

# The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:

**I**t has been said that in the wide world of Chinese art, there has never been a depiction of anything evil or degenerate. When this art reached Japan via Korea, it stamped itself upon Japanese culture perpetuating the high idealism of the "middle empire." The earliest monuments to Buddhism in Japan are to be found in or near the ancient city of Nara, and the earliest and most important structure is the Temple of Horyuji. It was built during the Asuka Period (A.D. 552-645). At the time of its glory, Nara had a population of over a million persons. It has been called a great ecclesiastical museum. Horyuji is the oldest wooden structure in the world and one of the most impressive, although it must be admitted that it has survived partly due to careful reconstruction as the ancient materials showed signs of disintegration. In Nara also stands the great Todaiji - the largest wooden structure in the world, within which is enthroned the huge statue of the Roshana Buddha, the largest bronze casting ever attempted. On the grounds of the Todaiji is the Shosoin, a huge log cabin, possibly the most extraordinary museum in existence. Here the treasures of the Imperial family and the utensils of the common people were stored away more than a thousand years ago. Most of the collection is still intact, for even though civil wars raged around it, the building was uninjured. Great collections of art were preserved in all these structures and most of the paintings, sculptures and ornamental works are now listed as National Treasures.

The Japanese have issued a number of magnificent volumes picturing their classical art. The March exhibit collection of picture-works in the ally prominent are the Kondo of Horyuji. *Kondo* means *golden* the most important of religious structures that the Horyuji by the great in India. In fact, painted in Japan after their Indian Horyuji murals have



Horyuji Temple

at PRS features a tures mostly from Nara Temple. Especially the early murals from Horyuji. The word *hall*, and is always building in a complex tures. It is believed murals were inspired Buddhist cave paintings they may have been less than a century prototypes. These an interesting and

tragic history. They remained in the dim depths of the ancient Kondo until the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912) when Japan, inspired by its first contact with Western manners, passed through its "cultural revolution." During this drastic era of social change, all native art was depreciated and at best, passed into neglect. Much was actually destroyed. Religion played a part in this episode because Japan, determined to become thoroughly Westernized, found its elaborate iconography distasteful to Western visitors, especially the missionaries. Even as late as the beginning of Taisho (1912-1926) very little Buddhist religious art was exhibited publically or found in antique shops patronized by foreigners. Buddhism passed through some mild persecution because the Imperial government favored Shintoism, which emphasized the heroic traditions centering around former rulers, generals and statesmen. Two men contributed largely to the preservation of the Horyuji murals. The most prominent of these was Ernest F. Fenollosa, who led a small group of Japanese artists in a program to protect the classical antiquities of the country. A younger protégé of Fenollosa, Okakura Kakuzo, who was associated for some time with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, having re-passioned appeal for the fore his death. Gradually persons of distinction ese art. This, of course, and a desperate effort escaped the misguided mind.



Although Japan is a small were almost inaccessible art treasures were comp- now have their own museums treasures are visited by ing hundreds of thousands year. Unfortunately, were sold to foreigners to restore the full

art. Things went well for sanctuaries in Kyoto and Nara were threatened by World War II. Through the intercession of an American, highly respected for his knowledge of Oriental art, these two great centers were declared open cities and stood uninjured throughout the conflict. Many pious Japanese believe that Prince Shotoku, founder of Horyuji and later regarded as an embodiment of the Bodhisattva Kannon, guarded his sanctuaries from the invisible worlds. The great murals however, were finally destroyed by a fire in 1949. A group of restoration artists installed electric lights and a short circuit resulted in a fire which destroyed all but one small fragment of the murals.

The PRS exhibit includes many of the finest examples of the sacred imagery of the Asuka and Heian periods. Many students of comparative religion are still puzzled by the ornate imagery. Although native writers emphasized that these are not idols, and that Buddhists did not worship them, the fantastic arrays on the Temple altars are incomprehensible to non-believers. The principle involved is very simple. The Buddhists have never been able to accept the concept of a mechanistic universe. They do not like to speak of laws and forces and images and principles simply as "things." To them every aspect of existence is conscious. All creatures are alive in the highest sense of the word. The universe is not a complex fortuitous combination of atoms or electrons or molecules. The earth, the air,

time with the Museum of Fine turned to Japan made an im- Horyuji murals a few days be- it became obvious that Western were deeply concerned for Japan- restored it to public favor was made to save all that had enthusiasm obsessing the public

country, many of its monasteries and in these remote places the aratively safe. Many Temples and public exhibitions of their persons of many nations includ- of Japanese schoolchildren each however, many exceptional pieces so that it has been difficult grandeur of Japanese Buddhist a time, then the great religious

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the fire, the water, are living things and while no one knows exactly what they look like, the beings responsible for natural phenomena are intelligent and all their purposes are benevolent. Rather than picture such processes as creation and redemption as mathematical formulas, or by arbitrary symbols that convey no implication of ethical and moral content, the Buddhist portrays these abstractions through orders of "selves." All of which are extensions and manifestations of the one Supreme Being, The Great Illuminator Of All That Exists. Actually The Great Illuminator itself can only be pictured symbolically in a figure which suggests to the initiated the total splendor of space itself and all that inhabits it. The wisdom of The Great Illuminator is given one form; its compassion another - and these various aspects or attributes are arranged systematically on the Temple altars to portray the eternal motions which impel involution and evolution. In this pattern the worshipped and the worshipper are bound together by concatenations of beings symbolizing degrees of consciousness.



The Buddhist universe is not a kingdom - it is a commonwealth. Every creature from the highest to the lowest is a citizen with equal rights. There is no tyranny and growth is a natural response to persuasion bestowed by a sovereignty which inhabits what it creates and manifests as a splendid effulgency. The sparks making up the huge nimbus, this radiant galaxy of light, shines in the hearts of men and in the central vortices of elements. All conflicts are resolved and we come to the final realization that all things rest forever in eternal life. Perfect wisdom is to know this, perfect faith is to accept it, and perfect love is eternal gratitude for the eternal good.

With these thoughts in mind I think you will especially enjoy the many works of Eastern religious art in the collection of our Society, and the splendid pictures which represent so forcibly and dramatically the effort of the inspired artist to capture at least the shadow of the divine purpose.

May we take the opportunity to wish each and all of you a happy and useful New Year. Let us do everything that we can to release the infinite light in ourselves so that it will brighten the way of others and help us to discover in our own inner lives those certainties of consciousness which will be our ever present strength in time of trouble.

Always most sincerely,

*Francis P. Hall*

## FRIENDS FUND REPORT - SPRING 1974

The demand for our publications continues to increase and without the kindly assistance of The Friends Of The Society, many of our most important and useful books could not be available to those who need them. The largest bookbinding company in the area recently suffered a disastrous fire in the course of which several thousands of our books were destroyed. While the loss is covered by insurance, the inevitable delays caused by this fire makes it difficult for us to fill orders, which is a real loss we must face in 1974.

Three of our books, *Man, The Grand Symbol of the Mysteries*, *The Most Holy Trinosophia (St. Germain)*, and *Healing, The Divine Art*, are now in the process of being reprinted.

In the next six months, our most expensive book, *THE SECRET TEACHINGS of ALL AGES* will require a new edition and we must also arrange for the new printings of:

*Buddhism and Psychotherapy*  
*Journey In Truth*  
*Words To The Wise*  
*The Mystical Christ*

Several small publications including *The Therapeutic Value Of Music*, *The Basic Rules for Better Living* and *Mysticism and Mental Healing*, are now being republished and several other booklets are in very short supply. However, listed below are publications which have not been available for some time, and are now back on our shelves. They include:

*Buddha's Sermon on the Mount*  
*An Introduction to Dream Interpretation*  
*A Vital Concept of Personal Growth*  
*Woman, The Mother of All Living*  
*Value of Prayer*

More than twenty years ago, the PRS Friends Fund was created by a group of our closest friends who wished to make voluntary annual contributions to assist in our publishing program. Had it not been for the help of our Friends, the remarkable expansion of our printing program would not have been possible. The international emergency which the world now faces is largely responsible for the unusual sale of our publications. Folks everywhere realize that only through deeper insight into the truths of living and the strengthening of personal character through self-discipline, dedication and cooperation can we prepare ourselves for the years that lie immediately ahead. We are doing all that we can to help those who are confused or discouraged to face the future with a good hope.

I have always had the deepest regards for our Friends Fund group and its splendid cooperation with our work, and I'm ever grateful for the dedicated help of these good people. We hope that you will be able to contribute to this Fund for we are sincerely convinced that we have been of practical assistance in protecting basic human values.

We appreciate those who have already contributed to our 1974 program and hope that all of you will join in this project. Contributions to the Friends Fund are tax deductible.