

**Reconstruction of the ecclesiastical network along the ancient “silk routes” through Central Asia to China
(from the fifth century to the end of the Tang Dynasty)**

Maria HSU
Pontifical Oriental Institute (PIO)
Faculty of Eastern Christian Studies (SEO)

Abstract: A pivotal moment in the history of the Church of the East (*Jingjiao* 景教 Christianity) was the arrival of the first East Syriac missionary monk, *Aluoben* 阿羅本, in Chang’an in 635 AD during the Tang Dynasty, marking the beginning of Christian expansion into China. This event motivated the present study, which aims to explore the ecclesiastical network of the Church of the East along the ancient Silk Routes through an analysis of primary literary sources supported by archaeological evidence. The focus is on the development of its dioceses eastward in Central Asia and China from the fifth to the tenth centuries. The study begins with an examination of the Church’s origins, followed by its establishment as an autonomous entity and its subsequent development. It then explores the organization of ecclesiastical provinces by the Church of the East, tracing its network across several key regions, including Khorasan, Segestan, the southern Caspian Sea, Bactria/Tokharistan, and Turkestan, including West Turkestan (the Semiryechye region) and East Turkestan (the Tarim Basin and Tufan Oasis), and, finally, the presence of the Church in China. This study is part of a broader doctoral thesis that also includes East Syriac monasticism and its development, which will be discussed at a later time.

Key Keywords: Church of the East; *Jingjiao* Christianity; ecclesiastical organization; Khorasan; Segestan; Semiryechye; Transoxiana; Sogdiana; Turkestan; West Turkestan; Chinese Turkestan; Tarim Basin; Turfan Oasis; Central Asia; China; Tang Dynasty