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Elements in the Global Middle Ages

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A FRANCISCAN TOMBSTONE IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY CHINA

A Global History

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A Franciscan Tombstone in Fourteenth-Century China

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Abstract: This Element examines the tombstone for Andrew of Perugia (d. 1332?), the sole surviving object from the fourteenth-century Franciscan mission in China. The narrative begins in Zayton, where diverse groups brought to this maritime entrepot old antagonisms and new alliances. The discovery of Andrew's tombstone and that of other Christian monuments over the centuries demonstrate how various Christian churches interacted with their host society from the eighth through the fourteenth centuries. Relying to the extent possible on words of the protagonists, this Element scrutinizes the Nestorian cross-and-lotus motif and questions prevailing interpretations about this quintessential Nestorian iconography and its presence on a Franciscan tombstone: the Interreligious borrowing of art and symbolism, the mode through which ideas and traditions were transmitted, the function and purpose of adaptation, and the plausible contribution of local artisans to the creation of the earliest Christian art in China.

Keywords: Andrew of Perugia, Franciscan, Zayton, Church of the East, Nestorian Iconography

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