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

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Chapter 3 A refutation of the conventional chronology

Alas, ancient books are hard to read! (甚矣古書之難讀也！)

— Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1880-1971)¹

Mount Chang was renamed Mount Zhen after the enthronement of [Tang Muzong] in the fifteenth year [of the Yuanhe reign, 820]. ([唐穆宗元和]十五年即位，改嘗岳為鎮岳。)

— Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962-1025)²

Mount Heng was renamed Mount Zhen [after the enthronement of Tang Muzong in the fifteenth year of the Yuanhe reign]. ([唐穆宗元和十五年即位] 改恒岳為鎮岳。)

— Liu Xu 劉昫 (888-947)³

The modern historian Chen Yuan uttered the exclamation above when he, by complex deductions relating to Chinese imperial name taboos, finally understood that Wang Qinruo's record was not wrong after all but what he had read should stand. In Tang China there was no holy mountain called Mount Chang. As Liu Xu demonstrates it was Mount Heng that was renamed Mount Zhen in 820 because *heng* was the given name of the new emperor and therefore had to be avoided. In 1013, when Wang Qinruo quoted this historical record and submitted his work to the throne, *heng* again had to be tabooed, but this time because it was the name of Emperor Song Zhenzong. Acquiescing in the practice, Wang Qinruo replaced *heng* with a synonym, *chang* 常. In the late-seventeenth century, however, *chang* was contained in Emperor Ming Guangzong's name, Changluo 常洛, and had to be tabooed. The upshot was that the re-publisher of Wang Qinruo's work substituted *chang* 常 with a homonym, *chang* 嘗, that was what Chen Yuan read.

This laborious chain of deduction shows that the name taboo practice was a demanding, enduring Chinese tradition and intimates that a study of the avoidance of emperors' names can shed light on the time of the production of a manuscript. This chapter will rely on this practice in order to examine whether it is at all possible that *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* were produced in the first period of the Tang church. Since it has been claimed that Aluoben composed the two texts and discussed them with Tang Taizong around the 640s, this

¹ Chen Yuan 陳垣 1958:71. Chen Yuan's work, *Shihui juli* 史諱舉例, was first published in 1928. This dissertation refers to the version edited in 1958.

² Cited from Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:70).

³ Liu Xu 劉昫 945/1975:476.

chapter investigates whether and, if so, how Aluoben avoided *shimin* 世民, the name of his great patron.

Before any discussion begins, it is necessary to introduce the Chinese taboo tradition. This introduction will be followed by a discussion of the ways in which scribes avoided Tang Taizong's name. On the basis of the results of these discussions, the chapter will analyze *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, and compare their taboo examples with a large corpus of stones carved between 618 and 663. These findings show that although the two Christian sources are authentic ancient manuscripts, they were not made in the 640s. The chapter also goes on to suggest that the two Christian manuscripts must have been produced in a much later period.

3.1 Relying on the name taboo practice to date sources

Throughout Chinese history, an impressive number of special decrees and governmental edicts were issued to admonish people to observe the name taboo practice in both writing and speaking. Consequently in the course of time, many texts, essays and manuscripts were altered, modified and redacted, leaving traceable clues to the time at which the sources were produced.

3.1.1 A historical overview of the name taboo practice

The name taboo practice is probably as old as Chinese civilization itself. Sources indicate that it might have been established and widely embraced more than 3,000 years ago. *The Zuozhuan* 左傳, one of the earliest Chinese historical sources, notes that “[The Zhou people’s] names should be tabooed after death.” ([周人]名終將諱之)⁴

Observance of this custom was more stringently enforced after Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 declared himself the first emperor of China in 221 BCE. Later it became standard practice at the imperial courts that frequently issued special decrees to command people to avoid the emperors' names. “According to the practice in the Han dynasty,” Xing Zicai 邢子才 notes in the sixth century, “when the Son of Heaven ascended the throne, his name became known

⁴ For a more complete quotation, see Poitr Adamek (2015:87). For more details about the emergence of this practice, see also Wang Xinhua 王新華 (2007:2-6), and Wang Jian 王建 (2002:1).

under Heaven and was avoided by all people.”漢法，天子登位，布名於天下，四海之內，無不咸避。⁵

In the period from the seventh to the thirteenth century, the taboo practice seems to have reached its “culmination”.⁶ In Tang China, for instance, the practice was codified. The first Chinese penal code, *The Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議, stipulates:⁷

Any violation of the ancestral temple name taboos in the above-mentioned petitions, and submitted to the Emperor, is punishable by eighty blows with a rod. For violations caused by slips of the tongue and in other documents, the punishment is fifty blows with a stick. 諸上書若奏事，誤犯宗廟諱者，杖八十；口誤及餘文書誤犯者，笞五十。

Although the name taboo practice grew less exaggerated in later periods, by and large violations were not tolerated. Transgressors were often humiliated, tortured and could even be decapitated. In 1777, for instance, Wang Xihou 王錫侯 paid dearly for failing to observe respect due to emperors’ names in his dictionary. He and several of his family members were beheaded.⁸ As scholars have observed, the taboo tradition persisted until the last emperor, Pu Yi 溥儀, abdicated the throne in 1912, and this tradition penetrated into all layers of Chinese culture.⁹

3.1.2 Using the taboos to date sources

For today’s scholars, the name taboo can be very useful. Relying on this practice, codicologists can determine a source’s edition and verify its authenticity, historians are able to solve some mysteries and philologists have a way to study ancient pronunciations. The taboo examples are particularly helpful as one of the most common methods to date manuscripts because of their adherence to unique characteristics.¹⁰

First, the most important fact about this practice is that the name taboo was a nationwide injunction against the use of emperors’ (personal) names. It was promulgated in decrees, regulations and codes. Examples of it are innumerable. Most are clear cut and are not subject to dispute. Even the more difficult ones are often readily discernible and can be cross-checked with other sources.

⁵ Wei Zheng 魏徵 636/1973:187.

⁶ Piotr Adamek 2015:139.

⁷ Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 653/1983:200.

⁸ Cf. Piotr Adamek (2015:1-2).

⁹ For the impacts, see Piotr Adamek (2015), Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010), and Wang Jia 王建 (2002).

¹⁰ For the usefulness of the name taboo, see Piotr Adamek (2015:227-247).

The second characteristic is that the taboo of a name had a temporal demarcation. Although the name might have been avoided when the emperor was still the heir-apparent, a wider prohibition was usually enforced after he ascended the throne.¹¹ This remained in force for seven generations, after which the emperor's name was removed to the Hall of the Distant Ancestors. However, names of very strong emperors, especially the early founders, could continue to be avoided throughout the dynasty. Nevertheless, the taboos imposed in a former dynasty were not observed in a new dynasty. Generally speaking, but not without exception, in texts that contained older taboos names were restored to their original status and, of course, modified to accommodate the new names to be avoided. Although it was an extremely rare occurrence, the taboo on Tang Taizong's name, as demonstrated in Section 3.5, continued to be avoided for some time, even after the Tang collapse.¹²

The third feature is the broad scope of the implementation of the taboo system that meant the writing of the names of imperial ancestors and the names of people who were recognized as ancestors by the emperors was also discouraged. Probably because of the all-pervading influence of ancestor worship, these names were tabooed as strictly as those of ruling emperors, despite the fact the bearers of these names had died long before the dynasty was established. As will be demonstrated, the character *hu* 虎 was widely avoided in Tang China because it was the given name of Li Hu 李虎 (d. 551), the great-grandfather of Tang Taizong. These taboos are also helpful when examining sources, because the taboo was always officially enacted by the court by the proclamation of edicts or orders that are dated or are clearly documented.

The fourth characteristic is that the name taboo did not mean that the emperors' names or their corresponding characters could never be used. This practice did actually allow scribes to employ these characters, but, whenever they encountered them, scribes were supposed to adopt technical measures in order not to offend the name-bearers. Accordingly, in the course of time the Chinese people developed a full package of methods that enabled them to use these names without running the risk of being punished. Alongside the method observed at the opening of this chapter (that is: a name could be replaced by another character or a synonym), after having written the emperor's name, some authors covered it with a slip of yellow paper. Moreover, when encountering the name, certain people did not commit it to

¹¹ It seems that Chinese avoided mentioning crown princes' names from the third and fourth centuries. Nevertheless, this avoidance might have been observed by only a small group of people, presumably court officials. For more details, see Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:73) and Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:136).

¹² For more details, see Piotr Adamek (2015:271) and Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:79-80).

paper at all but left the space blank. Constrictions imposed by space mean that these taboo methods cannot be introduced one by one with illustrations of each of them. However, four techniques of tabooing Tang Taizong's names are discussed at great length below because they are important to the dating of our manuscripts.¹³

Given the pervasiveness of the practice, its temporal limitations, the special edicts and the different methods used, the name taboo lends itself splendidly to dating sources. As Imre Galambos points out, a rough and yet common rule of thumb in using taboos to date manuscripts is: "[W]henver such a [taboo] case is encountered, the document is generally assumed to date to the period between the reign of the ruler whose name is tabooed and the end of the same dynasty."¹⁴

3.2 The four methods of tabooing Tang Taizong's name, *shimin*

Tang Taizong's name, *shimin* 世民, composed of two characters, *shi* and *min*, was tabooed more rigorously than that of any other Chinese emperor. Among all the 2,504 examples collected throughout history, in Wang Jian's survey, 301 concern Tang Taizong's name.¹⁵ In Tang China, both *shi* and *min* were widely avoided by using one of four methods: omitting, replacing, *quebi* 缺筆 and *gaijian* 改件. This section argues that the latter two methods are two techniques that were newly introduced at different periods in Tang China and should not be mistaken for one method.

3.2.1 Examples tabooed using the two older methods, omitting and replacing

As suggested by their transparent meanings, omitting means that users simply did not write a name; replacing indicates that scribes chose to employ other characters, most of which happened to be synonymous with the name. Both methods are very old. The former had probably been in use since the Zhou dynasty; the latter since the third century BCE.¹⁶

Examples of avoiding Tang Taizong's name using these two methods are many. For instance, Tang authors also often did not write out *shi* or *min* contained in other people's names. A fifth-century man named Zhu Chaomin 竺超民 appears as Zhu Chao in Tang sources; Wang Shichong 王世充 (d. 621), a general who was defeated by Tang Taizong, was sometimes

¹³ There are more than a dozen methods. For comprehensive lists, see Piotr Adamek (2015:49-59), Wang Xinhua 王新華 (2007) and Wang Jiang 王建 (2002:305-310).

¹⁴ Imre Galambos 2012:109.

¹⁵ Wang Jian 王建 2002:285, 288.

¹⁶ Piotr Adamek 2012:49-50, 55, 86-87; Wang Xinhua 王新華 2007:170; Wang Jiang 王建 2002:306-307.

known as Wang Chong.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, as Chen Yuan remarks, recourse to this method can easily lead to confusion, especially when people’s names are concerned.¹⁸

Likewise, *min* was often replaced with *ren* 人; *shi* with *dai* 代. The Xi’an Stele twice substitutes *shi* with *dai* to convey the birth of the Messiah: “*tong ren chu dai*” (同人出代) and “*fen shen chu dai*” (分身出代).¹⁹ In these two phrases, as scholars have pointed out, *chudai* is *chushi* that is still used by present-day Chinese to mean birth.²⁰ Probably because this method causes less confusion than the previous one and the taboo examples are largely decipherable, Tang scribes seem to have preferred this method. They replaced *shi* and *min* using a number of characters — see Table 3.1.²¹

Name	Replacement
<i>min</i> 民	<i>ren</i> 人, <i>baixing</i> 百姓, <i>meng</i> 萌, <i>mang</i> 氓, <i>shi</i> 士, <i>ren</i> 仁, <i>chen</i> 臣, <i>ding</i> 丁, <i>bu</i> 部, <i>buxia</i> 部下, <i>shi</i> 时, <i>tianxia</i> 天下
<i>shi</i> 世	<i>dai</i> 代, <i>shi</i> 时, <i>xi</i> 系, <i>si</i> 嗣, <i>su</i> 俗, <i>ye</i> 葉, <i>shi</i> 势, <i>zhu</i> 祖, <i>shi</i> 事, <i>tai</i> 太, <i>zhong</i> 中, <i>zheng</i> 政, <i>you</i> 又

Table 3.1 Replacement characters used to taboo Tang Taizong’s name, *shimin*

3.2.2 Examples tabooed using the new method, *quebi*

The *quebi* method was a popular taboo technique. It was “a superior way of maintaining the integrity of texts”.²² Both *shi* and *min* could be avoided on a large scale using this method. However, the first appearance of this method still has to be determined.

3.2.2.1 *Quebi* examples of *shi* and *min*

The *quebi* technique required the removal of some strokes from the character — usually the very last stroke. In simple words, scribes deliberately deviated from the orthodox orthography, writing a character in an ‘incorrect’ form. Various *quebi* forms of *shi* and *min* have been confirmed.

¹⁷ For a good list of these examples, see Wang Yankun 王彦坤 (2009:193-194, 240-242).

¹⁸ Chen Yuan 陳垣 1958:37-40.

¹⁹ Paul Pelliot 1996: Fig.2, Cols. 6, 26.

²⁰ For a brief discussion, see Xu Longfei (2004:128), Paul Pelliot (1996:204-205, note 39), and Lin Wushu 林悟殊 and Yin Xiaoping 殷小平 (2008:333).

²¹ This table is based on examples analyzed by Wang Yankun 王彦坤 (2009:194-200, 242-248).

²² Imre Galambos 2012:117.

Looking at the *quebi* examples of *shi*, three forms, 𠂔, 卅 and 卺, are clear.²³ The most common taboo form is 𠂔. In P.3371 alone, this form is used more than a dozen times, and all examples like 𠂔 are obvious.²⁴ *The Hua Xian Muzhi*, a Christian inscription dated 815 and introduced in Chapter 1, was also carved using this form, 𠂔 (c24w13).²⁵ In contrast, 卅 and 卺 are lesser known variants. The former, according to Piotr Adamek, was employed on the *Li Ji bei* 李勣碑 stele erected in 677.²⁶ The latter occurs in P.2536, a Dunhuang manuscript dated 663: 卺 (世).²⁷

Five taboo forms have been identified of the *quebi* examples of *min*. The most common four are: 𠂔 in S.799, 𠂔 in S.453, 𠂔 in S.800 and 𠂔 in P.2590.²⁸ The form, 氏, was less common. Xiang Zonglu (d. 1941) discovered that this form was used in a Tang annotation of *The Wenxuan* 文選, an anthology of Chinese literary works compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531).²⁹

3.2.2.2 The introduction of *quebi*

The precise time at which it was introduced is very hard to pin down. Most scholars accept the theory first proposed by Chen Yuan in 1928 and maintain that “must have begun in Tang Gaozong’s reign”. (當起於唐高宗之世)³⁰ This dissertation basically agrees with the prevailing

²³ For the sake of both argument and convenience, this paper uses the rescanned examples and the re-computerized forms. The condition of the sources, especially the manuscripts, varies widely. Many rescanned examples are too unclear. Importantly, as these illustrations are not the orthodox forms, the retyping is not easy and sometimes almost impossible.

²⁴ Cited from Michel Soymié (1990:404).

²⁵ To facilitate readers in finding these examples used on Tang stones, this dissertation follows the traditional Chinese writing habit and assigns a combination of letters and numerals to the samples. For instance, ‘c24w13’ means that the example is Word (Character) 13 in Column 24 on the *Hua Xian muzhi* tombstone. The example has been scanned from the original plate kindly sent to me by Mao Yangguang.

²⁶ Piotr Adamek 2015:145. This example was first analyzed by Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:6).

²⁷ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:139. All Dunhuang taboo examples used in this dissertation are cited from Dou Huaiyong, unless otherwise stated. I have re-examined each example by downloading manuscript images from International Dunhuang Project’s website, <http://idp.bl.uk/>. Note that Dou Huaiyong focuses on the taboos of Chinese emperors’ names between the fourth century and the early eleventh century. He exhausts all the dated Dunhuang manuscripts that number more than 600.

²⁸ The first three are quoted from Huang Zheng 黃征 (2005:276). For the last, see Michel Soymié (1990:404).

²⁹ Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 1987:271. I do not have access to the original Tang version that Xiang Zonglu is studying.

³⁰ Chen Yuan 陳垣 1958:7. *Quebi*, other theories suggest, might have appeared in either the first or the fourth century, perhaps even the late sixth century. For instance, Dou Huaiyong has put forward the hypothesis that *quebi* might have already been used on a small scale in the Sui dynasty. However, none of these minor theories has yet been substantiated by clear examples. In fact, Dou Huaiyong basically concurs with Chen Yuan, and he writes candidly that we “lack convincing [Sui] evidence that might distinguish *quebi* taboos from popular variants.” (尚缺乏有力的[隋朝]證據將缺筆後的字形與俗字分開). Moreover, he has so far discovered no *quebi* taboos in Sui manuscripts — see below. For more details about these minor theories, see Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:129-139).

theory but nevertheless finds that we can backdate the appearance of the *quebi* method a little bit earlier.

On one hand, the prevailing theory seems strong. Lately, Piotr Adamek has also concluded that the *quebi* method “can be seen for the first time in the Tang period, during the ruling time of Gaozong”, whereas other earlier alleged cases “cannot be confirmed” owing to “many different writing styles [variants]”.³¹ He goes on to elaborate:³²

For example in the inscription of “Zengtai shikong xuangongbei” 贈泰師孔宣公碑 (Stone Stele Presented to the Greatest Teacher Confucius) from 666, the character *min* 泯 is written as *zhi* 泚. The case is regarded as the first known example of the method of a missing stroke. Similar instances can also be found in the “Zhining bei” 志寧碑 (Stone Stele of Zhining, 666) — *shi* 世 is written as *sa* 卅 in the expression *shiwu* 世武, and on the “Li He bei” 李賀碑 (Stone Stele of Li He) (677) — there is the *sa* 卅 character put in place of *shi* 世 in the name of Wang Shichong 王世充.

On the other hand, these putative earliest examples are not the first occurrences of *quebi*. There are pre-666 examples and they are not only unequivocal but also sizeable. Dou Huaiyong has already discovered a number of *quebi* examples from Tang Gaozong’s reign but a few years prior to 666. His earliest examples are found in manuscript P.2536, dated 663. In this source, on multiple occasions *bing* 丙, *min* 民, *shi* 世 and *zhi* 治 are deprived of their last strokes. For an illustration, see the last above-mentioned *quebi* example of *shi*. More *quebi* examples used in Tang Gaozong’s rule are discussed in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, I have also found examples that were used in Tang Taizong’s reign. The earliest occurrences I have discovered are 𪔐 and 𪔑. They bear the date 648, occurring in *The Shanjianlü* 善見律, a Tang Buddhist manuscript famous for its exquisite calligraphy (23 centimeters x 457 centimeters). Although this source scarcely rates a mention from many taboo experts, there are five good reasons that demonstrate these two occurrences are *quebi* taboos of *hu* 虎 (虓), the name of Li Hu, that have been deprived of the last vertical stroke.

The first affirmative reason is that *The Shanjianlü* is a genuine manuscript. As shown below, information about how it came to be made is indisputable. The manuscript was produced by the Tang court and it might have even been used by Emperor Tang Taizong himself. Moreover, as attested by private seals and historical notes, this manuscript has been the property of

³¹ Piotr Adamek 2015:54, 144.

³² Piotr Adamek 2015:145. The first source should be transcribed as *Zeng taishi kongxuangong bei*. The full title of the second stone is *Yu Zhining bei* 于志寧碑. The correct title of the last stele should be *Li Ji bei* 李勣碑.

members of the Chinese elite throughout history. For some time it was even kept in the Imperial Library and was examined by several emperors of different dynasties. Currently, it is housed at the Palace Museum 故宮博物院 in Beijing.³³

The second reason that confirms our statement is that the context reveals that the two examples are the character *hu* 虎. The first example occurs in the phrase “*hu lang shizi*” (虎狼師[獅]子); the second example in the phrase “*shanhu hupo jin yin*” (珊瑚[琥]珀金銀).³⁴ As these two phrases consist only of ordinary nouns, there is no any other way to read them other than in the interpretation below. The first phrase refers to three ferocious beasts, *hu* (虎) for tiger, *lang* for wolf and *shizi* for lion; the second phrase lists four expensive substances, namely: *shanhu* coral, *hupo* (琥[珀]) amber, *jin* gold and *yin* silver.

The third reason that backs our argument is the very fact that *The Shanjianlü* was sanctioned by the Tang court suggests that its production was subject to the most stringent quality control. The colophon states that the manuscript was written on seven pieces of paper by a professional scribe, Guo Quan 國詮, on “the tenth day of the twelfth month in the twenty-second year of the Zhenguan reign” (貞觀廿二年十二月十日, December 29, 648).³⁵ The text was then proofread not once, but twice. On the first occasion this work was done by Dao Yi 道嶷 and the second by Fa Lun 法倫, both monks but from two different Buddhist monasteries. After editing, these loose pieces were bound by a professional binder called Fu Wenkai 輔文開. Crucially, each procedure seems to have been overseen by government representatives. As stated in the colophon, the whole process was supervised by four officials: Ma Renyi 馬仁義, Zhao Mu 趙模, Lu Zhengchen 盧爭臣 and Wei Dan 蔚丹; and the whole project was under the direction of Yan Liben 閻立本, a top court official who was also a well-known calligrapher and painter. Given such rigorous quality control, the making of this manuscript was unquestionably a serious court matter and the manuscript was probably intended to be read by Emperor Tang Taizong. In short, this Buddhist source was produced to the highest possible standards, that would certainly have faithfully observed the name taboo practice.

The fourth reason to verify our assertion is based on the fact that Chinese historical accounts record that *hu* should be avoided because the name-bearer, Li Hu, was posthumously

³³ For more information, visit the official website <http://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/handwriting/231479.html>.

³⁴ Sun Baowen 孫寶文 2012:6, 29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31. Images of this manuscript can be easily found on the Internet.

elevated to emperor. *The Tanghuiyao* records that one month after he seized the throne, Li Yuan created Li Hu “Jing Emperor” (景皇帝) and placed his name tablet in the ancestral temple where it could be venerated.³⁶ In fact, throughout the Tang dynasty, *hu* remained widely tabooed. It was often replaced by *wu* 武 — the phrase *hupi* 虎皮, the official position *huben* 虎賁 and the geographical name *hulao* 虎牢 were changed to *wupi* 武皮, *wuben* 武賁 and *wulao* 武牢 respectively.³⁷ As Wang Jian points out, *hu* was one of the most frequently tabooed Tang characters, ranking second only to Tang Taizong’s own name.³⁸

Finally, forms similar to these two examples have been identified as *quebi* taboos of *hu*. 虎 found by Michel Soyumié in manuscript P.2530 that bears the date 660, for instance, is exactly the same as our first example.³⁹ In fact, Dunhuang manuscripts yield more examples that are exactly the same as our two specimens. In manuscript P.2457 alone, Dou Huaiyong has recognized these two forms: 虜 and 虜. Pertinently these two forms do not differ at all from our first and second examples. Manuscript P.2457 is a religious source composed by Daoists in the name of Tang Xuanzong in the “*Kaiyuan niansan nian*.” (開元廿三年, 735)⁴⁰

All of the reasons given clearly indicate that the examples used in *The Shanjianlü* are *quebi* taboos. They were deliberately written in this form by the scribe to deviate from the orthodox orthography so as not to offend the name-bearer Li Hu. In short, the *quebi* method was not first used in Tang Gaozong’s reign as it had already been employed in Tang Taizong’s reign. As no other earlier examples can be confirmed, at this stage of research we can claim that *quebi* could very well have been introduced during Tang Taizong’s reign or at a given time between 626 and 648.

3.2.3 Complex characters tabooed using the new method, *gaijian*

Before Dou Huaiyong first observed the *gaijian* method in 2007 and consequently reiterated that we should distinguish *gaijian* from *quebi* in 2010, all the *gaijian* taboos were taken to be examples of *quebi*.⁴¹ To the best of my knowledge, Dou Huaiyong still remains the only

³⁶ Wang Pu 王溥 961/1955:1. Li Yuan elevated four generations of his ancestors in total.

³⁷ For more examples, see Piotr Adamek (2015:52, 236, 238, 273), Wang Jian 王建 (2011:199-203), and Wang Yankun 王彥坤 (2009:103-117).

³⁸ Wang Jian 王建 2002:288.

³⁹ Michel Soyumié 1990:404.

⁴⁰ This date is given in the colophon and is cited from Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2007:97).

⁴¹ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:156-171, 2007:218-226.

scholar to have made this distinction.⁴² I agree with Dou Huaiyong and reiterate that the first appearance of the *gaijian* method can be traced back precisely to the year 658. On the basis of his study, I shall clarify some of the points he raises and offer the first reconstructed picture of this complicated method.

3.2.3.1 The term *gaijian*

The term *gaijian* is derived from *gaixing* 改形 that was coined by Dou Huaiyong to categorize a large portion of presumed *quebi* examples analyzed by mainstream scholars. Dou Huaiyong argues that a *quebi* was confined only to the actual names of the emperors, whereas *gaijian* (*gaixing*) was applied to the complex characters of which these names consist. For instance, *ye* 葉 is a complex character composed of three elements. The top element is *ao* 艸 and the lower element is *mu* 木; arranged between these two elements is *shi* 世, the first character of Tang Taizong's name. *Hun* 昏 is also a complex character. It has two elements. The top is *min* 民, the second character of Tang Taizong's name; the lower *ri* 日. Obviously, these complex characters were not actual royal names and they differ fundamentally from the individual characters contained in the emperors' name — in this case, *shi* and *min*. Nevertheless, these complex characters were also avoided from the advent of the Tang dynasty in China.

Technically speaking, the term *gaixing* is less precise than the phrase *gaijian*. In the writing of Chinese characters, *xing* 形 means form, shape and appearance, and *jian* 件 stands for component, part and element. Therefore, *gaijian* encapsulates the uniqueness of avoiding complex characters more accurately than does *gaixing*. In a nutshell, strictly speaking any taboo example entails changes in the original form of a particular character. That is to say, any name taboo, regardless of a specific method, can be labeled a *gaixing* example. Therefore, this paper prefers *gaijian* to *gaixing*.

3.2.3.2 The introduction of *gaijian*

As far as the sources are concerned, *gaijian* appeared in 658. The initial appearance of this method is documented and can also be substantiated from other sources. Nevertheless, the first promulgation is actually attested in two sources. The first one is a court order preserved in *The Jiutangshu*.⁴³

⁴² For instance, Piotr Adamek (2015) and Imre Galambos (2012) do not recognize this method.

⁴³ Liu Xu 劉昫 945/1975:77. See also Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:157) and Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:7).

[Tang Gaozong] changed “*hun*” and “*ye*” on the sixteenth day [of the twelfth month in the second year of the Xianqing reign]. [唐高宗顯慶二年十二月] 庚午，改 “昏” “葉” 字。

Admittedly, this order is succinct, and it does not explain how these two characters, *hun* and *ye*, should be avoided. However, it is clear cut and unambiguous. It documents indisputably that Tang Gaozong promulgated the *gaijian* method and ordered that *hun* and *ye* be tabooed on January 25, 658.

The second source is *The Sanzang shengjiaoxu ji* 三藏聖教序記 that happens to employ *hun* and *ye*. *The Sanzang shengjiaoxu ji* is not a common source. It is a stele that was composed to extol the virtues of Xuanzang 玄奘, a Chinese monk who journeyed overland to India (629-645) and translated Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese.⁴⁴ The first part of this text was composed by Tang Taizong in 648; the second part was added shortly afterwards by his successor, Tang Gaozong. The whole text was then written down by Wang Hangman 王行滿, a famous calligrapher. The stele was subsequently carved by Sheng Daoyuan 沈道元 and erected in Yanshi 偃師, Xuanzang’s birthplace.

In view of this official attribution of the text, therefore, it would have been surprising had this stone not embraced the tradition and avoided *hun* and *ye*. However, the opposite is true. The stone does not taboo the use of either of these two characters. As Dou Huaiyong has observed, *ye* is written in its orthodox form.⁴⁵ I have re-examined the rubbing and have found that *hun* was also chiseled in its normal orthography. This rescanned example, , although not as clear as it might be, is still legible.⁴⁶ There is no doubt that it is not a taboo form.

The reason that this official source used the orthodox orthographies is not far to seek. The answer lies in the time that the stone was erected, namely: on “the fifteenth day [of the twelfth month ...] in the second year of the Xianqing reign.” (顯慶二年[十二月.....]十五日, January 24, 658)⁴⁷ That is to say, its erection took place precisely one day before Tang

⁴⁴ After returning to Tang China, Xuanzang dictated an account of his journey to his disciple, Bianji 辯機. His account, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* 大唐西域記, has been translated into English by Li Rongxi (1996). Some of his other works will be analyzed in Chapter 6.

⁴⁵ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:157.

⁴⁶ Beijing tushuguan jinshizu 北京圖書館金石組 1997a:57. This example is carved on the lower part of Column 13. This stone has been badly damaged and a fair part of the rubbing is illegible.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* The date is in the last column. Cogently, *ye* and *hun* were also not tabooed in another inscription of the same text composed in 652 by Chu Suiliang 褚遂良, a famous calligrapher. For more details about this earlier stone, see Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:7).

Gaozong ordered that *ye* and *hun* be avoided. On that particular day, there was still no requirement to taboo any complex characters.

This promulgation is also confirmed by Dunhuang manuscripts and Tang engraved stones. Dou Huaiyong's study has demonstrated that none of the dated manuscripts ever avoided any complex characters before 658. The earliest *gaijian* taboo that Dou Huaiyong has found occurs in a Buddhist manuscript, *Ganbo* 028. This manuscript bears the date "the twenty-third day of the sixth month in the third year of the Xianqing reign" (顯慶三年六月廿三日, July 28th, 658) — for the illustration, see below.⁴⁸ Turning to the engraved Tang tombstones, none of the following 500 inscriptions carved before the middle of the seventh century ever employed the *gaijian* method before 658. As will be discussed in Section 3.4, the first example of the avoidance of these complex characters is found on a tombstone, [Zhang] *Henggui zhi* [張]恒貴誌. According to the inscription, *Zhang Henggui* was buried in October 658 (顯慶三年八月), just a few months after Tang Gaozong's order was promulgated.

3.2.3.3 Reconstructing the *gaijian* method

Although the *gaijian* method is still only scantily documented, a search of Dunhuang manuscripts and Tang carved stones unlocks many more details that demonstrate that Tang China avoided a host of complex characters. In fact, the examples are so numerous we are able to reconstruct a fairly detailed picture of this new technique. As the examples collected from the Tang steles and stones will be discussed in Section 3.4, this section will be confined to the examples found in Dunhuang manuscripts.⁴⁹

Generally speaking, the element *shi* was modified in three ways. In the most conspicuous *shi* was changed into 甘. For example, *xie* 洩 was transformed into 洩 (P.2617) and *die* 牒 into 牒 (P.2617). Besides this, *shi* could also be replaced by 曳. For example, *xie* 洩 was written as 洩 (S.5731, P.2371), *yi* 榘 as 榘 (P.2528), *ye* 拙 as 拽 (P.3906v, S.5431) and *yi* 咄 as 咄 (S.617). Meanwhile, the element *shi* could also be written as 云 that often appears as 云 in

⁴⁸ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2007:74. This date occurs in the colophon. *Ganbo* stands for Gansusheng bowuguan 甘肅省博物館, a provincial museum in China.

⁴⁹ For more occurrences, see Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:157-171, 183-218, 226-243).

handwritten works.⁵⁰ For example, *die* 諫 was modified into 諫 (S.388), *die* 蹀 into 蹀 (P.2528) and *die* 蝶 into 蝶 (S.617, P.3054).

The element *min* 民 was likewise modified in three ways. The most common one was its transformation into 氏. Therefore *min* 泯 was written as 泯 (*Ganbo* 028). Meanwhile, the element *min* was also changed into “氏.”⁵¹ For example, the taboo form of *hun* 昏 was 昏 (P.2717). Occasionally, the element *min* could be written as 𠂔 — the example being 𠂔, that is *min* 泯. Dou Huaiyong found it in P.2475, a Taoist text written in 714.⁵²

Several interesting facts that have not been observed anywhere else can be gleaned from the list. Firstly, during the Tang dynasty, people seem to have employed these fashions interchangeably, showing no special inclination to abide by any one particular fashion. Many complex characters were in fact written in more than one way. For example, *ye* 葉 was written in two ways: 葉 (S.2999, P.3742) and 葉 (P.3233, P.2016). The same applies to *die* 揲: 揲 (P.2617) and 揲 (P.2602). Some complex characters were even tabooed in all the three ways. In addition to the two taboo forms mentioned above (*Ganbo* 028, P.2475), the character *min* 泯, for instance, was also avoided using the second fashion, “氏” (S.2832).⁵³

Secondly, the ways in which the elements *shi* and *min* were modified shed light on the interesting relationship between *gaijian* and *quebi*. Undoubtedly, *gaijian* and *quebi* are closely connected to each other and *gaijian* seems to have been invented on the basis of the existing use of *quebi*. The first method of avoiding the element *shi* mentioned above is one of the *quebi* forms of the individual character *shi*. All the three ways of tabooing the element *min* are precisely the same as the *quebi* forms of the individual character *min*. Despite these correspondences, *gaijian* and *quebi* are not one and the same method. They do differ from each other. The last two ways of discouraging the use of the element *shi* were completely new. To the best of my knowledge, these two fashions have not been spotted in the *quebi* examples of the individual character *shi*. Importantly, as to be demonstrated below, the

⁵⁰ 云 and 𠂔 seem to have been two different forms. Cf. Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:160-162). However they are probably one form written in two different styles. The former is in the standard style; the latter in the cursive style.

⁵¹ To computerize this example is difficult. This study cites the *quebi* example of *min* 民, found in S.799 and analyzed by Huang Zheng 黃征 (2005:366). The only difference between this example and the previous one is that this example is written with one dot in the right corner. Despite this difference, these two examples were used interchangeably. Cf. Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:162-163, 241). When examining the Tang tombstones, I do not distinguish these two different ways of modifying the element *min*.

⁵² Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:163.

⁵³ Huang Zheng 黃征 2005:277.

archaic forms of complex chracters can be revived and used to taboo Tang Taizong's name. In plain English, *gaijian* and *quebi* should be recognized as two different methods and the *gaijian* examples cannot be mixed up with the *quebi* examples or vice-versa.

In light of the above discussion and illustrations, we can extrapolate the following picture of the *gaijian* method.⁵⁴ Firstly, any complex character, as long as it was part of an emperor's name, could be avoided, even though Tang Gaozong actually ordered only two complex characters be tabooed. Secondly, the way to avoid the complex characters was to modify only the precise elements that happened to be the emperors' names. Other elements of the complex characters were left intact. Thirdly, *gaijian* was introduced on the basis of *quebi*, but it differs fundamentally from it. Fourthly, *gaijian* appeared no earlier than the year 658. Its specific commencement can be traced back to Tang Gaozong's order issued in 658.

3.3 The Messiah Sutra and On One God tabooed Tang Taizong's name inconsistently

In the framework of this overview of avoiding Tang Taizong's name, the implementation of the taboo practice in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* is not consistent. While they do use the taboo forms of Tang Taizong's name, both manuscripts still employ the orthodox orthographies, thereby violating the name taboo practice. This inconsistency, I argue, demolishes the traditional chronology that places these two sources in Tang Taizong's reign. As the findings will be spelt out in the Conclusion to this chapter, this section will document this inconsistency by presenting the non/taboo examples.

3.3.1 Non-taboo of Tang Taizong's name

The non-taboo of Tang Taizong's name is attested by two strands of conspicuous evidence. The first piece of evidence is that, although the scribe used the orthodox form of *shi* many times, he did not employ the character *min*. All forty-four occurrences of *shi* are clear and complete. All are in the form 世, that is still used as the only 'correct' orthography today. As demonstrated in Table 3.2, not a single example is deprived of a stroke. Not one occurrence of *shi* is a taboo.

Sources	<i>Shi</i>	Samples
<i>The Messiah Sutra</i>	1 x c7, 11, 12, 17, 18, 33, 46, 75, 104, 119, 122, 125, 136, 138, 147, 162, 163, 168.	c122w12 世, c138w6 世

⁵⁴ Here and there, Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:157-171, 183-218) has also tried to reconstruct *gaijian*.

<i>On One God</i>	1 x c207, 208, 209, 263, 265, 267, 285, 286, 294, 314, 316, 317, 333, 335, 339, 351, 352, 353, 357, 359, 361, 363, 364, 395; 2 x c348	c294w5  , c348w11 
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Table 3.2 Orthodox orthographies of *shi* in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*

1x c7: one occurrence in Column 7.

The second piece of evidence is the complex character *min* 愍, that consists of the second character contained in Tang Taizong's name. This character occurs only once. The example,  (c115w5), is found in *The Messiah Sutra*.⁵⁵ As suggested above, *min* 愍 must have been tabooed after 658. More often than not, its left top element *min* 民 was changed into 氏 —  that was used in S.388, S.5319, P.2274, S.1048 and S.2278.⁵⁶ As our example is clear and neat, there is no room to doubt that it is an orthodox form.

Before moving on to discuss the undisputed taboos of Tang Taizong's name, two other observations need to be made about suspicious taboos. The first is concerned with the method omitting. This method, one might presume, was used because the key theological term *shizun* 世尊 is sometimes written without *shi*.⁵⁷ However, it is almost impossible to determine whether this non-usage of *shi* in this particular case was attributable to the name taboo practice or whether it can be blamed on the scribe's carelessness. As other occurrences of *shizun* do contain the character *shi*, the more likely scenario is that the scribe unintentionally omitted *shi*. This tendency toward scribal sloppiness will become more apparent when a growing number of examples can be quoted from the texts.

The second observation is about the method replacing. So far it seems to have been used only once in the phrase "*chunqiu yingdai*" (春秋迎代) that occurs in Col.162 of *On One God*.⁵⁸ The last character *dai*, according to Table 3.1, seems to be a replacement for *shi*. However, I am not aware of any literature that has discussed this particular phrase as a taboo form. Moreover, this phrase might even have been a customary expression. Wu Changxing seems to have pinpointed its ancient origin. He suggests that the usage comes from "*yushi chunqiu*

⁵⁵ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:397.

⁵⁶ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:240-241.

⁵⁷ In total, I have discovered six such instances. All occur in *On One God*. They can be found in Cols. 256, 266, 267, 269 (two occurrences) and 270. This non-occurrence of the character *shi*, as discussed in Chapter 2, has been used by the doubters as an indication of forgery.

⁵⁸ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:364.

gaijie, *sishi diedai*” (於是春秋改節，四時迭代), one verse from a famous Chinese essay, *Dongjingfu* 東京賦, written by Zhang Heng 張衡 in the second century.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, these two observations do not influence the analysis. Should these cases indeed be taboos, all they suggest is that *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* were made in or after Tang Taizong’s reign. At any rate, they do not necessarily attest that the two sources were produced around the 640s.

3.3.2 Taboo of Tang Taizong’s name

The taboo of Tang Taizong’s name is demonstrated by the fact that three complex characters are written in the taboo forms. Two characters contain the element *shi*: *die* 牒 and *qi* 棄. They are used in *On One God*. The third character is composed of the element *min* 民. It is the character listed in the Tang Gaozong’s famous order, *hun* 昏. It occurs in *The Messiah Sutra*. This section deals with them one by one.

3.3.2.1 *Die* 牒 was tabooed

Die 牒 consists of three elements. The left element is *pian* 片, the right top is *shi* 世, the first character contained in Tang Taizong’s name, and the lower right element is *mu* 木. It occurs only once,  (c287w4).⁶⁰

During the course of the twentieth century, this handwritten form was invariably transcribed by scholars as 片京.⁶¹ It barely raised any comment because the original Chinese context (Jesus’ body was shrouded in new cotton cloth) is pretty clear, and because the meaning of the text is not changed regardless of how this single character was transcribed.

Nevertheless, the research conducted in this new century has demonstrated that this transcription is a mistake. Nie Zhijun was the first to offer the suggestion that the handwritten example was one of “the popular forms” (俗字) used in many other Dunhuang manuscripts.⁶² Furthermore, he puts forward a succinct argument that the handwritten form was indeed a

⁵⁹ Wu Changxing 吳昶興 2015c:100, note 261.

⁶⁰ This example has been scanned from the version reprinted by Lin Wushu 林悟殊 (2003:376).

⁶¹ For this transcription, see P.Y. Saeki (1951:59, Chinese texts), Weng Shaojun 翁紹軍 (1996:145), Jiang Wenhan 江文漢 (1982:87), Luo Xianglin 羅香林 (1966:203), and Gong Tianmin 龔天民 (1960:143).

⁶² Nie Zhijun 聶志軍 2010:123.

consequence of avoiding writing Tang Taizong's name, concluding that its orthodox form is “牒”.⁶³ So far, his reading has been accepted by Chinese scholars.⁶⁴

Although one could cross swords with Nie Zhijun about the demarcation between the popular forms and the orthodox orthographies, his conclusion is insightful and his explanation is inspiring. The modern transcription is not to be found in any dictionary, either Chinese or Japanese. Nor have I come across any ancient manuscript that ever used it. Most likely, it was invented by those scholars who first edited the Chinese texts in the early twentieth century, since when it has been taken for granted because the original manuscripts were not accessible.

In fact, the handwritten example in the Christian manuscript is very similar to many other Dunhuang handwritten forms that are recognized as the taboo form and are transcribed as 𪚩. For example, 𪚩 in S.203, discussed by Huang Zheng, and 𪚩 in P.2215 found by Dou Huaiyong.⁶⁵ It is almost identical to 𪚩 in P.2613 and many other subsequent examples collected from Tang tombstones.⁶⁶ In other words, this particular handwritten form used in *On One God* was the result of avoiding Tang Taizong's name by modifying the element *shi* that is contained in the complex character *die*.

3.3.2.2 Qi 棄 was tabooed

Qi 棄 can be divided into three elements. The top is 云; the middle *shi*; the lower *mu*. It also occurs once only in *On One God* in which case its middle element *shi* is removed, 𪚩 (c297w9).⁶⁷ The computerized form is 弃, of which the orthodox form is 棄.

So far this handwritten form has been a bone of contention; whether or not it is a taboo is still being debated by experts. Duan Yucai (d.1815) maintained that it is a taboo form. The reason, he explains, is that “the middle element of [棄] looks like 世 that was tabooed by the Tang people”. ([棄]中體似世/唐人諱世)⁶⁸ However, Su Peicheng points out that “弃 was the original ancient orthography of 棄.” (弃本來是棄的古文)⁶⁹ Therefore what Su Peicheng is

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Wang Lanping 王蘭平 2016a:208, 231, note 236; Wu Changxing 吳昶興 2015c:118, note 485.

⁶⁵ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:167; Huang Zheng 黃征 2005:87.

⁶⁶ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:101-102. This manuscript bears the date 873.

⁶⁷ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:376.

⁶⁸ Duan Yucai 段玉裁 1815/1981:158.

⁶⁹ Su Peicheng 蘇培成 2000:172.

suggesting is that the former had been used earlier and was replaced by the latter, but this is not enough grounds to claim that the former was not a taboo form. Lately, Dou Huaiyong has been exploring the middle ground. He comments: “It cannot be explicitly excluded that the ancient form ‘弃’ was being used more frequently [than 棄] in Tang China so as to avoid the character ‘世’ by employing the *gaixing* [*gaijian*] method.” (在唐代更多使用了古文字形‘弃’，這顯然不能排除因避唐‘世’字諱而改形[件]的可能。)⁷⁰

Although scholars have shown that 弃 was used long before Tang China, this research is inclined to accept that the form under discussion is a taboo. In fact, it seems that by acquiescing in Dou Huaiyong’s claim, it is possible to visualize a particular process: the older form 弃 became obsolete after the newer form 棄 was introduced; however, because of the taboo practice, the older form was revived in Tang China, apparently dislodging the newer form and this process is attested below.

3.3.2.3 Hun 昏 was tabooed

Hun 昏 is used three times. It is consistently written as 昏, whose top element, *min* 民, was changed into 氏/𡈼:  (c129w14),  (c132w10) and  (c133w5).⁷¹

This handwritten form is also not without its problems. Although mainstream scholars claim that it is a taboo, a few others assert that this form is not a taboo because it was used in pre-Tang China.⁷² Dou Huaiyong again adopts the middle ground. While claiming that it must be seen as a Tang taboo, he warns that one should tread very carefully when adducing it as a taboo case in the examination of sources because it was indeed used before Tang China.⁷³

As time presses, I have not traced the orthographic development of this character fully. However, none of the Tang stones examined below uses the taboo form 昏 before the year 658. Should 昏 be an old and obsolete form, it could still be suggested that the wide usage of this old form after 658 was the result of the wish to avoid Tang Taizong’s name.

3.4 Tang tombstones reveal that *gaijian* was introduced in 658

⁷⁰ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:162.

⁷¹ Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:398-399.

⁷² For the mainstream claim, see Michel Soymié (1990:391-392), Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 (2010:241-243), and Chen Yuan 陳垣 (1958:52-53). For the historical usage of the two forms and their connections, see You Mingzhi 由明智 (2002).

⁷³ Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:241-243.

As some forms used in the Christian manuscripts are questionable, a quantitative survey was conducted so that they could be compared with the Tang inscriptions. The outcome shows that tombstone examples exhibit one identical pattern: not a single taboo form was used earlier than the year 658.

3.4.1 The survey design

The stone inscriptions examined in this chapter are contained in the first five volumes of *The Tangdai muzhiming huibian fukao* 唐代墓誌銘彙編附考, edited by Mao Hanguang who also transcribed and annotated them briefly. In total, these volumes contain 500 inscriptions that are numbered from 1 to 500. As each volume is arranged per 100 inscriptions; each book covers a different timespan: V.1: 619-646, V.2: 646-652, V.3: 652-656, V.4: 656-660 and V.5: 660-663.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, fifty-one of the stones have not been photographed, and fourteen rubbings are unclear. For this exercise, I have perused 435 pieces.⁷⁵

The stones have been found throughout China. Most were excavated between the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. The rubbings of a very small portion were made earlier, and a handful were discovered after World War II. The stones also vary in size and content (mainly a brief overview of the whole life of the deceased). A few contain almost 1,000 characters and appear to have been prepared for the Tang court and high-ranking officials. A number of stones are inscribed with just a few columns. The majority run to about 300 characters and are tombstones of lower-ranking officials and ordinary Tang people who are not documented in Chinese historical accounts. Therefore the taboo examples found on these stones could be a reflection of the fact that the taboo practice was commonly embraced by many strata in Tang society.

At this point it should be said that this research has not examined all the four complex characters found in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*. Given time constrictions, it has focused on *die* 牒 and *hun* 昏. In order to extract yet more information, it also studied another character, *die* 諫. The reasons for running this additional check are twofold. Firstly,

⁷⁴ Mao Hanguang 毛漢光 1986a, 1986b, 1985a, 1985b, 1984). Mao Hanguang planned to examine all available Tang stones made in 618-907 but his project was interrupted. Between 1984 and 1994, he and his team read 1,800 rubbings and stopped in the year 727. In total, they published eighteen volumes.

⁷⁵ The plates that defy reproduction are Rubbings 3, 28, 32, 47, 48 and 52 in V.1; Rubbings 116, 154, 155, 156, 157, 164, 178, 183, 195 and 197 in V.2; Rubbings 208, 209, 211, 216, 250, 252, 258, 263, 281, 289 and 295 in V.3; Rubbings 302, 303, 308, 312, 316, 335, 357, 359, 367, 371, 378, 385, 399 and 400 in V.4; Rubbings 407, 423, 437, 450, 463, 467, 470, 480, 486 and 500 in V.5. The illegible inscriptions are Rubbings 6, 23, 58 and 79 in V.1; Rubbings 110 and 170 in V.2; Rubbings 227, 244, and 277 in V.3; Rubbings 336, 369, 370 and 382 in V.4; Rubbings 469 in V.5.

die 諫, as introduced in Section 3.2.3.3, was also tabooed because its right top element is *shi*. Secondly, Tang Chinese used *die* 諫 and *die* 牒 interchangeably to convey the meaning of a family record or lineage. On these stones, one often comes across phrases like *jiadie* 家牒/諫, *tudie* 圖牒/諫, *shidie* 史牒/諫, *pudie* 譜牒/諫 and *jiandie* 簡牒/諫. Therefore, the forms of 牒 can also give us clues about how the Chinese wrote 牒 at the time they were inscribed.

3.4.2 *Die* 牒 was not tabooed before 658

On these Tang stones, *die* 牒 occurs eighteen times. Examples are unevenly distributed throughout all five volumes. Only two forms are used. One is the orthodox form, 牒; the other is the taboo form, 𡩺. All occurrences are legible and undamaged.⁷⁶

As attested by Table 3.3, the non/usage of the two forms is clear cut. Before Tang Gaozong issued his edict in 658, all occurrences are of the orthodox form. After that edict, all examples are of the taboo form.

The first taboo instance occurs in the fourth volume, in Rubbing 352, [*Zhang*] *Henggui muzhi* [張]恒貴誌. This occurrence, 𡩺 (𡩺), is unmistakable. The right top element *shi* is irrefutably the typically taboo form, 𡩺, rather than the orthodox form, 世. According to the rubbing, Zhang Henggui never served in any official post. He died eleven months after the 658 edict was promulgated. The Chinese time is “the eighth month in the third year of the Xianqing reign.” (顯慶三年八月, 658)⁷⁷

Given these examples, it is reasonable to claim that the taboo form 𡩺 was first introduced in 658.

Volumes	Orthodox form 牒	Taboo form 𡩺
1 (619-646)	r10c5w3, r53c4w4, r70c4w10, r88c23w4, r90c3w6	--
2 (646-652)	r123c4w11, r131c2w2, r135c14w12, r196c3w7	--
3 (652-656)	r235c4w13, r299c3w25	--
4 (656-660)	r319c3w13, r320c6w9	r352c15w7
5 (660-663)	--	r432c3w9, r436c4w8, r444c4w13, r464c3w19

⁷⁶ The case of *die* 牒 (c4w15) in Rubbing 363 in Volume 4 is not studied. Its right top element *shi* is illegible. The stone is dated to *xianqing san nian* 顯慶三年 (658). However, this example does not impinge on our analysis of the use of the taboo form.

⁷⁷ Mao Hanguang 毛漢光 1986b:213 (transcription), 215 (rubbing).

Table 3.3 Orthographies of *die* 牒 in Tang stones (618-663)

3.4.3 *Hun* 昏 was not tabooed before 658

When we look at *hun* 昏 that occurs forty-nine times — see Table 3.4, we find that its usage is almost the same as that of *die* 牒. It is found in all five volumes. Yet only two forms were ever employed: the orthodox form, 昏, and the taboo form, 昏. All examples are legible.⁷⁸

The non/usage of these two forms is clearly demarcated by the year 658. Before 658, all occurrences exhibit the orthodox form. After 658, all examples display the taboo form.

The first occurrence of the taboo form is also found in the fourth volume. The example is



likewise clear: (c9w25). The rubbing is *Zhang Yi zhi* 張義誌. According to the text, Zhang Yi served in the Tang military in which enjoyed a modest career. He died at the age of seventy-four and was buried in Pingle 平樂, a town under the jurisdiction of Luoyang, on “the twenty-seventh day [...] of the seventh month in the fifth year during the Xianqing reign.” (顯慶四年七月 [.....] 廿七日, August 20, 659)⁷⁹ This means that this example was chiseled almost two years after Tang Gaozong ordered that particular complex characters should be tabooed.

On the basis of these findings, we are now ready to determine whether or not 昏 can be taken as a taboo form. As stated in Section 3.3.2.3, scholars have found that the form 昏 had been replaced by 昏 before the Tang dynasty was established in 618 and therefore they argue that this form is not a Tang taboo. Given the findings of this research, however, these contenders cannot give an adequate answer to one particular question: Why did Tang China suddenly abandon the orthodox form on a large scale and begin to use the older, archaic form? As demonstrated in Table 3.4, the orthodox form, not the archaic (taboo) form, was still being used in Tang China four months before Tang Gaozong’s order. The last occurrence of the orthodox form is dated to “the twenty-eighth day of [...] the eighth month [...] in the second

⁷⁸ Rubbing 360 in Volume 4 contains one unstudied example of *hun* (c15w1), whose top element *min* is damaged. Nevertheless, it is dated *xianqing san nian* 顯慶三年 (658), one year after Tang Gaozong’s edict. Whether or not it was a taboo case does not have any impact on our conclusion. Moreover, the combination ‘r60c22w7/8’ in Table 3.4 indicates that a rubbing (No. 60) contains two examples (Words 7 and 8) in one column (Column 22).

⁷⁹ Mao Hanguang 毛漢光 1986b:325-326 (transcription), 327 (rubbing).

year of the Xianqing reign.” (顯慶二年 [.....] 八月[.....] 廿八日, October 11, 657)⁸⁰ In hindsight, therefore, today we can deduce that 昏 was actually an archaic form of 昏. In the eyes of the Tang people, however, it seems that 昏 was accepted as a form of avoiding Tang Taizong’s name. Whatever the case may be, the above non/usage clearly suggests the following possible scenario: the orthodox form was discouraged because of the taboo tradition, and the obsolete form was revived and used as a form to circumvent the taboo by order of Tang Gaozong.

Given what has just been said, we cannot reject the argument that 昏 on these tombstones was a taboo form out of hand. Moreover, considering our observations of the other two characters, we are now in a much stronger position to assume that 昏 is actually a taboo case.

Volumes	Orthodox form 昏	Taboo form 昏
1 (619-646)	r9c9w4, r14c25w12, r16c15w16, r17c24w23, r44c19w4/5, r45c29w28, r60c22w7/8, r62c27w23, r65c22w2/3, r70c20w8, r74c22w8, r77c20w9, r83c14w17/c22w12, r88c25w4, r94c5w4	--
2 (646-652)	r109c19w1, r125c16w17, r130c10w8, r137c15w22, r145c9w3, r159c22w1, r161c23w23, r163c22w6, r172c18w8, r182c10w13, r188c13w19	--
3 (652-656)	r201c19w10, r210c22w10, r215c12w18, r218c22w20, r220c17w13, r222c19w15, r255c15w19, r278c14w3, r293c18w8	--
4 (656-660)	r328c18w1	r380c9w25, r381c18w8, r389c19w16, r398c30w8
5 (660-663)	--	r427c13w11, r435c18w7, r436c23w7, r445c18w7, r498c18w14

Table 3.4 Orthographies of *hun* 昏 in Tang stones (618-663)

3.4.4 *Die* 諫 was not tabooed before 658

The usage of *die* 諫 matches the occurrences of the above two characters perfectly. In total, it shows up twenty-three times, scattered sporadically throughout all the five volumes. As demonstrated in Table 3.5, only two forms were used. One is the normal form 諫; the other is

⁸⁰ Mao Hanguang 1986b:107 (transcription), 109 (rubbing). The stone is Rubbing 328, *Lu Huo shi zhi* 路霍氏誌. The top of this example is slightly damaged. Nevertheless, it is still possible to determine that the example is an orthodox form. In another version, this example is . For this illustration, see Beijing tushuguan jinshizu 北京圖書館金石組, 1997a:45.

the taboo form 諱. Except for one slightly damaged example in V.5 (r458c3w17), in which the taboo element 云 is recognizable, all other twenty-two examples are complete and crystal clear.

As attested by Table 3.5, the non/usage of these two forms is also divided by the cut-off date, the year 658. Before 658, only the normal form 諱 was used; after 658, only the taboo form 諱 occurs.

The first occurrence of the taboo form is found in the fifth volume, Rubbing 404, *Liu Yanshou zhi* 劉延壽誌. According to the inscription, Liu Yanshou died of illness at the age of sixty-one in “the fourth year of the Xianqin reign” (顯慶四年), and he was finally laid down to rest a few months later.⁸¹ The example is  (c6w12). In terms of orthography, there is no doubt that the right top part *shi* is the typical taboo form, 𠂔, rather than the orthodox form, 世.

Volumes	Orthodox form 諱	Taboo form 諱
1 (619-646)	r55c20w10, r70c4w10	--
2 (646-652)	r116c2w21, r119c3w4, r160c3w5, r171c3w1	--
3 (652-656)	r202c3w6, r214c6w5, r236c6w7, r249c3w24, r261c4w11, r276c4w3, r297c3w23	--
4 (656-660)	r310c5w5, r318c3w22, r321c6w19, r323c4w10, r331c5w13	--
5 (660-663)	--	r404c6w12, r419c3w17, r441c4w19, r458c3w17, r481c3w21

Table 3.5 Orthographies of *die* 諱 in Tang stones (618-663)

3.4.5 Summary of the survey

This survey demonstrates that the three forms, 昏, 諱 and 𠂔, are taboo forms. Their usage commenced no earlier than the year 658. Without exception, not an example on the Tang tombstones antedates Tang Gaozong’s order.

Consequently, it seems fair to claim that Tang China began to employ these taboo forms nationwide after 658. The driving force behind this change was the name taboo tradition. The direct reason was that in 658 Tang Gaozong ordered that the complex characters containing

⁸¹ Mao Hanguang 毛漢光 1986a:17 (transcription), 19 (rubbing).

Tang Taizong's name must be tabooed. Therefore, this survey also shows that the *gaijian* method first appeared in 658.

3.5 Discussion and conclusion

This analysis has demonstrated that the exigent name taboo tradition is a very useful tool for dating sources. It yields us critical information that allows us to come to grips with the making of *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, because it points out not only to their dating but also to their authenticity.

In the first instance, the confirmed taboo examples of complex characters refute the conventional chronology of *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*. In the manuscripts, *hun* 昏 occurs in its taboo form, 昏. Although 昏 might have been used long before the seventh century, it never occurs on a Tang tombstone carved before 658. It seems that this old form had already become obsolete and been replaced by 昏 before the foundation of the Tang dynasty. However, the old form underwent a revival in order to facilitate the taboo on Tang Taizong's name and quickly became popular, appearing to have dislodged 昏 after 658. A similar argument applies to *qi* 棄 that is written in its ancient form, 弃, that probably had also become obsolete before the emergence of Tang China. Nevertheless, the taboo form, *die* 牒, is unambiguous. Before 658, none of the Tang stones ever uses this form, and all rubbings show that the orthodox orthography 牒 was used. After 658, all the stones adopted the taboo form. This pattern of using the taboo form is confirmed by the usage of its synonym, *die* 牒. Therefore we can confidently conclude that the manuscripts, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, could not have been made by Aluoben and presented to his great patron Tang Taizong sometime in the 640s. Before the death of Tang Taizong in 649, the complex characters were not tabooed. As demonstrated in the above, the avoidance of these complex characters was a new development in the name taboo tradition in Tang China in its own time. The *gaijian* method was invented in 658. It differs from *quebi*, a technique introduced no later than 648.

The second most important conclusion is that this inconsistent taboo practice disproves the forgery theory. The findings of this chapter show that the Christian sources did use the taboo forms of Tang Taizong's name but did so inconsistently. Besides in the taboos of the complex characters outlined above, there are some characters that were not avoided. The character *shi* contained in Tang Taizong's very name appears in its normal form. The same can be said of the complex character *min* 愍. Given this inconsistency, the forgery theory is an awkward customer to prove. It is hard to imagine that a forger would not have been aware of the

taboos attached to the towering figure of Tang Taizong, who is known as one of China's greatest emperors. Importantly, it is both logical and natural to argue that only a Chinese forger would have been cognizant with this indigenous Chinese tradition and therefore would have avoided the very character contained in Tang Taizong's name, *shi*. However, the inconsistency in its application in the Christian manuscripts shows that the forger was not particularly bothered about the character *shi*. On the contrary, what did exercise his mind greatly were the complex characters, and yet he did not avoid all the complex characters. Since it is universally admitted that a forger would push his skills to their limits to make a fake manuscript as much authentic as possible, it is really odd that this Chinese forger would have produced works that contain such glaring errors. What is even odder is that this forger seems to have been more accurately informed about the Tang taboo practice than almost any modern scholar. As shown above, researchers are only now beginning to understand the taboo on the complex characters. No consensus about this new method, *gaijian*, has yet been reached. A few taboo forms are being debated. Nevertheless, the fact remains that this putative forger outshone nearly all modern experts. His employment of the debatable taboo forms is almost perfectly in conformity with the Tang tombstone inscriptions that have never been systematically examined before this research. Given this surprising conformity, one might begin to wonder how an early-twentieth-century forger could ever have been equipped with knowledge so profound that he was informed with such accuracy about certain taboo forms that even today's best scholars do not yet completely comprehend. Indeed, as will be shown in Chapter 5, this forger's knowledge is too good to be true, and therefore the existing two Christian sources are not modern forgeries.

Lastly, the taboo inconsistency also suggests that the two Christian manuscripts could have been made much later than 658. The practice of avoiding Tang Taizong's name profoundly affected the language of the Chinese. His name remained tabooed so long that people's writing habits were fundamentally changed. Many later scribes seem to have taken the taboo forms of his name as common orthographies, continuing to use them on a large scale for a few centuries after the Tang court collapsed in 907. For instance, Dunhuang manuscripts made in the tenth century contain many such cases. In P.2649, that has been dated 984, *min* 民 was deprived of one stroke 𠂔; in S.4609 that was also dated 984, the complex character *die* 牒 is in the taboo form 牒.⁸² In fact, many complex characters were written in their taboo forms even at a much later time. This is confirmed by Zhang Shinan, a thirteenth-century

⁸² Dou Huaiyong 竇懷永 2010:104-105.

official who served in many posts. Zhang Shinan wrote: “The character ‘*shi*’ offends Tang Taizong’s name *shimin*. Today, therefore, ‘牒’ [*die*], ‘葉’ [*ye*] and ‘棄’ [*qi*] are all deprived of *shi* and have been changed into ‘云’” (「世」字因唐太宗諱世民，故今「牒」、「葉」、「棄」，皆去「世」而多從「云」)。)⁸³ It seems that the Chinese people in the thirteenth century were still happily using the taboo forms of these complex characters. This fact opens the possibility that the two Chinese Christian manuscripts could have been written generations after Tang Taizong died in 649.

In sum, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* are authentic ancient manuscripts. They could only have been made after the first period of the Tang church (arrival-diffusion, 635-649). The possibility that they were produced in the second phase of the Tang church, expansion-setback-recovery (649-790s), is in the topic of the next chapter.

⁸³ Zhang Shinan 張世南 1233/1981:77. For a brief introduction of Zhang Shinan and his works, see Cai Rongsheng 蔡榮生 and He Zhenzuo 何振作 (2010), and Peng Donghuan 彭東煥 (2004).