PILLAR INSCRIPTION

This octagonal pillar of sandstone erected in A.D. 749 is inscribed with an historical record in Chinese relating to the capture of the city Shi=p'u, an ancient Chinese strong= hold on the Tibetan border (four miles south of Taochow in southwestern Kansu), which had previously been taken by the Tibetans. During the eighth century the Tibetans were constantly at war with the Chinese. In A.D. 741 the Tibetans conquered the city Shi=p'u which the Chinese governor general failed to defend. In 748 General Ko=shu=han was appointed governor general of Kansu and part of Turkestan. He attacked and recovered the city and captured the Tibetan minister of state. These events are also recited in the con= temporaneous Annals of the T'ang Dynasty.

This pillar was dug up in 1906 on the farm of Chou Chao=nan in Taochow Old City, who as the owner of the stone ceded it to Berthold Laufer on December 18, 1909. Pillar inscriptions are very scarce in China; the usual form for inscriptions is the stone tablet (see adjoining case).

Unfortunately, the stone has suffered much from exposure, and the inscription is but partly preserved. The characters are neatly outlined, and each character is enclosed in a square. It is presumed that this inscription was written by a reputed calligraphist and high official, Yen Chen=k'ing, who died in A.D. 785 and who was a descendant of the renowned scholar Yen Shi=ku (579=645).

T'ANG PERIOD, A.D. 749