Quanzhou in the Province of Fujian in South China and its neighboring municipality of Jianjiang became known among Manichaean scholars worldwide through Professor Lin Wushu’s efforts to stage there the 2003 International Symposium of Manichaean Studies, “Manichaeism and Ancient China.” The choice of the venue underscores the importance of these two municipalities for the history of Manichaeism, which made the subsequent cancellation of the symposium all the more disappointing. The city of Quanzhou was China’s major sea-port throughout the European Middle Ages and was host to a number of affluent and influential foreign mercantile communities. It was from Quanzhou that Marco Polo left for Europe c. 1292 CE after his long sojourn in China. The nearby municipality of Jinjiang possesses the only Manichaean shrine which is still used as a place of worship with a historic statue of Mani as the Buddha of Light. However, an Australian team under my leadership has been paying regular research visits to both Quanzhou and Jinjiang since 2000 and in this paper I hope to highlight some of the more significant finds relevant to the study of the diffusion of both Manichaeism and Nestorianism (i.e. the Church of the East) in South China.

The Manichaean shrine on Huabiao Hill (Jinjiang)

We know from literary sources that Manichaeism had made its presence felt in the Commandery of Qingyuan (which included the medieval city of Quanzhou) not long after the religion was expelled from the capital cities of Changan and Loyang in the Ninth Century CE (i.e. after 842). Among the fanciful stories collected from the region is the tale of the house of a senior local official in Qingyuan being haunted by an exceptionally pernicious evil spirit. Repeated efforts by Daoist priests to get rid of it only resulted in its being more pugnacious. In
the end a Manichaean priest was asked to stay overnight in the house together with his scriptures and the spirit disappeared for good.¹ The sect continued as a secretive popular Buddhist cult in South China until the conquest of the region by the Mongols in 1277. It is not surprising therefore that the extant Manichaean shrine on Huabiao Hill is linked in the local gazetteer (the *Minshu* of He Qiaoyuan) to the Mongol period of Chinese History (i.e. the Yuan Dynasty, c. 1260–1368 CE). The relevant literary source was first noted by the Chinese scholar Chen Yuan in 1921.² The significance of this material from the *Minshu* was immediately realized by the French Sinologist Paul Pelliot who translated it into French with accompanying material.³ The section most relevant to the shrine is as follows:

The Huabiao Hill of the county of Jinjiang prefecture of Quanzhou is joined to the Lingyuan Hills. Its two peaks stand up like *huabiao* (i.e. twin columns placed at entrance of tombs). On the ridge slope back of the hill is a *caó’an* (lit. thatched nunnery) dating from the Yuan period. There reverence is paid to Buddha Mani. The Buddha Mani has for name “Brilliant Buddha Mo-mo-ni.” He came from Sulin (i.e. Assuristan) and is also a Buddha, having the name “Envoy of the Great Light, Complete in Knowledge.”…In the period Huichang (841–846) when (Buddhist) monks were suppressed in great numbers, the Religion of Light was included in the suppression. However, a *Hulu fashi*⁴ came to Futang (south of Fuzhou), and taught his disciples at Sanshan (in Fuzhou). He came to the prefecture of Quan in his travels and died (there) and was buried at the foot of a mountain to the north of the prefecture. In the period Chidao (995–997) a scholar of Huai’an, Li Dingyu, found an image of the Buddha (Mani) in a soothsayer’s shop at the capital; it was sold to

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⁴ The term is either an abbreviation of the title for a Manichaean preacher *huluhuan* = Middle Persian *xrwh(x)wn* in which cases it means ‘Preacher-Priest’ or the *hulu* part could have come from Old Turkish *ulu* in which cases the title would have simply meant a ‘Great’ or ‘High Priest’. Cf. Takao Moriyasu, “On the Uighur čxšapt ay,” *Studia Manichaica. IV. Internationaler Kongreß zum Manichäismus, Berlin, 14.–18. Juli 1997*, R. Emmerick et al., eds. (Berlin, 2000), 435–36.