

SYRIAC GRAVESTONES FROM CENTRAL ASIA

[from: Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document* (Reprinted from *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1925), 41-42 and John Stewart, *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise: The Story of a Church on Fire* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 204-213]

- This is the grave of Pasak -- The aim of life is Jesus, our redeemer.
- This is the grave of chorepiscopus¹ Ama. In the year 1566 (AD 1255)² he departed from this world in the month of July on Sabbath. May our Lord unite his spirit with those of the pious and upright. Amen.
- In the year 1583 (AD 1272) that is the ape year. This is the grave of the priest and general, Zuma -- a blessed old man, a famous Emir, the son of General Giwargis. May our Lord unite his spirit with the spirits of the fathers and saints in eternity.
- In the year 1584 (AD 1273). This is the grave of the church visitor Pag-Mangku, the humble believer.
- In the year 1612 (AD 1301) the bull year. This is the grave of the priest Taki who was very zealous for the church.
- In the year 1613 (AD 1302). This is the grave of the priest Isaac, the blessed old man. He worked much in interests of the town.
- In the year 1616 (AD 1305) which is that of the Turkish snake. This is the grave of Sabrisho, the archdeacon, the blessed old man and the perfect priest. He worked much in the interests of the church.
- In the year 1618 (AD 1307), which is the year of the sheep. This is the grave of Jeremiah, the believer.
- In the year 1618 (AD 1307) that is the sheep year. This is the grave of the charming maiden Julia, the betrothed of the chorepiscopus Yohannan.
- In the year 1623 (AD 1312), which is the year of the pig. This is the grave of the priest Peter, the venerable old man.
- In the year 1627 (AD 1316) which is the year of the dragon. This is the grave of Shliha the celebrated commentator and teacher, who illuminated all the monasteries with light, son of Peter the august commentator of wisdom. His voice rang as high as the sound of a trumpet. May our Lord mix his pure soul with the just men and fathers. May he participate in the heavenly joys.
- In the year 1639 (AD 1328) that is the dragon year. This is the grave of Pesoha the renowned exegetist and preacher who enlightened all cloisters through the light -- extolled for wisdom and may our Lord unite his spirit with the saints.
- In the year 1650 (AD 1339) the hare year. This is the grave of Kutluk. He died of plague with his wife Mangu-Kelka.

¹ The term used for a visitator, similar to an archdeacon, a bishop's assistant. The Syriac word *sa'ora* and the Greek word *periodeutes* were also used to describe this office. "The duty of the bearer of these titles was to visit the churches and see that all was well with them and to build up congregations that had fallen off. It was also part of his duty to visit villages and smaller congregations, to gather elders around him, to admonish them, and remind them of their duties, to read the scriptures, to gather the children together, pray with them and arrange for their education. The person appointed to this office was chosen because of his piety, his uprightness and his incorruptibility." (Stewart, 205-206).

² Many of the dates given on these grave inscriptions follow the Syriac custom of dating events according to the Seleucid Era (i.e. beginning with the inauguration of Seleucid rule in Syria and Palestine in 312/311 BC). Dates using AD are in parentheses.