

A RETROSPECT OF THE HISTORY OF TAO FONG SHAN

YEARS OF PREPARATION (1903 --1921)

1903 - Karl Ludvig Reichelt is sent to China as a missionary by the Norwegian Missionary Society.

1904 - Reichelt starts congregational work in the small town of Ningsiang in Hunan Province.

1905 - Reichelt visits the great monastery of Weishan. It leaves a lasting impression that is to change the focus of his missionary work.

He embarks on years of study of Chinese religion, especially Buddhism. His aim is to reach with the gospel those who have dedicated themselves to a religious way of life.

1911 - Reichelt is on furlough in Norway.

He writes his first book on Chinese religion, *Religion in Chinese Garment* (1912-13).

He also writes his most famous hymn, *Thy Kingdom, Jesus, Ever Shall* (1912).

1913 - Between 1913 and 1920 Reichelt teaches New Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Shekou, Hubei Province.

He produces a series of New Testament commentaries, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (1915), commentaries on *John* (1917), *Galatians* and *James* (1918) and *Mark* (1922). At the same time he continues his studies of Chinese religion.

He also visits temples and makes friends with Buddhist monks.

1919 - On Christmas Day the first Buddhist monk, Kuantu, is baptized in the chapel at the Lutheran Theological Seminary.

1920 - "The Christian Brotherhood Among China's Buddhists" is founded

1921 - On furlough in Norway, Reichelt is busy preparing the ground among Scandinavian mission organisations for new mission work among what was termed the *Special religious people in China*.

A NEW BEGINNING – THE NANJING YEARS
(1922-1927)

1922 - On September, 8, 1922, the Board of the Norwegian Missionary Society authorizes the start of the new mission work in Nanjing.

A committee of representatives from three Scandinavian mission organisations, Norwegian Missionary Society, Church of Sweden Mission and Danish Missionary Society, is formed to help solicit financial support for the work.

Reichelt and his young assistant Notto N. Thelle arrive in Nanjing on November 1.

1923 - An advisory committee, consisting of six Chinese Christians and three missionaries, is established. During the summer of 1923 a building site is purchased and with the help of a friend in Hankow a house in Chinese style is erected, allowing space for a reception room, dormitory, classrooms, chapel, prayer room and an office. Between 1923 and 1927 the Mission's center in Nanjing receives and accommodates more than 5,000 Buddhist and Taoist monks.

1927 - In the wake of Chiang Kai Shek's Northern Expedition, the center is looted. Reichelt abandons Nanjing in search of a new place to continue the work of the Mission. Thelle leaves for Norway for further education.

INTERMEZZO
(1927 - 1929)

1927 - Shanghai becomes a temporary base in Reichelt's effort to reach the Buddhist world.

Besides visiting famous Buddhist sites in China, he also visits Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore and Hong Kong.

1929 - On New Year's Eve 1929, Reichelt and his Danish colleague Axel Hamre arrive in Hong Kong. Their first lodging is a house in Taipo Market. An ancestral hall is rearranged as a chapel and prayer room.

YEARS OF PLANNING, CONSTRUCTION AND WORK
-TAO FONG SHAN (1930-1941)

1930 - In May the Mission purchases at a public auction a small hill overlooking Shatin valley, for the sum of \$3,705.

The Danish architect, Johannes Prip-Møller, draws the plans for a center in the style of a Chinese Buddhist temple.

1931 - On July 28, the Very Rev. A. Swann, M.A., resident bishop of the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, lays the foundation stone for Tao Fong Shan.

While on furlough in Norway, Reichelt publishes his most controversial book to date, *From the Sanctuary of Life in Christ*. In this book Reichelt argues for a cosmic view of the salvation drama.

1932 - Reichelt and Prip-Møller embark on a six-month journey to China, from June to December. Reichelt's travelling letters to the Mission's headquarter in Oslo are later compiled into a book under the title *Towards the Frontier of Tibet*.

Prip-Møller, who has received a stipend from a foundation in Denmark to study Chinese temple architecture *in situ*, collects material for his future classic book on Chinese Buddhist monasteries.

1933 - In January, Thelle returns to Hong Kong with his family.

In May, what is now the *Side Chapel*, is completed. At this time it has three functions: Reception Hall, Pilgrim's Hall (Dormitory) and Vegetarian Hall (Dining Hall). A group of 18 Buddhist monks are welcomed.

1934 - Bishop Ronald Hall of the Anglican Church in Hong Kong conducts the dedication ceremony for the Christ Temple.

Stig Hannerz and his wife arrive from Sweden and Mrs. Reichelt joins her husband.

1935 - An increasing number of Buddhist monks visit Tao Fong Shan and stay for shorter or longer periods of time. Lectures and classes in religion and Christianity are conducted.

1936 - Wang Ching Ch'ing, a former student at the center in Nanjing, is ordained as the first Chinese Lutheran pastor at Tao Fong Shan.

1937 - In January, en route to Norway, Reichelt visits Thailand, Burma, India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and meets with Buddhist leaders and Christian missionaries. In Reichelt's absence, Thelle and Hannerz are responsible for the work at Tao Fong Shan.

During the summer of 1937 full-scale war breaks out between China and Japan following an incident at Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge), and in November the Nationalist government announces the transfer of its capital from Nanjing to Chongqing.

- 1938 - Reichelt returns to Hong Kong in May. Reichelt's son, Gerhard M. Reichelt and family, join the work at Tao Fong Shan.

The School Building (today's Pilgrim's Hall) is completed.

Reichelt attends the Tambaram meeting of the International Missionary Conference in India and exchanges views with Hendrik Kraemer on God's preparatory work in non-Christian religions.

The situation between China and Japan worsens through the year and has implications for the Mission's work in Hong Kong.

- 1939 - On March 17, King Håkon of Norway awards Reichelt the Order of Saint Olav for his service to Christian mission.

The two Reichelts, together with Pastor Song Tao Liang, travel to Yunnan Province by way of Vietnam, to the holy mountain of Chi-tsueh-shan.

On September 3, the Second World War breaks out in Europe.

- 1940 - Reichelt is awarded a Doctor of Theology degree *honoris causa* by the University of Uppsala for his work as a scholar and as a missionary.

On April 9, Norway is occupied by German troops. All communication with Norway is broken off for the next five years.

- 1941 - On December 8, Hong Kong is attacked by Japan and remains under Japanese occupation until August 1945. All missionary activities come to a complete halt. Travelling is prohibited. The three missionary families are isolated at Tao Fong Shan and suffer through the next four years on a minimum of sustenance.

SUMMARY

Between 1931 and 1941 Tao Fong Shan is visited by 542 Buddhist monks, 281 Buddhist literati and 40 Taoist monks.

A list of students for 1933 to 1942 contains 120 names.

The number of graduates from the School of Religion at Tao Fong Shan is 21 (close to 20% of the total number of registered students).

The recorded number of baptised is 56.

YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY
(1945 - 1949)

1945 - The Sino-Japanese war ends in August. Notto Thelle and Gerhard Reichelt and their families leave for Norway. Civil war breaks out in China.

1946 - Reichelt makes his last visit to China before retirement. He visits Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing. At the Easter Service in the small chapel at Ching Fong Shan, outside of Nanjing, Reichelt baptizes 19 adults who have been attending baptism classes during the months preceding his visit. At the end of June, Reichelt says farewell to Tao Fong Shan and returns to Norway.

Stig Hannerz arrives from Sweden and is made responsible for the work at Tao Fong Shan upon Reichelt's departure. Eric Kvan and his wife arrive in Hong Kong from Denmark to start Chinese language studies.

1947 - Reichelt is seventy years of age.

1948 - Three women missionaries take up residence at Tao Fong Shan: Elisabeth Pettersen from Norway, Birgitta Thorman from Sweden and Annie Lemming from Denmark.

Notto Thelle returns to Hong Kong and is appointed the new president.

In November, the Lutheran Theological Seminary, with 42 students and 9 teacher families, evacuates from Shekou in China, and arrives in Hong Kong on December 1. They are welcomed by Thelle. The Seminary remains at Tao Fong Shan until 1955, at which time the campus is moved to Pak Tin.

1949 - On October 1, Mao Dzedong proclaims the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The borders to the outside world are closed and Christian missionaries begin to be expelled. Refugees from China flood into Hong Kong, and Chiang Kai Shek flees with 2 million people to Formosa (Taiwan).

A NEW BEGINNING (1950 – 1962)

- 1950 - Solveig and Daniel Nelsson arrive from Sweden and are soon involved in refugee work taken up by the Mission.
- 1951 - Reichelt returns to Hong Kong and takes up a teaching assignment at the Lutheran Theological Seminary.
- 1952 - On March 13, in his 75th year, Reichelt dies from a brain hemorrhage. He is buried at the Christian Cemetery at Tao Fong Shan.
- 1956 - A Christian home for single women – Ai Tao Yuan – modelled after the Buddhist vegetarian halls, is founded by Madam Lau Ng Man Lo and Elisabeth Pettersen.
- 1957 - Gerhard Reichelt returns to Hong Kong with his family to assume responsibility for the work at Tao Fong Shan. The Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture is established as an ecumenical undertaking at Tao Fong Shan. Gerhard Reichelt becomes the first director and also the editor of Ching Feng (Pure Wind).
- 1958 - The Mission runs a roof-top school (K.L. Reichelt Memorial School) at Li Cheng Uk.
- 1962 - Gerhard Reichelt and family leave Hong Kong.

SUMMARY

For a generation or more, the work of the Mission had been identified with Reichelt. With his passing, an era came to an end. The fifties signalled in many ways a new beginning. After the closure of China to the outside world, focus became more and more directed towards the needs of Hong Kong, especially the needs of the refugees. At the same time innovative work, like Ai Tao Yuan, came into being. A workshop specialising in painting biblical motifs on porcelain plates also developed. Further, the establishment of the Christian Study Centre reflected the new interest in a more in-depth study of religion and culture. In spite of all these new things, some of the old tradition was also carried on, through visiting Buddhist temples and by arranging classes in Christianity for Buddhist monks who had arrived in Hong Kong as refugees. This, however, gave rise to strong criticism from the Buddhist community in Hong Kong, and was therefore gradually given up.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOLLOWING FOUR DECADES
(1967 - 2001)

1967 - The arrival of the China scholar, Dr. Sverre Holth, as the new president of Tao Fong Shan.

1968 - The regrettable departure of Rev. C. C. Wang, who after more than 40 years' association with the Mission left for the United States.

The old brotherhood of the 'Friends of the Way' is revitalized.
The 'House of Friendship' in Ho Man Tin, used for friendly encounters with people of other religious paths, is founded.

1974 - The untimely death of Rev. Chan Tao Pei, who had been in charge of the House of Friendship after Dr. Holth's departure in 1971.

1981 - Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre is established.

1983 - Rev. Ernst Harbakk is appointed president and takes up residence at Tao Fong Shan with his family.

1984 - Tao Fong Shan Lutheran Congregation becomes a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong.

1985 - The CMB board approves the donation of Tao Fong Shan property to the new campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary. The Mission, through its president, is involved in the planning of the new campus as well as in the legal matters related to the transfer of property, which is completed only in the late eighties.

1986 - Rev. Harbakk signs a letter of intent with Sun Hung Kai for developing part of the land for high-rise residences.

Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre is dissolved.

An advisory committee is formed, representing three Lutheran churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, Tsung Tsin Mission and Hong Kong Chinese Rhenish Church.

Work among western back-pack travellers is initiated at Chung King Mansion, Tsim Sha Tsui. Regular evening services in English are introduced.

Contacts with The Amity Foundation and the Christian church in China are developed. Mrs. Kari Harbakk starts arranging training courses at Tao Fong Shan for Amity staff and leaders of Chinese social welfare institutions, and becomes involved in social-humanitarian projects together with Amity.

1987 - *Areopagus* magazine, a joint venture with Dialogue Centre International in Denmark, begins publication.

The President and Chow Tao Kwun resume the visiting of Buddhist temples and monasteries in China.

1988 - The Ascension House community is established.

1989 - Plans are developed to restructure Tao Fong Shan to become a place for spirituality, study and retreat in cooperation with three of the Lutheran churches in Hong Kong.

1992 - Plans for an institute of Sino-Christian studies are initiated.
In August, Rev. Harbakk leaves office and is replaced by Rev. Rolv Olsen.

1993 - A trial project with the topic of "Sino-Christian Theology" is formed in the working structure of Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre. Project Directors: Daniel Yeung and Liu Xiaofeng.

1995 - The 'Institute of Sino-Christian Studies' is registered as a separate entity at Tao Fong Shan with Daniel Yeung as Executive Director and Dr. Liu Xiaofeng as Academic Director.

1996 - CMB enters into an agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, Tsung Tsin Mission and Hong Kong Chinese Rhenish Church in the running and management of Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre. At the same time TFSCC is registered as an independent institution with the Companies Registry.

1998 - Rev. Olsen returns to Norway and his position is taken up by Dr. Philip Chia, who resigns after less than two years in office.

1999 - Serious fire breaks out in the office building. In April, the firm Nelson Chen Architects Ltd. is appointed with the responsibility of doing extensive renovation to Tao Fong Shan.

2000 - Tao Fong Shan is restructured into three independent units: Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, Institute of Sino-Christian Studies and Tao Fong Shan Service Unit.

2001 - The new structure takes effect.

Renovation work is completed.