

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

Tibetan Prayer Wheels

The wheel goes round and round, and each time it spins represents a repetition of the prayer written on a paper attached to it—that is the idea of the Tibetans in designing the revolving aids to devotions known as prayer wheels, of which a collection is exhibited in Hall 32 (Case 3).

But not content even with the efficacy of this lazy way of saying prayers, they have developed a method which they believe increases its effectiveness a thousandfold. This is done by printing the prayer a thousand times on long strips of paper which resemble the tape used in stock market tickers, and inserting these strips into a hollow cylinder in the wheel. Then, each time it spins, the effect is regarded as equivalent to saying the prayer a thousand times. As most Lama priests and many laymen have these instruments, and keep them almost perpetually in motion during their waking hours, they are thus enabled to say their prayers millions of times in a day, a feat that would be physically impossible to the most fervent suppliant who confined himself to oral utterance.

Shown in the accompanying illustration is a typical prayer wheel included in the Field Museum collection. A further refinement of these hand-propelled wheels—one equipped with a tin propeller to be spun by the wind—is exemplified by one of the specimens in the exhibit. Temples and villages often have community prayer wheels, fifteen to twenty feet in diameter, operated by water power or windmills. The larger ones, because of their size, are usually called "prayer barrels."

Mr. Schuyler Cammann, who recently returned from Tibet, and visited Field Museum to study its Tibetan collections, adds the following information from his personal observation:

There are other Tibetan devices to aid praying. A traveler may walk clockwise around a *chorten* (a monument containing ashes of saints) or a *mani* pile (made of

stone slabs carved with the prayer formula "*om mani padme hum*") and thus have prayers said for him. The extreme development of this seems to be the *mani* walls, sometimes three-quarters of a mile long with a *chorten* at each end, and with hundreds of flat rocks along the top of the wall, each carved with a prayer or charm words. In passing these to the left the prayers accrue to the traveler's benefit. But if he goes on the right of the wall, the prayers are "deducted." Tibetan horses automatically walk to the left of such walls. A combination of the wheel and wall method of praying is found in Likiang, in the borderland



"Mass Production" of Prayers

Tibetans believe they accomplish the effect of praying a thousand times with each twirl of one of these odd wheels containing a long strip of paper on which supplication may be printed a thousand times. Mr. C. Martin Wilbur, Curator of Chinese Archaeology and Ethnology, holds a complete instrument and a roll of prayer tape. On the table is a disassembled wheel showing opened cylinder into which roll is inserted. The metal weight attached to cylinder by a chain causes it to revolve when a swinging motion is applied to the handle by the person offering prayers.

between Tibet and southwestern China. A monk walks clockwise around the wall of his temple, into which have been fixed leather-bound prayer wheels. As he walks along he brushes the wheels with his shoulder, setting them to spinning prayers for him.

FIELD WORK IN MISSISSIPPI

Collections of birds from the state of Mississippi are few and far between, and as a result the avifauna of that part of the South is relatively little known. This lack of knowledge is important because Mississippi lies in the area where birds typical of Florida and Texas come together.

Through the cordial co-operation of Mr. James Leavell and Mr. Carl Birdsall, of Chicago, Mr. Rudyerd Boulton, Curator of Birds, and Mr. Stephen S. Gregory, Jr., of Winnetka, had the opportunity recently of making a brief reconnaissance of the bird life of Jackson County.

In the space of five days, some sixty species were recorded. Specimens were obtained of about thirty species that will greatly aid in the solution of problems of speciation in birds of the Gulf Coast area. Among the interesting birds found were Brewer's black-birds which occurred in large flocks. It was not previously realized that this western species wintered so far to the east.

The field work, though brief, was so successful that hopes were aroused for a more extensive program of further work in this zoologically neglected area of the south.

—R.B.

ANOTHER GIFT OF \$4,000 RECEIVED FROM MRS. J. N. RAYMOND

To further the co-ordination of educational activities of Field Museum with those of the schools of Chicago, Mrs. James Nelson Raymond last month made an additional gift of \$4,000 to the Museum. This, with previous gifts, makes a total of more than \$63,000 received from Mrs. Raymond to supplement the \$500,000 endowment she provided in 1925 wherewith the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures was established.

The year 1938 was one of the most active in the history of the Foundation, and the staff has been increased from five to six lecturers to meet the increasing demands for its services. Attendance at the free programs of motion pictures for children presented in the James Simpson Theatre has been larger, and several new types of activity have been carried on, such as the preparation of special exhibits, and the development of informational conferences for groups of children in connection with a new series of radio programs broadcast under the auspices of the Chicago Board of Education. More work has been undertaken also to supply natural history counsel for those in charge of children's camps, boys' and girls' clubs, and church organizations. Approximately 1,200 groups, aggregating tens of thousands of children, have been provided with guide services on visits to the Museum. Two new series of stories for children have been prepared, and thousands of copies distributed. Extension lecturers sent out into the schools have addressed approximately 185,000 children in their classrooms and assembly halls.

Museum Lecture Tours Attended by 1,585 "4-H" Boys and Girls

Groups of American farm boys and girls from forty-four states, Canada, and Hawaii, were brought to Field Museum during the International Live Stock Exposition held in Chicago in December. There were 1,585 of them—626 girls, and 959 boys—several hundred more than were in the groups of the previous year. They came under the auspices of the National Four-H Club Congress. The entire staff of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation was assigned to conducting them on guide-lecture tours of Museum exhibits. In addition to these groups, the Museum received hundreds of other individual visitors, both adults and youths, in Chicago because of the live stock show.

Noteworthy fresco paintings of the first century A. D., excavated from the village of Boscoreale near Pompeii, are exhibited in Edward E. and Emma B. Ayer Hall (Hall 2).



1939. "Another Gift of \$4,000 Received from Mrs. J.N. Raymond." *Field Museum news* 10(1), 3-3.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25712>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/364520>

Holding Institution

Field Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.
For information contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.