

declared that the religion of the sacred books known as *Persian* had originally come from Tathsin (the Roman Empire); propagated by preaching and tradition it had made its way to the Middle Kingdom, and had been for a long time practised therein. Temples of this worship had been erected from the first, and had got to be known popularly as Persian temples. But as this title was inaccurate it was by this edict enacted that throughout the empire the name of Persian temples should be thenceforward changed to TATHSIN TEMPLES.¹

68. The second record is that celebrated monument of Singanfu which has been the subject of so much discussion.

This monument was dug up in the year 1625 during a chance excavation in a suburb of Singanfu, preserving in its name of Changgan that of the city which was for so many ages the capital of successive dynasties. It was a stone slab of some six feet and a quarter in height and about three feet in width, with a cross carved at the top, and below that a continuous Chinese inscription of great length, besides lines of writing in an alphabetic character, which was soon after the discovery ascertained to be Syriac.²

The contents of this inscription, attesting the ancient propagation of Christianity in China, speedily became known to the Jesuit missionaries; and a Chinese edition of it was published in the country eighteen years later by two of that body. Long before the latter date, however, copies or facsimiles had been sent to Europe, and the first attempt at a translation was published by Athanasius Kircher in 1636.

The inscription has since been several times translated, and has given rise to a large amount of controversy, sometimes of very acrimonious character. Many scholars have entirely refused to believe in its genuineness. Voltaire, as a matter of course, sneered at it. In our own day Renan (though apparently with some doubts) and Julien have denied its authenticity; so has the German Neumann with singular rashness, roundly accusing the

¹ *Pauth. de l'Auth.*, pp. 79-80.

² Extracts regarding the discovery of the monument will be found in Suppl. Note x.