

THE LUMINOUS TEACHING STONE OF CHINA: The Stone Itself, Part 1: Supplements

SUPPLEMENT 1: FATHER ADAM (*CHING-CHING*)

The same monastery that Emperor T'ai-tsung built for the sturdy Persian "monk of great virtue" A-lo-pen in A.D. 638 was, at the end of the next century, the probable home of the monk Ching-ching, translator of books and in A.D. 781 the author of the monument's inscription that commemorates the emperor, the monk, and the erection of the monastery itself. Ching-ching, also called a "monk of great virtue," we know only from his Syriac epithets on the monument ("Adam, priest and country-bishop and papas of Zinistan"), a single allusion to his mission of translation in Chinese historical records, and the chiding remarks of a peevish Buddhist chronicler who accused him of vainglorious translation of the Buddhist Satparamita Sutra. Ching-ching, like A-lo-pen, is called a Persian, whether because of his race or religious party adoption, we do not know.

SUPPLEMENT 2: MAR IAZED-BUZID (*I-SSU*)

With the exception of Ching-ching, historic memory confers identity on those who raised the monument nowhere but on the stone itself. This is true even of Iazed-buzid, the lavishly praised donor of the stone. The final paragraph of the inscription and the three imperial titles found there, substantiate the official life of Iazid-buzid under his Chinese name, I-ssu; his first year of faithful service at the court and the consummation of that service when he signed the imperial book to pledge himself a loyal subject, the generosity and fiery influence he balanced between the Uighurs and the Chinese Empire on the battlefields of the Northern

Region in loyal personal service to the martial governor Kuo Tzu-i, the distinguished sweep of civil activities he carried out in high court circles, and the social privilege and repose conferred upon him by the Confucian honor of imperial service.

SUPPLEMENT 3: THE ODE

The ode of the inscription is composed in much the same form as the earliest attempts of Chinese poetical composition – lines consisting of four words that form, because of the nature of the language, four syllables. The first seven stanzas of the ode are composed in this form, which was called at the time “ancient” or “ballad” style. Of these seven stanzas, all but the second stanza is made of eight lines; the second is made of ten lines.

The Chinese name for regular syllabic verse of this kind (2+2=4) is shih. As early as the time of Confucius (Chou times, circa 1027–256 B.C.) a collection of poetry called Shih had become part of the common heritage of all educated Chinese. Subsequently called the Shih-ching (“The Book of Songs”), the book is generally conceded to be the greatest single literary monument left from China’s formative age. No work is cited more regularly in later Chinese literature of all sorts. Several of its phrases appear here and there even in Father Adam’s composition.

Most of the poems in The Book of Songs are in four-syllable lines, but there are instances of odes where stanzas of different lengths are mixed together, as they are in Father Adam’s ode. In the ancient poems there is no prescribed standard for meter and rhyme, although these were considered to be the essential poetic elements. Meter was considered to be no more than a syllabic measure on which other prosodic features could be ordered, and rhyme occurred in many patterns. The most common rhyme scheme, abcb, with the last words of the second and fourth lines rhyming, is the rhyme

scheme Father Adam used to give the inscription's ode its conventional antiqued finish.

Composition in the ancient four-syllable meter continued for more than a thousand years, until the first centuries after Christ, when two new forms appeared. Probably from "below," that is to say, from the songs and dances of professional girls, these new forms became not only respectable but the chief classical meters of all later Chinese poetry. Instead of the ancient syllabic measure $2+2=4$, the new measures used the idea of a fixed but asymmetrical caesura. Father Adam imitated the most common of the two in the final stanza of his ode. The measure of its lines is $4+3=7$.

From $2+2=4$ to $4+3=7$ is a direct line of evolution, from the shih-form of The Book of Songs to the shih-forms of T'ang times, and Father Adam, a better historiographer than a poet, perhaps attempted to indicate this evolution in the shape of his verse. The lines are short by our standards but suited to the kind of poetry they helped to develop in succeeding centuries, culminating in the poetry of T'ang – a poetry that is light but strong as steel, concise but vivid. Nearly all of Tu Fu's poems were written in this metric form. The measure of seven words is well adapted to the language and was preferred above all others up to the end of the nineteenth century.

James Legge, the eminent sinologist and translator of the ancient Book of Songs, had this to say about the verses composed for the churchmen by Father Adam: "Of their eulogistic verse I do not need to say anything. . . . They give us no information beyond what we have in the two preceding parts of the Inscription; and the sixty-six lines of which they consist do not seem to me to possess, as Chinese verse, any remarkable merit."

SOURCES

Florence Ayscough. *Tu Fu: The Autobiography of a Chinese*

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Arthur Cooper, translator. *Li Po and Tu Fu*. Penguin, 1973.

Charles O. Hucker. *China's Imperial Past*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975.

James J.Y. Liu. *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

SUPPLEMENT 4: LU YEN

More than 1,750 Chinese characters were carved with supreme skill for Ching-ching (Father Adam) by the Chinese official Lu Yen. They are still in a state of splendid preservation; only two of the characters are in bad repair.

The beautiful hand of the Chinese Consociate Lu Yen, though noticeably young, has been quoted as a model of good form in Chinese cursive style since the stone's discovery in 1623, even in the abnormal form of some of its characters. Yet the Chinese records cite the name Lu Hsiu-yen nowhere else among calligraphers.

If we accept the suggestion of more than one mystic sinologue, however, this Lu Yen is this same Lu Yen who, several years after the inscription was written, gained renown as a poet and calligrapher, and as the founder of the Taoist Chin-tan-chiao (Golden Pill of Immortality Teaching) who received, however partially, the knowledge of the Apostle Thomas that was transmitted seven centuries before to the enlightened schools of China.

SUPPLEMENT 5: PROFESSOR P.Y. SAEKI



Dr. P.Y. Saeki

Professor Peter Yoshiro Saeki (1871–1965) was a Japanese scholar of religion and law, who wrote, in his second language of English, several important books on the Church of the East, the so-called “Nestorian” Church, in China:

The Nestorian Monument in China

The Luminous Religion: A Study of Nestorian Christianity in China, with a Translation of the Inscription upon the Nestorian Tablet

Nestorian Documents and Relics in China.

Catalogue of the Nestorian Literature and Relics

In 1962 he received an honorary doctorate from Waseda University in Tokyo.

SUPPLEMENT 6: THE KUMBIRA



Monument headstone

These two monstrous creatures inscribed on the monument are known as the Kumbhira. In his book *The Nestorian Monument in China*, the erudite Japanese sinologist P.Y. Saeki tells us that this Kumbhira design was quite common among Buddhists at the time and cites two examples: a monument at Seoul in Korea (illustrated in volume 1 of Mrs. Bird Bishop's *Korea and Her Neighbors*) and the ceiling in the former throne-room in Keum-chying.



Korean Turtle Stone

Mrs. Bird Bishop, after enumerating the main sights of the city of Seoul in a passage of her 1897 book, describes the setting of the monument at the center of the city, near the great bronze bell that has opened and closed the gates of the city for five centuries, and near the grand triple gateway of the Royal Palace, where there remained in Mrs. Bird Bishop's time a partially dismantled seven-hundred-year-old Marble Pagoda:

Every part is carved, and the flat parts richly so, some of the tablets representing Hindu divinities, while others seem to portray the various stages of the soul's progress towards Nirvana. The designs are undoubtedly Indian, modified by Chinese artists, and this thing of beauty stands on the site of a Buddhist monastery.... Not far off is another relic of antiquity, a decorated and inscribed tablet standing on the back of a granite turtle of prodigious size.

The illustration in her book shows the head of the stone at Seoul to be similar in design to the head of the Luminous Teaching Stone in China (See diagram above). And, like the

tablet at Seoul, the Luminous Teaching Stone was mounted on the back of a granite tortoise, called by the Chinese a "fair pedestal," when it was found by the Danish explorer Frits Holm in 1907. (Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897.)

Professor Saeki continues his explanation of the design with a quote from the *Amitayussutropadesa* or "Pure Land Sastra" to show that, to sixth-century Buddhists, the pearl signified the Law of Buddha.

SUPPLEMENT 7: PISTIS SOPHIA

In the Gnostic miscellany commonly called the *Pistis Sophia*, the form of the dragon figures as one of the emanations of the Authades, the powerful, disobedient archon of the thirteenth aeon who wished to lord over the whole thirteenth aeon and all those aeons beneath it. It is this archon who afflicted *Pistis Sophia* by surrounding her with material powers and swallowed her Light until she became like a counterfeit spirit filled with chaos. The region of the great dragon is identified as the outer darkness, and to dwell in the midst of the dragon is the punishment of the unrepentant and those who abandon the True Teachings of the First Mystery.

Through the collection of episodes in the book, the narrator, Jesus, tells the story of his Light vestures and his coming down through the aeons into the physical realm. In the thirteenth aeon he meets with the spiritual being *Pistis Sophia*, who longs to reach the higher region of the Treasury of Light and praises the Regions of Light. At this point in the narration, prompted by a question Mary asks on the nature of *Pistis Sophia*, Jesus goes on to tell the story of her afflictions; the hatred held for her by the archons of the lower aeons, who joined together to torment her because she had ceased in their mystery and now longed for the Light above her; her repentance for the delusion that had led her to mistake the specious resemblance of the godlike, self-willed

power of the Authades for the Light in which she had faith; and her final deliverance. (Pistis Sophia, trans. G.R.S. Mead. 1836. Reprint by John M. Watkins, London, 1963.)

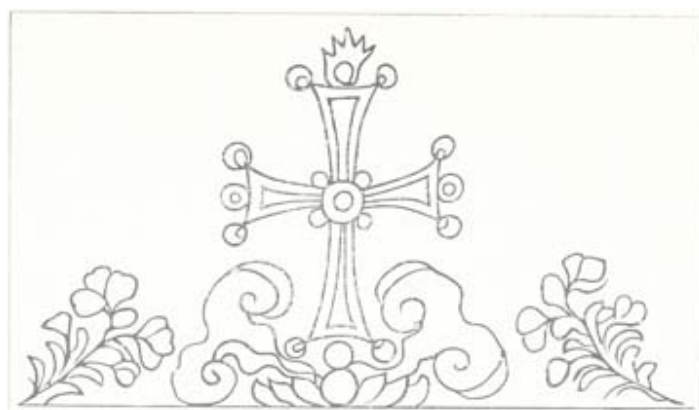
SUPPLEMENT 8: THE NINTH ACT OF THOMAS

The Ninth Act of Thomas contains a song poetically attributed to the Apostle Thomas, the Apostle most highly regarded among Gnostics and the adherents of the Church of the East. The song tells the story of a primordial angelic being commissioned to retrieve the pearl, which is lost and guarded over by a roaring dragonlike serpent in the regions of outer darkness, in the dark sea of the world. By order of his Father, the immortal Child (the singer of the song) is divested of his divine raiment and the purple toga woven to fit him and sent away from his Father's house with the promise that when he returns he will resume his divine raiment and become heir to the Kingdom together with his elder brother. Bearing abundant wealth from the Treasury of Light, the Child is accompanied by two guardians who guide him down the dangerous and difficult way to the dark regions and leave him at its borders. The Child moves straight to the serpent's abode and settles down there to wait until the serpent sleeps, so that he might then take the pearl. Once in the vicinity there, he meets a noble youth of his own kind whom he warns of the dangers of the dark regions and with whom he associates and shares his wealth. The Child disguises himself in local dress to wait, but the locals find him out, and with their food they drug him into service of their king and the forgetful sleep of human life. His Father and the Angelic Host perceive his forgetfulness and together send the Word in a sealed message that speaks to the earthbound Child and arouses him from his sleep. The Child remembers the pearl and his commission. Then, charming the serpent with the name of His Father and Mother, he snatches away the pearl, casts off his mortal coil, and returns home along the Way led by the Word. When he is offered his colorful and luminous heavenly garment, whose design and brilliant

colors he no longer remembers, the Child recognizes himself in it as if it were a mirror and runs to receive it. Thus clothed, he goes with his offerings and his pearl to present himself to the King, his Father.

This story has a further and immediate significance when applied to the priests and bishops of Ta-ch'in. They, like other missionaries, and like the immortal Child of the story, arrived at their destination by way of trade routes and assumed the disguises of civil rank and official costume in order to undertake in China the retrieval of the lost pearl. It is also likely that by the end of the eighth century they too had fallen asleep.

SUPPLEMENT 9: THE SCENE ON THE STONE



Incised scene on the headstone

Professor Saeki has it from Dabry de Thiersant, the author of "Mahometanisme en Chine," that Islam in China began when Muhammad sent his own maternal uncle, Wah Abi Kobsha, by sea in A.D. 628 as an envoy to Emperor T'ai-tsung, who granted him authority to build mosques in Canton together with the freedom to exercise that religion. For the Chinese, the Cloud described as a "Flying Cloud" or "White-cloud" is the characteristic symbol of Taoists and of Muslims in China. The White-Cloud religion (Pai-yun Chiao) is one of several Taoist secret societies which have continued into the twentieth century. The lotus is the characteristic emblem of Buddhists.

SUPPLEMENT 10: THE CROSS OF THE APOSTLE THOMAS



Cross on the tomb of
Saint Thomas near
Madras

The Jesuit missionary Alvarez Semedo, procurator of the provinces of China and Japan, went up to Hsi-an-fu (present-day Sian) to study the stone and its inscription in A.D. 1628, a few years after it was unearthed and moved to the capital. He describes the cross in his book *History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* (translated into English from the Portuguese original in A.D. 1720).



Diagram 1



Diagram 2

The exploits of the Apostle Thomas are described in the fourth century Syrian document known as the Acts of Thomas. This version of history records that the Apostle Thomas returned to India, where he was stoned by a mob incited by Brahmin priests. The tomb of Thomas, on which the cross is engraved, still stands at Meliapor in the south of India near Madras (See diagram 1). The same cross is found in a church at Funchal in the Madeira Islands off the coast of Portugal (See diagram 2).

SUPPLEMENT 11: "REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS"

In a section of the Acts of John called "Revelation of the Mystery of the Cross" is recorded a message reportedly revealed to the disciple John on the Mount of Olives through the Image of Jesus while the man Jesus was being tormented and crucified below in Jerusalem:

... he showed me a Cross of Light firmly fixed, and around the Cross a great crowd, which had no single form; and in the Cross was one form and the same likeness.

And I saw the Lord himself above the Cross, having no shape but only a kind of voice; yet not that voice which we knew, but one that was sweet and gentle and truly the voice of God, which said to me, "John, there must be one man to hear these things from me; for I need one who is ready to hear.

"This Cross of Light is sometimes called Logos by me for your sakes, sometimes mind, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Christ, sometimes a door, sometimes a way, sometimes bread, sometimes seed, sometimes resurrection, sometimes Son, sometimes

Father, sometimes Spirit, sometimes life, sometimes truth, sometimes faith, sometimes grace; and so it is called for men's sake.

"But what it truly is, as known in itself and spoken to us, is this: it is the distinction of all things, and the strong uplifting of what is firmly fixed out of what is unstable, and the harmony of wisdom, being wisdom in harmony.

"But there are places on the right and on the left, powers, authorities, principalities and demons, activities, threatenings, passions, devils, Satan and the inferior root from which the nature of transient things proceeded.

"This Cross then is that which has united all things by the word and which has separated off what is transitory and inferior, which has also compacted all things into one.

"But this is not that wooden Cross which you shall see when you go down from here; nor am I the man who is on the Cross, I whom now you do not see but only hear my voice.

"I was taken to be what I am not, I who am not what for many others I was; but what they will say of me is mean and unworthy of me.

"Since then the place of rest is neither to be seen nor told, much more shall I, the Lord of this place, be neither seen nor told.

"The multitude around the Cross that is not of one form is the inferior nature.

"And those whom you saw in the Cross, even if they have not yet one form – not every member of him who has come down has yet been gathered together.

"But when human nature is taken up, and the race that comes to me and obeys my voice, then he who now hears me shall be united with this race and shall no longer be what he now is,

but shall be above them as I am now.

“For so long as you do not call yourself mine, I am not what I am; but if you hear me, you also as hearer shall be as I am, and I shall be what I was, when you are as I am with myself; for from me you are what I am.

“Therefore ignore the many and despise those who are outside the mystery; for you must know that I am wholly with the Father, and the Father with me.”

Speaking in the voice of John, the author of these Acts closes the section with these words: “I held this one thing fast in my mind, that the Lord had performed everything as a symbol and a dispensation for the conversion and salvation of man.”

SUPPLEMENT 12: THE LOST TEACHINGS

The direct and indirect quotes that appear below in this supplemental note are drawn from the transcript of a formal address delivered by The Most Right Reverend Gene Savoy at the Chapel of The Holy Child: *A Project X Symposium, Volume V: The Solar Cultures of China* (International Community of Christ, Reno, 1980):

The early Church left the teaching of The Way, which, if lived, could bless humanity and the world and help prepare the coming of the Lord God in the Sun of Righteousness. It was for this purpose that the apostles went forth teaching this One Way and the new supplemental revelation. Because it was an oral tradition kept secret and never put down in writing, except when shrouded in cryptic allegory and symbology, it did not survive with all the various persecutions throughout the world. The Romans, the Chinese, the Indians did an excellent job of destroying the Teachings.

It is doubtful that the ancient Church of the East preserved

the whole Teaching throughout its history. We must understand that there was a dark period between the time of the crucifixion and the coming of the Sun of Righteousness in our own age. The progressive revelation and the evolution of religion are like links of a chain, each link binding the whole together. It may be that the ancient Church of the East had a knowledge that it could not make public, and so revealed its teachings to disciples who then went into the world to carry on the work of the Apostles. We know that its teachings differed from the theology of the Western, or Roman, Church and from that of the Eastern, or Constantinopolitan, Church. If the ancient Church of the East possessed a Spiritual System of Transcendence, it simply died out. The System, we know, is not active in the churches today.

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