

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN -- OCTOBER 1967

Dear Friend:

On the 8th of August, I made another trip to Japan, this time by the northern route, flying over Anchorage, Alaska, and coming back over Fairbanks. The return trip was a remarkable achievement in speed -- Tokyo to San Francisco in $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours, non-stop. Through the assistance of friends in Japan, I was able to visit a number of remote places and gather some very interesting research material. Upon my return, I was happy to find that our Space Program for 1967 is progressing. As of September 13th, something over \$12,000 has been donated or pledged for the enlargement of our facilities. We have every hope that the building program itself will start before the end of the year. Our sincere gratitude to those who have contributed, and for the many letters of appreciation and encouragement.

Our fall quarter extends from October 1 to the Christmas holiday, so perhaps we should mention first of all the art exhibits in our Library for these months. During October we are showing Buddhist and Shinto temple souvenirs, which have not been previously displayed. These delightful old woodblocks include wonderful drawings of the gracious buddhas and bodhisattvas, interesting symbolical compositions, and inscriptions based upon the writings of celebrated saints and sages. Shinto productions often feature Amiterasu, the solar ancestress of the imperial family. There are also representations of venerated heroes and architectural designs showing the principal buildings of a Shinto sanctuary. I have collected over seven hundred of these pictures, most of them made from blocks cut between the years 1400 and 1875. Many have considerable merit as examples of folk art. For this exhibit I have selected a group showing unusual creative skill and fine quality of treatment and design.



The November exhibit, which will open on the 5th and continue through the 26th, will have special appeal to those interested in unusual embroidered textiles. The material in our display dates from the Manchu Dynasty, which ended when Dr. Sun Yat-sen proclaimed the Republic of China. After the collapse of the extravagant and ostentatious imperial court at Peking, the various mandarins and other members of the aristocracy and gentry fell almost immediately into impoverishment. In order to secure funds for the necessities of life, they were forced to sell the most valuable of their personal belongings. Among the items that came on the market at this time were many splendid examples of rare Chinese embroidery. This art was brought to a high perfection in China, and it was the custom to require young girls planning marriage to submit examples of their needlework to prospective mothers-in-law. Unless these samples were duly approved, it was unlikely that a marriage would be sanctioned. In addition to this custom, there were professional

embroiderers who achieved fame for their almost unbelievable skill. So delicate was some of this embroidery that it could not be done if any marked change of weather caused shrinkage or expansion of the silk.

The examples we are exhibiting are largely derived from Manchurian court robes and other vestments. They include elaborate matched sleeve cuffs, borders, and magnificent collars. Especially noteworthy is the consistent use of the so-called Peking knot. This is similar to the familiar French knot, in which the silk is wound around the needle before it is returned to the fabric. In France, this type of knot is used principally to make the centers of flowers, but in China, an extremely fine and tedious form of this knot is found in large areas of diversified designs.

Much of this work was done by young people, whose eyesight was permanently impaired as a result. The government therefore passed decrees against this type of embroidery, and it came to be known as the "forbidden stitch." The accompanying illustration shows an example of ornate flowers in beautiful colors, embroidered entirely with the Peking knot.

Christian religious art will be exhibited in December, and since the Library is closed on holidays, this display will be held over until January 28th. There will be famous woodblock prints by Albrecht Durer, beautifully illuminated missal and antiphonal leaves, foreign-language Bibles, and a group of miniature Bibles, some no larger than postage stamps. This exhibit is designed to inspire the viewer through an awareness of the tremendous devotion with which our forefathers copied and preserved the sacred scriptures of Christianity.

As we are devoting our fund-raising efforts to our proposed building program this year, we have not had our usual Friends Fund appeals. Many have sent in their regular contributions, however, and for this we are indeed grateful. Our publications program, though somewhat curtailed, has moved ahead, and we are happy to give the following summary of our activities in this area.



NEW PROJECTS: "Search for Reality" -- Ten Lectures on Personal Growth. These lectures, reprinted from mimeographed notes of lectures I gave in the early years of our Lecture Notes Program, will be available as ten separate publications, as well as in the form of an attractively bound book.

REPRINTS: A new edition of "Reincarnation, the Cycle of Necessity;" two popular titles from our 1955 printed lecture series -- "How Belief in Rebirth Can Enrich Your Life" and "Positive Uses of Psychic Energy" -- printed this time in the pocket-size format; the pocket-size booklets "The Quiet Way" and "Astrology and Reincarnation;" the second edition of "Daily Words of Wisdom."

REPLENISHMENT OF STOCK (BOOKBINDING): Eight titles required new bindings, including "Astrological Keywords," "Encyclopedic Outline," "Buddhism and Psychotherapy," "The Mystical Christ," and "Self-Unfoldment." A total of 2,775 books bound.

... I am always glad to autograph books on request...

Several friends have asked me if I could advise them on purchasing examples of Oriental art that have been appearing on the market in recent years. Especially difficult to expertize are reproductions of Tibetan and Nepalese gilt-bronze figures of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and subordinate deities. Obviously, the present condition of Tibet makes it difficult or impossible for the artisans of that country to continue their age-old arts and crafts. In spite of the rarity of genuine items, however, the market is flooded with reasonable or unreasonable facsimiles, most of which were not intended to be deceptive, but are frequently misrepresented by merchants.

In judging this work, bear in mind that genuine Tibetan and Nepalese antiques should be at least a hundred years old. Fine examples from both countries are about equally valuable, but extreme rarities may be very costly. In the originals, the detailed workmanship is far better than in the reproductions, which are often coarse and even crude. The gold-plating of the older pieces is usually in a deep yellow gold, and is probably defective or partly missing due to age. The facsimiles are much too new looking, and the gold plating is exceedingly bright, but not as deep in shade. It looks more like yellow chrome, and does not bear careful examination. The faces of the images are nearly always incorrect in terms of national style, with the features too Western, and the attributes and decorations associated with the various divinities are incorrectly depicted. The prices of the facsimiles are also wrong -- usually far too low for a genuine piece. Also, a dealer may have several pieces actually alike or very nearly so, which would be practically impossible with a genuine example.

Large shipments of neo-antiques arrive frequently from Nepal and India, and we should point out that most articles associated with the Hindu religion have also been copied. Copies in stone are less frequent; in wood, comparatively rare, as it is more economical to make castings in metal.

There are several ways in which a purchaser can protect himself against misrepresentation. If he plans to collect this type of material, he should have a good handbook from which to study pictures of known originals. If local museums or galleries include this type of work, he may examine them there. If he contemplates an expensive purchase, he should buy only from a reputable dealer, who will refund the money if the item is not as represented. All bargains must be regarded with suspicion, unless the purchaser is very well informed. Tibetan or Nepalese figures offered for a few dollars, are nearly always reproductions. Very large and elaborate figures are not likely to be genuine unless the price runs into four figures. Naturally, a study of the iconography of Lamaist Buddhism will do a great deal to give the informed person a subconscious ability to sense what is genuine and what is misrepresented.

Our Fall Open House will be held on October 29th. This is one of the outstanding events of the year, and we hope that everyone in the area will make an effort to be with us on this date. The lecture for Sunday morning will be "War and Karma: Buddha's Discourse with the Commander of the Armies." In the afternoon at 2:15, I will give an informal talk on "Plans for Greater Usefulness -- the P.R.S. as a Center of World Culture." In addition to the display of temple souvenir pictures, which are well worth a special trip, other interesting material will be shown in our Library, and the Gift Shop will have many new items to intrigue the eye. This will be a splendid opportunity to secure cards and books and small gifts suitable for your Christmas needs, and will save you the trouble of long and exhausting shopping tours. The Hospitality Committee will again provide those refreshments for which it has become justly famous. You will also want to note the various improvements in our facilities and furnishings, and examine displays of our own pictures and publications. We look forward to seeing you at the Fall Open House.

Very sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

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Manly P. Hall has personally known the Guru and several of his disciples, but has made changes in names and places, in deference to the wish of the Oriental mystics that their good works shall continue to be performed without any holy man being singled out for personal credit.

Mr. Hall not only knows the Eastern way of life, but has the ability to make it comprehensible for those in the Western world who, as he says, cherish the hope "that the day will come when wise men will have their disciples here also, to teach the great truths in the same simple and beautiful way that they are taught in India, that strange distant land where gods still walk with men."