

CHINESE PANELS ILLUSTRATE IDEA OF TRANSMIGRATION

In many a Chinese temple the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul is made easily understandable for the populace by means of vivid, colored paintings and carvings which adorn wall panels.

A series of such painted panels and partitions from the Lama temple near Taichow, Kansu, China, is on exhibition in Hall 32 (Case 2). Some of these pictures, such as those showing the skins of dead men and animals hung on a line for purification in preparation for the reception of a soul, and one painting in which a mule bears a saddle made from a human skin, are startling in nature.

The idea of metempsychosis, or the transfer of the soul through a series of animal and human bodies, is a cardinal doctrine of Buddhist religion. Salvation finally brings to a close the cycle of incarnations, and then the soul reaches the state of "nirvana" in which one's individuality is totally annihilated.

The pictures are painted directly on the wood, and have been made spectacular for the purposes of popular teaching. One of the panels exhibited at the Museum illustrates beliefs concerning the soul's ability to enter the body of a horse, a deer, a lion, a camel or an elephant; and shows how the soul dwelling in an animal body eventually may change its abode into that of a man or even a god.

The Tibetans do not bury their dead, but expose the corpses in the wilderness to become the food of beasts and birds of prey, while the bodies of the Lamas are cremated. One of the Museum's panels shows the animals devouring a corpse, and in this same picture are seen the skins of dead creatures, including men, folded once and hanging outdoors to be aired before the soul may enter.

Equally striking in colors and weird in conception is the painting of the mule of the goddess Lha-mo, saddled with the skin of a human being. It bears a bowl made from a skull, filled with blood. The flank of the mule has an eye, concerning which there is a strange legend. Yama, the deity of death, was supposed to have shot an arrow into the mule, but Lha-mo transformed the wound into this additional eye.

W. H. DUNHAM HERBARIUM RECEIVED BY MUSEUM

Mr. William H. Dunham, of Evanston, Illinois, has presented to Field Museum his private herbarium, consisting of 2,000 mounted sheets of plants. This collection is of much local historical interest, because many of the specimens were gathered in the Chicago area, principally along the north shore, beginning about fifty years ago. Many of them are from areas now covered by buildings, where all natural vegetation disappeared long ago.

The herbarium also contains many plants from other parts of the United States, especially from California and the Rocky Mountain states, Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, and some of the eastern states. It includes, in addition, many specimens from various parts of Europe, and from Palestine, Turkey, and the Madeira Islands. Nearly all of the specimens were collected by Mr. Dunham, and the collection well illustrates how much material of permanent value may be gathered by one who enthusiastically devotes his leisure time to serious study of one of the branches of natural science.

CHANGES IN INSTALLATION IMPROVE BENGAL TIGER GROUP

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The group of Bengal tigers, illustrated in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS for November, 1934, has recently been subjected to alteration in which the male tiger has been remounted and placed in a slightly different position. Although the change is not very great, it is in the direction of less strained and dramatic pose for the animal, giving it better conformity with subjects of other groups in William V. Kelley Hall (Hall 17).

As previously stated, the animals for this group were collected by the James Simpson-Roosevelts Asiatic Expedition during a special hunt in northern India organized after the main route of the expedition had been covered in the heights of the Himalayas, Pamirs and Thian Shans. Participating, besides the Roosevelt brothers, were their wives, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and Mrs. Kermit Roosevelt. This hunt was of the exciting and spectacular kind, usually

temperate Asia, north to Manchuria and west to Persia. It does not reach Africa or Arabia. Although it is found in Sumatra and Java, it does not extend far into the East Indies and has never reached Ceylon. Within its range, several varieties may be distinguished. The Bengal tiger is the variety of India, a good-sized animal of rich color, with a short smooth coat. The northern or Manchurian tiger, now comparatively rare, is large, pale, and soft-coated. Another variety occurs in Persia, and smaller ones in Sumatra, Java, and Bali.

Although unpleasant tragedy is the invariable accompaniment of wild life, it is not usually emphasized in museum groups. Among predacious animals, however, death-dealing is a daily occurrence and, in the case of such a rapacious beast as the tiger, it can scarcely be omitted if a truthful representation is to be made. In the Museum group, therefore, the male tiger is shown standing over its kill, snarling and tense,



Bengal Tiger Group as Reinstalled

A comparison of this picture with that of the same group which appeared in the November, 1934, issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS will make clear the contrast in effect produced by certain changes in installation.

reserved for royalty, in which trained elephants are used and large numbers of native beaters are employed to surround and harass the game. It was quite successful, and two fine tigers were secured for the Museum.

The tiger, contrary to general belief, is a relatively recent immigrant into India from the north, where it ranges over most of

while the female stands at one side, half-crouched and ready to slink away if trouble should develop. The kill is a wild pig, an animal common in Asia, and one frequently preyed upon by the tiger.

The group was prepared by Staff Taxidermist C. J. Albrecht, and the background is by Staff Artist Charles A. Corwin.

OITICICA OIL

The introduction of chinawood or tung oil from an Oriental tree of the spurge family almost revolutionized the varnish industry. For reasons such as disturbances in China, and possibly also speculative manipulation, the supply has not always been as constant or as abundant as might be desired by consumers, and another vegetable drying oil, practically unknown to the world at large until a few years ago, has come into prominence as a partial substitute. This is oiticica oil, which is expressed from the dry, pecan-shaped fruits of a sturdy oak-like tree (*Licania rigida* Benth.) of the drought area of

northeastern Brazil. In that country its oil has long been known for local or domestic use, though it has only recently been available in commercial quantities.

The name oiticica is of Tupy Indian origin and means "white resin." The tree belongs to a division of the rose family represented in the United States only by the pigeon and gopher plums of the Florida shore, but in the tropics by a considerable number of species which include some large and handsome trees yielding edible fruit, and sometimes planted as shade trees.

Specimens of oiticica fruits and oil are included in the vegetable oils exhibit in Hall 28.



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