



漢言

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Essay

Reichelt and Prip-Møller, Masterminds behind Tao Fong Shan Architecture

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Tao Fong Shan is unique in that this well-known Christian ecumenical center looks like a traditional Chinese Buddhist temple. What is the secret behind Tao Fong Shan architecture? Two names always pop up in this connection - Karl Ludvig Reichelt and Johannes Prip-Møller. How did the Norwegian founder of the Asian Christian Mission to Buddhists form an alliance with the Danish author of *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*? And what setbacks occurred during the construction of Tao Fong Shan? Few people, I am afraid, are familiar with the inside stories.

Prip-Møller's first sketch for Tao Fong Shan was actually made in November 1929 and published in March 1930 in the Norwegian periodical *Buddhist Missionen* (No.3, 1930). In the article "Om byggeplanerne paa Tao Fong Shan" (*Buddhist Missionen*, No.7, 1930), he traced the inspiration of his Tao Fong Shan design back to an unexpected meeting with Reichelt in New York City during the summer of 1920. At that time, he just arrived in the U.S.A. to do a Master's degree in architecture at Columbia University, while Reichelt was making a lecture tour in the U.S.A. to promote his theory that Christianity in China must coexist with Buddhism and Taoism.

The first Sunday on my arrival of the United States, I met Reichelt outside a Norwegian church in Brooklyn. During the evening party, he told me about his plan to do evangelical work

among the Buddhists and create an ecumenical center for the Christian brotherhood. After that, we had more opportunities for private talk, and he also learned about my plan to go to China as an architect. The very next day, Reichelt warmly invited me to go to his place to see the various designs done by an engineer named Kiær, who had drawn these sketches for Reichelt's planned ecumenical center. I immediately had a visual impression of the Christian Mission to Buddhists Reichelt intended to establish. These sketch designs which I saw were closely related to the ideas entertained by Reichelt for years. They have greatly broadened my horizon. (p. 110)¹

Prip-Møller's participation in designing Tao Fong Shan architecture began in November 1929. At that time, he happened to be in Mainland China doing research on Chinese Buddhist temples and had yet not come to Hong Kong. In the above-mentioned article, he also wrote about the basic requirements Reichelt had proposed to him concerning architectural style:

... one of the regulations of the Buddhist Mission stipulates: "In order to make the visitors feel at home and keep them pleasant, the appearance of our houses must resemble Chinese Buddhist temples as much as possible." This not only concerns the comfortableness of life within the house, but also the issue that the architectural style must conform with the life style within the house. (p. 111)

This idea of architectural design had won the approval of Prip-Møller. In order to know further the functions, the concepts and the details of Chinese Buddhist architecture, Prip-Møller personally visited many famous Buddhist temples all over China. Wherever he went, he used a measuring tape, sketchbook and camera to record the environment and atmosphere of these places. He held that the ideal religious architecture must make one feel at once spiritual, comfortable, elegant and relaxed. A design of religious architecture is not successful without these characteristics. Prip-Møller's first sketch design of Tao Fong Shan architecture is



too conceptualized, for he had all the buildings of Tao Fong Shan neatly arranged within a rectangular courtyard. Naturally, this kind of architectural design could not be put into practice on Tao Fong Shan. It was only after he had personally made the field survey in Hong Kong that he was able to make the second sketch design, which suits the actual topography of Tao Fong Shan.



Prip-Møller's first sketch design of Tao Fong Shan

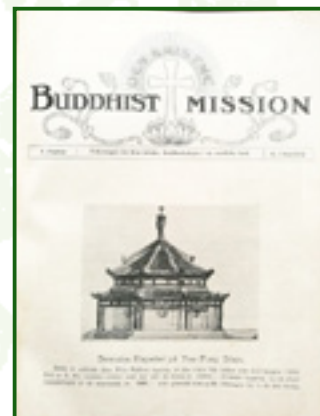


Prip-Møller's second sketch design of Tao Fong Shan

Whenever Prip-Møller finished a sketch, he asked the opinion of Reichelt and others, making adjustments accordingly, until everyone was satisfied. The designing process of the Holy Chapel, the key building on Tao Fong Shan, was just such an example. When Prip-Møller published the first sketch design of the chapel on the cover of the *Buddhist Missionen* (No. 9, 1930), the roof of the chapel was round. That design was after the model of The Imperial Vault of Heaven (皇穹宇) in The Temple of Heaven. The second draft of the sketch design on the cover of the *Buddhist Missionen* (No. 5, 1934), however, was quite different from the first. The roof, for instance, had been changed from the round one to the double-eave octagonal pavilion roof (重檐八角攒尖顶); and a cross had been added to the peaked cap. The real building, completed at the end of 1934, had some further improvement. The lower part of the pavilion was heightened, to increase the interior space. The wall between the two eaves was also heightened and windows had been added to enhance the skylight. Human figures were added on the double eaves. In addition, in order to resist typhoons, the traditional wooden structure of its roof had been replaced by reinforced concrete.

As the spiritual leader of Tao Fong Shan, Reichelt's influence on its architecture is manifold. Besides his often repeated ideas about the architecture for the ecumenical center, as well as his specific requirements and suggested modifications on the construction of Tao Fong Shan, his greatest contribution was perhaps fund-raising. Reichelt's shrewdness was almost incomparable. People relished his classical story of the "White Wolf". In 1929, just before his first visit to Hong Kong, he

managed to get about 3,690 Mexican dollars from the Republican government, as compensation for the destruction of Ching Fong Shan in Nanjing in 1927. On 23 May 1930, he was able for the sum of 3,705 Mexican dollars to bid for a small denuded hill in Shatin, Hong Kong, on which the famous Tao Fong Shan architectural complex was later constructed. When Prip-Møller's first sketch design of Tao Fong Shan came out in early 1930, Reichelt immediately made it into a planar graph with one hundred divisions and made an estimate that the architectural complex would cost about kr. 35,000. He published this planar graph in the monthly periodical of *Buddhist Missionen* for crowd-funding. This method of fund-raising proved to be very effective. In about a year's time, the first goal had been reached. In June 1932, a second round of fund-raising was launched in the same way and the goal of kr.150, 000 was reached in less than two years. Thus with this simple method of crowd-funding, Reichelt had solved the most overwhelming problem of fund-raising for the construction of Tao Fong Shan architectural complex.



Reichelt went to great lengths in writing letters and travel notes in almost every issue of *Buddhist Missionen*. He told in vivid detail about his visits to different Buddhist temples or about the construction work that was going on in Shatin, Hong Kong. Of the two most attractive report series of his travels and visits of Buddhist temples, one is about his travel to Tibet in 1932 with the Prip-Møllers, the other is about his travel to Inner Mongolia and North China in 1935. These writings attracted readers from Scandinavia. In them he urged readers to donate liberally for the construction of Tao Fong Shan.

Finally, let us return to the question raised at the beginning of this article: why had the style of Chinese Buddhist temples been chosen for Tao Fong Shan? The reply of a Chinese person to Reichelt in Shanghai may reveal this mystery: he explained that Buddhism, like Christianity, had been introduced into China from abroad. Yet after two thousand years, it was not only still living and developing in China, but also deeply rooted in the Chinese heart and mind. In this respect, Christianity must learn from Buddhism.■

1. Zhou Wuna, one of my Ph.D. students, has helped me translate the two quotations in this article from Norwegian into Chinese.

The Significance of Orthodox Studies to Chinese Academics

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Unlike the Latin Church, the Orthodox Church has not been affected immensely by ideological changes and social movements such as the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. The Orthodox Church thus appears to have stood still. Orthodox theology and liturgy seem to have better preserved the early Christian tradition and heritage. As such, the study of Orthodox theological thought is helpful for Chinese Academics to understand Christianity comprehensively. In addition, Christian faith is often regarded as an “external transcendence”, which is incompatible with the “immanent transcendence” of Confucianism. Christian theology is also considered as speculative, which differs greatly from Chinese self-cultivative moral practice. Nevertheless, from the 14th century Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas’ renowned theological work *The Triads*, we can see that Christian thought contain much spiritual treasure, in which immanent transcendence and moral practice are obviously included.

Firstly, the unity of God and humanity is related to the immanent relation of human and God. Orthodox theology does not emphasize the absolute difference between human sinfulness and God’s salvation. It does not look upon God from a human perspective, but upon humanity from God’s perspective. Thus, the absolute transcendent God does not only possess insurmountable transcendence, but also includes an immanent relation between human and God. Orthodox theology can thus become an anthropology leading humanity towards God.

Platonism divides humanity into noble spirit and despicable body. In Apostle Paul’s triple division of the body, soul and spirit, he equates “soul” to “flesh” and often interprets the “spirit” as emerging from God in opposition to the “soul” within humanity. Eastern church fathers use the concept of “*nous*” to resolve and transcend such opposition and affirm the immanent relation of humanity and God. Palamas said, ‘let *nous* dwell in the house of the body, as the master, to establish the law for every spiritual power and every bodily organ.’ *Nous* is the sight of spirit. It can have a reflexive glance on oneself and be illumined by God through purification and prayer and attain self-transcendence. *Nous* can also transfer spiritual joy to the body in order to transform it into a spiritual being. Such a body would abandon the evil desires, and would no longer drag the spirit down but let it rise together, causing the whole person to become ‘spiritual’.

Humanity can directly “unite with God” and become “deified” in “God’s light”. That is a theme in Palamas’ theological thought. Palamas said that we can directly unite with God. He opposed Barlaam’s viewpoint about the communication of humanity and God, which can only be realized through angels. Palamas claimed



that such a viewpoint did not correspond to the ontological view in the Christian revelation of God and human. Due to the work of Christ, the mighty incarnation event fundamentally alters the ontological and historical structure of the world, changing the nature of the relationship between God and man. Such an event makes the direct communication between God and human possible. Christ does not become angel but directly becomes man, setting up a “new covenant” with humanity and establishing a personal and direct relationship with man. He affirms such relationship through the coming of the spirit to the world. God descends to fallen humanity even until death so as to open a route for all finite creatures to rise to unite with God.

Secondly, spiritual practice is the intimate relation between theological knowledge and spiritual experience and practice. The knowledge of God is a crucial theme in Orthodox theology. It starts with apophatic theology rooted in spiritual experience and proceeding through spiritual practice to achieve deification.

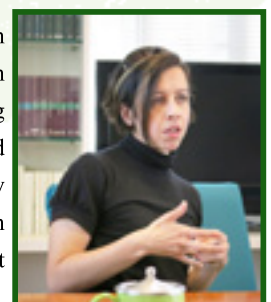
Pseudo-Dionysius claimed that we could not find out about God by asking, “What God is”. Instead, we had to ask, “What God is not”. According to Palamas, negative thinking as a rational ability is just a starting point or means of understanding God. The aim of apophatic theology is not to attain rational knowledge, but to negate and transcend rationality itself so as to unite with God in “mystical intuition”. As such, Vladimir Lossky said that theology and spiritual experience were not mutually exclusive. They support and complement each other. Spiritual experience occurs in personal spiritual practice and theological knowledge is also attained through it. How to attain spiritual knowledge or truly understand God in spiritual practice? Methods include abandoning the self-sufficient rationality, maintaining the holiness of spirit, obeying God’s commandments and praying continuously and so forth. Using Palamas’ thought, the one who cuts off any relation between his soul and lower beings, obeys commandments in order to abandon all things, prays unceasingly to transcend any cognitive activities, and be illumined by the unreachable light in unknowable unity, can truly understand the supernatural and unthinkable God.

Certainly, Orthodox theologians emphasize that uniting with God cannot be achieved in this world, but is a hope for the future. In other words, it is not a goal to be achieved through personal concrete practices, but a believer’s spiritual endeavor direction.■

Sino-Christian Theology Now and Then, Here and There

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The study of religion as an academic discipline is not new in 21st century China. When describing the “emergence” of intellectual and academic discourses on Christianity in China, we are in fact dealing with the *re-emergence* of such engagement parallel to the broader societal religious,



which Ian Johnson has investigated for his *The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao*. It is a re-emergence in more than one sense. As one scholar I interviewed explains with regard to various definitions of the movement of Christian studies in China and, specifically, the strategically promoted Sino-Christian theology movement, it is also one that is taking place on many levels in Chinese society today: From the historical point of view, if “movement” denotes that people

From the historical point of view, if “movement” denotes that people are self-consciously working together for a particular purpose, I would say that there is such a thing: there is that kind of a movement, but what I see occurring historically is more vast, it’s more complicated: it comes in many, many forms; it includes people in universities, but also at research institutes, seminaries and in other institutions such as publishing houses. Editors and others are promoting this from their different angles. I would add that Chinese-language theology (漢語神學 Hanyu shenxue) is being done at a number of different levels, including the church level, where the goal is to help churchgoers across China understand how to apply their theological orientation, worldview and values in the practical world they are dealing with. Finally, this can involve both non-Chinese and Chinese, both indigenous in terms of citizenship and those who are long-term residents, those who come from afar but are competent in Chinese.

This scholar’s perspective highlights the fact that “Chinese-language theology”, which has primarily been associated with professors in Mainland China who have written about western theology and Christian culture from non-confessional viewpoints at Chinese institutions over the last 30-40 years, can also be interpreted on a much wider scale. Taking a broader taxonomic approach, one might find “Chinese-language theology” on many levels, including Asian-American theologies in North America or Chinese theological seminaries of various denominational orientations overseas.

The first “Sino-Christian scholar” I met I spoke with during a visit to Shanghai in 2010. He explained that since the reopening of the first Three-Self seminaries in the early 1980s, research on Christianity had also begun to re-establish itself in the context of state higher education. I spoke with this scholar at the outset of a trip during which I visited a number of Protestant seminaries, including Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, the national seminary, as well as regional seminaries in Chengdu, Wuhan, Guangzhou and Shanghai. At the time, I was exploring potential topics for my Ph.D. dissertation and knew I wanted to base the study on qualitative data collected through fieldwork. After our meeting, I thought about this “other force” in Chinese Christianity. It became clear to me that Christian studies here meant something very different from religious studies in the West. I became more and more interested in two particular questions: first, whether these well-established Chinese scholars devoting their research careers to this area widely lacked official recognition; second, whether they were interested in Christianity for personal existential reasons – as a personal faith – or not. I thought these questions deserved more attention in Western scholarship.

In August 2011 I went to Tao Fong Shan, as a visiting scholar

of ISCS, where I interviewed the first scholars; these Chinese scholars and Ph.D. students were visiting from mainland and overseas universities. I stayed at the institute for two months, learning about their partners and the various projects the institute had launched and familiarizing myself with its publication work, including the institute’s journal, *Logos and Pneuma*, which shares its name with the mountain. ISCS associates helped me hone my research instruments for collecting qualitative data and introduced me to a number of their core research partners, some of whom were outside China. From Hong Kong I travelled on to Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou, where I met with other scholars in their work environments. Six months later I returned to engage in further fieldwork. I interviewed 48 scholars altogether during these two initial research visits and later. During an extended stay at Renmin University, I formally interviewed two more professors and less formally spoke with Ph.D. students in the field.

The work of Sino-Christianity scholars is interesting in and of itself because it approaches a global religious tradition from a new and creatively positioned cross-cultural perspective, and also because the context of the work is unique. Theology in the context of secular disciplines within the university system of an explicitly atheist state is something for which we have few, if any, precedents that could serve for useful comparisons. My forthcoming book *Studying Christianity in China: Constructions of an Emerging Discourse* focuses both on the study of Christian culture as well as on the specific term “Sino-Christian theology” and its various contingent connotations, a term used by ISCS and some of its partners, along with several observers who use a range of definitions, from purely descriptive and non-associative to likening the term to a sort of brand name with the narrowest possible application. Researching this topic has enriched my personal appreciation of the various ways in which Christian culture, theology and faith can be examined and analysed in a number of new and unexpected settings, such as in the fieldwork of a sociologist looking at marriage relationships between Buddhists and Christians or a philosopher’s understanding of Christian existentialism from a Chinese post-secular perspective. Based on his own exchanges with Chinese scholars since the 1980s, Jürgen Moltmann, who has advocated for more in-depth Sino-Western theological dialogue and exchange, has observed that the Chinese spent far more time engaging in our intellectual discourses than we did learning about and participating in theirs:

We really don’t know much about the Chinese intellectual scene. In the end my impression is that they know everything about us, and we know nothing about them because they translate our writings and participate in our theological discussions... But we are absent from [theirs].¹

I hope that more Western scholars with converging interests in religion, theology and China will consider joining the cross-cultural dialogue on Sino-Christian in the coming years.■

1. Jürgen Moltmann. Qtd in Corinna Mühlstedt. “Das Christentum als Forschungsgegenstand.” *Deutschlandfunk*. “Tag für Tag.” 17 Mar. 2014. Web. 19 Mar. 2014.

Overseas Visiting Scholar: QU Xutong in USA



Invited by Prof. Diane Obenchain at Fuller Theological Seminary (Los Angeles, USA), Prof. QU Xutong, our guest research fellow in Mainland and associate professor of the School of Philosophy at Beijing Normal University, visited the seminary during 10 January to 10 February 2017. On 31 January and 6 February, he delivered two lectures on Karl Barth's theology titled "Gleichnis wagen: Karl Barth's Political Theology and Its Meaning for the Church-State Relationship in Mainland China" and "Karl Barth on Religion, Christian Faith, and Implications for future Possibilities of Chinese Culture" respectively. In different meetings with Prof. Diane Obenchain, Prof. QU introduced ISCS and the Sino-Christian Theology Movement, and discussed the project of studying Karl Barth and the project of translation as well as the possibility of co-operating with Fuller Theological Seminary, such as assisting Chinese students to study M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes. On 20 January, Prof. QU visited Prof. Amos Yong, who is a well-known Pentecostal theologian teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary. They had in-depth exchanges at ISCS about the Sino-Christian Theology Movement, the comparison between Barth's and Tillich's theology, and other theological topics.

Academic Officer's Visit to Japan



During 23-25 February 2017, our academic officer, Prof. Jason LAM, was invited by the University of Kobe to participate in a seminar on Sino-Christian theology. The event was initiated by Prof. OGATA Yasushi, who is an expert in modern Chinese thought at the Faculty of Letters. In recent years he has been researching in "Sino-Christian Theology and the Formation of Chinese Public Cultural Circle". For the sake of understanding the trends of Sino-Christian theology in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, he invited Prof. LAM, Prof. CHIN Ken-pa from Fu Jen Catholic University and Prof. HUANG Jianbo from East China Normal University to the University of Kobe for an in-depth discussion.

They presented papers on the concept, history, development and cases of Sino-Christian theology and made comparisons with Christianity in Japan. They hoped to extend the research in the future.



Prof. LAM also took this opportunity to visit Nansan Institute for Religion and Culture, Nansan University in Nagoya during 20-22 February. Several years ago their academic team visited Tao Fong Shan and their director KIM Seung Chul had been our visiting scholar. Prof. LAM enjoyed the meeting with their academic staffs and participated in their internal seminar. The seminar is similar to that hosted by ISCS in which visiting scholars from all around the world present their research topics and exchange ideas. Apart from sharing with the scholars the development of Sino-Christian theology in recent years, Prof. LAM also discussed with Prof. James W. Heisig, who is responsible for academic publication. They had very useful exchanges on translating and publishing classics in Asian languages.

Sino-British Pastoral and Academic Exchange Program



ISCS cooperated with the University of Glasgow and had successfully held the first Sino-British Pastoral and Academic Exchange Program from 19 May to 16 June 2017. Four Chinese pastors were selected to participate in this program. They are CAI Jianwei (Vice-President & Dean of Guangdong Union Theological Seminary), WANG Wenjun (Vice-Principal of Hunan Bible Institute), XUE Jing (Lecturer of Northeast Theological Seminary) and DU Nana (Lecturer of Shandong Theological Seminary).

During the visiting period, they finished various courses at the University of Glasgow on the practice and practical theology of the Western Church in the Post-Christian period. Led by Prof. David Jasper, they also visited churches belonging to different denominations and backgrounds, including the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church to gain first-hand knowledge of contemporary church practice in