, was created “circa 740”.⁸⁹

Interestingly and yet mysteriously, this conception of *Mishihe* is also repeated in a number of fragments of a later text, *The Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記. This source is a collection of stories about the short-lived *Baotang* School 保唐宗 of Buddhism that flourished in Sichuan province in southwestern China during the eighth century. Rong Xinjiang notes five fragments, S.516, P.2125, F261, P.2776 and P.3727.⁹⁰ I have discovered that the verso of Jinyi 304 (津藝 304 housed in the Tianjin Arts Museum of China) also uses the appellation *Mishihe* three times. Probably because the pertinent part is written in light red and is therefore not clear when it is printed in black and white, these occurrences have so far escaped scholarly notice and have barely attracted any attention.⁹¹

Intriguingly, Jinyi304v, S.516, P.2125 and F261 are different versions of the same copy; P.3727, on the other hand, is a short abridgement. They all tell the same story: in the country of *Jibin* 罽賓國, an ancient power occupying northeastern Afghanistan and Kashmir, the king had previously adhered to two heresies Manichaeism and Christianity. He later converted to Buddhism and began to seek out Manicheans and Christians, all of whom were not holy but simply human beings. As Wendi Adamek has edited S.516 and P.2125 and translated the story into English, I quote P.3727:⁹²

The King of Jibin practiced the heretical laws of Momanni (Mani) and Mishihe (Messiah) and did not believe in arhat (Buddhism). He killed the [Buddhist] sages who sweated and then bled white milk. Momanni (Mani) and Mishihe (Messiah) however were ordinary people and their blood did not transform. (罽賓國王信奉事外道末漫尼彌[彌]師訶法不信羅漢煞其聖者/遍體汗乃流白乳其末漫尼彌師訶[彌師訶]等同凡夫血無變現)

⁸⁸ For the transcription, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (2008:114).

⁸⁹ T.H. Barrett 2003:57, original italics. This chronology is basically agreed with by Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (2008:112), who traces the editions of *The Laozi huahu jing* and argues that the second roll was created between 712 and 731.

⁹⁰ Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 2010:123-157, 2008, 2002, 2001:343-368, 1999, 1997.

⁹¹ Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House 上海古籍出版社 and Tianjin Arts Museum 天津市藝術博物館 1997:325. The pertinent paragraph is in the second frame of Jinyi304v, running from Col. 26 to Col. 32. The publishers have also printed a color plate (Colored Plate 8).

⁹² Wendi Adamek 2007:107, (Chinese) 307, (English) 308.

Turning to the dates of these fragments of *The Lidai fabao ji*, it is hard to make a conclusive suggestion. Mainstream scholars have utilized these fragments as if they were Tang texts. Their assumption hinges on the composition of *The Lidai fabao ji*. According to the fragments, as well as some other Buddhist accounts, all the stories contained in *The Lidai fabao ji* were collected to commemorate the memory of the abbot of the Baotang Monastery, Wuzhu 無住, who died in 774, and the compilation was completed no later than 779.⁹³

While I agree that there was a Tang source entitled *Lidai fabao ji*, I must point out that most, if not all, of the extant Dunhuang fragments of *The Lidai fabaoji* were copied at a fairly late period, very possibly after the fall of the Tang dynasty. The text on the verso of P.3727, for instance, is dated “955”.⁹⁴ Moreover, the phrases “the Tang Dynasty” 唐朝 and “the phrase in the reign of [Empress Wu] Zetian of the Tang Dynasty” 唐朝則天時 occur several fragments, long and short.⁹⁵ Very probably, as argued in 6.3.1, these fragments were (re)produced after the Tang court collapsed in 907. That is, these fragments of *The Lidai fabao ji* contain obvious redactions in later hands. They are not, and therefore cannot be, recognized as original Tang texts. Therefore, I deal with these scraps as the post-Tang sources.

6.4.1.2 *Bosifo* 波斯佛 and *Bosi* 波斯

More intriguingly, the concept Christianity being a heresy in the West is also echoed by S.6551v. This fragment records a Buddhist monk doing catechetical work among the ordinary people in Turfan. As suggested by textual clues like the official titles and the kings of the local Uyghur power, S.6551v was written around “930”.⁹⁶ As this source lists the Manichean Buddha, *Bosifo* and the Zoroastrian Buddha, *Bosifo* must be related to Christianity:⁹⁷

[...] when converting, in which Buddha shall we believe? He is neither the Manichean Buddha, nor the *Bosifo* [Persian Buddha] nor the Zoroastrian Buddha. It is the Sakyamuni Buddha. [...] In the West are 96 kinds of heresies among which are *Bosi* [Persian], Manicheanism,

⁹³ Other confirmed Dunhuang fragments are S.1611, S.1776V, S.5916, S.11014, P.2680 and P.3717. There is one more incomplete piece stored by the Ishii Sekisuiken bunko 石井積翠軒文庫 in Japan. In Turfan, archeologists also found another fragment Ch.3934r (now in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin). As *The Lidai fabao ji* holds clues to understanding the early history of the Chan School of Buddhism, these fragments have attracted considerable scholarly attention. For two good summaries of the field, see Zhang Zikai 張子開 (2000), and Zhai Xinglong 翟興龍 (2015). For a short introduction, see Rong Xinjiang (2013:352). Lately, Wendi Adamek (2007) has examined these manuscripts in her doctoral project and has reconstructed a presumably original Tang text of *The Lidai fabao ji*.

⁹⁴ Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 2001:354. The later phrase can be found in S.516, Jinyi 304v and F.261, the last of which has been transcribed by Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (1997: 239, Column 33).

⁹⁵ For more occurrences of these phrases, see Wendi Adamek (2007:316, 319, 320).

⁹⁶ Zhang Guangda 張廣達 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 1989:33. The proposed date of S.6551v spans from 742 to 940. For a brief summary, see Wang Lanping 王蘭平 (2008:346-347).

⁹⁷ The transcription is cited from Zhang Guangda 張廣達 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (1989:24).

Zoroastrianism and Crying to the Gods [Shamanism?]. They all say that the converts are ordained and are far removed from life and death. Yet all lie and cheat human beings and heaven [...]. ([.....] 歸依佛者，歸依何佛？且不是磨[摩]尼佛，又不是波斯佛，亦不是火祿佛，乃是 [.....] 釋迦牟尼佛。[.....] 且如西天有九十六種外道，此間則有波斯、摩尼、火祿、哭神之輩，皆言我已出家，永離生死，並是虛誑，欺謾人天 [.....])

6.4.1.3 *Bosiseng* 波斯僧

The time has now come to look more closely at the appellation *Bosiseng* 波斯僧, it occurs twice in S.1366, in which a clerk was recording the Dunhuang governmental expenditure on such items as flowers, oil, cloth and so on:⁹⁸

Bosiseng from Ganzhou [receives] a flower for the month: seven *dou*; oil: one liter. *Diesaugushi* [receives] a flower for the month: seven *dou*. On 26th, distributed one *shi* of flowers and three liters of oil to Bosiseng who offered medicines [to us]. (甘州/來波斯僧月麵七斗油一升牒塞 (?) 骨示月麵七斗廿/六日支納藥波斯僧麵一石油三升)

S.1366 is fairly incomplete. What has survived is the middle part. Scholars think that it can be matched with S.2474, in which Rong Xinjiang has studied the information suggested by the Chinese months and assigns “980”.⁹⁹ Although the name of *Bosiseng* is not specified, on the basis of the proclamation of the 638 edict in which Aluoben is called a *Bosiseng*, it can be argued that *Bosiseng* refers to Christians.

6.4.1.4 *I si Myi si ha*

The appellation *I si Myi si ha* is used in a Tibetan Buddhist source, Pelliot tibétain 351, that was made between 787 and the early eleventh century. As I do not read Tibetan, I cite G. Uray:¹⁰⁰

Man, your friend is named god I si Myi si ha and acts as Vajrapani Sri Sakyamuni, and when the doors of the heaven with seven layers will be opened, you will pursue the Yoga (= way of conduct) that you will receive from the judge at the right hand of God; and what (you) will have thought, do it without shyness, unsacred, undaunted. You will become a Jina (= you will become blissful). There will be no demons of sickness and impediments. This lot, for whatever cast, is very good.

⁹⁸ Ganzhou is a town 600 kilometers east of Dunhuang; *shi* and *dou* are Chinese measurements.

⁹⁹ Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 1996:371.

¹⁰⁰ G. Uray 1983:413, underlined added.

G. Uray claims that this quotation “represents a passage of a Nestorian text which superficially had been assimilated to Buddhism”.¹⁰¹ For example, ‘*l si Myi si ha*’ acts in the same vein as Vajrapani Sri Sakyamuni, one of the earliest bodhisattvas to appear in Mahayana Buddhism. Specifically, the Christian elements are suggested by two clues. Number one is that ‘*l si Myi si ha*’, in contrast to many phonetic transcriptions of ‘Jesus Messiah’ in other languages, “can only have derived from the Chinese form 移鼠迷師訶”, *Yishu Mishihe* used in *The Messiah Sutra*.¹⁰² Number two is that the concepts ‘judge at the right hand of God’ and the ‘seven heavens’ match these Christian sources as the Bible and the Nicene Creed.¹⁰³ As this dissertation has argued that *The Messiah Sutra* was created after 800, whether the Tibetan transcription is derived from the Chinese phrasing or not does require more investigation.

6.4.2 Three crosses in Tibetan manuscripts

The following three images are crosses drawn in three manuscripts, Pelliot tibétain 1182, Pelliot tibétain 1676 and IOL Tib J 766. The first two have been studied by Géza Uray; the last one has been first published online by Sam van Schaik.¹⁰⁴ As far as I know, the last cross has not been discussed in print by other scholars.

The image in Pelliot tibétain 1182 is a Sasanian cross (Fig.6.14). Each limb is of equal length, and their extremities have been added with a short line, forming four more small crosses. In contrast, the sketch in Pelliot tibétain 1676, is a Greek cross (Fig.6.15). All the arms are equal in length and breadth. The cross in IOL Tib J 766 (Fig.6.16) is a cross typical of those used by the Church of the East, especially in China. It is decorated with three pearls at the end of each arm, and the bottom arm is longer than the other three that seem to be equal in length.

The forms of these crosses are extremely interesting. Their forms, especially the Greek cross, could indicate that not all the Dunhuang Christians belonged to the Church of the East. However, these manuscripts contain nothing Christian besides these crosses. Pelliot tibétain 1182 seems to be a fragment of a longer piece that the scribe used to hone his Tibetan writing skills. Pelliot tibétain 1676 is a long copy of a Tibetan Buddhist source, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the cross seems just happened to have been jotted down in the top margin of the texts. IOL Tib J 766 is “just a strip of paper, probably an offcut from a

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 418.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 416.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 416-418.

¹⁰⁴ Sam van Schaik 2007; G. Uray 1983.

manuscript, which has been used as a doodle pad by a scribe.”¹⁰⁵ In the light of present knowledge, it is hard to arrive at a detailed conclusion, including the reason these images were sketched.

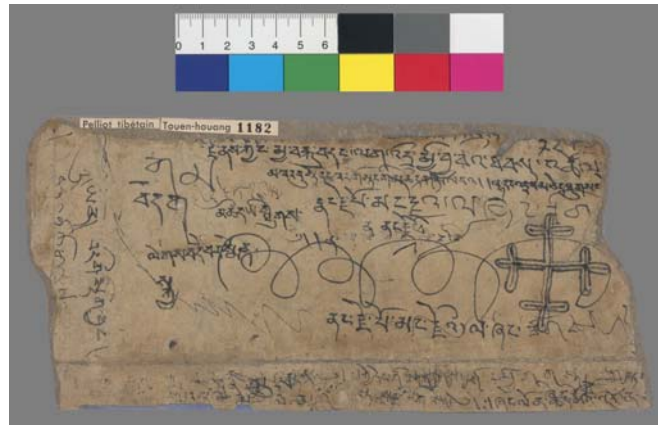


Figure 6.14 A Sasanian cross in Pelliot tibétain 1182

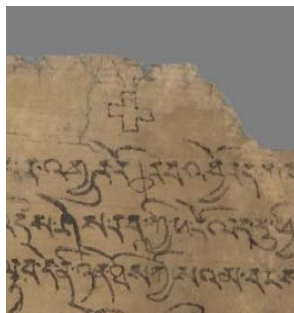


Figure 6.15 A Greek cross in Pelliot tibétain 1676



Figure 6.16 A cross in IOL Tib J 766

Nevertheless, the dates of these sketches are workable. All the manuscripts are written in Tibetan – the writing of IOL Tib J 766 is in Tibetan and in a Sogdian or Uighur script. As Tibetan did not become the ‘official’ language until the Tibetan Empire conquered Dunhuang in 787 and still continued to be used after the Tibetan power was overthrown in 848, it can be assumed that the sources were copied between 787 and the sealing of Cave 17.¹⁰⁶

6.5 Conclusion

Christians maintained a continuous presence in Dunhuang from the eighth century up to the eleventh century. As far as can be inferred from the information available, Christians seem have established themselves in Dunhuang on a more stable footing by the late eighth century although an earlier presence is possible. Although the two dated Kojima Forgeries A and B were most probably made in the early twentieth century, the other two Christian sources, *The*

¹⁰⁵ Sam van Schaik 2007.

¹⁰⁶ See also G. Uray (1983:420).

Mysterious Bliss Sutra and *The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao*, are authentic texts written between 745 and 787. During the ensuing one hundred years or so, the number of Christians in Dunhuang could have grown. They created the Sogdian fragments — a business letter, a religious text — and one painting with the crosses decorated with pearls in a style preferred by the Church of the East in the Tang central plains. All these sources suggest that Dunhuang Christians were not isolated. They were in contact with other Christians. After Tang China collapsed in 907, Dunhuang Christians continued to maintain a modest presence. Religious manuscript P.3847 confirms that the post-Tang Christians were well informed about their predecessors. The bronze cross B105:2 would appear to attest that Cave 105 was the tomb of a Christian who was buried before the turn of the twelfth century.

This observation about the historical presence on the basis of Christian sources seems to tie in with the information contained in the Chinese and Tibetan sources, none of which can be dated earlier than the second half of the eighth century; the majority were made between the ninth century and the first decade of the eleventh century. Appellations like *Mishihe* and *Bosiseng* used in several Chinese fragments are assuredly related to Christianity. Even though the passage in the Tibetan Buddhist source Pelliot tibétain 351 that contains the phrase *l si Myi si ha* requires more research, the sketches found in other Tibetan fragments are of Christian crosses. The cross decorated with pearls in IOL Tib J 766 bears a very close resemblance to the images of the crosses made by the Church of the East in China. Clearly, as suggested by these appellations and sketches, Christians were present in Dunhuang and their presence did not escape the notice of the other non-Christian residents.

Admittedly, this sketch of pre-twelfth-century Dunhuang Christians is still rough. However, this local four-century uninterrupted presence strongly suggests that the historical presence of Christianity in pre-twelfth-century China is a much more complicated picture than its common narrative, that has been introduced in Chapter 1, would imply. The first chapter of the historiography of China's ancient Christians has to be rewritten and an initial attempt at this task will be undertaken in the following concluding part of this dissertation.