



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Sun, J.

Citation

Sun, J. (2018, March 21). *Re-dating the seven early Chinese Christian manuscripts : Christians in Dunhuang before 1200*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/61237>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/61237>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/61237> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Sun, Jianqiang

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

Date: 2018-03-21

Re-dating the Seven Early Chinese Christian Manuscripts

Christians in Dunhuang before 1200

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,

op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,

volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties te verdedigen op

woensdag 21 maart 2018 klokke 13:45

door

Jianqiang SUN

geboren te Tengzhou, China in 1980

Promotores

Prof.dr. H.L. Murre-van den Berg (Radboud University)

Prof.dr. Ab de Jong

Prof.dr. Barend ter Haar (Oxford University)

Promotiecommissie

Prof.dr. H.G.B. Teule (Radboud University / Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Dr. M. Nicolini-Zani (Monastero di Bose, Italy)

Dr. P. Riboud (INALCO, Paris)

Prof.dr. R.P.E. Sybesma

Prof.dr. S.N.C. Lieu (Macquarie University, Australia)

Chronology and Geography have been justly called the “eyes of History”, without the lights of which all is chaos and uncertainty; but perhaps a better simile would be, that Dates are to History, what the Latitude and Longitude are to Navigation, — fixing the exact position of, the objects to which they are applied.

— Harris Nicolas (1833:vi).

To
my parents
and
my niece, SUN Xinyi 孫心怡

Contents

<i>Timeline of China's dynasties</i>	10
<i>Reigns of Tang emperors</i>	11
<i>Abbreviations</i>	12
<i>List of Maps, Figures and Tables</i>	13
<i>Stylistic matters</i>	16
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	17
<i>Introduction</i>	18
1 Main question	18
2 Methods of dating sources and research scope	26
3 Dissertation structure	31
<i>Chapter 1 The traditional narrative of China's pre-twelfth-century Christians</i>	32
1.1 Possible Christian presence in pre-Tang China and expansion of the Church of the East	32
1.1.1 The Church of the East in the pre-fifth-century Middle East	33
1.1.2 The expansion of the Church of the East from Central Asia to China's western borders	34
1.1.3 Speculation about a pre-Tang Christian presence	36
1.2 The earliest undisputed Christian presence in China: the Tang church	37
1.2.1 The Xi'an Stele	37
1.2.2 Chinese non-Christian sources	40
1.2.3 Newly discovered Christian inscriptions	41
1.2.4 Other sources	41
1.3 The three periods of the Tang church (635-840s)	42
1.3.1 Arrival-diffusion (635-649)	42
1.3.2 Expansion-setback-recovery (649-790s)	44
1.3.3 The so-called disappearance (800-840s)	50
1.4 Conclusion	55
<i>Chapter 2 Introducing The Messiah Sutra and On One God</i>	57
2.1 Description and the earliest publications	57
2.2 A synopsis of The Messiah Sutra and On One God	59
2.2.1 Four sections of The Messiah Sutra	60
2.2.1.1 The title: The Messiah Sutra	60
2.2.1.2 Section Two: theological themes	61

2.2.1.3 Section Three: a transitional part.....	62
2.2.1.4 Section Four: Gospel stories.....	62
2.2.2 The Four parts of <i>On One God</i>	63
2.2.2.1 Essay One: The Parable, II	63
2.2.2.2 Essay Two: On One Heaven, I.....	63
2.2.2.3 Essay Three: <i>Shizun</i> On Almsgiving, III	65
2.2.2.4 The title: On One God	66
2.3 Rejecting the forgery theory	66
2.3.1 The emergence of the forgery theory	66
2.3.2 The arguments propounded by the forgery theory	68
2.3.3 A critique of the forgery theory.....	71
2.4 The tenuous conventional chronology	73
2.4.1 The popular dates.....	73
2.4.2 The problematic arguments	74
2.4.2.1 Three inconclusive arguments about <i>On One God's</i> date.....	74
2.4.2.2 Three dubious observations about <i>The Messiah Sutra's</i> date	77
2.4.2.2.1 Historical observations	78
2.4.2.2.2 Philological observations	80
2.4.2.2.3 Doctrinal observations.....	81
2.5 Conclusion	82
Chapter 3 A refutation of the conventional chronology.....	84
3.1 Relying on the name taboo practice to date sources	85
3.1.1 A historical overview of the name taboo practice	85
3.1.2 Using the taboos to date sources.....	86
3.2 The four methods of tabooing Tang Taizong's name, <i>shimin</i>	88
3.2.1 Examples tabooed using the two older methods, omitting and replacing	88
3.2.2 Examples tabooed using the new method, <i>quebi</i>	89
3.2.2.1 <i>Quebi</i> examples of <i>shi</i> and <i>min</i>	89
3.2.2.2 The introduction of <i>quebi</i>	90
3.2.3 Complex characters tabooed using the new method, <i>gaijian</i>	93
3.2.3.1 The term <i>gaijian</i>	94
3.2.3.2 The introduction of <i>gaijian</i>	94
3.2.3.3 Reconstructing the <i>gaijian</i> method.....	96
3.3 The <i>Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i> tabooed Tang Taizong's name inconsistently.....	98
3.3.1 Non-taboo of Tang Taizong's name.....	98
3.3.2 Taboo of Tang Taizong's name	100
3.3.2.1 <i>Die</i> 牒 was tabooed.....	100
3.3.2.2 <i>Qi</i> 棄 was tabooed	101

3.3.2.3 <i>Hun</i> 昏 was tabooed	102
3.4 Tang tombstones reveal that <i>gaijian</i> was introduced in 658	102
3.4.1 The survey design	103
3.4.2 <i>Die</i> 牒 was not tabooed before 658	104
3.4.3 <i>Hun</i> 昏 was not tabooed before 658	105
3.4.4 <i>Die</i> 牒 was not tabooed before 658	106
3.4.5 Summary of the survey	107
3.5 Discussion and conclusion	108
Chapter 4 <i>The Messiah Sutra and On One God</i> cannot have been made in the 650s-790s	111
4.1 <i>The Messiah Sutra and On One God</i> were not made in Tang Gaozong's reign	111
4.1.1 <i>Zhi</i> was not omitted	111
4.1.2 <i>Zhi</i> was not replaced by other characters	112
4.1.3 <i>Zhi</i> was not deprived of its strokes	113
4.1.4 Discussion	115
4.2 <i>The Messiah Sutra and On One God</i> were not made in Empress Wu's reign	115
4.2.1 The usage of Wu's new forms and the dating of a source	115
4.2.1.1 Why were the new forms widely used?	116
4.2.1.2 Empress Wu changed seventeen characters into eighteen forms	118
4.2.1.3 Wu's new forms were widely used before 705	119
4.2.1.4 Revoking Wu's new forms after 705	121
4.2.2 The non-use of Empress Wu's new forms in <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i>	122
4.2.2.1 Comparing examples with Wu's new forms	122
4.2.2.2 The form 𤝵 is a scribal error of 𤝵	124
4.2.3 The non-taboo of Empress Wu's name in <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i>	126
4.2.4 Discussion	127
4.3 <i>The Messiah Sutra and On One God</i> were not made in Tang Xuanzong's reign	127
4.3.1 <i>Long</i> and <i>ji</i> were not omitted	127
4.3.2 <i>Long</i> and <i>ji</i> were not replaced by other characters	128
4.3.3 <i>Long</i> and <i>ji</i> were not deprived of their strokes	129
4.3.4 Discussion	129
4.4 Conclusion	130
Chapter 5 <i>An alternative chronology</i>	131
5.1 Relying on the Chinese passive to date sources	132
5.2 An overview of the passive use in <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i>	135
5.2.1 Occurrences of <i>yu</i> , <i>wei</i> and <i>jian</i>	135
5.2.2 Occurrences of <i>bei</i>	136

5.2.3 Two remarks about the passives in the Christian texts	137
5.3 The dominance of <i>bei</i> and the date of the two Christian texts	138
5.3.1 The emergence of <i>bei</i> in the pre-Qin period	138
5.3.2 The rise of <i>bei</i> in the Han and Six-Dynasties period	140
5.3.3 The dominance of <i>bei</i> in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period	142
5.3.4 Discussions	144
5.4 The '<i>bei</i> + verb + <i>jiangqu</i>' order and the date of the two Christian texts	146
5.4.1 The pre-seventh-century coalescence between the ' <i>bei</i> + verb' order and <i>jiangqu</i>	147
5.4.2 Unclear examples in the seventh century	150
5.4.3 Emergence in the eighth century	151
5.4.4 Limited use between the ninth century and the eleventh century	154
5.4.5 Discussions	156
5.5 Conclusion	158
Chapter 6 A documentary history of Dunhuang Christians	160
6.1 The presence in the eighth century	161
6.1.1 Kojima Forgeries A and B	161
6.1.1.1 Description and the earliest publications	161
6.1.1.2 Convincing arguments for forgery	163
6.1.1.3 Three more arguments in support of the forgery claim	165
6.1.2 Two other eighth-century Christian manuscripts: <i>The Mysterious Bliss Sutra</i> and <i>The Sutra of the Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao</i>	167
6.1.2.1 Description and the earliest publications	167
6.1.2.2 Authenticity, authorship and chronology	169
6.2 Dunhuang Christians between the ninth century and 907	170
6.2.1 Christian Manuscripts	171
6.2.1.1 Two confirmed Sogdian fragments: Or.8212/86 and Or.8212/182	171
6.2.1.2 Three possible fragments: Or.8212/89, Pelliot Chinois 2782, and Pelliot Chinois 3134	172
6.2.2 A late-ninth-century Christian painting: Ch. xlix. 001	174
6.3 Post-Tang Christians (before the twelfth century)	178
6.3.1 Christian manuscript P.3847	179
6.3.1.1 Description and the earliest publications	179
6.3.1.2 Dating P.3847	181
6.3.2 A bronze cross: B105:2	182
6.4 Christians in Chinese and Tibetan sources	184
6.4.1 Five appellations relating to Christianity	184
6.4.1.1 <i>Mishihe</i> 彌施訶	184
6.4.1.2 <i>Bosifo</i> 波斯佛 and <i>Bosi</i> 波斯	186

6.4.1.3 <i>Bosiseng</i> 波斯僧	187
6.4.1.4 <i>I si Myi si ha</i>	187
6.4.2 Three crosses in Tibetan manuscripts	188
6.5 Conclusion	189
<i>Conclusions and Implications</i>	191
1 A new chronology	191
1.1 The date of <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i>	191
1.2 Kojima Forgeries A and B	197
1.3 The date of <i>The Mysterious Bliss Sutra</i> and <i>The Sutra of Origins of the Daqin Jingjiao</i>	198
1.4 The date of manuscript P.3847	199
1.5 An overview of the new chronology	199
2 Implications	200
2.1 <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> and <i>On One God</i> are not modern forgeries	200
2.2 Dunhuang Christians must be understood in their own right	201
2.3 Revisiting the traditional historiography of China's pre-twelfth-century Christians	201
3 Future directions	203
<i>Bibliography</i>	205
<i>Summary</i>	227
<i>Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)</i>	229
<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>	231

Timeline of China's dynasties

c. 2100-1600 BCE	Xia 夏
c. 1600-1050 BCE	Shang 商
c. 1046-256 BCE	Zhou 周 Western Zhou 西周 (<i>circa</i> 1046-771) Eastern Zhou 东周 (<i>circa</i> 771-256) Spring and Autumn Period 春秋 (<i>circa</i> 770- <i>circa</i> 475) Warring States Period 戰國 (<i>circa</i> 475-221)
221-206 BCE	Qin 秦
206 BCE-220 CE	Han 漢 Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE-9 CE) Interregnum of Wang Mang 王莽 (9-25) Eastern Han 東漢 (25-22)
220-589	Six Dynasties 六朝 Three Kingdoms 三國 (220-265) Jin Dynasty 晉 (265-420) Northern and Southern Dynasties 南北朝 (386-589)
581-618	Sui 隋
618-907	Tang 唐 Empress Wu's Zhou 武周 (690-705)
907-960	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms 五代十國
960-1279	Song 宋 Northern Song 北宋 (960-1127) Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1279)
1271-1368	Yuan 元
1368-1644	Ming 明
1636-1912	Qing 清

Reigns of Tang emperors

Gaozu 高祖	618-626
Taizong 太宗	626-649
Gaozong 高宗	649-683
Zhongzong 中宗	683-684
Ruizong 睿宗	684-690
Empress Wu 武后	690-705
Zhongzong 中宗	705-710
Ruizong 睿宗	710-712
Xuanzong 玄宗	712-756
Suzong 肅宗	756-762
Daizong 代宗	762-779
Dezong 德宗	779-805
Shunzong 順宗	805
Xianzong 憲宗	805-820
Muzong 穆宗	820-824
Jingzong 敬宗	824-827
Wenzong 文宗	827-840
Wuzong 武宗	840-846
Xuanzong 宣宗	846-859
Yizong 懿宗	859-873
Xizong 僖宗	873-888
Zhaozong 昭宗	888-904
Aidi 哀帝	904-907

Abbreviations

b. born

d. died

r. reign

List of Maps, Figures and Tables

Maps

- 1 Cities along the Silk Road

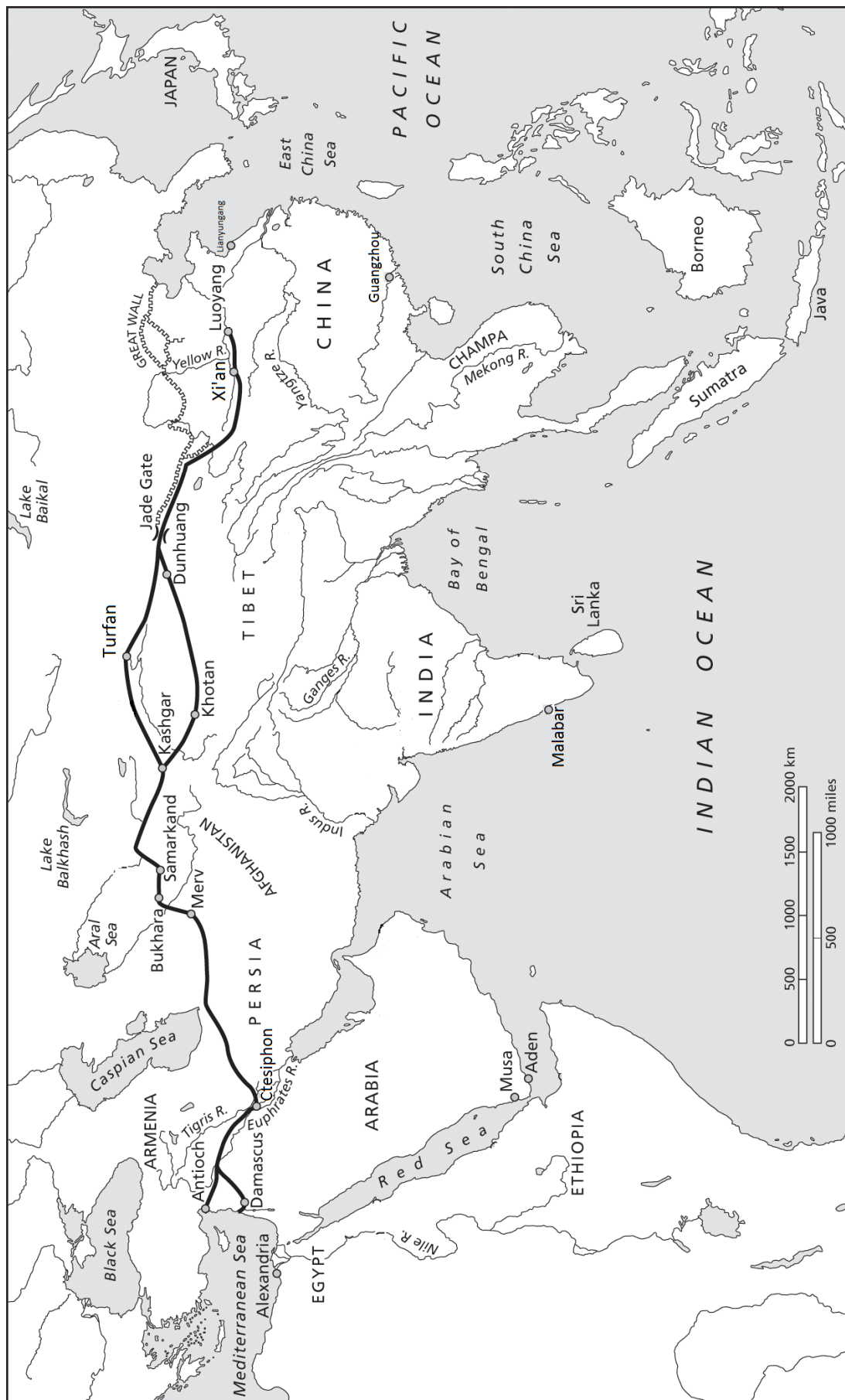
Figures

- 1.1 The Xi'an Stele
- 1.2 The crest of the Xi'an Stele
- 1.3 The Luoyang Pillar
- 2.1 End part of *The Messiah Sutra*
- 2.2 The roll of *On One God* and the first frame
- 6.1 Haneda Toru's Photo of Kojima Forgery B
- 6.2 P.Y. Saeki's Photo of Kojima Forgery B
- 6.3 Or.8212/86: a business letter drafted by Sargi
- 6.4 Or.8212/182: a Christian divination text
- 6.5 Or.8212/89: a possible Christian letter
- 6.6 Pelliot Chinois 3134: a possible Christian business document
- 6.7 Pelliot Chinois 2782: two possible Christian lines
- 6.8 Ch. xlix. 001: a Christian painting
- 6.9 Crosses decorated with pearls found in Central Asia
- 6.10 Crosses decorated with pearls found in China
- 6.11 Verso of P.3847
- 6.12 Seal and colophon of P.3847
- 6.13 The bronze cross unearthed in Dunhuang
- 6.14 A Sasanian cross in Pelliot tibétain 1182
- 6.15 A Greek cross in Pelliot tibétain 1676
- 6.16 A cross in IOL Tib J 766

Tables

- 3.1 Replacement characters used to taboo Tang Taizong's name, *shimin*
- 3.2 Orthodox orthographies of *shi* in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*

- 3.3 Orthographies of *die* 牒 in Tang stones (618-663)
- 3.4 Orthographies of *hun* 昏 in Tang stones (618-663)
- 3.5 Orthographies of *die* 諫 in Tang stones (618-663)
- 4.1 Replacement characters used to taboo Tang Gaozong's name, *zhi*
- 4.2 Comparison of orthographies in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* with Wu's new forms
- 4.3 Replacement characters used to taboo Tang Xuanzong's name, *longji*
- 5.1 Occurrences of *yu*, *jian*, *wei* and *bei* in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*
- 5.2 Pre-twelfth-century usage of passive markers, *yu*, *jian*, *wei* and *bei*



Map 1 Cities along the Silk Road (Source: Xinru Liu 2015:459, adapted)

Stylistic matters

This study employs both traditional Chinese characters and the modern *Hanyu pinyin* system of transcription. As Chinese tones are not indicated in this system, and the tone-free transcriptions can be mismatched with other characters, this dissertation uses Chinese characters wherever they are relevant to the argument and gives an Asian author's full name in transcription and in the original characters. For the sake of consistency, western scholars are also mentioned by their full names. This research uses the name-date system in the footnotes and offers the full reference information in the Bibliography. In order to save space, the titles of Asian publications are not transcribed. Both footnotes and the Bibliography make a distinction between western literature and Asian publications. This research refers to Dunhuang Chinese manuscripts by their conventional catalogue numbers: S.2215 is manuscript number 2215 obtained by Aurel Stein and now held by the British Library; P.3847 is manuscript number 3847 collected by Paul Pelliot and now housed in Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Non-English quotations are all translated; the translation is followed by the original texts in brackets. All translations, punctuation, underlining, italics, column numbering and division (/), and other emphases are mine unless otherwise stated. Moreover, Chinese dates have been transferred into the Western (Gregorian) chronology via the Sino-Western Calendar Transfer Program offered by the Academia Sinica (<http://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw>). All internet publications were retrieved during the whole process of the research and were re-retrieved on August 17, 2017.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been written without the support and the help of many people. Some I have probably forgotten, and I sincerely apologize to those who are not mentioned here. Some I still recall, and I would like to list them here.

My heartfelt thanks go first to Heleen Murre-van den Berg, Ab de Jong, Barend ter Haar, Liu Zhaoyong 劉兆永 and Jia Zhengchuan 賈正傳. They provided intellectual guidance for years, helping me greatly expand my horizon and accurately explore the unknown territories.

Special thanks shall also be extended to Peter de Hoog, Matthias Brand and Song Chunli 宋春利. Without their help, I may have ended up with doing other things.

This project has also benefit from many other people. They either sent me material or typed the difficult Chinese characters and Syriac words or gave advice to my Ph.D. application and research in Leiden or read some chapters — all mistakes that should remain, are mine: Chang Hsiangming 張向明, Chen Huaiyu 陳懷宇, Chen Ruixuan 陳瑞翹, Chen Zongli 陳宗利, Christien Kiewiet de Jong, Gao Ziwen 高子雯, Han Jianxia 韓建俠, Hidemi Takahashi 高橋英海, Jiang Tengfei 江騰飛, Li Xiaohu 李小虎, Liu Puning 劉璞寧, Liu Xiaojing 劉曉靜, Liu Zheng 劉錚, Mark Dickens, Matteo Nicolini-Zani, Miao Shengfa 苗聖法, Michael Radich, Nicholas Sims-Williams, Ren Baoyan 任寶彥, Rint Sybesma, Samuel N.C. Lieu, Song Changchun 宋長春, Sun Jianchun 孫建春, Tijmen Baarda, The East Asian Library and The Lipsius reception of Leiden University, Wu Yue 吳越, Xiu Xudong 修旭東, and Zhong Lei 鐘雷.