

Dr. Christian Lindtner and Gematria/Isopsephy

Dr. Christian Lindtner was a Buddhist scholar, who, in the last 23 years of his life, had focused his research on the relation of Buddhism to Christianity. He died November 4th, 2020, but his recently finished book, *Hemmeligheden om Kristus: Der Nye Testamente er Buddhas Testamente* [*The Secret of Christ: The New Testament is the Buddha's Testament*] has been published this month by Rostras Forlag, Denmark. I was requested to write an Afterword for this book, which I gladly obliged. With permission, I reproduce my remarks on certain significant aspects of Dr. Lindtner's revolutionary research:

AFTERWORD

Michael Lockwood

After having taught philosophy for thirty-two years at a university college in South India, I retired in 1998, looking forward to being free, in retirement, to devote myself to an in-depth study of the relation of Buddhism to Christianity. It was in that same year that Dr. Christian Lindtner, in India, publicly presented to an international gathering, for the first time, his revolutionary thesis that the New Testament Gospels are indebted to Buddhist scriptures. Three years after that pioneering event, in an article published in a distinguished South Indian journal, he recounted the significance of that occasion with these words:

My thesis is simply that there is not much in the New Testament Gospels that cannot be traced back to the *Mûla-Sarvâstivâda-Vinaya (MSV)*. The New Testament Gospels are translated – in a prima facie very strange fashion, to be sure – directly from the Sanskrit of the *MSV*. This novel thesis of mine was first presented to an international public in Sarnath, November 1998. My paper was subsequently expanded and published as a pamphlet by the Ananda Buddha Vihara Trust under the title *Buddhism in Relation to Science and World Religions*, Secunderabad 1999.

– Christian Lindtner, “Some Sanskritisms in the New Testament Gospels”,
The Adyar Library Bulletin 66 (Chennai 2001), pp.101-109.

At the time of my retirement, I had no knowledge of Dr. Lindtner or of his research, but in my own thinking, during the last two decades of the 20th century, I had also come to the radical suspicion that Christianity was, in some way related to Buddhism.

With my time fully free for researching this ‘hunch’, it was not long before I became well acquainted, on the internet, with the views of Dr. Lindtner. Because of my background, I was immediately able to grasp the relevance of his research. This led me later to contact him and obtain a number of his insightful articles to include in each of my three anthological volumes which have been devoted to demonstrating the multitude of ways in which Christianity is related to Buddhism.

In my view, Dr. Lindtner had an almost miraculous ability to sense parallelisms among Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian scriptural passages. These parallelisms, of course, exist in the very debatable realm of *allusion*. But, I believe, cumulatively, the very great number of them has, indeed, succeeded in confirming the soundness of his thesis.

There is one area of Dr. Lindtner's research, I think, that most readers of his works may find difficult to follow. It is in the realm of ‘Gematria’, a subject Dr. Lindtner has dealt with, in depth, in the present book. I must admit that I have also found it difficult. But I would encourage those of the younger generation of scholars with an interest and ability in mathematical computation and linguistics to take up research in this area.

It is said that this was the motto over the entrance to Plato's Academy:

ἀγεωμέτρητος μηδεὶς εἰσίτω.

Ageōmétrētos mēdeis eisítō.

(“Let no one ignorant of geometry enter here.”)

My father's life-long profession was teaching mathematics at the college level. So when I came across this motto, I naturally assumed that Plato was only plugging mathematics as the fundamental intellectual discipline for all kinds of measurements in the actual physical world or in some purely abstract realm. It was only after reading Dr. Lindtner's works, that I realized Plato's gateway motto might really have been insisting that every entering student should have some understanding of **GEMATRIA!** Every student would have been expected to be able to navigate topics where geometry mixes with literary discussions of religion and other concerns of daily life.

On what evidence you ask? Well, I too wanted to quickly check on Google and Wikipedia about possible connections between 'Plato' and 'gematria' – and what do you know?:

Plato (*ca.* 427-347 BCE) offers a discussion in the *Cratylus*, involving a view of words and names as referring (more or less accurately) to the “essential nature” of a person or object and that this view may have influenced – and is central to – *Greek gematria*.^{[33][34]}

33. Marc Hirshman, “Theology and exegesis in midrashic literature”, in Jon Whitman, *Interpretation and allegory: antiquity to the modern period*, Brill, 2003, pp. 113-114.

34. John Michell, *The Dimensions of Paradise: Sacred Geometry, Ancient Science, and the Heavenly Order on Earth*, 2008, pp. 59-65 ff.

So, these two cited books should be added to the works of the two important authors dealt with by Dr. Lindtner in this present book: **1)** Joost Smit Sibinga's lecture published in the *Journées Bibliques*, of Louvain, in 1970, which discusses “a [numerical] literary technique in the *Gospel of Matthew*”; and **2)** M.J.J. Menken, *Numerical Literary Techniques in John*, Brill, 1985.

I am hopeful that the younger generation of scholars will take up the leads of Dr. Lindtner and these other authors to bring the importance of Gematria into general public knowledge.

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