

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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President - Founder



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Dear Friends:



AS the result of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, the religion, philosophy, and art of the Tibetan people are more widely diffused than ever before. Most of the intellectual class, including the Buddhist monks, have found refuge in India, Europe, and America under a broad plan for survival inaugurated by the Dalai Lama. We are in touch with the library in northern India, and members of the staff have offered assistance in translating and classifying the Tibetan material in our library.

Among the last strongholds of Lamaism in Asia, we should mention Bhutan and Nepal. As yet religion has not been persecuted in these countries, and refugee monks in the Nepalese Lamaseries are perpetuating their sacred arts through painting and wood-block printing. The lamaseries have many old blocks which have been used to print charms, talismans, mandalas, and pictures of the various divinities. Skilled painters working largely from memory are producing tankas as accurate and attractive as the ancient paintings. In recent years travelers in Nepal have been buying any Tibetan art object that could be found in the shops and bazaars. Older pieces are now practically unobtainable and are as expensive in Kathmandu as in London or New York.

Ethnologists have acknowledged that modern Tibetan paintings and prints are entirely accurate and are just as useful for study and research as the older items. One of the moving spirits in the Nepalese Buddhist art program is the Chini Lama, who is the head of the Tibetan church in Nepal. Through his encouragement, the Tibetans are expanding their arts and crafts and accumulating funds to help in the perpetuation of their traditions.

We have recently been in contact with several persons who have visited Nepal and brought back products of the new cultural revival. More Westerners than ever before are studying Tibetan philosophy, translations are being made of rare Buddhist books, and students of Asiatic tradition are being encouraged to study the languages and dialects of the area.

We have recently secured an interesting group of Tibetan wood-block prints. These are made in the Nepalese monastery from old or re-cut wood blocks and are printed on an interesting and primitive type of paper. From a decorative standpoint, they are most attractive, and each has a very definite meaning. They are not expensive and offer a delightful hobby for people of moderate means.

The accompanying picture from a Nepalese wood block presents the traditional appearance of Padmasambhava (The Lotus-Born One), also known as the Precious Guru. He lived in the eighth century and was educated at the University of Nalanda in what is now Bengal. He arrived in Tibet as a Buddhist missionary in A.D. 747 and is regarded as the true founder of Lamaism. After he had finished his work among the Tibetans, he was carried away in a southerly direction in a chariot which flew through the air. It is now believed that his destination was Ceylon or possibly Java. (For a more detailed study of Padmasambhava, see my book, *Twelve World Teachers*.) The Precious Guru in the accompanying print holds in one hand the thunderbolt and in the other a skull cup. In the hollow of his arm he supports an elaborate scepter, the upper part of which takes the form of a trident.



Another very dramatic wood-block print shows the temptation of Gautama Buddha while seated in meditation under the Bo-tree. The air around him is filled with demons, and the daughters of Mara are performing ritualistic dances to divert his attention from his sacred objective. At the top of the picture is the Buddha Amitabha, of whom the historical Gautama was a manifestation, according to Esoteric Buddhism. At the lower left of the picture is a stupa, or memorial tower, surrounded by the sacred symbols of the Buddhist faith. The stupa has the same meaning as Buddha himself. It stands for holiness locked within the mystery of physical form. In the lower center, Buddha is preaching his first sermon (the Turning-of-the-Wheel-of-the-Law Discourse) to a group of ten celestial beings who have assembled from the directions of space.

Wood-block prints of this size and quality are often stamped on cloth instead of paper. These cloth impressions are then hand-colored. Many tankas, or temple banners, have shown, under careful examination, an underprinting in red or black from one of the temple blocks.



In August there will be an exhibit in the PRS Library featuring photographs which I took in Japan and China just fifty years ago. Looking over these pictures has brought back certain nostalgic memories of the way things were before they were swept away by a torrent of progress. One of my outstanding recollections is concerned with Frank Lloyd Wright's grand old monstrosity, the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. According to always reliable rumors, it was designed to be built in Mexico and therefore was reminiscent of Aztec architecture. For some reason, the Mexican deal did not go through, so Frank offered it to the Japanese people. At that time, Japan was absolutely fascinated by anything that originated in America, and Wright went to work with his usual enthusiasm. The Imperial Hotel survived the earthquake, which did not strike that area of the city, so I was among the early guests. The structure was monumental with slight consideration for comfort. The rooms resembled a row of cells in Sing-Sing, the walls were solid concrete, and the doorways and corridors were narrow. Much of the furniture had to be taken apart to get into the rooms. I remember

one special staircase that, emerging from a gloomy tunnel, made a sharp left turn in the Twilight Zone of Mr. Wright's subterranean bazaar under the hotel. There were no railings, so it was not uncommon for those descending the stairs to go straight ahead and fall off. In the bazaar the ceilings were so low that I always scraped my head, and as ladies wore hats in those days, many suffered from ruffled plumage.

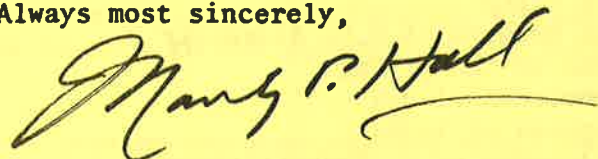
During my last stay at the old Imperial, the hazardous staircase was still there, my head still bumped on the ceiling, and there was a general appearance of antiquity which made the structure resemble, even more closely, a ruin in Chiapas or Yucatan. Of course the Imperial already had a new wing, which made the contrast even more disastrous. Now, all is gone (except the new wing) and in its place stands a reasonable facsimile of the United Nations Building in New York City--a real skyscraper which dominates surrounding structures and maintains the reputation long enjoyed by this famous hostelry.

I remember Frank Lloyd well, with his fluffy white hair, artist's bow-tie, and velvet jacket. Valiant efforts were made to preserve his hotel in Japan as a National Treasure, or at least as an important Cultural Property. But it faded away because it could no longer be operated efficiently.

It was in Kyoto at that time that I made the acquaintance of the gentleman I call "Mr. Nakamura." In one of my early stories about him, I explained how he carefully swept out his shop as soon as a group of tourists departed. He was trying to rid his establishment of those curious Western vibrations which worked such a hardship on his sensitive soul. He was actually sweeping for all he was worth the day that I met him, and explained his conduct to me. When I left, however, he bowed very low and assured me that he would not sweep out my vibrations. On my second visit, he opened a square in the floor of his shop, and we descended into a basement. Against the far wall was a beautiful Buddhist family shrine, and in the gilded interior were the memorial tablets of his father and mother. He explained that when his mother, of sainted memory, was dying, he carried her down into the basement so that her last memory of the mortal world would be the shrine with the gilded image of the Amida Buddha. The last time I visited Japan, I tried to find his little shop, thinking that some descendant still managed it. But it was gone, and a sizeable department store occupied the location.

We hope that you have all enjoyed a pleasant summer and look forward to a busy and useful fall season. Please accept my deepest appreciation for all the good thoughts and kindly deeds that your friendship has brought to me through the years.

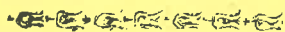
Always most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Mary P. Hall".

SPECIAL NOTICE FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional works in future issues. These books may be ordered directly from The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on page one). Please add 25¢ for handling on orders of less than \$5.00, and sales tax is to be included by California residents. NOTE: Prices are subject to change without notice.

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