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Eating Turtles in Ancient China

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Source: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1962), pp. 73-74

Published by: American Oriental Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/595986>

Accessed: 19/01/2009 02:53

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the translation of Skt. *daśabala*, which in B is *śkamaiyya*, in A, *śkatampeyum*, while the word for 'ten' is B *śak*: A *śāk*.

Following Bernhard (*op. cit.*, 46), Krause takes this B *a*: A *a* to be a generalization of the reflex of PIE *o*, as found in a number of IE languages (cf. Bernhard, p. 47). This is a rather surprising assumption in view of Krause's contention that B *a* (*ä*), that is, B /ə/, never represents PIE *o* (*op. cit.*, 88); for, the *-a-* in B compounds stands beside variants with *-ä-*: the accusative of *śkamaiyya* is attested as both *śkamaiyyai* and *śkāmaiyyai* (B 252 [MQR] a 3, b 3). Besides, the normal reflex of PIE *o*, B *e*, survives when the first part of a compound is an old \**o* stem; cf. *kärtsewere* 'of good fragrance' in B 308 (Š) b 6 and numerous other examples in Bernhard's study

(186 ff.). It is therefore absolutely necessary to reject the assumption made by both Bernhard and Krause that the connecting vowel *-a-* (*-ä-*) in B reflected old \**o*.

On the other hand, the *-a-* found in the same position in A may well be of such origin: it does occur with old \**o* stems (cf. *atratampe* 'possessing the strength of a hero' beside A *atür*: B *etre* 'hero'), and it does represent the regular development of PIE *o*.

What follows is that B *-a-* and A *-a-* at the transition point of compounds are different in nature (B /ə/: A /a/) and of different origin (A *-a-* is from PIE *o*, B *-a-* is not); to treat them as alike only serves to confuse the picture.

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### *Eating Turtles in Ancient China*

The earliest Chinese literature is enthusiastic about eating turtles, and the popular favorite from ancient times has been the Soft-shelled Turtle (*Amyda* [*Trionyx*] *sinensis*),<sup>1</sup> which is abundant in fresh water everywhere. "Roast Soft-shell" was a fortunate addition to a feast in Chou times (middle of the first millenium B. C.),<sup>2</sup> and later too. The Giant Soft-shell (*Pelochelys bibroni*),<sup>3</sup> which lives in deep sluggish rivers and along the coast of South China, made a lordly gift, and a prized ingredient in soups. A notice of this handsome dish survives from the seventh century B. C.<sup>4</sup> These, then, were the old reliable kitchen turtles. But we know that the ancient Chinese ate others. The *Ch'u tz'u*, an old collection of poetry, full of the South, refers (for instance) to "broth of sea-turtle," but we cannot be sure what species was used.<sup>5</sup>

Such was the situation in antiquity. It does not seem to have changed much in later times. T'ao Hung-ching, the fifth century pharmacologist, recommended turtle broths and soups for their excellent tonic properties,<sup>6</sup> and indeed we still have a fifth century recipe for making broth of the common soft-shelled turtle: it was cooked with mutton, onions, bean-relish, rice, ginger, magnolia, and wine.<sup>7</sup> An eleventh century source<sup>8</sup> tells how enormous Soft-shells (*Pelochelys*) were captured in the large rivers and lakes of the South and eaten—as were their eggs, which were pickled in salt. Another book, probably written in the fourth century,<sup>9</sup> tells of a deliciously edible tree-climbing turtle of Kwangtung.<sup>10</sup>

of tropical seas seems to appear in Chinese literature as the almost legendary *ao*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *Pen ts'ao kang mu* [Shanghai, 1916; hereafter cited as PTKM], 45, 33b. Sun Szu-miao, in the seventh century, listed several taboos—turtle should not be eaten with pork, or melons, or wild rice, or pigweed. See *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Chia Szu-hsieh, *Ch'i min yao shu* (*Ts'ung shu chi ch'eng* ed.), 8, 182.

<sup>8</sup> The pharmacologist Su Sung, quoted in PTKM, 45, 35a. He observes that boiling the eggs of this turtle does not congeal the whites.

<sup>9</sup> Shen Huai-yüan, *Nan Yüeh chih*, a lost book, here as quoted in *T'u shu chi ch'eng*, "Ch'in ch'ung tien," 151.

<sup>10</sup> Our source says that its name was *shen*<sup>2</sup> *wu*<sup>1</sup>, or

<sup>1</sup> *Pieh*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Shih ching*, "Hsiao ya; Lu yüeh": "roast turtle and minced carp" (Legge's translation).

<sup>3</sup> *Yüan*<sup>2</sup>. It grows up to four feet long.

<sup>4</sup> *Tso chuan*, Hsüan 4 (605 B. C.); *Shih chi*, 42, O148d (K'ai ming ed.), "Cheng shih chia."

<sup>5</sup> The word used is *hsi*<sup>1</sup>, which later, especially in the form *tsu*<sup>1</sup> *hsi*<sup>1</sup> or *hsi*<sup>1</sup> *kuei*<sup>1</sup>, refers specifically to the Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta olivacea*). But this animal makes rather poor eating. However it resembles the Hawksbill and Green turtles, and it may be that *hsi*<sup>1</sup> was used as a collective term for these three sea-turtles. The giant Leatherback (*Dermodochelys coriacea*)

Of the sea-turtles, the best known in China was the Hawksbill or Tortoise-shell Turtle of the seas off Kwangtung,<sup>11</sup> which supplied an abundance of tortoise-shell to decorate artifacts used by the well-to-do. Two similar turtles are often referred to in literature. One, the *tzu<sup>1</sup> hsi<sup>1</sup>*, is reported as native to the waters and coasts of Kwangtung; its carapace provided an inferior substitute for true tortoise-shell. This must have been the Loggerhead Turtle.<sup>12</sup>

Less often we find the name of a turtle called *kou<sup>1</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup>*,<sup>13</sup> a sea-turtle from southern waters.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes this rather mysterious creature was identified with the Loggerhead,<sup>15</sup> but some authorities say that it resembles the Hawksbill, and that even the natives of the southern coasts confused it

*yüan<sup>2</sup> chu<sup>4</sup>*, or *shen<sup>2</sup> kuei<sup>1</sup>*; it was golden colored, and the size of a fist; the edges of its carapace were saw-toothed, and it climbed trees in search of cicadas. It is possible that this was *Platysternon megacephalum*, which is an edible tree-climber, best known for its long tail and large non-retractable head.

<sup>11</sup> *Eretmochelys imbricata*, Chinese *tai<sup>4</sup>-mei<sup>4</sup>*.

<sup>12</sup> It has this name today, but, as suggested in note 5, unqualified *hsi<sup>1</sup>* may have been a general word for "sea-turtle," comprising the Hawksbill, Loggerhead and Green Turtles. T'ao Hung-ching places the *tzu<sup>1</sup> hsi<sup>1</sup>* at Canton; Ch'en Ts'ang-ch'i (eighth century) tells of it along sea-coasts (both quoted in PTKM, 45, 34a). *Ling piao lu i* (*Ts'ung shu chi ch'eng* ed.), c, 23, says *tzu<sup>1</sup> hsi<sup>1</sup>* were common (in the ninth century) around Ch'ao-chou and Hsün-chou, both in eastern Kwangtung, and that men could ride on their backs.

<sup>13</sup> Ancient Chinese \**kzu-piek*; and as *hsi<sup>4</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup>*, Ancient \**γiei-piek*, in *Yu yang tsa tsu*.

<sup>14</sup> See *Pei shih*, "Liu ch'iu chuan," which tells of a "kou<sup>1</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup> islet" on the way to Liu-ch'iu (Formosa?). *Yu yang tsa tsu* (as quoted in PTKM, 45, 34a) says that "... it lives in the South Sea." The received edition of *Yu yang tsa tsu* (*Ts'ung shu chi ch'eng* ed., 17, 139) omits the word "South."

<sup>15</sup> *Ta ming jih hua pen ts'ao*, of the late tenth century, as quoted in PTKM, 45, 34a, says "the *tzu<sup>1</sup> hsi<sup>1</sup>* is the *kou<sup>1</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup>*."

with the latter.<sup>16</sup> The classical reference to this reptile is in the *Wu tu fu* of Tso Szu (end of third century). Commenting on its name in this passage, the T'ang scholiast Liu Liang quoted the old book of Liu Hsi-ch'i, the *Chiao chou chi*, which describes the *kou<sup>1</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup>* as a clawless sea-turtle, with a patterned carapace, like the Hawksbill,<sup>17</sup> and adds that "its flesh resembles the flesh of [fresh water] turtles, and can be eaten, being rich and delicious." Again, the anonymous *Lin hai shui t'u chi*, after stating that the *kou<sup>1</sup>-pi<sup>4</sup>* is two or three feet long, with a shiny yellow-spotted carapace, adds, "Its flesh may be eaten, being as tasty as that of the Giant Soft-shell (*Pelochelys*). The eggs are as large as duck eggs, and perfectly round. When eaten fresh they are more delicious than birds' eggs." A turtle from warm seas which was confused both with the Loggerhead and the Hawksbill, and had extremely tasty flesh could hardly have been anything but the famous Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the gourmet's delight. A commercial product called "[kou<sup>1</sup>-] pi<sup>4</sup> skin," which was submitted as tribute to the T'ang court by the city of Canton,<sup>18</sup> must have been sections of the carapace of this animal, from which the gelatinous essence used in soups is extracted. Indeed the editors of *Kuang-tung t'ung chih*<sup>19</sup> say that the taste of "pi skin" is extremely rich and savory.

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<sup>16</sup> See *Lin hai shui t'u chi*, apparently an old book, but author and date unknown, quoted in PTKM, 45, 34a.

<sup>17</sup> "The shell has black beads, and is patterned in colors like the Tortoise-shell; it may be used to decorate objects." I do not know how appropriate "black beads" is.

<sup>18</sup> E. H. Schafer and B. E. Wallacker, "Local Tribute Products of the T'ang Dynasty," *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 4 (1957-58), 225, No. 223.

<sup>19</sup> Edition of 1864, 98, 29a.

## GLOSSARY

ao <sup>2</sup> 鼈	shen <sup>2</sup> kuei <sup>1</sup> 神龜	tzu <sup>1</sup> hsi <sup>1</sup> 鱟
hsi <sup>4</sup> -pi <sup>4</sup> 係臂	shen <sup>2</sup> wu <sup>1</sup> 神屋	yüan <sup>2</sup> 龜
kou <sup>1</sup> -pi <sup>4</sup> 龜體, 蚶	tai <sup>4</sup> -mei <sup>4</sup> 瑤瑁	yüan <sup>2</sup> chu <sup>4</sup> 元佇
pieh <sup>1</sup> 鼈		