

God Created Heaven and Earth

Chin Chú Siōng-tè chō thiⁿ-tōe

738

This hymn, says I-to Loh (#247), “was originally from Amoy, Fujian, province of China. It was one of the earliest hymns to be taught in Taiwan, and one of the missionaries had adapted a Piⁿpo melody to it around the early 1920s. We all claim it to be ours today because of the tune. But the text is not from Taiwan.”¹²¹⁷ It is built on Psalm 148, with allusions to the first account of creation in Genesis 1 (and Acts 4:24).

Another hymn by **Boris Anderson** (b. August 11, 1918) and **Clare Anderson** (June 21, 1923–May 7, 2008), “God the Lord omnipotent,” wrongly appeared with this tune (TŌA-SĪA) in the *E.A.C.C.* [East Asia Christian Conference] *Hymnal* (Kyoto, 1963) at #107 and in *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969) at #55. That hymn (“God the Lord omnipotent”) was revised by the Andersons as “God the Lord in love and might” and goes with the tune TAMSUI as at #175 in *Sound the Bamboo* (Tainan, 2000). This hymn, “God created heaven and earth,” goes with this tune (TŌA-SĪA) as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Sound the Bamboo* at #173, and *Hymns from the Four Winds* (1981) at #3 have it.¹²¹⁸ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* prints a version minus the third stanza, which is about idols (“handmade gods of wood and clay”).

Boris and Clare Anderson were I-to Loh’s teachers. Boris was born in Yorkshire, England. His father was an Anglo-Scotch Presbyterian minister and his mother Anglo-Welsh. He studied at the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Oxford University (MA in theology). He married Clare Porteous, and they went to Taiwan as missionaries. From 1948 to 1963 Boris served as vice principal of Tainan Theological College and Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and was professor of New Testament, church history, and Western philosophy. After returning to England, from 1964 to 1972 he served as the secretary of the Overseas Mission Committee in the Presbyterian Church of England and from 1972 to 1983 as the secretary of the World Church and Mission Department in the United Reformed Church (1972–83). Very interested in music, he frequently played the flute with his wife, Clare, accompanying him at the piano. He was on the hymnal committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan that produced that church’s hymnal in 1964. He wrote *The Future of Taiwan* (1972), edited Shoki Coe’s *Recollection and Reflections* (1994), and also authored *Taiwanese Voice* (1981), published by the British Council of Churches under the pseudonym “Anne Ming.” Tainan Theological College and Seminary awarded him an honorary DD in 1987.

Clare Anderson (née Porteous) was born in Islington, London, of Anglo-Scotch parents. Her father was a Presbyterian minister and traveling secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, her mother a teacher and musician. She studied at Nottingham High School, King Edward VI Birmingham, and Newnham College,

1217 E-mail from I-to Loh, April 18, 2009.

1218 I am grateful to I-to Loh for unscrambling this in an e-mail of May 7, 2009.

Cambridge (MA in classics). After she married Boris Anderson and went to Taiwan as a missionary, from 1948 until 1962 she was a lecturer in New Testament Greek at Tainan Theological College and a lecturer in Greek and Latin literature in English translation at Cheng-Kung University in Tainan. She and Boris Anderson had two children. She taught them along with other foreign children according to the British private tutoring system. From 1963 until 1976 she taught classics in London, from 1977 to 1983 she participated in a new translation of the *Domesday Book*, and she worked with Ghanaian and Chinese communities. She was a pianist who frequently accompanied her husband, Boris, a flutist. Her collection of poems is entitled *Sad, Mad, Good, Bad* (1999).¹²¹⁹

TŌA-SĪA

This is a Piⁿpo melody from a Taiwanese Seng-si (a “hymnal”). Mary Oyer says that means it comes from “the Plains aborigines of Taiwan who have been assimilated into the Chinese population and who do not exist as a distinct group any more” but who “always manifest a strong musical ability.”¹²²⁰ The melody is pentatonic. That is not the only reason Asian tunes like this are among the most difficult for Westerners to sing. Oyer helps to explain why.

Unlike most Western tunes, this one begins high and gradually descends. Its first half is similar to many ancient melodies which ethnomusicologists describe as cascading downward over a wide range.¹²²¹

Touch the Earth Lightly

739

Shirley Erena Murray (#397) wrote this hymn in 1991. It names her most recent collection (2008) and borrows the title line “from an Australian aboriginal saying. The ‘clouds of disaster’ referred [at the time of writing] to the continuing testing by France of nuclear devices in the Pacific Ocean, with dire consequences for many of the small Pacific Islands.”¹²²² This hymn points to the Christian concern for the care of creation beyond the nuclear threat of a given moment, however, with the interconnectedness of all living things in the garden God gives us. Murray’s sensitivity in expressing this concern became especially clear to me in an exchange

1219 These biographical sketches of Boris and Clare Anderson are edited from I-to Loh’s work in the companion to *Sound the Bamboo* (2000), *Sound the Bamboo: Asian Hymns in Their Cultural and Liturgical Context*, to be published by GIA.

1220 Oyer, *Exploring the Mennonite Hymnal: Essays* (1980), 27.

1221 Ibid.

1222 Murray, *Touch the Earth Lightly* (2008), 158.