

CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

BEFORE THE YEAR

1550

BY

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CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

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TO
THE BLESSED MEMORY
OF MY
FATHER AND MOTHER

PREFACE

THE plan of this book has been to gather into one volume the available evidence of the existence of Christians in China in the early and middle ages of the Christian era, and to give in English translation the actual words of the original authorities in every case, avoiding as far as possible all generalizations, summaries, or expressions of personal opinion. Careful references and necessary explanations have been given in footnotes. But when all is done the book remains incomplete, for the evidences of the presence of Christians in Old China have been accumulated at a pace which has outstripped my leisure and abilities; while mere want of space has made it necessary to give some lists of references and summaries in place of complete texts, especially in the eighth chapter.

The help received from many kind friends is, I hope, duly acknowledged in the proper places. On almost every page my debts to the late Sir Henry Yule and to Professor Paul Pelliot, still fortunately in the prime of his powers, will be clear. To the latter's friendship and encouragement I owe much more than even the many references to his published works might suggest. I owe more general gratitude to my Father, and to the late Professor Edouard Chavannes, to my brothers George and Henry, and to many others, including Mr G. K. Leung and Mr Sinmay Zau and through them to unknown Chinese helpers. Many thanks are due to the staffs of the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cambridge University Library, and other libraries, to Messrs Vaus and Crampton, and to photographers who have helped with the illustrations, and especially to Dr R. F. Fitch of Hangchow for allowing the use of his beautiful photograph of Ling-yin for the frontispiece.

I have also to thank the Rev. P. Tacchi Venturi S.J., the Editor of the *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, and the publishers or editors of other journals for the use which they have kindly allowed me to make of materials which have appeared in their respective publications. The Eastern Press, Reading, have most courteously lent some Chinese types. Finally I am indebted to my Wife for great help in reading the proofs and making the index.

To some it will be a disappointment to find that the book is not the story of the far off beginnings of a Christian church which has grown and increased and become established in the land, but rather the record of the residence in China for longer or shorter periods at various epochs of larger or smaller numbers of foreigners who were in name or fact Christians, though that record will include the story of at least two great if disappointed evangelistic missions. Nor will any attempt be found to discuss the possible influence of Christianity on Buddhist doctrine or on Chinese thought. Little or no evidence has yet been published which tends to justify the late Dr Timothy Richards's words that a famous Buddhist treatise is "an Asiatic form of the same Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" or Professor Saeki's "the China of the T'ang Era was under Christian influence actually, if not in name."

While it has been easy for me to spell Chinese words consistently in Wade's system it has been extraordinarily difficult to transliterate the alphabetic Asiatic scripts, and the spelling will seem wrong and inconsistent to experts and stands in need of much apology. It is hoped that the uniform spelling of the Chinese words will reduce the confusion, which must arise from the omission of native characters, to the least dimensions. A few important texts are given in facsimile.

A. C. M.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AFH</i>	<i>Archivum Franciscanum Historicum</i> , Quaracchi, periodical.
<i>A.M.</i>	<i>Annales Minorum</i> by Luke Wadding O.S.F.
<i>B.D.</i>	<i>A Chinese Biographical Dictionary</i> by H. A. Giles.
<i>BEFEO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient</i> , Hanoi, periodical.
<i>BF</i>	<i>Bullarium Franciscanum</i> by Sbaralea and Eubel, in progress.
<i>B.O.</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i> by J. S. Assemani, 3 volumes.
<i>CSCCC</i>	<i>Chih shun chên Chiang chih</i> , 1333, printed 1842, by Yü Hsi-lu.
<i>GB</i>	<i>Biblioteca Bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa</i> etc., by G. Golubovich O.S.F., 5 volumes.
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i> , Paris, periodical.
<i>J.A.O.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New York, periodical.
<i>JNCBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , Shanghai, periodical.
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , London, periodical.
<i>SF</i>	<i>Sinica Franciscana</i> vol. I., 1929, by Anastasius Van den Wyngaert O.S.F.
<i>W.</i>	L. Wadding in <i>A.M.</i> as above.
<i>YS</i>	<i>Yüan shih</i> , Shanghai, 1908.
<i>YTC</i>	<i>Yüan tien chang</i> (<i>Ta yüan shêng chêng kuo ch'ao tien chang</i>), Hang-chou, 1908.
<i>YTCTK</i>	<i>Yüan p'ung chih t'iao ko</i> (in <i>Yüan yeh li k'o wên k'ao</i>). See also p. 213.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS, 1947

PAGE		
32	<i>for</i> Ch'ang-an chih	<i>read</i> Ch'ang an chih and so on p. 275
35	<i>after</i> separated.	<i>add</i> Sun and moon revolved and the day and night began.
36	<i>omit</i> by Lŭ Pên-chung of the Sung dynasty	
44	<i>for</i> (Prince's)	<i>read</i> [Prince's]
55	<i>l. 6 after</i> obtaining salvation.	<i>add</i> One roll.
n. 59	<i>note</i> It is now known that in the dialect of N.-W. China at that time <i>ning</i> was a good and normal transcription of <i>da</i> .	
57-64	<i>note</i> Since 1930 much has been published about these Documents; the texts, with unsatisfactory versions, by P. Y. Saeki in <i>The Nestorian Documents in China</i> , 1936; by J. Foster, <i>The Church of the T'ang Dynasty</i> , S. P. C. K., 1939; by myself in <i>Nestorians in China</i> , 1940; etc. Collotype facsimiles of the two earlier texts have appeared in Japan.	
70	<i>par. 9 omit</i> the first words and	<i>read</i> Of those who make known the religions . . . (Chung hua).
71	<i>n. 84 for</i> the decree itself and	<i>read</i> a proclamation with
80	<i>l. 20 at</i> disappeared.	
	<i>note</i> It survived in good condition in August, 1931. cf. <i>Nestorians in China</i> , 1940, pp. 31-32.	
86	<i>for</i> Cross (<i>twice</i>)	<i>read</i> Ten Words
89	<i>l. 5 for</i> Cross	<i>read</i> Ten Words
	<i>l. 7 for</i> two	<i>read</i> the
	<i>l. 9 for</i> spoke to him.	<i>read</i> spoke ten words to him.
	<i>l. 10 for</i> "a brilliant . . . ch'uang."	<i>read</i> "he saw again the ten words shining one above another on the ancient ch'uang."
	<i>l. 14 for</i> The cross . . . brightness.	<i>read</i> The ten words shed enlightenment.
	<i>l. 15 omit</i> From this . . . the other hand	<i>and read</i> The existence of . . .
	<i>l. 23 for</i> Cross	<i>read</i> Ten Words
	<i>note</i> In written Chinese "the ten words" is absolutely identical in form with "the word ten" (a cross). For this whole passage see <i>Nestorians in China</i> , 1940, pp. 26-29.	
124	<i>n. 38 for</i> and published	<i>read</i> and will be published
138	<i>l. 13 for</i> and	<i>read</i> according to
141	<i>n. 21 for</i> the Alan officer	<i>read</i> the Tangut officer

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS—*contd.*

PAGE

- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|------------------|---|---|
| 149 | <i>l.20</i> | <i>note</i> | An independent reference to the monastery "in Hang-chou at the Chien-ch'iao gate" was found and published by Saeki, and the exact site of the monastery was identified by Dr. S. D. Sturton, O.B.E., in 1942. See <i>The Nestorian Documents</i> , 1936, p. 516; and especially "The Asiatic Review," January, 1945, pp. 82-85. | |
| 181 | <i>n.34</i> | <i>for</i> | own | <i>read</i> own. |
| 198 | <i>l.28</i> | <i>for</i> | against | <i>perhaps</i> <i>read</i> which it enters at |
| 200 | <i>l.15</i> | <i>for</i> | canes | <i>read</i> canes; |
| | <i>l.17</i> | <i>for</i> | thickness; round about
[are] . . . thorny | <i>read</i> thickness round
about; . . . thorny, |
| 202 | | <i>for</i> | and Maabar | <i>read</i> to Maabar |
| 217 | | <i>for</i> | Uruntsi | <i>read</i> N.-E. of Uruntsi |
| 226 | | <i>for</i> | <i>Bibliothèque</i> | <i>read</i> <i>Bibliothèque</i> |
| 249 | <i>n. 8</i> | <i>for</i> | JA,1830, | <i>read</i> JA,VI,1830, |
| 250 | <i>l. 1</i> | <i>for</i> | this | <i>read</i> that |
| | <i>l.38</i> | <i>for</i> | Christians | <i>read</i> catholic Christians |
| 251 | <i>l.33</i> | <i>for</i> | gladly, | <i>read</i> gladly |
| 258 | | <i>for</i> | The years . . .
benevolent, | <i>read</i> The Son of Heaven
is benevolent and
long-lived, |
| 262 | <i>l.10</i> | <i>for</i> | 1274 | <i>read</i> 1275 |
| | <i>l.27</i> | <i>for</i> | at Tung-k'ou in | <i>read</i> on the eastern
border of |
| 265 | | <i>for</i> | T | <i>read</i> Ti |
| 266 | A | <i>for</i> | 12.6.626 | <i>read</i> 25.6.635 |
| | B | <i>for</i> | 8.9.625 | <i>read</i> 3(4).9.626 |
| | C | <i>for</i> | 2.2.664 | <i>read</i> 24.1.664 |
| | | <i>for</i> | Ch'èng-hèng | <i>read</i> Hsien-hèng |
| | F | <i>for</i> | 23.11.694 | <i>read</i> 22.1.695 |
| | | <i>for</i> | Shên-ch'u | <i>read</i> Shên-kung |
| | <i>n. 2</i> | <i>for</i> | 704 | <i>read</i> 2.3.705 |
| 268 | A | <i>for</i> | 1152 | <i>read</i> 1162 |
| | E | <i>for</i> | 1251 | <i>read</i> 1.7.1251 (see E.A.W.
Budge, <i>The Monks</i> ,
&c., p. 45, where no
authority is given). |
| 285 | | <i>transpose</i> | Montgomery &c. | : Montecorvino &c. |
| 291 | | <i>for</i> | I-tsê-lu | <i>read</i> I-tsê-lü |

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CHRISTIANS IN CHINA BEFORE THE YEAR 1550

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

MATTEO RICCI tells us that when the Jesuit missionaries reached China late in the sixteenth century they found the very memory of Christianity there on the point of vanishing; and his story makes a good introduction to the study of the history of that Christianity of which he witnessed the last scene.

A Jew named Ai,¹ who had read of the Jesuits in a Chinese book called *Things I have heard tell*, seized the opportunity of making their acquaintance when he came to Peking on business and called on Ricci there at the end of June, 1605. "From this man" writes Ricci "we learnt that in the capital of Ho-nan, called K'ai-fêng, there were ten or twelve families of Jews, with a very fine synagogue, which they had lately restored at a cost of ten thousand ducats, where they kept with great reverence the Pentateuch of Moses written on parchment and mounted on five rollers. And they had been there for five or six hundred years. And he said that in the capital of Chê-chiang, called Hang-chou, there were many more families of their religion with a synagogue; and in other places, but with no synagogue, because they were gradually disappearing. And because they do not eat pork the Chinese make little distinction between them and the

¹ This was Ai T'ien, a native of Hsiang-fu, who took his second degree (*chü jên*) in 1573. cf. *K'ai fêng fu chih* c. 23 fol. 48v°, in *Le Juif Ngai* by Paul PELLIOU, *T'oung-pao*, 1921, p. 38.

Mohammedan Saracens, although these Jews dislike that sect and have nothing to do with it.”²

Very little is known of the history of the Jews in China. The synagogue at K'ai-fêng was built A.D. 1163, as is recorded in four or five inscriptions there, dated respectively June, 1489, 3 August, 1512, June, 1663, and 1679. From the earliest of these inscriptions we learn that a party of seventy³ families reached China in the Sung dynasty and were invited by the Emperor to settle at Pien (the modern K'ai-fêng). The next inscription says that the Jews reached China in the Han dynasty, while the third (1663) ascribes their arrival to the Chou dynasty or before the year B.C. 250.⁴ We learn too from these inscriptions that the synagogue was repaired or enlarged in the years 1279, 1421, 1445, 1461, c.1480, 1512, and rebuilt just after the middle of the seventeenth century. As many as thirteen copies of the Law had been kept in the synagogue before it was destroyed by the cutting of the

² *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S.I.*, vol. I. *I Commentari della Cina*, 1911, p. 469. Ricci's Commentaries, printed at Macerata his native place, have long been more or less known through N. TRIGAULT'S *De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas*, Rome, 1615.

³ "seventy" is perhaps a mistake for "seventeen." Just seventeen names are given on the monument. Of these all except Li and Ai have been carefully erased, only Kao, Mu, Chao, and Chin being recognizable while the remaining eleven are quite illegible on the published facsimile. The list of names given by TOBAR (*Inscriptions Juives*, 1900, p. 43) from "the copies" contains three duplicates, and there are said to be duplicates among the names of the seven clans which survive. The seven clans of the 17th century were however Li, Chao, Ai, Chang, Kao, Chin, Shih, as given on the inscription of 1663. cf. J. TOBAR, *Inscriptions Juives (Var. Sin. 17)* p. 83.

The inscriptions were on three stone slabs. The first with the inscriptions of 1489 and 1512, and the third with the nearly illegible inscription of 1679 were removed before 1912 to the premises of the Canadian Church Mission at K'ai-fêng where they are carefully preserved. The second, containing the inscription of 1663 and another of about the same date, is lost.

⁴ No trace of the presence of Jews in China before the Sung dynasty has been found in Chinese books or inscriptions. Sir A. STEIN found a mutilated Judæo-Persian fragment at Dandân-ulîq (*Ancient Khotan*, vol. I. pp. 306-9, 570-4; vol. II. Plate cxix), and a little MS. of the 9th or 10th century in square Hebrew letters was found by PELLIOU at Tun-huang in 1908 (*JA*, juillet-août, 1913, pp. 139-175). cf. also PELLIOU, *BEFEO*, I. pp. 263, 264; CHAVANNES, *T'oung-pao*, 1904, pp. 482, 483; LAUFER, *Globus* vol. 87, pp. 245-7; who agree that the Jews probably came from India by sea in the Sung dynasty.