



# **SACRED PLACES IN CHINA**

**CARL F. KUPFER**

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**BY**  
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was buried to his mother's left. His wives are to her right. This can be seen in the official annals of *K'anghsi*.

"During the *Sung* Dynasty this place was called *Tehhwa* Village, with an altar called the Clear Water Shrine. In the year 1215, eighth year of the Emperor *Chia Ting* of the Southern *Sung* Dynasty, a minister of state named *Wei Liao-wang*, passed here and worshiped. When he arrived at the palace in Peking he begged of the Emperor to grant *Chou* posthumous honors. This was done, and *Chou* received the name *Yuen Kung*. In the *Ming* Dynasty, during the reign of *Hung Chih* (1490 A.D.), the Prefect of *Kiukiang* built an ancestral hall near the grave, and named it *Yuen Kung Chou Siensing*. So I now write with due honors: 'The Ancient Worthy *Yuen Kung Lienchi Chou Fu Tsz Mu*.' This is in accord with ancient propriety. But to repair his grave and worship him is of no benefit to any one, if he does not receive his doctrine. If all who pass here will honor him and follow his example, then his teaching will not have been in vain.

"Now, since the work of repairs is completed, I write these words of commendation, that the chief points of his life may be held in remembrance. All who have aided in these repairs shall have their names inscribed on the opposite of this tablet.

"Done in the tenth year, third moon of *Kwang Hsü* (April, 1885). *Peng Yu-lin*."

About two miles northwest of the grave there was a school. *Lienchi Chou Fu Tsz* loving the sight of the mountains and the fresh water, had a home here. In the year 1850 there was a great flood in the *Yangtze* Valley, and this home perished, and with it the last material remembrance of this noted man disappeared; but his name will be held in high esteem by his countrymen for ages to come.

The classic pilgrim who desires to visit this shrine will find it on his way to *Kuling*, five *li* from *Shihlipu*, turning to the left at this village.

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## LUNG-HU SHAN—THE DRAGON-TIGER MOUNTAIN

Wherever in China this mountain is mentioned, whether in *Kiang-si* or in the most distant province, every one knows what it stands for. Just as much as Rome is known to all Catholics to be the home of the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, so all Chinese know that the Pope of the Taoist Religion has his residence here. It was to this mountain retreat that *Chang Taoling*, the first Pope of the Taoist Religion, was directed in the first century of the Christian era. He had retired into seclusion in the mountains of Western China, devoting himself wholly to meditation and the study of alchemy. From the hands of *Laotze*, the founder of the Taoist Religion, who had lived six hundred years before him, he supernaturally received a mystic treatise by which he was enabled to compound the elixir of life. When manipulating this elixir of the dragon and tiger he met a spirit who said to him, "In the *Pesung* Mountain is a stone house where the writings of the Three Emperors and a liturgical book may be found. By getting these you can ascend to heaven, if you pass through the discipline which they enjoin." He came. He dug and found them. By means of these he was instructed how to discipline himself for a thousand days, and was then able to leave his body and walk among the stars and fight with the king of demons, divide mountains and seas, and command storm and thunder to obey him. All the demons fled before him, leaving not a trace of their retreating footsteps. On account of the prodigious slaughter of demons by this hero, various divinities came with eager haste to acknowledge their faults.

The *Pesung* Mountain is a harp-shaped section of the range that runs from northeast to southwest, separating the *Kiangsi* province from *Fukien*. Between this mountain and *Shan Sing Kung*, the Pope's resident town, a river as clear as crystal is clamoring for the *Poyang* Lake, where its pure water is soon tainted with the impurities of that body.

The latter years of the mystic earthly experience of *Chang Taoling* were spent on the Dragon-Tiger Mountains, and it was there, where at the age of

123 years, after having compounded and swallowed the grand elixir, that he had gained power to ascend to heaven to enjoy, the bliss of immortality.

Six hundred years before this (B.C. 604) *Laotsze*, the founder of the Taoist Religion, was born in the province of Honan. *Lao Tsze* means Old Boy, and doubtless was given him because at his birth his face is said to have been wrinkled and his hair gray like an aged man of seventy. Very little is known of his early life. He preferred solitude and quiet, and early withdrew from the busy haunts of man. When Confucius was quite a young man and in search of the *Tao*—the word—he came to the aged philosopher and said, "I have sought for the *Tao* for twenty years." *Laotsze* replied, "If the *Tao* could be offered to men, there is no one who would not be willing to offer it to his prince; if it could be presented to men, everybody would like to present it to his parents; if it could be announced to men, each man would gladly announce it to his brothers; if it could be handed down to men, who would not wish to transmit it to his children? Why then can you not obtain it? This is the reason. You are incapable of giving it a resting place in your heart." The young philosopher may not have relished or fully understood the instruction he received, for he came back to his disciples and said, "To-day I have seen *Laotsze*, and I can only compare him with the Dragon." Even to us he seems mysterious as the mystical animal; but we can not read the sayings of this pagan philosopher without feeling that there is a vital, restful strength and wonderful spirit manifested here that does not exist in other Chinese literature. Mystical and apt spiritual simplicity and universal wisdom is here expressed. It seems to come from a heart that has been touched by divine revelation. A few quotations from his wonderful work, the *Tao Teh King*, convinces one that he must have been not only a great and good man, but an inspired man. He doubtless had some conception of Him who was promised by the Prophets. Note these quotations, and compare them with what the beloved disciple of Christ said of the Logos: "Its name may be named, but it is not an ordinary name. Its nameless period preceded the birth of the universe. Having a name it is the mother of all things. The *Tao* is full, yet it operates as though not self-elated. In its origin it is, as it were, the ancestor of all things. I know not whose offspring it is. Its form existed before God was (by the term "God," as used in Chinese literature, is understood the First Ruler, or the Highest Ruler). It is mysterious, recondite,

and penetrating. Pellucid as a spreading ocean, it yet has the semblance of permanence. There was something formed from chaos which came into being before heaven and earth. Silent and boundless it stands alone, and never changes. It pervades everything, and may be called the mother of the universe. I know not its name, but its designation is *Tao*. Heaven is *Tao*, and *Tao* survives the death of him who is the embodiment of it, living on unharmed forever. The *Tao* of heaven never strives, yet excels in victory. The *Tao* of heaven resembles a drawn bow. It brings down the high and exalts the lowly; it takes from those who have superfluity, and gives to those who have not enough. The great *Tao* is all-pervasive; it may be seen on the right and on the left. All things depend upon it and are produced by it; it denies itself to none. With tenderness it nourishes all things, yet claims no lordship over them."

Here is where *Chang Taoling*, at the age of one hundred and twenty-three, ascended to the heavens to enjoy the bliss of immortality, and in this temple is his image in life size, where all the popes have worshiped.

The philosopher *Huai Nantsze*, an adherent of Lao Tsz's philosophy, commenting on the *Tao*, described it thus: "*Tao* is that which covers heaven and supports earth; its height can not be measured, nor its depth fathomed; it enfolds the universe in its embrace. The *Tao* reaches upward to heaven and touches the earth beneath; it holds together the universe and the ages, and supplies the three luminaries with light. It is by the *Tao* that mountains are high and abysses deep; that beasts walk and birds fly; that the sun and moon are bright and the stars revealed in their courses; that the unicorn roams about and the phoenix hovers in the air. *Tao* is the beginning and end of the visible creation. *Tao*, in its sublimest aspect, regards itself as the author of creation, the power which completes, transforms, and gives all things their shape. All-pervading and everywhere revolving, yet can not be sought out; subtle and impalpable, it yet can not be overlooked. If it be piled up it will not be high; if it be added to it will not increase; if it be deducted from it will not diminish. Shadowy and indistinct, it has no form. Indistinct and shadowy, its resources have no limit. Hidden and obscure, it reinforces all things out of formlessness. Penetrating and permeating everywhere, it

never acts in vain. Utterly non-existent, *Tao* is yet ever ready to respond to those who seek it."

Let one more quotation of *Laotsze* suffice. It is his conception of the ideal man, and I would pronounce it the brightest gem in pagan philosophy. "The ideal man recompenses injury with kindness." This is equal to the crowning glory of Christianity, return of good for evil.

That this great wizard chose this locality in those early days, and all succeeding popes dwelt here, is not surprising. The scenery is prodigiously picturesque, indeed, it is enchanting. Doubtless those children of nature in their imagination saw the mountains leaping like lambs. I have traveled in many lands, and have seen beautiful natural scenery, but nowhere have I ever seen a place where nature has been so lavish in bestowing her charms than in this mountain retreat. Nature truly has done her part well. But what contrast do we find when we inspect the works of man!

At the foot of the Dragon-Tiger Mountain, on the southeastern slope stands a temple, at the place where *Chang Tao-ling* is supposed to have ascended the throne on high. This temple, at one time doubtless a most costly structure, and though housing the image of such an honored personage and the place where the chief of a great world religion worships, is in a most dilapidated condition, the rendezvous of beggars and bats, in charge of a lonely old woman whose husband had died a year before, but in his coffin was yet standing in her living room. A few copper cash soon relaxed her stern attitude, and she freely permitted us to visit the sacred shrine with the one reserve that we do not photograph the altar and the image, lest we carry away his spirit. No persuasion or offer of money would induce her to grant us that liberty.

To *Chang Taoling* is attributed the honor of having invented the charms which in all parts of China are seen posted on door lintels, and are believed to drive away demons and all invisible malevolent beings. A proof of the dominating idea of popular Taoism throughout the land.

But the most renowned temple is about five miles northeast of this mountain, near to *Shan-sing-kung*, the town where the pope has his palace. Here, in a beautiful amphitheater-shaped valley, is a large group of temples.

In these temple grounds are numerous stone tablets bearing inscriptions of ancient writers. These descriptions, however, are so defaced by the tooth of time that the deciphering of them is almost impossible. The center of this group is the Chief Hall, containing a colossal image of *Yü Hwang-ti*—the Pearly Emperor. He is emperor of all immortals. All the power of heaven and earth are supposed to be in his hands. Nothing is said of the time when he was on earth. His birthday and heaven's birthday are the same. To the Taoist worshiper he is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. Dethrone him and Taoist image worship is demolished. To him and before his altar all the popes of the Taoist religion have prostrated and done homage.

In February, 1910, it was my privilege to visit this modern Wizard *Chang Tientsze*, the Heavenly teacher, who is a direct descendant of *Chang Taoling*, and who can boast of an unbroken lineage of sixty-two generations. To reach this mountain retreat the *Poyang Lake* had to be crossed as far as *Yao Chou-foo*, a distance of about ninety miles. This was done in a little steam yacht. One of our theological students served me as photographer. At *Hu Keo*, the Mouth of the Lake, an official joined us in our little compartment. We soon became acquainted with each other. When he had learned that we came from William Nast College, he became interested in our object of traveling at this unfriendly season. I told him because it was New Year's vacation, and that I had long since had a desire to see the Pope of the Taoist Religion, the man who is believed to have such magical power to exorcise demons and malevolent spirits. A forced smile flit across his stoical face when he replied, "In former years we did believe that he could do this, but very few people believe this now." "However," he continued after a little thought, "there is something remarkably strange about this man; he can control the lightning and thunder." Strange combination of doubt and faith. The only explanation seems that the educated official, as a Confucianist, is a materialist, and as such does not want to admit belief in the absurd popular idea of evil spirits wandering through the air disturbing the public tranquillity, but does not hesitate to admit his belief in the power of nature and the Pope's ability to subdue and control it. His unbelief in the one and his belief in the other did not, however, lessen my curiosity to meet the great Magician, the Chief of one of the great religions of the world.



Upon my arrival after four days of traveling, on the evening before the last day of the year, I sent my card to the Papal Residence, and asked for an interview the next day. Inquiry was made as to the purpose of my visit and my official relation. I replied that I was holding no official relation to my country, and had no official business, but was a humble missionary and had come from a far country, and it being the last day of the year I wished to see the great man and offer him my New Year's congratulations. That seemed quite sufficient reason to admit a stranger from a strange land, and arrangements were made for the interview on the next morning. In due time I made my appearance, when the center doors, dividing the departments, were thrown open wide, the doorkeeper walking ahead holding my card in his outstretched hand. Having passed through four divisions we reached the official palace. Here we were ushered into a well-furnished reception room where, in a few moments, his excellency appeared. He is a tall, handsome middle-aged man, was dressed in the ordinary costume of a high-class Chinese scholar, and most pleasant and congenial; well-informed in all things that were of vital interest to the Asiatic people; by no means a recluse. He is the husband of two wives, and father of one daughter and three sons. By all the Taoist priests throughout the land he is recognized as the Commander-in-chief of the Taoist religion, wielding an immense spiritual power in the entire Empire. His name is on every lip, and he is believed to be the vicegerent on earth of the Pearly Emperor in heaven, and as such he has power to expel demons from haunted houses. To accomplish this he wields the sword that is said to have come down to him as a priceless heirloom from his ancestors of the *Han* Dynasty. All demons fear this sword, and when the great magician wields it he can catch them and put them into jars which he seals with a charm. It is said that somewhere on the Dragon-Tiger Mountain there are many rows of such jars, holding incarcerated evil spirits. Personally I did not find these jars. The efficacy of a charm is supposed to be greatly increased by the magical gift of the pope from whom it is obtained, hence to secure his service is very expensive. His title *Chen-ren*, that is "the, ideal," "the true," "the perfect man," means a man who has the power to rule over himself and over nature. Being the chief official on earth representing the Pearly Emperor in











suspicion through political interference. No thought is of greater importance to-day in the propagation of the Christian religion than the maintenance of the integrity of the Imperial Kingdom, and carefully avoiding all interference with political questions. The stigma that once rested upon the missionaries has been removed. The Protestant missionaries are no longer looked upon as emissaries of their governments. The officials have come to see that the dominant desire of the missionary is to see the cause of Christ advanced and order and loyalty promoted.

It is indeed pathetic to see such a great mass of human beings so wholly absorbed in things temporal and yet unable to rise from the crushing burden of poverty and misery. If hard labor and diligence could have brought relief they long since would have risen to wealth and happiness. But vastly more pathetic is it to see them in their efforts to satisfy the soul's longing, and in their penury spend millions of dollars in making pilgrimages to far distant shrines, bringing sacrifices to the dumb idols, involving self-sacrifice of which in Christian lands we have no conception. It must be terrible to be so poor that life no longer is life, but only an existence; but infinitely more terrible to be fettered down by superstition to gods that need to be appeased by such sacrifices, and yet bring no blessing. It is hard to be a heathen! Surely, if God could be found by mere searching for blessings and bringing sacrifice, these people would long since have found Him and rejoice in Him. But their systems to which they trusted, and now hoary with age, have not lifted them upward nor led them to the truth, but estranged them farther and farther away from the truth, and led deeper and deeper into superstition and misery. The only joy these visits brought to me was the convictions of thereby becoming better prepared to guide some of these wandering millions to find the way to Him who is the Light of the world and rejoice in the living God.

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