

THE SOUTHERN SUNG STONE-ENGRAVING AT NORTH FU-T'ANG

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On the southern tip of the small peninsula, North Fu-t'ang (Pak Fat-t'ang), on the eastern shore of Junk Bay, lies a stone-engraving dating from the Southern Sung Dynasty, one of the most famous historic relics in Hong Kong. The vernacular name for this place is Ta-miao (Tai-miu), or "Big Temple," because a temple of T'ien-hou (T'in-hou), or "Heavenly Queen," is situated there. About half-way up the hill just behind this Temple, is located the large rock, five feet high, ten feet wide and five feet thick, hidden in the thick brush. On its flat surface facing the south, there are 108 Chinese characters engraved in nine vertical lines with twelve characters each. Each character is about four square inches in size. The entire surface covering the engraving is four feet two inches wide and three feet nine inches high. The engraving was done in the tenth year of the reign of Hsien-hsun (Ham Shun) of the Emperor Tu Chung of the Southern Sung Dynasty (A.D. 1274) — the date given at the end of the inscription. Just three years before this date, two of the sons of the Emperor, who later successively succeeded him to the throne, were fleeing from the pursuit of the Mongols and had landed on the western shore of Kowloon Bay at the historic spot subsequently named Sung Wong Toi.

This stone-engraving is recorded in the Chia-ch'ing (Ka Hing) edition of the Gazetteer of Hsin-an (Sun-on) District, but details of the historic relic are not given in its description. The Genealogical Record of the Lin (Lum) clan of P'u-kang (P'u-kong) village in Kowloon, however, contains a narration concerning the place, the Temple and the stone-engraving which is very helpful for studying the history of this historic relic. Unfortunately, many of the characters on the stone as transcribed therein are not correct, leaving the readers still in the dark regarding the real meaning of the original text. As a matter of fact, a few engraved characters on the rock have been partially worn-out so badly that it renders some lines absolutely unintelligible.

In the summer of 1958 a number of Chinese and Western historians, writers, poets, reporters and government officers accompanying the author, who had taken the principal interest in and had organized the research project, made three trips to the place to see and study the historic object. As a result of painstaking research and study, we are now able to decipher and read every character engraved there and to understand the exact meaning of the whole text. The full text is rendered more clearly on the opposite page.

The inscription and engraving were done by the Administrator of the salt field, Kuan-fu-ch'iang (Kwoon-fu-ch'eung)—a place which is identified as present-day Kowloon Peninsula. The text describes the Administrator's full name and position, his visit to the site, the construction of the Stone Pagoda on South Fu-t'ang (the islet south of North Fu-t'ang now officially named Tung-lung Island), the repairing and renewing of these two places successively by several persons, the erection of another stone tablet (now disappeared), and finally, the elaborate repairs carried out by a local celebrity, Lin Tao-yi (Lum To-yi), who caused the text to be engraved on the rock on the aforementioned date.

Lin Tao-yi was also responsible for the construction of the Temple of T'ien-hou at North Fu-t'ang. The author, after visiting the place, had the privilege of being invited by some of his decedents in Kowloon to read their Genealogical Record mentioned above. It was found that Tao-yi's great-grandfather originally hailed from P'u-t'ien (P'o-t'in), South Fukien, and was the first ancestor of their clan to migrate to Kwangtung settling down in Kowloon sometime during the Southern Sung period. His own son had had two sons, Sung-chien (Ch'ung-kin) and Po-chien (P'ak-kin). The two brothers engaged in the transportation business with large sailing vessels between sea ports along the coast and Kowloon. Once while returning south they met with a typhoon near the Fu-t'ang gap. The ship was wrecked and sunk, but they held on to the matshed-cover of the ship which kept them floating. On the cover was a tablet of the Goddess Lin Ta-ku whom they had been worshipping aboard the ship. They tied their loosened hair to it and swam to South Fu-t'ang. Landing in safety they firmly believed that the Goddess had saved their lives and immediately made the matshed-cover

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her temporary temple. Since then other sailors passing by went ashore to worship her, who, they believed, gave them every protection at sea. Later, they collected a sum of money to build a permanent temple there. Sung-chien, the first beneficiary, had become wealthy by then and contributed the principal share of the construction fund. Still later, in the second year of the reign of Hsien-hsun (1266) the local people, because of superstition, thought that another temple should be built on the shore of North Fu-t'ang. Tao-yi, the only son of Sung-chien, responded and constructed a much more elaborate temple there. Besides, he composed a poem commemorating the event and had it inscribed on a stone tablet which was erected by the side of the new temple. This monument has long been lost, but the temple remains there till the present day, of course having been repaired from time to time during the past 700 years. Its name has also been changed since the Goddess has been bestowed by Emperors of successive dynasties with different honorable titles from the plain Lin Ta-ku to T'ien-hou (Heavenly Queen) which was given her by the Emperor K'ang-hsi (Hong Hei) of early Ch'ing. According to the Gazetteer of Kwangtung this is the oldest temple of T'ien-hou along the coast of the Province. Eight years after its construction, Lin Tao-yi, having made another effort to renew the whole vicinity and repair the Temple, requested the Administrator of the Kuan-fu salt field to prepare the inscription which he had engraved on the rock.*

The stone-engraving has distinct cultural value. In the first place, for students of the history of the Southern Sung Dynasty, the reference to the construction of the Stone Pagoda at South Fu-t'ang in the fifth year of the reign of Emperor Chen Chung of the Northern Sung (A.D. 1012) is particularly of historical interest and significance. This is because when the two young sons of Tu Chung, who would become the last emperors of Sung

* The Goddess was the sixth daughter of Lin Yuan (Lum Yun), an official in Fukien (892-946). It was alleged that she had an innate supernatural power and could perform miracles in saving people from drowning at sea. She died at the age of twenty and henceforth was worshipped by sailors as their patron goddess. See the author's study of her story in *Sung Wong Toi, A Commemorative Volume* (1960), Ch'uan 5, p. 279ff (in Chinese).

For the author's detailed studies of the engraved rock, see the same volume, pp. 151-154, 268-280, 284-290.

as stated above, left Kuan-fu-ch'iang on the way to Ch'uan-wan (Ch'uen-wan) on the western shore of Kowloon in the year A.D. 1277, they stopped over at a place by the name of Ku-t'a (Ku-t'ab), or "Ancient Pagoda." This fact had been recorded in some historical books, but where and what this place is has never been known. Now, with the revelation from this stone-inscription plus certain statements in the Genealogical Record of the Lin clan definitely referring to the Stone Pagoda, a sound conclusion can be drawn to the effect that Ku-t'a is identical to the present-day South Fu-t'ang, the northern shore of Tung-lung Islet. It is further reinforced by the fact that, according to tradition, local people used to call the said Pagoda by the name of Ku-shih-t'a (Ku-shek-t'ab) or "Ancient Stone Pagoda" which was later abbreviated to Ku-t'a. With the discovery of the missing link a very knotty problem in the study of the itinerary of the last two emperors of the Southern Sung is rationally solved at long last. For this the value of this stone-engraving to historical scholarship is most pronounced.

Secondly, from the standpoint of archaeology, this stone-engraving, done 690 years ago (1274-1965), is the oldest historic relic with a definite date in Hong Kong and Kowloon. (The history of Sung Wong Toi began three years later than this and the three characters were not engraved there until the Yuan Dynasty. The ancient tomb in Li-cheng-wu (Lee-chang-uk) appears to have a longer history, but the date is uncertain.)

Thirdly, from the standpoint of literature, its diction and sentences are excellent and the narration of no less than eight events in only 108 characters is terse and elegant. As a stone inscription, it should be ranked as an exemplary piece of literature of its kind. Moreover, the calligraphy possesses beauty, gracefulness and strength, being typical of the Sung style and akin to the penmanship of the celebrated poet, Su Tung-p'o.

Last of all, considered as a work of art, the craftsmanship of the engraving is highly commendable. The cutting is deep and sharp, and even after having been exposed to the elements for nearly 700 years, almost all of the engraved characters remain intact.

In conclusion, this historic relic should by all means be regarded as a distinctive feature in the cultural history of Hong Kong.