

The Human Face of Alfred Russel Wallace, Part 1

There are two separate and substantial Creations, one of Light and one of Darkness, and man's life in this transitory world, and this world itself, is an outgrowth of the Worlds of Darkness; man's changing material fate is a miscarriage of his spiritual destiny, a counterfeit of another life in the immortal Worlds of Light. This is one of the universal doctrines restored by Zoroaster to the righteous of Persia in the first millennium B.C.E. and recorded nearly a thousand years later in the Gathas of the Zend Avesta. It was not the only time immortal Spirit made such an observation. That doctrine was also restored by Buddha to the righteous of India, by Mani to the righteous of Babylonia, by Jesus and his forerunners to the righteous of Israel, and by other Teachers of Light to the righteous of China, Greece, Northern Europe, Egypt, Arabia, Oceania, the Americas. Oral tradition, and the sacred literature derived from that tradition, abounds in allegories on the spiritual origin and evolution of man.



Alfred Russel
Wallace (1878)

I

The cosmology implicit in this universal doctrine gives rise

to an endless interpretation of human events. I am invoking it now to assist me in a modest plan: to trace the history of the evolution of an idea through the heterogeneous texts of three authors. The first one is by Alfred Russel Wallace; it is an excerpt from the collection of essays he published one century ago this year (i.e., 1895) titled *Natural Selection* (pages 167–83):

We know positively that man was contemporaneous with many extinct animals, and has survived changes of the earth's surface fifty or a hundred times greater than any that have occurred during the historical period. . . . But while these changes had been going on, his mental development had, from some unknown cause, greatly advanced, and reached that condition in which it began powerfully to influence his whole existence, and would therefore become subject to the irresistible action of natural selection. This action would quickly give ascendancy to mind...and from that moment man, as regards the form and structure of most parts of his body, would remain stationary. But from the moment that the form of his body became stationary, his mind would become subject to those very influences from which his body had escaped. . . .

We may trace back the gradually decreasing brain of former races, till we come to a time when the body also begins to materially differ. There we shall have reached the starting-point of the human family. Before that period he had not mind enough to preserve his body from change, and would, therefore, have been subject to the same comparatively rapid modifications of form as the other mammalia. . . . Man may continue to exist through a series of geological periods which shall see all other forms of animal life again and again changed...while he himself remains unchanged, except in two particulars – the head and face, as being immediately connected with the organ of the mind and as being the medium of the most refined emotions of his nature.

I wonder what my reader thinks of that proposition. To me it is nearly perfect. It seems impossible to deny, for it has the integrity of a statement *ipso jure*, an outgrowth of the law of natural selection itself. And, of course, it is just that. His formula reconfigures clearly an event that is evidently complex: the face expressing a mind developed in a culture that manifests, however imperfectly, an expression of spirit. In chapter 9 of the same collection, Wallace suggests that man is gradually moving or evolving toward participation in the Eternal. He contemplates the possibility that the development of the specifically human portions of man's structure and intellect have been determined by the directing influence of more highly intelligent beings, perhaps encompassing layers of them, and that some general and fundamental law underlies the law of natural selection "too deep for us to discover it." Behind Wallace's idea is the general and ancient idea of the Fall of Man and the generations of humans who long for redemption.

< [Read Part 2](#) >

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 6



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Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 5E

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像宗武唐

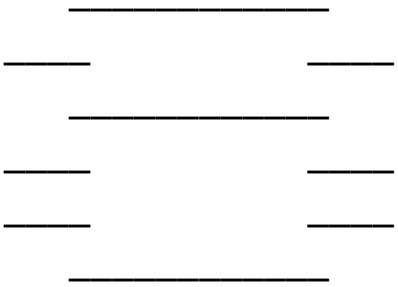


Emperor
Wu - tsung
(Wuzong)

Two dynastic generations after the Monument was raised, a period of time shorter than a single lifetime, the monasteries suffered the humiliation of mortal dissolution, as had the benefactor Mar Iazed-buzid before them. (See Supplement 32) In 845, the monastery buildings were confiscated by imperial decree; the monks were returned to secular life *so they might pay taxes*; and the Stone was buried in the earth, where it remained for nearly 800 years. (See Supplement 33)

Mar Iazed-buzid, who had striven to restore the visible Church with riches and good works, was perhaps no more presumptuous than I, who have striven to recollect his life from a single

short account and a modest audit of history.



Robert Petrovich, 1989

< PART 6: REFERENCES >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 32:
The Ebbing Dynasty of Tang



Emperor
Wu - tsung
(Wuzong)

Under Emperor Wu-tsung (reigned 840–847) the dynasty had gone through a period of crisis. After the Uighur Empire fell and internal strife in Tibet destroyed all semblance of central power there, Chinese authority once again spread into the

territories of the Northwest. While these foreign affairs were still in the balance, Emperor Wu-tsung faced another internal rebellion, this time in southern Shensi. Now the culminating wave of financial crisis, which had been building during the reign that preceded his, broke. Like Te-tsung and Hsien-tsung before him, Wu-tsung was a deeply committed Taoist, and he decided to solve his problems by suppressing the Buddhist monasteries and sequestering their wealth on a vast scale. (Tai-tsung, the second emperor of Tang, put himself in power in similar fashion before Rabban A-lo-pen's arrival in 635.) Other foreign religions suffered the same fate. Although Wu-tsung's successor, Hsuan-tsung, (reigned 874–859) swiftly rescinded these measures – their impact had been profound both on Buddhism and on Chinese society, which had become completely permeated with Buddhist (foreign) influence – it was too late. The power of the dynasty itself was slowly ebbing. The Tang dynasty lingered on for thirty more years, then ended.

Supplement 33:

A Note on the Burial of the Monument



Luminou
s
Teachin
g Stone
of
China

During the so-called Ta-chin Rebellion (783–784), it was said

that one of the leaders of the rebellion, Chiao Lin, hid in a "saint-visited monastery." This was perhaps the monastery at Wu-chun. In 784, after the emperor had beheaded the chiefs of the rebellion, he could have ridden back to Chang-an past this same monastery. If the Monument had been erected here, the emperor might have ordered it buried or else the monks might have buried the Stone themselves in order to protect it. The words "Ta-chin" were inscribed on it in large characters. If the Stone was not buried in one of these ways in 784, it was certainly buried in 845 after the imperial edict was decreed.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 5D



Luminous Teaching Stone of China

In 781 the beneficent Mar Iazed-buzid raised a Monument to commemorate the mission of the Luminous Religion in China, as well as his own part in its restoration. (See Supplement 24) The task of forming the characters of the Inscription and etching them into stone was granted to the young calligrapher Lu Yen. (See Supplement 25) The young Chinese calligrapher, who held a prestigious title but no office, and was quite likely unemployed at the time (he had been engaged formerly as a personnel manager of requisitioned labor on the east coast), yielded to his humble, careful task: to inscribe the characters of his native language onto stone that was paid for by a Turkic benefactor in order to formulate a tract composed by a Persian father. He thereby created a document that would become, a millennium later, the single most valuable testament to the existence of the Luminous Religion in China.

On February 4, 781, (See Supplement 26) a Sunday during the patriarchate of the Great Catholicos Mar Timothy I (See Supplement 27)—five days after New Year in the second year of the Chien-chung period under Emperor Te-tsung and the last day of the Great Cold before Spring's beginning—the sacristan of the monastery, at the order of the abbot, summoned the congregation out of doors for the raising of the stone. (See Supplement 28) When the boards cracked the icy winter air, human chatter stilled, and churchmen from the monasteries of the four quarters took their places in ceremonial array. The distinguished abbot Ye-li led the elders: the country-bishops Mar Iazed-buzid, from the region northwest of Chang-an, Mar Sergius, from southwest of the capital, Mar Gabriel, head of the church of the two capitals, and the Persian father Ching-ching, who had written the long preface and mediocre verses that commemorate the diffusion of the Luminous Religion in the

Middle Kingdom. (See Supplement 29) These and other gray presbyters were followed by the priests Ling-pao, Hsing-tung, and Sabran-Yeshu, who had aided in the raising of the Monument, and by the youths the deacon Adam, Mar Iazed-buzid's son, and the calligrapher Lu Yen. Perhaps among them also were the seventy other missionaries whose names were carved in the Stone: bishops in white turbans holding pastoral staves; priests in black turbans and cassocks; monks in tunics girded in leather and adorned only with a cross, their tonsured crowns covered with black turbans and in their hands the staves of the ascetic. (See Supplement 30)

When we read between the lines of the Syriac that commemorate Mar Iazed-buzid, we come to recognize I-ssu, and the story of the Asian mission that is written in the Inscription is brought to completion for us. We see the distinguished presbyter Mar Iazed-buzid, kind and gracious, provisioning the orphans and the poor at the monastery for fifty days, just as he had provisioned imperial guests daily at the imperial table of the palace as the young and wealthy I-ssu. Each year he laid that table ready at all times with good, substantial food, as much for the stranger who came there as for the brothers who were appointed; the sick were given holy water to drink, and disciples were healed according to monastic custom – by touch and word, without medicines or drugs.

As the courtier I-ssu, Mar Iazed-buzid had been a man of great power and influence in civil and military affairs; (See Supplement 31) here at the monastery, among the white-robed scholars of the Luminous Religion, he wore the purple clerical robe. Mar Iazed-buzid had secured his fate in this transitory and conditional life by cultivating himself and awaiting his allotted time. Now he walked through the doors of the lovely pavilion to keep an appointment within the walled enclosure when the boards were struck at the hour of repast. The meals came from the kitchen cooked and served by the brothers; the wine stores in the pantry were emptied from their skins for

the banquet table. Here there were no civil robes, no pendant badges of rank. Only rows of monks and churchmen, assembled silently at long tables on each side of the hall, before their simple meal of bread and vegetables. Novitiate brothers sat and ate together with their prestigious guests and with the ascetics, who had come from their separate cells away in the hills to the commons on this feast day. The abbot, too, sat with them in the assembly on this day. The hearts of the guests were purified. All annoyance was stilled. When the sacristan rose up to beat the board for evening office, black night had already enclosed the courtyard.

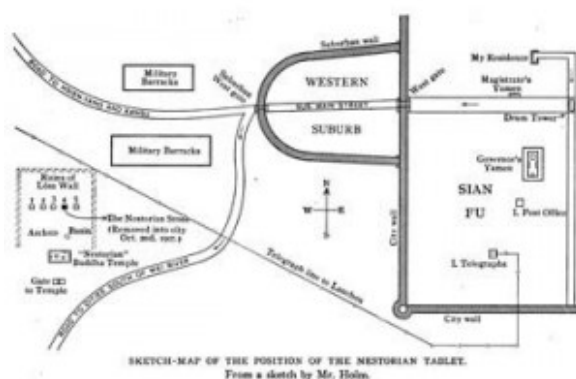
< PART 5E: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 24:

The Original Location of the Monument Stone

There are two possibilities for the original location of the Monument Stone:



Position of the monument
before its removal in 1907

(1) the monastery at I-ning Ward where it stood for 500 years

until the Danish explorer Frits Holm found it in 1907. (According to Dr. Kuwabara's report from the 1930s, which is reprinted in Saeki's book, the Buddhist monastery where the monument stood from 1625 to 1907 corresponds exactly to the old site of I-ning Ward of Chang-an; that is to say, the Buddhist monastery that Frits Holm visited in 1907 was the site of the 638 Ta-chin monastery at I-ning Ward.)



Postcard of Ta-chin (Daqin) Tower and replica of the monument stele

(2) at Wu-chun, the Ta-chin monastery on the slope of South Mountain in Chou-chih, where it is believed that I-ssu retired (The location of Wu-chun is not far from the spot where the Stone was unearthed in 1625 at one of the seven post towns that existed then between Chang-an and Chou-chih).

Supplement 25:
The Calligrapher Lu Yen



Sculpture of Lu Yen (755-805 CE) as the immortal Lu Dong Bin. By 892 CE his visage was carved into the Caves of Baishan, located in the Dazu region south of Chang-an (presentday Xian). The influence of the Persian Church of the East figures in the angel wings rising from his back and the solar cross on his chest. PHOTO Dale A. Johnson

Although Lu Yen's beautiful writing, even in the abnormal form of some of its characters, had been quoted as a model of good

form in Chinese cursive style since the discovery of the Stone in 1625, the Chinese themselves record the name of Lu Hsiu-yen nowhere else among calligraphers. But if we accept the suggestion of more than one mystic sinologue, this same Lu Yen gained renown as a poet and calligrapher some years after the raising of the Monument and, as the Taoist founder of the Golden Elixir of Immortality Religion (*Chin-tan-chiao*), received, however partially, the knowledge that the Apostle Thomas is said to have transmitted seven centuries before to the enlightened schools of China.

Supplement 26:

The Founding Date of the Monument



Luminou
s

Teachin
g Stone
of
China

February 4, 781, was the date according to the Old Style, or Julian, calendar. The Gregorian date was Sunday, February 8, 781.

Supplement 27:
The Discrepancy of Dating by Patriarchate



James Legge (1815-1897),
Congregationalist missionary to
China and first professor of
Chinese at Oxford University.

The Syriac of the Inscription says: *In the days of the Father of Fathers, Mar Hananishu, Catholicus, Patriarch*. No two authorities agree on the date of Hanan-Ishu's death, whether it was 778, 779, or 780. On the other hand, we are told by Dr. Wright and others that eight months elapsed between the death of Hanan-Ishu and the final election of his successor, Mar Timothy. If Hanan-Ishu died sometime in October or November of 780, the closest possible date to the date of the Inscription, the consecration of Mar Timothy could have been as late as May 781. The missionaries in China could not possibly have known of Hanan-Ishu's death at the end of 780, when the stone was finished and waiting for the day of unveiling.

James Legge, the distinguished nineteenth-century professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Oxford, explained this discrepancy in a footnote to his translation of

the Inscription:

This is an important note of time, and occasions some little difficulty. We know from the Bibliotheca Orientalis Celestina Vaticana of J. S. Assemani that this Hanan-Yeshu' was created Patriarch of the Nestorians at Baghdad in 774, and died in 778; whereas here is this monument erected in 781. But is not this discrepancy rather a proof of its genuineness? The news of the patriarch's death had not reached them at Chang-an. In fact, according to Assemani (vol. iii I, 347), the canon for communication between the more distant metropolitan sees and the patriarchate required the interchange of messages only once in six years.

Mar Timothy I, whose name has already appeared in our narrative, was elected Patriarch after Hananishu, serving from sometime in 779 or 780 to sometime in 820.

Supplement 28:

The Passing of Ko Tzu-i



Birthday
reception
for Duke
Kuo Tzu-i
Qing
Dynasty
porcelain
vase

In the same year as the unveiling, Ko Tzu-I (himself suspected by historians of being an adherent to the Luminous Religion) retired from office and passed away at the advanced age of 85, still clear-headed and respected. Though many tried to injure his character, none ever dared question his loyalty. His eight sons and seven sons-in-law all held high government offices, and, at the time of his death, three thousand of the family that had grown around him recognized him as their head.

Supplement 29:

The Imperial Office of Abbot Yeh-li



Hypothetical reconstruction of Hanyuan Hall at Daming Palace, where many state ceremonies were conducted.

The Chinese Inscription identifies Abbot Yeh-li as assistant supervisor of the erection of the tablet and "*t'ai-ch'ang-ch'ing* by examination, granted the purple clerical robe." This secular title is the common official designation for the office of Chamberlain for Ceremonials. He, a chief minister or chamberlain (*ch'ing*), passed the government examination to be

Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices and was ranked 3a, as I-ssu had been. The agency for which he was ranked, and in which he may have served, was one of the Nine Courts in the central government, and the foremost in prestige. The unofficial title of his office literally evokes his image as standard bearer and the imperial decoration of the sun, the moon, and the dragon.

The court was generally responsible for the conduct of major state sacrificial ceremonies according to the regulations prescribed by the Ministry of Rites. Through its several subordinate agencies, the Court of Imperial Sacrifices was responsible for the rite of ritual slaughter, especially at the Imperial Ancestral Temple and the imperial mausoleums. Through its four minor agencies, all staffed by state slaves, the court maintained the ceremonial implements of imperial sacrifice: *hu* battle gear captured in battle, treasures of good omen for display, the emperor's apparel, and all musical instruments, grains, and utensils.

All responsibility for the ritual and for the agents of imperial sacrifice – the provision of imperial fifes and drums and dancing, the provisions of living grains and animals to be sacrificed, the preparations for the imperial rites and their conduct at national altars and at the temples of the dynastic capital, all the forms of sacrificial divination (including the use of tortoise shells and the ancient divination text, the I-Ching) – were under the court. The court was also responsible for suggesting posthumous titles of emperors, such as those that appear in the preface and verses of the Inscription.

Supplement 30:

The Seventy



Seventy Syriac names in rows on the narrow sides of the stone with corresponding Chinese characters

Scholars still disagree on the significance of the catalogue of seventy names that cover the edge of the stone, but the East Syrian Bible, the Peshitta, records that Jesus appointed the same number.

Supplement 31:

A Note on the Imperial Office of Monastics



Tang
officials
Artist
unknown

This is not unprecedented in Chinese history, especially during the Tang era; even among the monastic orders there were many instances of priests serving as soldiers or secular

officials.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 5C



Restoration by Robert MacGregor of the original silk painting of a missionary bishop of the Church of the East, discovered at Dunhuang in 1908 by Sir Aurel Stein in a cave sealed since 1036 CE.

When I-ssu put aside his cap of gauze and came to live under new vows, he bowed his head for Rabban to replace his official top knot with the tonsure of "wheel and crown." Whether it was in middle life or in old age, (See Supplement 14) after the period of probation, he must have served for some time as head priest of a city or large town, with several priests as his assistants, before he became Mar Iazed-buzid and was elevated to the dignity of country bishop, first by election of his future parishioners and then by confirmation with the laying on of hands, and only later could he have received his staff of office to become chorepiscopos of Khumdan (Chang-an).

As chorepiscopos, Mar Iazed-buzid was second only to metropolitan bishops in the rank of church dignitaries. His province at the time of the raising of the Monument extended north of the capital to the city of Ling-wu, the same northwest district of yellow clay and dust where he had once commanded an army. Mar Iazed-buzid employed clerks, readers, and deacons (among them, no doubt, his son) in numbers proportionate to the size of the several parishes in his ecclesiastical pasture and according to his own needs as governor of his province. (See Supplement 15) At that time he, like Mar Sergius, mentioned in the Inscription, had functions identical to those of Mar Gabriel, the archpriest in the capital, and all three exercised episcopal functions in the absence of a regular bishop. Each day Mar Iazed-buzid conducted the morning service, then followed his daily routine of civil duties in bearded state and in the black cloak and turban of his predecessors. With the responsibilities of a regular bishop, his office as chorepiscopos was of extreme importance and delicacy: he had to deal directly with the uneducated and illiterate.

Over a period of more than seven centuries – first in Egypt and Syria, then in Mesopotamia and Persia – countless men before I-ssu had put aside their noble birth or station and laid in their wealth to take on the religious life of service.

(See Supplement 16) Not unlike his predecessors, and even superseding them, I-ssu had distributed his riches over the entire region of the Western Capital. (See Supplement 17) The Inscription tells us that the mythic pheasant of five colors spread its wings (See Supplement 18) in flying eaves and roofs of colored tile when this generous patron of the Luminous School enlarged the worship halls and ornamented walls and galleries to restore the old monasteries with the noble adornments of their former condition. (See Supplement 19) In our own time the monasteries are all in ruins or simply erased from the face of the earth, but we may partially remember their images in the images of others preserved for us in ancient journals: the Pearl Tower built by men of Ta-chin in Szechuan province at its capital of Cheng-tu, where, a medieval passage tells us, the ten rooms of the gate tower all had blinds made of strings of pearl and blue jade; (See Supplement 20) the tiles of the temple at Wu-chun, "dazzling in the golden rays of evening"; (See Supplement 21) the splendor of I-ning monastery, whose buildings "shone forth like the light of the sun"; the vermillion tablets that hung high in the air above the monastery gates inscribed with Dragon-writing in kingfisher green; (See Supplement 22) the faithful portraits of the sacred emperors copied on the walls of the monastery at I-ning to "confer great blessing" and "illuminate the church." (See Supplement 23)



Original silk painting of a missionary bishop of the Church of the East, discovered at Dunhuang in 1908 by Sir Aurel Stein in a cave sealed since 1036 CE.

< [PART 5D: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN](#) >

SUPPLEMENTS

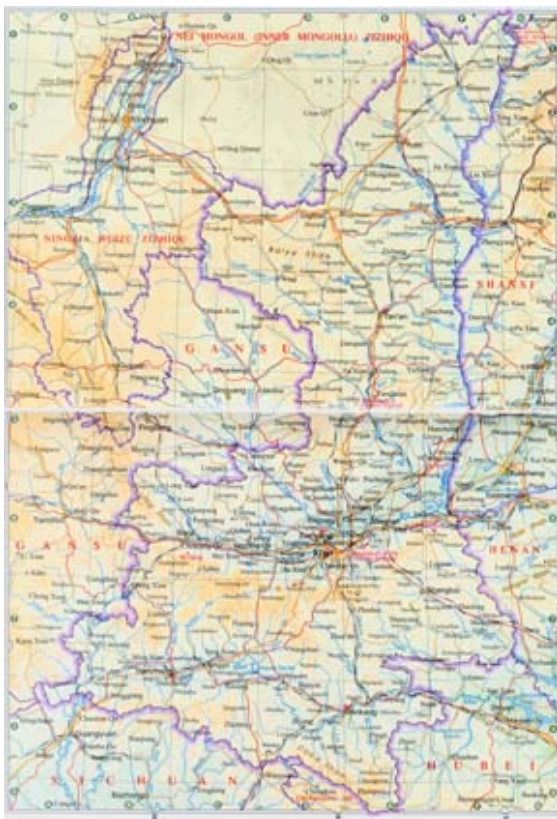
Supplement 14:

The Office of the Ascetic



Ascetics could be solitary brethren who lived in a monastery or else bishops and metropolitans.

Supplement 15: The Religious Provinces



Map of modern province of

Shensi (Shaanxi) outlined
in purple.

What are called dioceses in the West were called provinces in the Church of the East.

To Professor Saeki it seems that if Mar Iazed-buzid were chorepiscopus of Khumdan (Chang-an), he must have been bishop of the northwestern portion of the modern Chinese province of Shensi. If we accept this determination of Professor Saeki, the size of Mar Iazed-buzid's province was great.

Mar Sergius, listed among the seventy, must have been chorepiscopus of the southeastern portion, according to Professor Saeki. In the southeast of Shensi, in what was Mar Sergius's province, is the temple dedicated to the originator of the Golden Elixir of Immortality religion, Lu Yen. This temple is commonly known as the "Monastery of the Purple Door." In the eighth century, it might have been a temple of the Luminous Religion and Lu Yen its consociate.

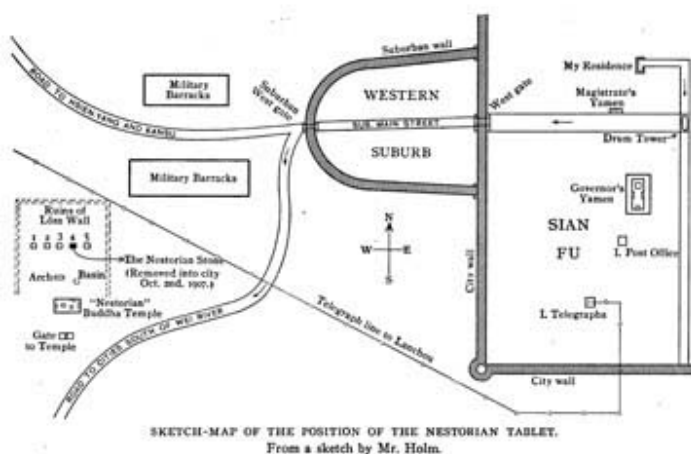
Supplement 16:

The Religious Candidate



It was both noteworthy and commonplace for a monk to make large gifts to the monastery upon entering it and to bequeath to the monastery all his inheritance of the house of his fathers.

Supplement 17:
The Ta-chin Monasteries of Tang



Position of the monument before
its removal in 1907

Tang city annals record the locations of several Ta-chin monasteries up to I-ssu's time. The earliest monastery of the Luminous Religion of Ta-chin in Tang times stood two blocks west of the imperial palace at Chang-an, on the northeast corner of I-ning Ward, not far from the place where the Monument was resurrected in modern times and remained until the beginning of this century. The city wards (*fang*) were large rectangular blocks of buildings east and west of the Imperial City of Chang-an, divided by cross streets into four parts. The wards themselves were spaces between the streets. I-ning ("Righteousness Repose") Ward was in the extreme west of the city, two streets down from the imperial palace. The monastery seems to have been in the northeast angle of the cross formed by the two main streets. Moule, in 1930, says: "It ought to be possible to identify the site within a few yards, but I am not aware that this has yet been done." City records of the time referred to it as a "foreign monastery of

Persia." The founding of another Persian monastery at Chang-an, this one for Manichees or Mazdeans, was recorded in 631. Emperor Tai-tsung built the monastery in I-ning Ward for the sturdy Persian "monk of great virtue" A-lo-pen in 638. At the end of the next century it was also the home of the monk Ching-ching, translator of books and in 781 the author of the monument Inscription that commemorates the emperor, the monk, and the erection of the monastery itself.

According to an old tradition, the monastery at Wu-chun was formed by a company of five brethren who partook of the Immortals' food and from whom a new brotherhood arose. Another old tradition has it that Emperor Tai-tsung, who welcomed Rabban A-lo-pen in 635, built the White Tower of the Ta-chin temple on the grounds adjacent to Wu-chun. If these traditions are true, the monastery at Wu-chun was connected to the western lands from very early times and must have been built around the same time as the first monastery in I-ning Ward, perhaps earlier than those at Loyang and Ling-wu. In 1444 the Ta-chin monastery near Wu-chun was in a place called the village of Ta-ku in the Yu-hsien section of the district of Chou-chih. According to the epitaph still in existence there in 1932, this same monastery had been called the Ta-chin-ssu ever since the Tang dynasty. There is no longer any trace of the Tang village of Wu-chu. The tower is called *Chen-hsien-pao-ta* ("Guarding Immortals' Treasure Tower").

The tenth paragraph of the Inscription tells us that the decrees of Emperor Kao-tsung (650–683) caused monasteries of the Luminous Religion "to be founded in every prefecture." In 627 Kao-tsung's father, Tai-tsung, had divided the whole empire into ten prefectures (*shih tao*). This imperial favor had already been granted to the Buddhists for many years under Tai-tsung's reign. In 666, the Taoists received this privilege for the first time under the reign of Kao-tsung. Under Kao-tsung, it says the "True Religion gained the proper elegance and finish" and the Law of the Luminous Religion spread

throughout the ten prefectures. Annals also record that in 677 the king of Persia, Pi-lu, made a request to build a Persian monastery in the Li-chuan Ward. (In 708, during the unstable and embarrassingly intriguing period of imperial strife during the Ching-lung years, AD 707–710, the building was moved to Pu-cheng Ward.) There is reference to a Ta-chin monastery being built in the city of Chaun-chou in Min during the sixth year of Hsuan-tsung's reign, which may indicate either 718 or 747, depending on whether the reference is to the sixth year of the first period of his reign or the second period. (The same monastery was called the Shui-lu monastery in 1638.) Sometime before the An Lu-shan rebellion in 755, a monastery was also built in the northwest at Ling-wu.

Sometime after 638 there was a monastery built in Hsiu-shan Ward of the eastern capital of Loyang (called "Sarag" in the Inscription), one other than the Persian Zoroastrian or Manichean temple already there, and another in Cheng-tu, capital of Szechuan, in the south.

Supplement 18:

The Pheasant Spreads Its Wings



Chinese or
golden
pheasant

Professor Legge points out that the phrase "till they appeared like pheasants on the wing" is a direct quote from the ancient *Shih Ching*, a narrative poem on the completion of a palace titled "Sze Kan" (Part II, Book iv, ode v, verse 4).

Supplement 19:

The Restoration of the Monasteries at Ling-wu and Wu-chun



Emperor Tai-tsung (Taizong)
Color on silk from hanging
scroll

The Inscription also tells us that Emperor Su-tsung (756–762), under whom I-ssu served as a general and palace director, restored the monasteries at Ling-wu and Wu-chun. Su-tsung must have rebuilt the monasteries at Ling-wu and Wu-chun following the rebellion, soon after he entered the capital, because the Inscription says the God of Spirit *continued* to assist Su-

tsung after the two monasteries were rebuilt and his reign began anew. The monastery at Wu-chun, where I-ssu's influence became strong, seems to have been the center of all the four monasteries located in or near the western capital by I-ssu's time. Wu-chun literally means "five prefectures" and is the proper name of a place within the district of Chou-chih. During the reign of Emperor Hsuan-tsung, the monastery at Wu-chun was destroyed by an earthquake. It exceeded in grandeur and rank the monastery at Ling-wu and was in fact the model for rebuilding Ling-wu. It was said that the White Tower, and the monastery itself, were originally built in accordance with the imperial order of Tai-tsung (627–649), patron of the first missionary of the Luminous Religion, Rabban A-lo-pen. According to the Inscription, the emperor made the monastery at Ling-wu "equal to" the grand monastery that already existed at Wu-chun. I-ssu might have been the overseer of this imperial work, whether after an early retirement to monastic life or while still in government service.

Supplement 20:

The Stone Bamboo Shoots



The poet Tu Fu.
Anonymous artist's
conception.

The poet Tu Fu (712–770) wrote a poem on the stone bamboo-sprouts at Cheng-tu (*Poetical Works of Tu Fu*, vol. 7). The verses by Tu Fu do not mention the monasteries themselves, but the commentary on the verses does. All the medieval commentaries on Tu Fu's poem were notes on the single line: "When a heavy rain falls people often find *she-she*."

The stone bamboo-sprouts were a pair of stone pillars outside the west gate of Cheng-tu. In 1930 it was reported that the bamboo-sprouts were still there. The north one was 16 feet high and 9 feet around; the south one, 13 feet high and 12 feet around. On the site where the stone bamboo-sprouts stood, the stone that once belonged to the attached pavilion also remained. In Tu Fu's time, whenever it rained, people picked up pearls, gold, blue jade, and other rare things (*she-she*). Some of the small pearls there, with the appearance of greenish-yellow millet, had lobes in them through which silk thread might be passed.

The Sung scholar Wu Tseng (960–1127), who recorded and corrected other earlier scholars, tells us that long ago foreigners came to this place and built a monastery named Ta-chin monastery, whose gate tower had ten rooms, every one of which had a blind made of strings of pearls, blue jade, and white gems; later, he said, the tower was broken to pieces and fell to the ground. The scholar explains that what the people called the stone bamboo-sprouts were not the Pearl Tower itself but that the tower was built very close to the site where the stone bamboo-sprouts stood. Wu Tseng's article concludes: "It is said the Kingdom of Ta-chin produces precious stones like jasper, pearls, and night-shining stones. From this place the water canal-way leads to Yung-chang-chun, I-chou of Shu province, where many rare things are produced;

that is why this monastery was built by the people who came from the Kingdom of Ta-chin. But the scholar Tu Tien, quoting from a book called *Yu-yang-tsa-tu*, said that the city of Shao-cheng in Shu province was beautifully decorated with gold, gems, pearls, and blue jade, and that General Huan Wen got angry at such luxurious decorations and burned down the city so that the people would have nothing more to do with the Ta-chin people. But what Tu Tien said was entirely wrong."

Supplement 21:

The Tiles of Wu-chun Temple



Buildings with traditional
imperial yellow roof tiles

General Yang Yung-I, in a poem written in 1200 upon the occasion of his visit to the Wu-chun temple, described the tiles of the temple at Chou-chih in this way.

Supplement 22:

The Dragon Writing on the Monastery Gates



Emperor
Hsuan-
tsung.
Tang
Dynasty;
source
unknown.

The twelfth and thirteenth paragraphs of the Inscription establish the later reign of Hsuan-tsung (745–755) as the time when the Luminous Religion began to become clearly again a state-protected religion. In these paragraphs it is reported that in 744 Emperor Hsuan-tsung himself composed the official monastery names that appeared on the monastery gates, and the front-tablets bore the inscription in the emperor's own handwriting. The official, or monastery, name of the Ta-chin monastery at I-ning Ward, *Ta-chin-ssu*, originated in 745, although the monastery had been built in 638. Prior to 745, it

had been known simply as the Persian monastery. According to Professor Saeki, nearly every monastery had a “mountain title” (such-and-such *shen*) and a “monastery name” (such-and-such *ssu*) as every Buddhist monastery did. Although Saeki was not able to ascertain any of the mountain titles, the fact that the monasteries of the Luminous Religion had a monastery name (-*ssu*) indicates that the church was a state church under imperial patronage.

Supplement 23:

The Imperial Portraits at the Monastery of I-ning Ward



Emperor
Tai-
tsung
(Taizong
) Color
on silk
from
hanging
scroll

Sometime during the first two years of Hsuan-tsung's later reign (742–743), he decreed that the likenesses of the five sacred emperors were to be placed in the original monastery of I-ning Ward at the capital as a mark of favor, along with gifts of silk. His wording of the Inscription suggests that the adherents of the Luminous Religion could from this time on expect the protection of the emperor's bow and sword.

The eighth paragraph of the Inscription records that the monastery at I-ning Ward was adorned with the portrait of the reigning emperor, Tai-tsung. Immediately after the monastery was built in 638, officials were ordered to take a faithful portrait of the emperor and have it copied on the walls of the monastery “in variegated colors” and “with dazzling splendor.” That the monastery was built and supported by the government is indicated by the force of the term “attached to it” and its official name: *Ta-chin-ssu*.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 5B



Zhongnan Mountain, south of Chang-an (Xian)

I-ssu, married to both a worldly church and a dissipating

empire, traveled the 130 *li* across the fertile plain between Chang-an and South Mountain at least once – when he sought retreat at the monastery of Wu-chun. (See Supplement 8) On this plain in 617, the founder of Tang gained his foothold to march on the capital with his son, who later became Tai-tsung. A-lo-pen in 635 and Bishop Cyriacus in 732 might have passed through this same western district on their way to the capital. (See Supplement 9) Now I-ssu was crossing the field again, but his way led away from the capital, toward the monastery at Wu-chun. Perhaps, as he approached South Mountain in his tall official carriage, he had already developed the understanding that the world is only a place for redemption and that the Church is its vehicle. From the valley road, he would have seen the towers of the Ta-chin monastery and of the famous temple of Lao-tzu. In the same neighborhood, they were separated only by the small walled village of Wu-chun. (See Supplement 10) The Taoist tower rose up tall at the foot of South Mountain. To the west, and further up the slope, on the heights of a precipice, the Ta-chin temple stood, (See Supplement 11) overshadowed by cedar forests, beneath the line of pines. (See Supplement 12) Around it were hills, deep dark green, covered with flowers and trees and barley grain growing on the mountainside. From there, where peasants came to draw water from the springs, the grand snow-born rivers and little streamlets all flowed north, toward the capital, to join the waters of the Wei. An inspired visitor of the tenth century tells us that the Ta-chin temple, seen through the evening air, seems to take the shape of a mountain deer, its hind legs resting on the cliff above as it bends to drink the clear water below. As I-ssu rode up precipitous heights along the mountain paths, past Lao-tzu Temple and through town, he could see to the north the distant, high walls of Chang-an and below him a gentle ocean of fields and farms, spacious and calm: a fertile plain full of peasant villages, with silkworms feeding in the mulberry groves and, only a few *li* away, bamboo growing along the river in the Imperial Garden of Chou-chin. One of these images – the deer, the landscape, or the past – might

have entered the mind of I-ssu as he passed.

If I-ssu had received his bishop's staff while he was still in service to the emperor, he might have made this same trip many times, and even come to live at Wu-chun with his wife and son, somewhere past the cells of the solitaries, in the outer circle of the monastery that had grown like a little village around the central temple and coenobium, and there built a modest home where he and his wife could raise their son for the priesthood. (See Supplement 13) If not, then it might have been that I-ssu made this trip only once, when as a solitary dweller he retired and sought rest.

< [PART 5C: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN](#) >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 8:

The Religious Retreat of Mar Iazed-buzid



Dr. P.Y.
Saeki

With Professor Saeki, we assume, for the sake of circumstance, that I-ssu passed his last years cloistered here at this monastery in the neighborhood of the Four Forts, the Chang-an suburb frequented by Turkic and Indian mercenaries like those who had inhabited I-ssu's youth.

Supplement 9:

The Western District of Chou-chih



Tang Dynasty Uighur Khagan

The name Chou-chih (*chou*, mountain-bend, and *chih*, river-bend) describe a town that occupied the headland of the delta formed by the Wei-ho and Tsao-ho Rivers, noted from early times for its beautiful scenery.

Since the outbreak of the rebellion in 755, the western district of the Imperial City was an important strategic point in the defense of the capital. Chou-chih was made the outpost headquarters of the imperial army for 26 years (758–784).

During these years there was no civilian life in the city, and the army left the town in ruins for many years thereafter. Chou-chih was a military town when the Monument was erected.

In 781 the district of Chou-chih was occupied by foreign mercenaries; among the soldiers were Turkic, Uighur, and Persian adherents of the Luminous Religion, Mongols, and Indians. The mercenary army, known as the Shen-tse (God-grant-strategem") army, was outposted in the western frontier of the capital. The entire southern suburb of Chang-an was filled with Tibetans and I-ssu's old comrades in arms, the Uighurs or *hui ho*, now the affluent *nouveau riche* at the capital.

Supplement 10:

The Monastic Village of Wu-chun



Postcard of Ta-chin (Daqin)
Tower and replica of the
monument stele

The Ta-chin temple at this location, which stood only one *li* from the village, might have been the center of the four monasteries mentioned in the Inscription. In 1444 another village, called Ta-ku, grew up around the temple. Not far from present-day Sian (once ancient Chang-an), the grounds that once surrounded the ancient temple presently hold an old town. The monastic village of Wu-chun is no more.

Supplement 11:
The Taoist Mecca of Chou-chih



Entrance to the Louguantai
Taoist temple today

The district of Chou-chih was the Taoist Mecca, where Taoists and Christians came into closest physical contact. Here were the great temple of Lao-tzu and the house of Yin Hsi, where Lao-tzu is supposed to have spoken his last words of

instruction.

Supplement 12:
The Monastery Tower



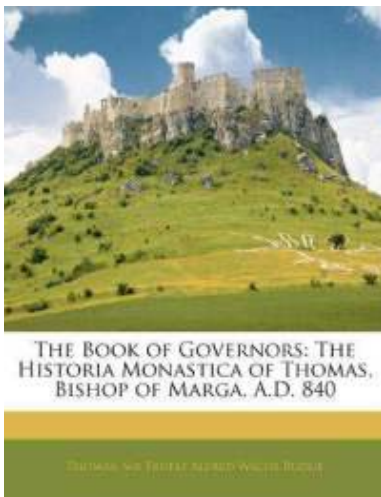
View of Ta-chin (Daqin)
temple pagoda

Within the premises of the temple ground was the Guarding Immortals' Treasure Tower (*Chen-hsien-pao-ta*), the White Tower of the temple, which was reported by Japanese scholars to be still standing in 1932. East of what once was the monastery, about 40 feet from the modern village, the eight-cornered

tower of seven stories stood 70–80 feet high.

Supplement 13:

A Picture of the Monastic Village of Wu-chun



Front cover of 2010
Nabu Press edition
of The Book of
Governors, a
monastic history
written by a monk
of Beth Abhe,

Thomas of Marga, in the first half of the 9th century A.D. The actual title of Thomas' book is The Book of Excellent Histories and Stories Concerning the Holy Men and Monks who Lived, Generation after Generation, in the Holy Monastery of Beth Abhe. The monastery of Beth Abhe, located northeast of Mosul, was founded at the end of the 6th century A.D. and became an important center for education and missionary work for the several hundred years of its existence. Thomas gives a detailed history of the remarkable members of this community during the first 300 years of its existence as well as narratives of important events in the history of the

Church of the East
during this period.

The monastery of Beth Abhe had been founded as a result of the confusion following a reform in western Persia in the year 484 that disallowed monastic marriage. Before the reform we have from fifth-century Persia the picture of at least one monastic settlement as a village in the mountains where monks and nuns lived together and raised families with children. One hundred years later, celibacy was enforced. By 628 a strict celibacy rule was in place.

Perhaps, as the founder of Beth Abhe had done in 570, the founder of the Chinese mission, A-lo-pen, continued the older rule in the Chinese missions when he arrived in 635, and now, in the eighth century, I-ssu was still allowed to live as presbyter in such a monastic village, where a priest might marry and those who took a monastic vow could obtain a dispensation to leave monastic life without disgrace or difficulty.

If anything can be known about the layout of the monastic village at Wu-chun, it is that it followed the tradition of Persia. If the Wu-chun monastery was modeled after the famous Persian monastery at Beth Abhe, from which China's metropolitans, and perhaps all its missionaries, had been sent, it looked as follows:

For 80 monks, a worship hall or temple 70 feet by 50 feet and, gathered close around it, the other buildings: a kitchen attended to and cleaned by those assigned to it on a weekly basis, and near the kitchen, the butler's pantry where those who set tables retrieved their supplies, a wine cellar where wine was stored in skins, and other domestic offices; a refectory; the common-room where brethren sat and ate together and on feast days were joined by the ascetics who lived in separate cells; a library; a guest chamber reserved for the entertainment of strangers; a special cell reserved for the

abbot; common sleeping accommodations for novice brothers; and , near the gate, an apartment for the porter. The large garden of the community at Beth Abhe included groves of fruit trees.

The wide monastic dwelling, including the inner and outer cells, was commonly referred to as a village. The cells of monks and ascetics were situated rather far off from the main body of monastic buildings.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 5A



PART 5: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN

*. . . He distributed his rewards and gifts,
laying up nothing in his own house.*

*He made offering of the crystal granted him by the Emperor;
he dedicated the cloth of gold granted him when he retired and*

sought rest.

He restored some of the old monasteries to their former condition;

in others he enlarged the worship halls,
elevating and ornamenting their corridors and walls;
roofs and flying eaves with colored tiles
appeared like pheasants on the wing.

He exerted himself beyond measure for the Luminous School;
making benevolence his rule, he dispersed his wealth.

Every year he assembled monks from the monasteries of the four quarters;

the hungry came and were fed;

the cold came and were clothed;

he healed the sick and raised them up;

he buried the dead and laid them to rest. . . .



Bodhisattva leading a woman
to the Pure Land, incense

burner in his right hand,
lotus flower in his left
hand. Tang era color on
silk discovered at Dunhuang
in the "100 Buddha Cave."

After the years of rebellion, half the people had vanished, turned to soldiers' ghosts; the others had risen up and migrated south, leaving whole regions uninhabited. Landed property moved into new hands. Statesmen paid lip service to restoration, but within a few years the government was forced to begin feeling its way toward new institutions. In his deteriorated empire, Emperor Tai-tsung (763–779) now continued, and even embellished, the religious avocation of his ancestral house: He constructed new Buddhist temples and reached new heights in support of Buddhist practice. When the emperor tied Tang government more closely than ever to the affairs of the Buddhist temple, the champions of secular morality began to criticize him for his spiritual leanings. Later, in 781, when a formidable rebellion broke out in Chih-li, after the new emperor, Te-tsung (779–805), wisely refused to be bound by the promises his grandfather, Su-tsung, had made, I-ssu had been retired from military service for many years and did not help to put it down. (See Supplement 1)

In the West, Mar Timothy sat as patriarch in the caliph's new capital of Baghdad, (See Supplement 2) the head of one of the richest and most influential communities in the Islamic Empire. (See Supplement 3) The office of patriarch had become an important position in the central administration, sometimes through favor with the caliphs themselves, (See Supplement 4) and sometimes through bribery and gifts. (See Supplement 5) In 781, when the Church was reaching its farthest limits of extension into Asia, (See Supplement 6) the patriarch was beginning to look like a civil servant, sometimes sent on diplomatic missions to Constantinople or to Rome, and the Church was growing more ostentatious and worldly from within.

(See Supplement 7)

< [PART 5B: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN](#) >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 1:

The Selfless Emperor Te-tsung



Emperor Te-tsung
(Dezong)

Jealousies among the suppressors of the civil war created a new uprising that caused the emperor to flee in terror. Te-tsung, an amiable but weak monarch, in his last acts, showed he had thoughts of ruling well and wisely. Throughout his reign, he had made nothing for himself by his reforms, and when he died, his property consisted of nothing but a few books.

Supplement 2:

The New Patriarchate of Baghdad



Abbasid Baghdad was a walled, fortified city, set among an extensive network of canals. Artwork: spl

In the time of the patriarch Hanan-Ishu, who preceded Timothy I, the patriarchate had been transferred fifteen miles upriver from Seleucia and Ctesiphon, a metropolis then falling into decay, to Baghdad, the flourishing new capital of the Muslim Commanders of the Faithful.

In 747, Abu'l Abbas as-Saffrah, an uncle of Muhammad, had opened the Abbasid dynasty when he raised the black standard of revolt in eastern Persia and two years later pronounced the traditional homily in the mosque at Kufa to become caliph. It is said that he, though an Arab, revived Persian customs and planted the post of vizier (first minister) in a Persian family descended from a high priest of the Buddhist monastery No Bahar near Balkh.

In 775, after the Abbasid caliphs had discarded the old Sassanid metropolis of Seleucia-Ctesiphon and built their own new capital, Patriarch Hanan-Ishu II (774–779?) considered it

expedient to move the patriarchate to that city while still reserving the old patriarchal title of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

Supplement 3:

The New Church Community



Nestorian priests in procession Detail of 7th- or 8th-century wall painting from the caves of Bezelik

Members of the community were accepted for their wealth and power and praised for their business ability. They were accounted the great teachers of Baghdad, the masters of languages; their physicians found their way to the palaces of the caliphs through efficient and honest medical service; individuals among them gained position, wealth, and fame. At the peak of their church's history, they were tempted even to claim full rights of equality with their Muslim fellow-citizens.

Although in times of religious toleration the Church

flourished, religion, and nationality had always been closely allied. The old pre-Islamic conviction that to be Persian one must be Zoroastrian now came to be replaced by the notion that to be Persian one must be Muslim. The restless energy of the monks, who were prone to wander, directed itself out of the cramping confines of the caliphate into those regions of the East where they felt free and were gladly received.

Supplement 4:

Mar Timothy I and the Caliph of Baghdad



Caliph Harun al-Rashid 8th-
or 9th-century Bronze chess
piece from Central Asia

By 781 Mar Timothy I, the patriarch of the Church of the East, had become a favored friend of the caliph of Baghdad, Harun al-Rashid, the monarch made fabulous in the Arabian tales of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*.

Supplement 5:

The Clever Succession of Timothy I



Timothy I of
Baghdad Unknown
artist

It is reported that Hanan-Ishu died in October or November of 778, 779, or 780, and that Timothy was installed as patriarch eight months later.

At his election, Timothy laid at the disposal of his electors heavy sacks to be opened after his success—presumably full of money; when he succeeded to the patriarchate and his supporters opened the sacks, they found them full of stones. When their understandable displeasure reached his ears, Timothy defended himself by retorting: “The priesthood is not to be purchased for money.” The cleverness and perspicacity of Timothy’s ruse, no doubt designed to humiliate the gross expectation of his perverted electors, has since been interpreted as mere trickery and fraud.

The Book of Governors, a monastic history of the Oriental Church written in 840 by a member of the once-renowned but by then already decaying monastery of Beth Abhe, is one of the earliest documents to suggest that Timothy’s possession of the

patriarchate was fraudulent. The author says: "And when Timothy saw the face of every man fixed upon our Mar Isho-yabh, he advised him secretly when they were alone together and said to him, 'Thou art an old man, and thou art not able to stand up and meet the attacks of the envious, Ephraim of Elam, Joseph the son of Mari, and other opponents; but do thou excuse thyself, and become one of the supporters, and I will make thee Metropolitan of Adiabene'; and to speak briefly, Timothy was appointed catholicos and patriarch, and was proclaimed among the heads of the fathers" (vol. II, p. 383). After a few days, because Mar Maran-'ammeh, metropolitan of Arbela, had died, Timothy appointed and proclaimed Mar Isho-yabh to be bishop of the Church of Adiabene and metropolitan of all his countries.

A fuller account of Timothy's succession, which further suggests that Timothy made fraudulent bribes, is given by Bar-Hebraeus in his ecclesiastical chronicles. (The account is reproduced in a footnote in the English version of the *Book of Governors*.) Bar-Hebraeus mentions that Isho bar-Non, Timothy's own successor, maintained a controversy with him during Timothy's time in office and played on his name (Timotheos), calling him "Talematheos" or "God-reviler."

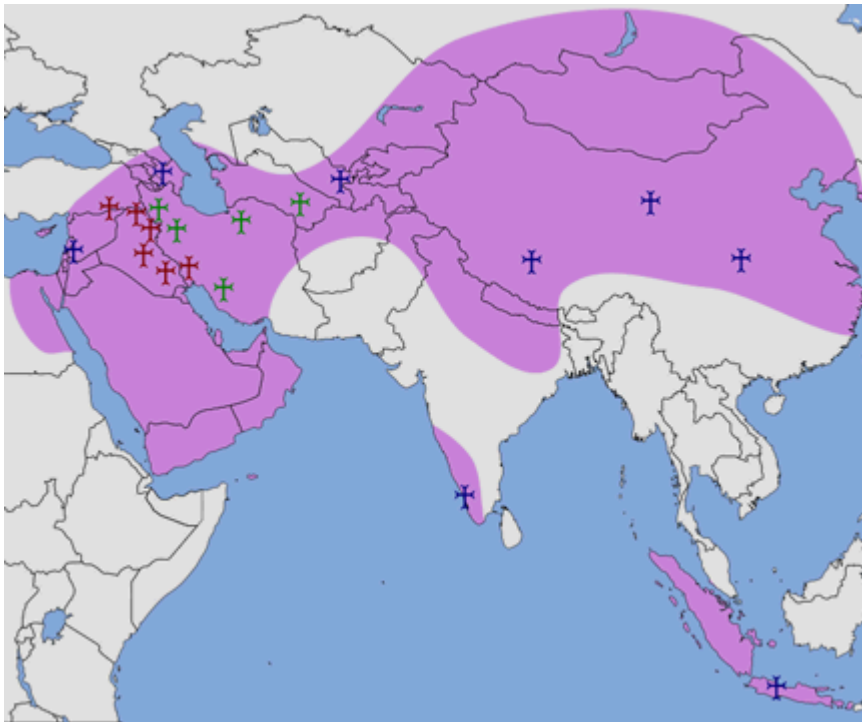
Dr. William Wright, following the line of thought laid out in the *Book of Governors*, explains in his "A Short History of Syriac Literature" that Timothy got himself appointed catholicos through trickery and against much opposition about eight months after the death of Hanan-Ishu II when a formidable opponent elected by a separate Baghdad synod died suddenly. Even after Mar Timothy's succession, Wright says, opposition continued; other synods in Baghdad and in cities further east attempted at least twice to excommunicate Timothy.

Only the modern historian Robin Waterfield exonerates Catholicos Timothy, however slightly. He tells us: "Patriarch Timothy can be said to typify a Persian Church leader of his

time. He was extremely worldly and not above giving or taking a bribe. Although he showed small signs of spirituality, he was zealous for the well-being and good name of the Church, which he administered very efficiently.”

Supplement 6:

The Outreach of Timothy I

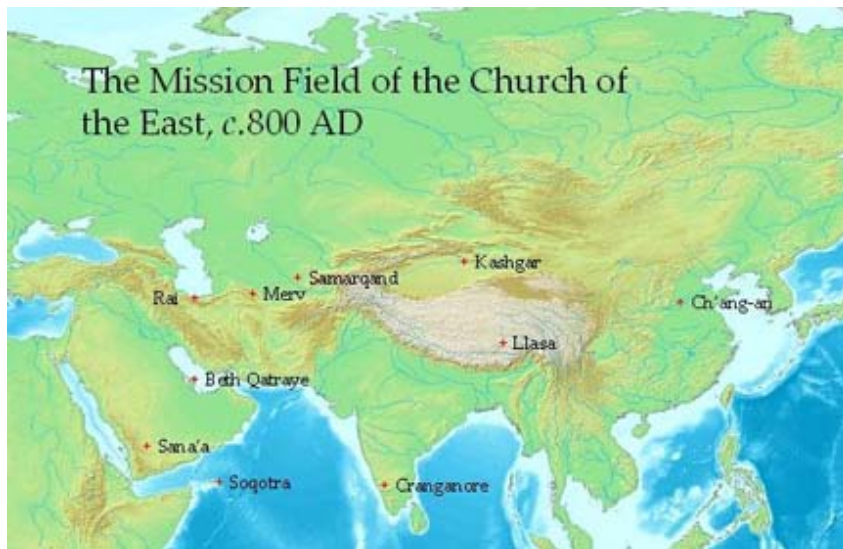


Map of Church of the East metropolitan provinces during the middle ages: red cross indicates Mesopotamia, green cross indicates Persia, blue cross indicates later expansions, violet cross indicates area of missionary activities. Artist: Rafy

This great outreach was made under Catholicos Timothy I by monks from the monastery at Beth Abhe. In 781, about the same time that the principality of Kashkar became Christian, Timothy wrote that “another Turkish ruler” had become Christian, and he mentions both the consecration of a bishop for Tibet and missionary journeys to India and China.

Supplement 7:

A Note on the Corruption of the Church of the East



Church of the East Exterior Provinces
Artist D.J. Wilms

As early as the latter part of the eighth century, there were reports of corruption in church matters; later, in the end, the elements of decay set in with disastrous consequences.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 4D



Pleasures of the Tang Court by Zhang Xuan

If we were to approach the life of I-ssu in a more subjunctive mood, is it possible to imagine that his life did not develop a pattern resonant with the court circles that fashioned it, a life like the life of all nobles, charmed with the symmetry of the solar year? Would we not have seen him among the throng, fashionably celebrating new weather on the day of Spring Festival, in the clear brightness after the equinox, when everyone went out walking in their best clothes and picnicked in the open air on some bend of the Crooked River in Chang-an Park, where many of gracious demeanor, men and women, with fine-grained skin and well-proportioned bones and flesh, gathered dazzling at the water's edge, their garments of embroidered silk gauze reflecting light in the sunset month of spring? When the grain rain fell and evening colored the sweet-scented season of the year, would he not have stood on the river belvedere and looked out on the forest flowers, wet with rain that added to their rouge, and on the golden lotuses, stretching their kingfisher girdles, lengthened by the wind? In summer's beginning, would he not have walked along the bends of the Serpentine Lake, past jostling scenes of lighthearted extravagance and lovely ladies whose lyres lay in brocade covers at their sides? On Tuan Wu Day, in the increasing heat of summer, when the emperor presented him with a cool grass cloth robe fashioned by palace women and monogrammed by the emperor's own hand, would he not have celebrated such an afternoon in a pavilion at the river head,

sitting with friends and drinking cool wine, far above the Hibiscus Pleasure Grounds that adjoined Prosperous Felicity Palace? In autumn, would he not hunt with crossbow through empty suburbs, or with falcons through vast and grassy parks, rumbling and clattering in a fashionable cushioned carriage, and then come home to a banquet of boiled lamb? And when heat stopped and the equinox turned the dew white with cold, might he not have stopped once upon the city ramparts to watch the setting sun gather on the thick walls around him and seen the ramparts within ramparts catch between them the evening fog? Then, after the frost's descent became winter's beginning, after slight snows and the solstice cold, when New Year's Eve let no one sleep, and candles shone bright in all the pavilions, why would I-ssu have allowed some shadow of trouble to darken the festivities then universal?



Every primary block of the city of Chang-an was enclosed by walls. Each of the small cities enclosed in these walls held small temples, workshops, and retail establishments. Inside each of these small cities, every residential and official building was also divided by walls. The design imitated the natural

system, in which smaller
worlds form larger worlds.

In this city, where firewood and food were more dear than pearls and gemstones, I-ssu grew older in public office, serving emperors in a decaying empire. During the time of intrigues at court, the border battles with Khitan rebels in the east, and later, the battles with Tibetans in the west, he waited to retire to monastic life, (See Supplement 8) many years before the reign of Te-tsung. (See Supplement 9) In this restless space of time, I-ssu's life held two moments of rejoicing: the first, his marriage, solemnized by the cup, the ring, the cross, and the coronation in colors; the second, the birth of his son. If, on this occasion, I-ssu had already been ordained, the hands of the priest who washed his son at birth, and the prayers that blessed the water, were his own; and again, on the day of the nearest great feast, he would have baptized his son once more, this time elaborately, with the threefold immersion and, with the child facing east, a total anointing with holy oil.

I-ssu did not fight beside the Duke Kuo Tzu-i at his pale victory in Loyang, when it seemed the rebel forces would gain mastery; (See Supplement 10) nor was he present at the final scene of the rebels' demoralization. I-ssu did not fight when the Tibetans rose up to take the capital and the emperor fled to Honan; nor did he accompany Kuo Tzu-i on his campaign in 764, when the general emerged from semiretirement to recover Chang-an from the Tibetans after the *hui ho* joined in the rebellion; (See Supplement 11) nor when the Tibetans retreated and the *hui ho* left the country; nor later, when the Tibetans resumed their attacks nearly every autumn, and state bureaucracy grew like the trunk of a palm tree.

When I-ssu retired from government service, he received two imperial gifts. The gold-embroidered carpet, according to precedents recorded in official annals, was an award which the

empire reserved to military officers upon their retirement from imperial work, somewhat as in our time the United States government rewards the golden years of service of its retiring officers with the Meritorious Service Award or Legion of Merit. The white pearl (*po-li*) (See Supplement 12) was a ritual gift. (The symbolism of both the crystal and the carpet might have come from Central Asia.) According to the Chinese *Book of Rites*, the primary authority on ceremonial observances for centuries, an imperial gift conferred symbolic approval or encouragement to action: When bow and arrows were conferred on a prince, he could proceed to execute the royal justice. When the hatchet and battle-axe were conferred, he could proceed to inflict death. When the libation cup was conferred, he could make spirits for himself; when this cup was not conferred, he had to depend for these spirits as a gift from the Son of Heaven (Li Chi, Royal Regulations 2:19) Thus, it seems that, with the crystal that I-ssu received from the emperor, he received also the emperor's consent to pursue the active principle of virtue.

< [PART 5A: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN](#) >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 8:

Administrative Chastity



The Chinese describe inviolate administrative honor as the “great chastity.” It is characteristic of the Tang administrative system that a man who disagreed with some matter of policy that he considered vital would voluntarily retire, often becoming a hermit. Scholars who felt that administrative conditions were such that they could not participate in government and yet preserve their honor would retire and say, “I will not allow my white coat to be splashed with black.” It is possible that I-ssu left government service under such a condition.

Supplement 9:

Te-tsung



Emperor Te-tsung
(Dezong)

Te-tsung is the emperor who sat on the Dragon Throne at the time the Monument was raised.

Supplement 10:

The Illness and Death of Su-tsung



Emperor Tai-tsung
(Daizong)

Within two years after recalling General Kuo Tzu-i, Emperor Su-tsung fell ill. The emperor's son, Li Yu, was appointed heir apparent, and the intrepid, jealous, tenacious Lady Chang was appointed empress. To carry out her duties, Lady Chang used the chief eunuch, Li Fu-ku, who overly influenced the ailing emperor. For those two years, the war continued without the guidance of Kuo Tzu-i, until the new emperor, Tai-tsung,

returned the duke to his northern command.

Su-tsung died in May, within a fortnight of the death of his father, Hsuan-tsung. Both died tragically: Hsuan-tsung in the virtual imprisonment imposed on him by the Goneril-like behavior of his son; Su-tsung, abandoned on his sickbed while a war to the death was being waged between his hateful empress and his still more hateful chief eunuch, Li Fu-kuo. When the powerful Li Fu-kuo tried to rule over the new emperor, Tai-tsung, as he had over Tai-tsung's father, Tai-tsung sent a body of soldiers suddenly to his residence to put him to death.

Supplement 11:

The Leader Kuo Tzu-i



Kuo Tzu-I receiving homage of Uighurs
Detail of Song Dynasty painting

The story is told that the Uighur tribes, on the verge of revolt, were pacified when they saw Duke Kuo Tzu-i approach on horseback; they all smiled and lay down their arms at his feet and went over to him again.

Supplement 12:

White Pearl



Sample sphatik
Shiva lingam

“Crystal,” or as Professor Saeki suggests, “white pearl” or “water crystal,” from the Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit word *sphatika*.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 4C



Palace Examination (detail)

Song Dynasty painting

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The Inscription is emphatic that I-ssu received his high appointment *by examination*. Such a citation indicates that I-ssu was a man of great ability and personal merit. It distinguishes him even further. As a native son of the Northwest, he had sprung from a later generation of the same wild Turkic stock as the mixed breed northern aristocrats who continued to be prominent in the Tang elite. The men of this breed, of the same Sino-Turkic bloodline as the emperors themselves, were hard-drinking, hard-riding fighting men, who hunted with falcons on their country estates and whose women played polo. But in contrast to this race of hardy roisterers, among whom merit meant good breeding alone, I-ssu exhibited as well the strong intellectual and cultural qualities that were the hereditary claims of the sons of Han, the scholarly officials who had descended from the old southern dynasties.

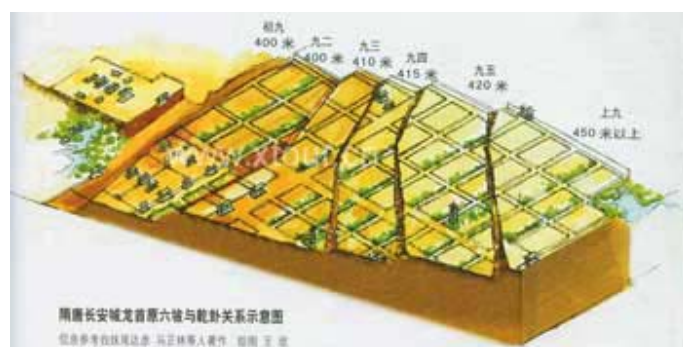


Kuo Tzu-i Anonymous
portrait

If the procedure of I-ssu's appointment followed the custom of the age, Duke Kuo Tzu-i, I-ssu's previous superior, had recommended I-ssu as a worthy and talented man to the emperor for direct appointment. Then, in a palace examination, which was regarded as highly as the highest metropolitan examination, I-ssu presented himself. For this high office, I-ssu stood not before a steward of the Ministry of Personnel but before the emperor himself. To show that his learning and his art did not extend carelessly in all directions but was coiled and interwoven, I-ssu appeared for one day before his examiner – the emperor himself – who tested his calligraphy and his ability to compose solutions to practical administrative problems, (See Supplement 4) and who judged I-ssu's personal appearance and manner of speaking and checked his dossier for evidence of virtuous conduct, talent, and zeal. (See Supplement 5) Once found acceptable, and exempted by the prestige of his rank from the indignity of three-year review, I-ssu would then have been asked to indicate his preference for appointment from the expected vacancies suitable to his rank and, with the emperor's approval, to assume his new position. It seems to me an irony of I-ssu's religious mission that the last step of his recruitment into government service – the formal pronouncement of his appointment, when he, as an appointee, expressed his thanks in imperial audience before taking up his assigned duties – would have required him to commit the incongruous act of prostrating himself before the emperor and, striking his head upon the ground nine times, to utter respectful words; this, in the same audience hall where his predecessor, A-lo-pen, on his mission to notify the empire of the liberation promised through practice of the Luminous Teaching, had stood.

When the emperor bestowed on I-ssu a new gold seal, dangled from a purple sash, I-ssu fulfilled in himself the Tang ideal. In a military establishment that consisted of citizen-soldiers, he had fought; in the bureaucracy of learned men, who shared a common educational background and a commitment to

Confucian principles of government, (See Supplement 6) he had taken office. In this imperial community, the emperor was considered the father and mother of the people, and all officials were expected to share his responsibility. The emperor provided a link of communication between this world and the Ruler of the Universe. It was I-ssu's sacred duty to cultivate his natural talents in the hope that he might provide a worthy channel of intercourse between the emperor and the People of the One Hundred Surnames – a service unblemished by thought of self – to serve, to advise, and to regenerate, if renovation was necessary. Following his appointment, I-ssu would have lived the only way of life considered worthy for a man of intellectual ability.



The site of Chang-an had a gentle downward slope from southwest to northwest and, according to geographical altitude, could be divided into six levels. It is said that, following calculations using the I Ching, the order of each of the six areas was ascertained, then the function of each area was decided by the virtue reflected from each. The noblest area was planned for Buddhist and Taoist temples. The second level was planned as the Palace City, a huge courtyard with all the residences and

offices of the emperor. The third level was planned as the Royal City, a huge courtyard that included the office space for all governmental officials. The fourth level was planned for two marketplaces. The sixth level was designated to be a royal park. All other areas were residential. The locations of the great temples and markets were convenient for all residents. The Royal City was just south of the Palace City, so officials could deliver files to emperors quickly without disturbing the life of ordinary civilians. And everyone had the right and opportunity to enjoy the beautiful urban and natural scenery from the high tower in the park. All the numbers of the blocks and the numbers on the gates in the city were determined by astronomy and the lunar calendar. The entire city was considered a model of the universe.

The emperor – The Above One, The Lord Above, The Lone Man (all terms for the emperor, whose name was never spoken) – lived in the north quarter of the palace enclosure and always sat facing south. One vast quadrangle of the Imperial City was placed to the left of the emperor's seat; the other was placed to the emperor's right. The left government building – with willows by its side and with banners and ceremonial weapons crowded together before it, level as a field of ripe grain – housed the Department of the Left, the Imperial Chancellery.

It was this departmental building which I-ssu entered through the Green (east) Gate to serve as a civil officer. Military men occupied the right government building, the less honorable position, to the west.



Master plan of Chang-an in the Tang Dynasty. Purple indicates the Palace City. Dark Blue indicates the Royal City. Green indicates markets. Light blue indicates the lake in the royal park.

No one outside the immediate entourage of the ruler—that is, the palace ladies and eunuchs—slept within the Forbidden City. Robed ministers like I-ssu ascended terraces to their storied houses in guarded places and entered their homes through mansion gateways, halberds waving before their noble gate, by their number telling their rank, and with statues in their yards. By day, I-ssu's carriage awning and cap of office was one of those that filled the capital; in the evening, he came home to rooms scented with aloeswood, at leisure to inspect his pointed turban at the screen or to sup on fragrant meats by the pool.



Tang era architecture

Of the three titles given to I-ssu in the Inscription, the first, Grand Master of the Palace with Golden Seal and Purple Ribbon (*Chin-tzu kuang-lu tai fu*), a prestige title, assigned I-ssu his status in the capital. (In formal documents, such as the Inscription, this title always took precedence over nominal offices.) As an indication of his rank – the upper class of the third rank in a ranking system of nine degrees – this title afforded him the visible privilege of wearing the golden fish from his waist chain and a certain emolument from the state. For I-ssu, this award would have been an annual stipend of some thousands of bushels, paid to him partly in grain and partly in equivalents of silk or cash. The second title, Associate Military Vice Commissioner (*Tung chieh tu fu shih*) of the Northern Region, identified I-ssu as an officer actively engaged in imperial service. The third title, Director of the Palace Administration (*Tien-chung-chien*) by examination, indicated a duty assignment and his responsibility at the capital. Serving at this appointment, I-ssu, together with a senior do-director of the same rank and a four-man directory staff, regulated the activities of the non-eunuch central government agency, responsible to the Central Office of the Secretariat-Chancellery for provisioning all those within the palace walls through the Six Services. (See Supplement 7)



Performance at Imperial Court Tang
Dynasty painting

< [PART 4D: COURT CIRCLES](#) >

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplement 4:
The Confucian Test of Knowledge



Tang Dynasty drawing
of Confucius by Wu
Daozi

Confucius once remarked that if one corner of a subject were revealed to a man and he did not understand the whole, he was not worth teaching.

Supplement 5:
The Dossier of Genealogy



Birthday reception for
Duke Kuo Tzu-i Qing
Dynasty porcelain vase

The Chinese, in judging a man, think it is of vital importance to look back at least three generations to examine what the education of the family has been.

Supplement 6:

A Bureaucracy of Learned Men



Tang officials

Artist unknown

There was no other social or economic basis for integrated nationhood. Regional differences were minimized by the rise of this elite class of officials who were recruited nationwide and used their folk heritage as a reservoir from which to constantly renew themselves. Even when linguistic differences made oral communication impossible, educated Chinese everywhere wrote the same characters.

Supplement 7:

The Six Services



Daming Palace, royal residence of the Tang emperors in Chang-an
Unknown artist's conception

Each of the Six Services, supervised by a pair of chief

stewards and several foremen, performed a specific art of functional necessity. One provided the emperor his sedan-chair service with a staff of fifteen unranked bearers, two chief stewards, two foremen, and four unranked supervisors stationed at both the Office and the Court of the Imperial Mausoleum. Another supplied Taoist prescriptions of medicinal herbs and medical supplies. For imperial personnel, the Livery Service managed the use of horses, including those maintained in the Six Stables and the Six Corrals. A fourth service had charge of the emperor's personal quarters in the imperial palace, preparing his baths, making special accommodations for great ceremonial occasions, and providing the tents and other accommodations the emperor required while he traveled away from the capital. The Clothing Service provided and maintained the clothing and accoutrements for the emperor's public appearances, and always involved eunuchs to some extent. This service prepared the emperor's Dragon Robes each day for the morning levee of the imperial court, held before dawn in Southern Fragrance Hall, and court dress when the emperor held audience with councillors, court officials, or envoys of redemption, like Rabban A-lo-pen, who a century before had come to found the mission which I-ssu now, in his own way, continued. The Food Service supplied necessities for the imperial table (including the eight delicacies on which the emperor was supposed to dine: bear's claw, deer's tail, duck's tongue, turbot roe, camel's hump, carp's tail, ox marrow, and gibbon's lips), and often cooperated with central government agencies such as the Court of Imperial Entertainments, eunuchs, and palace women to set out the imperial banquets, banquets that were the scenes of poetry, where groups of educated southern guests, the indigenous beautiful people of the Central Flowery Kingdom, turned their emotional life into verse composed on the occasion, often to a specified rhyme. The stewards of the service were responsible, among other things, for preliminary tasting of the food served at the imperial table, and set the table with chopsticks of rhinoceros horn, a material used as a poison detector and

known for its aphrodisiac and magical properties. The meat carvers, with tiny bells on their knives, executed a kind of ballet as they carved, their green firebird knives cutting the food into strands fine as silk cords. The guests drank wine and delighted in the season's vegetables, in delicious frosted pears, and in bitter dates and cold melons. Educated and talented courtesans, the "evening orioles" – powdered beauties in glistening sendal robes, with fashionable long, slender eyebrows, the green-black "willow leaves," brushed close to their eyes, and with hair that black clouds had taught how to pile – served as official hostesses and offered clever entertainment. On holidays, outings were exhibitions of high living where courtly women with delicate complexions and haughty manners sat in gardens with princess thoughts, eating and wasting the rich and expensive food that the Service provided for their conspicuous consumption. Their precious courses were sent to them in succession on flying steeds: badger's paws and turtle soup, purple camel hump peeking out from the kingfisher cauldron, rows of shining white fish lying on crystal platters clear as water. Palace eunuchs, their mounted couriers, galloped up to the throngs of guests bearing these additions to the feast from the imperial kitchen.

Mar Iazed-buzid, the Great Donor: Part 4B



Testers for imperial examinations. Song Dynasty painting

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The Inscription is emphatic that I-ssu received his high appointment *by examination*. This phrase leaves open two possible paths toward his life's conclusion (**G** and **H**), and leaves me uncertain about which path he followed. My uncertainty derives from the two possible interpretations, in Tang usage, of the single word *shih*, which preceded his title as Director of Palace Administration.

(G)

Taken to mean "probationary," *shih* refers to the status of a newly appointed official during his first year of service at an appointment, a dubious honor to be recorded in stone if I-ssu did not ultimately make the grade. Following this interpretation, the word suggests that I-ssu led a short courtly life and held his high administrative position for only one year in attendance to either Emperor Hsuan-tsung or Su-tsung. Here possibility bifurcates again. In one possible version of the story (**G₁**), I-ssu leaves Balkh as a candidate for examination under Hsuan-tsung as a provincial, but so worthy that he is appointed primarily on his intellectual

merit above thousands of other worthies; he serves the traditional probationary period of one year; during the invasion of 755, he flees the city and follows the Emperor to Ma-wei; there I-ssu joins the army of the heir apparent, who becomes Su-tsung, and is appointed to be a general because of his high standing; he makes war on the rebels; then I-ssu either returns to Chang-an when Kuo Tzu-i is recalled in 760 or else he continues on in a military career until his retirement a few years later. In the second possible version of the story (**G₂**), I-ssu establishes a military career under Su-tsung at Ling-wu first; he spends a probationary year at his high post under Emperor Su-tsung sometime between 760–763 (that is to say, before Su-tsung's death and before Su-tsung's son, the new heir apparent, overturns the authority of both his empress mother and her chief eunuch, Li Fu-kuo); later, I-ssu retires, or for some reason he is dismissed from his office.

(H)

If we take the prefix *shih* to mean "by examination," we are not required to imagine that I-ssu possessed the almost fantastic ability needed for a candidate from a dreary northern province to move directly into high-level palace work; nor are we required to accept the unlikelihood that a man so gifted would enter a high-level military career before he served at some other post first nor that he would then take an early retirement to live numerous years in nonfunctional obscurity.

Here a third possible story presents itself (**H₁**): I-ssu wins his position as administrator in the final year of Hsuan-tsung's reign by the usual means of candidacy and examination; while he serves his probationary year (*shih*), the rebellion breaks out; as a close associate of the emperor, and responsible for the transportation and accommodations of the emperor while he traveled, I-ssu follows the emperor's

entourage and guard to Ma-wei; there he witnesses the political assassination of the emperor's consort; I-ssu travels with the emperor's son to Ling-wu, where he receives his military commission under the new Emperor, Su-tsung. This third version of the story clearly embodies one sense of the military title attributed to I-ssu in the Inscription, where he is referred to as an *associate* military vice commander. The prefix *associate* (*tung*), when it does not indicate a shared authority, indicates that the holder of the title is temporarily serving his assignment at the same time that he holds another, usually higher, title. This third version also accounts for the immediacy with which I-ssu's retirement is brought up in the Inscription. A fourth possible version (**H₂**) begins like the third, but includes long years of government service before I-ssu's retirement to the monastery.

The characters or selves which I-ssu plays in his public life are the same in all four versions of the story: bishop, warrior, high government official. Only the sequence and duration of these roles change. In one story, I-ssu wins a high position by great personal ability and learning according to the rite of imperial candidacy and examination; he lives the life of a noble for less than a year and the life of a warrior for four years; he retires early from government service, perhaps disillusioned, but with imperial gratitude for his service; he continues his existence for many years in a monastery temple. In the second version, I-ssu arrives as a learned but provincial monk; he serves a short time in palace service; during the rebellion, he wins enough renown as a military leader to recommend him later to high imperial office; he serves in that office for many years; later, he retires with gifts of imperial gratitude. The third and fourth stories share the thematic elements of the first and second versions. All four stories are possible. Only one is true. Without the gratuitous invention of extraordinary personal circumstances, only one accounts for I-ssu's lasting wealth, his quick rise to high station, and the show of imperial

gratitude. The argument and plot of this story, more lively and more likely than the others, is the one followed in this narrative.

< [PART 4C: COURT CIRCLES](#) >