

The Adepts

In The Eastern Esoteric Tradition

By **MANLY PALMER HALL**



Part One

The Light of the Vedas

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ILLUSTRATED

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This work is a section of a comprehensive survey of the Adept tradition, which will be complete in fifteen parts. It is issued in the present form because of the unprecedented rise in the cost of book-production. Only in this way can the material be made available to students at a reasonable price.

THE LIGHT OF THE VEDAS

INTRODUCTION

Numerous references occur throughout the religious literature of the world to an order of enlightened human beings who are the custodians of the essential wisdom of the race. During the medieval revival of the Hermetic tradition in Europe, the higher initiates of this secret Fraternity were called Adepts, and it has seemed reasonable and advisable to preserve this term and title. Modern writers have gathered a quantity of reference material dealing with the Adept tradition, but no work is yet available which may be considered as a systematic outline of the historical side of this inquiry. Scattered intimations are not sufficient to justify the Adept concept. The existence of advanced spiritual types already functioning within and through the body of organized human society is taken for granted by the members of many religious groups. Even though the very existence of Adept-teachers has been artfully concealed, it is not overly difficult to restore the grand theme from available landmarks.

Psychologists are inclined to explain the Adept concept as an extension and refinement of the folk-hero idea originating within human consciousness. What the heroic self is to the individual, the school of the Adepts (the heroic race of the Greeks) is to the collective. Convinced that he has unsuspected potentials within himself, and his convictions sustained by the historical panorama of human progress, man finds no difficulty in accepting a doctrine which teaches that some of his own kind have already advanced beyond the limitations imposed by undeveloped

faculties and unexplored resources of consciousness. It is impossible to deny that great sages, the founders of religions, and lesser mystics and saints have discovered within themselves extraordinary sources of spiritual insight and courage. To reject inspired leadership is to undermine the noblest convictions of the race. The materialistic effort to explain all mystical revelations as forms of hallucination is undemonstrable and unsatisfactory.

The universe bears witness to sovereign intelligence manifesting through the constant unfoldment of living organisms from within themselves and according to immutable laws. The supreme source of consciousness, intelligence, and energy the ancients called God. In attempting to organize the God-idea, it was necessary to clothe it in familiar attributes. As time went on, the idea itself was submerged, and Deity was regarded as a vast personality subjected to all the limitations imposed by interpretation. From early contemplation was evolved a triune concept of existence consisting of God, the world, and man. God was remote, intangible, and substantially unknowable; the world was the theater of divine manifestation; and man, the noblest production of the evolutionary processes. At a very early time the human mind found it necessary to populate the qualitative interval between God and man. Familiar examples indicated both the need and the solution.

The nation or kingdom was not composed of merely the ruler and his subjects. The head of the state was powerless without a governing body to administer his will and his laws. Antiquity favored the monarchial form of political administration. By virtue of his internal resources, man was entitled to be governed constitutionally. It was the privilege of the human being to have a voice in the management of his own affairs, but he also required leadership in those larger issues which were beyond his personal experience. It thus came about that religious and philosophical systems envisioned Deity as operating through

orders of tutelary divinities, themselves conditioned aspects of the ultimate sovereignty. The interval between God and man was then filled by descending orders or hierarchies of intelligences, such as were described by St. Paul as the thrones, dominions, and principalities.

At the same time, humanity accepted the challenge of this interval and sought to ascend, through disciplines of spiritual development, toward conscious knowledge of the Hierarchy.* The only means available for such an ascent were the apperceptive powers locked within the human compound. The Mystery systems of initiation were organized to teach the science of human regeneration by which the inner faculties of the soul could be stimulated and unfolded according to the laws governing such processes in Nature. These sacred institutions flourished collectively for thousands of years, and those who attained mastery were called initiates. These were not merely persons who had received an exalted kind of knowledge; their advancement was the result of the release of internal powers of God-knowing. Through these initiate-teachers, the existence of the Adept tradition was gradually revealed to the world. The whole doctrine is suspended from one primary assumption; namely, that it is possible for the creature to know the Creator. It was further held that unless such a possibility existed the human state was purposeless.

The Adepts are sometimes referred to as a race inhabiting a continent between heaven and earth. This does not mean that the secret Fraternity is a separate creation, but a foreshadowing of the human destiny. Ultimately, the working of natural law will release the extrasensory perceptions in the majority of mankind. The initiate-teachers are therefore referred to as Elder Brothers, who have achieved to a superior state because of dedication to the noblest ideals which can inspire mortal conduct. In-

* When capitalized, Hierarchy represents the Adept Government of the world.

crease of knowledge brings skill, which the word *adept* implies. The miraculous accounts, which are an essential part of the Adept tradition, bear witness to increase of internal wisdom. The Adept is not a magician, but a sage. He does not dominate natural law or violate its patterns. He simply uses the resources of Nature which his inner consciousness has made available.

As the Adept tradition descended to the modern world through the migrations of the Aryan peoples, it is fitting that the first section of the present work should begin with the religious mysteries of Hinduism. The degree of indebtedness to the Eastern wisdom will be more apparent as the story unfolds. There are unfamiliar names and strange terms, but these are defined as used and should not discourage the reader. The Rishis of old Aryavata were the first Aryan Adepts, and from them came the wonderful doctrines and teachings which the East honors today as the Light of the Vedas.

MANLY PALMER HALL

May 1952, Los Angeles, California

THE ADEPTS

THE LIGHT OF THE VEDAS

The Rise of Brahmanism

The name *Dravid*, or *Dravidian*, is generally applied to the indigenous non-Aryan peoples who anciently inhabited that part of India which extends from the Vindhya to Cape Comorin. According to the older teachings, the dark-skinned Dravidians belong to the Atlantean distribution of populations. As the result of the early Aryan migrations from the north or possibly due to pressures within their own culture, the Dravids, who are of Turanian stock, departed from the region of the Punjab and the Ganges and withdrew to the central and southern provinces of India, where they now reside. The Dravidians still number approximately 47,000,000, and speak eleven distinct dialects. They exercise considerable moral influence, and their rights and privileges are traditional. The Dravidians did not have a caste system until the Brahmans settled among them. Prior to the Aryan infiltration, they recognized only two classes: patricians and plebians. The kindly ministrations of the Buddhists and Jains helped to overcome the antagonism which the Dravidians felt for the Aryans. A kind of cultural amalgamation was accomplished, and many earlier disputes were arbitrated. The pre-Aryan Dravids seemed to have possessed the Akkadian lunar calendar and a mythology of thirty-three deities belonging to an astrotheological pantheon.

From the ancient remains and the surviving institutions of these peoples, it appears that the Dravidians combined

primitive usages with a comparatively high degree of cultural skill. They practiced totemism, constructed monolithic monuments, and recognized kinship in a female line of descent. They also produced an extensive and important literature, and were advanced in the arts. Actually, the old Dravidians were derived from at least four racial stocks, including pre-Aryan. It was among this heterogeneous population that the Brahmanic religious philosophy arose. The earliest Hindu writings reveal the transition from the Dravidian worship of elements and the phenomena associated with the processes of generation. The Aryan racial factors gained domination over this complex of primitive peoples, and determined the direction of the cultural motion.

Summarizing the importance of Brahmanic learning, H. de Wilman-Grabowska says: "Despite the vicissitudes of an eventful history, it was, as a matter of fact, Brahmanism that made the Hindus out of the Aryan, the Dravidian, and the Autochthonous Indians; it was Brahmanism that gave India its moral and social unity and in some sort makes a nation of that country."* Brahmanism is a system of religious rites and institutions founded and unfolded by the Brahmans, the sacerdotal class of the Aryan-Hindus. Apparently the term *brahman* originally meant a *priest*, or *one who practiced the observances prescribed for followers of Brahma*. When this caste attained dominion over the Aryan peoples of India, its sphere of influence gradually enlarged until it became a ruling hierarchy. As the political and social pre-eminence of Brahmanism came to be generally acknowledged, its religious philosophy was expanded and refined, resulting in what is called the Brahmanical period of Hindu culture.

Sir Monier-Williams traced the progress of Indian religious thought through three successive stages, which he called Vedism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism. In this ar-

* See *Asiatic Mythology*.

range, Vedism is the period of revelation, Brahmanism, the period of organization, and Hinduism, the period of interpretation. The unfoldment of the Indian religious conviction was influenced by the conditions which prevailed during the important formative period. When the Aryas, or Aryans, descended into the Indo-Gangetic plain, they created a protective racial and cultural barrier between themselves and the Dravidians. In order to prevent the submergence of their racial identity, the Aryans gradually integrated and formed an exclusive social group. While such a program is never completely successful, it supplied the motive to those parts of the Vedic texts which emphasize the preservation of the Aryan bloodstream. The early Aryan tribes seem to have recognized three classes: priests, warriors, and agriculturists. These rallied around their religio-philosophical focus, and decreed that the non-Aryan population should be excluded from the rights and privileges of the favored classes. This concept intensified with the passing of time, resulting in the caste system with its rigid observances. The caste distinctions were further extended until the Brahmans, or priestly caste, acquired powers and privileges never equaled by any other sacerdotal class in the history of human society.

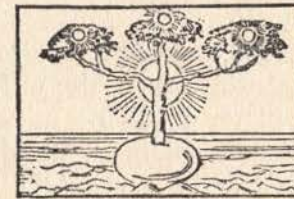
A survey of the findings and opinions of Western historians indicate a state of general confusion and a surprising lack of chronological data. It seems that the pageant of Indian civilization must be examined unhistorically. While most religious systems present this difficulty, Hinduism is the classical example. Various explanations have been advanced to explain the almost complete lack of factual chronology. It has been suggested that the Hindus had no adequate written language prior to the 5th century B. C. and were themselves unable to arrange their oral tradition sequentially. But, as usual, this hypothesis conflicts with what appears to be contrary evidence. The simplest way of approaching the Hindu tradition is to borrow the familiar opening line of the fairy tale: "Once upon a time . . ."

The Hindu compilers and commentators were addicted to the Asiatic instinct for fantasy. Clinging to the astro-mathematical formulas of the old Brahmans, they arrived at chronological conclusions of such incredible proportions that they amazed even themselves. These findings are rejected completely by Occidental scholars, who take refuge in the conviction that Aryan culture began in the 2nd millennium B. C. It is only fair to state, however, that, according to the great Indian sages, primitive Brahmanism, from which the more refined system developed, came into existence in north-central Asia at least 100,000 years ago, perhaps even a 1,000,000 years ago. Nothing will be gained by entering into the languishing debate over the antiquity of the Vedas. Dates will be inserted where they seem reasonable and there is some agreement among the authorities.

As the present outline is concerned primarily with the descent of the Adept tradition, it is not advisable to attempt a critical analysis of the Brahmanical religion. So remarkable is the doctrine and so profound and comprehensive is its unfoldment that it cannot be satisfactorily summarized. Yet, without some framework derived from the grand scheme of Hinduism, it is impossible to explain the Invisible Government of the World. The Adept concept as it is held today in various parts of the world is essentially Brahmanical, and is justified and clarified by the schools of Indian philosophy. Those students seeking additional data should consult the Upanishads, the Brahmanas, and the Puranas. The principal ideas contained in this mass of religious literature reappear in Buddhism and its teachings concerning the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats.

The old Hindu religious poets were aware that their ethical, moral, and social instructions were dependent for justification upon their theocosmological researches. Without some comprehension of the nature of the ever-existing principle, the deities which emerge from it, the formation

of the universe, the generation of life upon the earth, and the spiritual potentials of man himself, the statutes and institutes of formal religion were shadows without substance. It was customary, therefore, to introduce the collections of religious writings and even the great historical and literary epics with abridged versions of the sacred theogonic and anthropological accounts. By this means the principal matters discussed in a particular work are placed in their proper relationship to the grand theme. It seems wise to follow this plan insofar as it relates direct-



—From *Qabbalah*, by Myer

THE UNIVERSAL TREE OF THE HINDUS

ly to the Adept tradition. It should be remembered, however, that the descent of the Adept hierarchy is itself only one phase of the Hindu universe-concept. It is concerned with the destiny of the human creature and is the Brahmanic Master Key to the mystery of the evolutionary processes revealing themselves through mankind.

Most ancient peoples regarded analogy as the most useful and simplest of the mental processes. This law is stated in the Hermetic axiom: "As above, so below." The divine will operates through a master pattern, and creation is the statement of this pattern. The universe unfolds through an infinite succession of restatements by the divine mind of the basic pattern on different planes or levels. Thus worlds, races, institutions, and all corporeal bodies are microcosms or miniatures of the original design. They differ in magnitude (size) and multitude (number of their parts) but not in essential nature. To comprehend

one is to understand the formulas of all. From the least to the greatest, all structures reveal the Master Plan, and the Plan itself reveals the Planner. In this orderly scheme of things, there is no place for anything illogical or unreasonable.

The Brahmanas examined the body of God (the creation) strictly in terms of anatomy, physiology, and biology. They went further, however; for, realizing that man had a mind and a consciousness operating usually through the mental faculties, they turned their analogical key in the lock and opened the door which led from the visible universe of effects to the invisible universe of causes. They established the primary creative impulse as occurring on the plane of divine consciousness, the unfoldment of created things upon the plane of divine mind, and the bodies of created things upon the plane of the divine form.

Over the vast project they placed a Hierarchy of administering powers, themselves attributes of the Supreme Being. This Hierarchy likewise descended through the levels of creation, formation, and generation, and its lower termination was the Guru, the venerated teacher or sage. The Guru, surrounded by his disciples, is a microcosm of universal wisdom, serving all life and bringing it to the fulfillment of illumination. Thus the university is the microcosm of cosmic wisdom, the temple, the microcosm of universal consciousness, and the governments of nations, microcosms of the assembly of deities upon Meru, the World Mountain. The Eternal Power in its aspect of the Eternal Teacher ensouls the concept of learning. The body of learning is science; the mind of learning is philosophy; the spirit of learning is religion. These are the original castes or classes of early Aryanism. The scientists and artists are the Vaisyas, the husbandmen of the gods. The philosophers are the Kshatriyas, the warriors—that is, the defenders of truth. The religionists are the Brahmans, for in the order of learning spiritual acquirements are the most significant. Religion is not merely addiction to a

theological system, but is a spiritual science, the summation of all knowledge and an exact discipline of the unfoldment of human consciousness toward the substance of truth itself.

In the Brahmanic anthropological concept, the human life-wave is divided into seven great racial streams. Modern Theosophical thinkers call these races the Polarian, Hyperborean, Lemurian, Atlantean, and Aryan. The sixth and seventh races have not yet been differentiated, for they belong to the future. More technically, the Polarian, Hyperborean, and most of the Lemurian divisions are referred to as species to signify that they had not attained the state of true human creatures. The fourth, or Atlantean race, mingled with the remnants of the later Lemurians, constituted the Atlantean distribution of peoples. In the Brahmanic anthropology, the Atlantean culture was the dividing point between the involutory and evolutionary arcs of human development.

The Cult of the Dying God, which is one of the more important landmarks in the descent of the esoteric tradition, is believed to have originated in Atlantis. It was therefore present among the Dravidians at the time of the Aryan invasion. Traces of a doctrine of a savior-divinity who took upon himself the sins of the world for the redemption of his children are to be found in all the major divisions of the Aryan religion. It survived the collapse of paganism to form the central conviction of Adventism and the Messianic dispensation. In the older doctrine, the divine victim voluntarily died to save his world. He took flesh, was born in the likeness of a man, and suffered and died for the salvation of all men. In the Esoteric Schools, disciples sought liberation from the illusion of the world, not merely for selfish purposes, but in order that through them the great "penitent" might be released. Evolutionary procedure accomplished two purposes simultaneously. It brought mankind gradually to the fulfillment of its own

destiny, and at the same time liberated the "savior" who had identified himself with the human life principle.

The deities of Brahmanism are the personified attributes of universal consciousness and universal mind. The theology unfolds in the higher dimensions of the sphere of



—From *The Path*, (Feb. 1887)

BRAHMA AND PARASHAKTI

The conscious wisdom of the creative power is here represented as uniting with its female aspect, surrounded by the veil of mystery.

causes. The gods—that is, the extensions of the divine thought—engender organisms and then ensoul them. The material world with its infinite diversity is the Vahan, or vehicle of the modes of divine realization. Consciousness is one in substance, and many in manifestation. It is all-pervading and, by a process of meditation, images within itself the objective cosmos. The world is therefore sustained by will and Yoga. The universal power experiences the creations which it first envisions. To experience these productions of its own thinking, the power accepts volun-

tarily the reality of the mental images, identifies itself with them, and permits itself to be absorbed into them. This continual process of visualizing and identifying results in the complete emergence of the pattern and the complete submergence of the principle. The deity is released by the reversal of the procedure, which is accomplished by the orders of creation themselves conquering gradually by inner strength—the Light of the Logos—the dream appearances, which are real only until they are understood. The work of the Great School is to acquaint the divine power locked in the illusion with its own self-appointed way of liberation.

Assuming that the universe was a compound in which the all-pervading was locked within the all-pervaded, the Brahmanic scholar divided learning into three parts. The first dealt with the vast procedure by which the gods (the principles of consciousness) descended into the illusion which they themselves had fashioned; second, the present condition of the compound as revealed through animate and inanimate creatures, especially the most symbolically significant of these creatures—man himself; third, the divine sciences which reveal how, in the future, consciousness can be disentangled from form by revising the process which originally caused the entanglement. This method of releasing consciousness (the gods) from the state of form-awareness through self-awareness to the ultimate state of unconditioned realization is the secret science of the Adepts.

The Adept Hierarchy

There is much traditional support for the conviction that the *Rig Veda* is the oldest surviving religious book of the world. Although the text has passed through several recensions, the ancient doctrine which it unfolds reveals the fundamentals of the religio-philosophical system of the first Aryas. Around the central mass of the *Rig Veda* has

accumulated numerous commentaries and glosses which form together a wonderful heritage of wisdom. It is believed by Hindu scholars that the Vedic literature was given by the gods through initiate-teachers to guide the conduct of the race that was born in the highlands of the Himalayas. Agni, the god of the secret fire, rode through space in a chariot drawn by seven horses. The shining steeds were the Rishis, who guarded and directed the motion of the esoteric tradition.

From their sacred birthland, the Aryas extended themselves gradually to become, in the course of ages, the dominant people of the earth. In their long migrations, the Aryan tribes carried with them their laws and doctrines. They not only created systems of theology, but also expanded essential knowledge, organizing schools of arts and sciences. The remnants of older races which came under Aryan influence were indoctrinated with the Vedic wisdom, resulting in countless reformations and re-interpretations of older beliefs. The original Aryas were of Atlantean stock, probably descending from the old Semite branch of the Atlantean racial distribution. The differentiation occurred when Vaivasvata Manu overshadowed or ensouled one of the old clans or brood families, ordaining that it should become the vehicle of a new race.

Considered esoterically, all the Aryan peoples are parts of one psychobiological organism. Division took place within the race, but the race itself was not divided. It remained "set apart" for a high destiny. The first division or branch of the Aryas was the Hindu. It is not quite correct to think of the Aryan-Hindus as a separate subrace; actually they were the first emergence of a pattern which was established in and through them. The sages and saints who appeared at the dawn of Hinduism were the fathers or teachers of the entire racial motion. As the tree is concealed within its seed, so the old Hindus were called the progenitors, for nothing could come to birth which was not bestowed through them. From the Hindu, therefore,

came forth the other subraces, as the six continents of the earth emerged from the seventh Imperishable Island. Each subdivision as it emerged carried with it the Light of the Veda. The Aryan religions, therefore, are not separate revelations, but degrees of the unfoldment of one vast spiritual concept.

It is more or less unfortunate to apply limited terms and names to the branches of the Aryan race, but for convenience it is necessary to identify them in some way. The chemistries of time and environment and the changes which came from admixtures with surviving Lemurian and Atlantean stocks produced the vehicles required for the manifestation of the various potencies of the Aryan life-stream. The second subrace has been called the Aryan-Semite, and its cultural heritage has descended through the civilization of the Near East, including the Moorish and the Arabian. Very little is known of the ancient history of these groups. Nor should it be assumed that the subracial stock always occupied the region in which it is now found. The third branch of the Aryas is the Iranian, and its indebtedness to the Vedas is revealed through the *Zend-Avesta* and the ministries of the several Zoroasters. The modern Parsis are the keepers of the fire mysteries of ancient Iran.

The fourth subrace is usually called the Celtic, but it must be considered as embracing the Greco-Roman culture-groups. A study of the Orphic doctrines reveals the Greek indebtedness to ancient India. The fifth subrace is known as the Anglo-Saxon-Teuton, the distribution now dominating world affairs. The grand motion revealed through this descent of subracial groups is from the religious, through the philosophic, to the scientific. There has been a broad emphasis upon barter and exchange, and the Aryan will be remembered as the merchant-prince. Most of his advancements have been motivated by transportation and communication, and wherever he has gone he has created marts and trading centers. As a result of

his dominant pressures, he has brought into manifestation a complex of political systems and problems. Today his spiritual heritage is so completely submerged beneath his material activities that he has all but forgotten his birth-right. He is still bound, however, by an array of interlocking sacred books, and, although plagued by countless sectarian differences, he worships under a variety of names the gods of the first Aryans.

In his long and involved racial migrations, the Aryan has carried within him the Adept tradition. Wherever the rays of the Vedic Light have touched, Secret Schools have flourished. The Philosophic Empire was built around this spiritual heritage. One luminous doctrine has bestowed all the arts, sciences, crafts, and trades now practiced by the Aryans. The truths anciently guarded in shrines and sanctuaries are now locked in the racial subconscious. The Aryan, seeking within himself the keys to his own origin and destiny, contacts the stream of revelation which flows from Vaivasvata Manu. As the visible government of the Aryans is verging toward the World Commonwealth, which is no more than the reunion of scattered fragments, so the internal experience of the truth seeker discovers the one Light locked in the bloodstream of the race.

It was revealed to the Aryan ancestors that the administration of the racial unfoldment was in the keeping of certain custodians. These Adept-princes were once lords over the rulers ordained by divine right. Sometimes called the Trans-Himalayan Brotherhood, these Adepts are required by the law of the Manu to guide the race without interfering with the right of the human being to learn through experience. Like the humblest creature within their spiritual domain, the Adepts must keep the universal laws and are servants rather than Masters of the Great Plan. As the wise parent protects his child but does not overshadow his individuality, so the Hierarchy can only operate in accordance with the conscious will of the gov-

erned. When man seeks light, the Hierarchy reveals itself, but until such time it cannot force growth.

The Manu gave the laws for the regulation of public conduct, and the Hierarchy reveals the divine plan for personal unfoldment. Hundreds of sects and schools have stood as gates leading into an unknown world. Those who pass through these gates discover the one religion and the one discipline. The Eastern sage and the Western saint walk the same path, although some have not discovered the identity of their methods. The Greeks and the Chinese, the Egyptians and the Persians, the Mohammedans and Jews share together the secret doctrine of the Aryans. The road from diversity to unity, from illusion to reality is always and everywhere the way of Yoga. The world has been deceived by difference of language and has mistaken words for ideas. The great teachers who have founded the several religions which now flourish among the Aryan subraces are all to be considered as Adepts or as saintly persons who have received the Adept tradition as an experience of inner consciousness. Some have not known the source of their inspiration, and therefore could not state the unity of the doctrine. Each came in a time and to a group which urgently required spiritual guidance.

Apart from the purposes of the Great School, there have appeared leaders on the intellectual level who had not attained internal serenity. Reasoning only according to their own prejudices and opinions, they launched upon the world materialistic codes of behavior which survived because they catered to personal selfishness and ignorance. Such doctrines, though made respectable by traditional acceptance, cannot be reconciled with the Aryan wisdom. To follow in such schools is to become progressively more confused, until the heart and mind undergo a revulsion and discard that which is internally unacceptable. No matter how long the mind follows false teachings, the inner self is not completely contaminated. There are always emergencies which test the sufficiency of belief.

The gradual emphasis upon creeds and denominations marks a passing phase in human growth. The illusion must be met, experienced, and overcome. Regardless of intermediate circumstances, the Aryan returns sadder and wiser to the life-way of the progenitors. Over these inevitables, man has no authority; he has only the right to seek, discover, and accept. The primordial wisdom-religion divided into two great branches and produced the Eastern and Western Mystery Schools. For a long time these sacred institutions initiated qualified disciples and taught the sacred sciences. The Eastern branch of the Mysteries was like the fabled Banyan tree, the branches of which took root in the earth and became new trees. It was thus that Buddhism accomplished needed reforms in India, and the teachings of Lao-tse and Confucius advanced the spiritual culture of China. The Western Mysteries flourished in Chaldea and had a splendid revival in Egypt. The Egyptians combined qualities of the first Aryan subrace and the advanced Atlantean stock. After the failure of the reforms of Akhenaten, Egyptian religion fell into evil times. The esoteric tradition was re-established in Greece, and carried to the Near East by Moses, who was a priest of the Egyptians.

The Greek Mysteries are the most celebrated in history, but when they were transplanted in Rome they languished and finally ceased. In the meantime, both the Eastern and Western Schools produced initiated philosophers whose systems gradually took over the burden of mental leadership. The Adept-initiates Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle were actually transmitters of the Vedic doctrine. Pythagoras, of course, had direct contact with India, and Plato attempted a similar journey, but was prevented by wars raging along the route. The place of idealistic philosophy in the pattern was highly significant. It formed a middle ground between the profane world and the initiate system. It drew those who were dimly conscious of a better destiny and invited them to prepare their hearts and minds for

internal illumination. In this way the inner life of each truth seeker became a sanctuary in which he could attain initiation, even though the physical institutions had decayed.

It was in the Near East where Asia and Europe met that the alchemy of the Mysteries produced such groups as the Cabalists, the Neoplatonists, and the Gnostics. These were early attempts to bridge the religious hemispheres and re-establish the unity of the esoteric tradition. Much was accomplished, but the world was not ready to perpetuate the institutions which then came into existence. They have survived, however, through the names and teachings of their illustrious leaders. Fragments of many systems, including the Egyptians, the Greek, and the Chaldean, are evident in the early structure of Christianity. This heritage has never been publicly acknowledged—a grievous error, which may yet bring tragic consequences. The opportunity for the proclamation of the Universal Doctrine was lost, and the Keepers of the Flame were forced to retire and take refuge in secret assemblies. From these hidden but powerful groups, a constant outpouring of mysticism continued to embarrass the orthodox.

The term *yoga* seems to strike the keynote of the Aryan wisdom. All true unfoldment is toward unity. The journey is accomplished by a sequence of revelations. The inclusiveness of the divine plan refutes the exclusiveness of benighted purpose. Today there is talk of one world, one religion, one humanity, one universal need, and one divine power. The increasing realization of this pressing requirement for the acceptance of oneness is the path of Yoga. The constant restatement of both the need and the means for meeting the requirement is not the result of formal teaching, but of something which has been called intuition or instinct. It is the inward apperception of the divine purpose. The level of conviction that must be reached in order to experience this conclusion is the "knowing of the Veda." Behind the books and Scriptures of the Aryas is

the unwritten law. This is the divine plan existing in the divine mind. If the books were all lost or destroyed, the Veda could not perish. It is the legal soul of the Aryans, the laws to be known through the oracle of the heart and to be revealed through the priesthood of the mental faculties.

The concept of the Veda thus receives a newer and larger interpretation. The modern scientist depends upon immutable laws in the development of his formulas. He accepts these with the same unquestioning, even unthinking, faith as that demonstrated by the layman when he arranges his activities to meet the phenomena of day and night. On the level of the divine plan, the Veda stands for immutable principles forever restating themselves. The first Scriptures testified to these immutables and were not the substance of things hoped for by visionaries and mystics. As scientists accomplish their ends by using the laws of the universe, so the Adepts achieve their purposes by understanding and directing the energy of the Veda. To depart is to fail. On both planes—the spiritual and the scientific—the rule is: know and use.

Many may feel that the Adept tradition is fantastic, but is there anything incredible in the belief that there can be experts in the science of life and the art of living? The world has produced great painters, musicians of wonderful virtuosity, skillful architects, and profound scholars. These geniuses are regarded as exceptional, but are accepted because their works bear witness to their abilities. Men have always accepted the possibility of excellence, and from the earliest times have taught that a few dedicated and disciplined mortals have become Masters of the secret sciences of the soul. Because the soul is invisible and the sciences of the soul are not obvious in their workings, those untrained in such matters are not likely to recognize the Adepts and initiates. Yet there are numerous accounts in both Christian and non-Christian sacred books of saints and sages who have walked with God, have performed

miracles, and have led their peoples out of darkness and into the light of better ways. Shall all these accounts be rejected together as hallucinations or infirmities of the mind? What is gained by denying that which has inspired and guided the destiny of nations?

Nor is the record of the Adept-teachers so difficult to find. It is impossible to study any religion without contacting historical accounts of the appearances and activities of these teachers. They have appeared in all nations, and at critical moments have emerged as sages, reformers, and instructors. Equally significant is the message which they brought. It is always the same, for, after all, there is only one adversary—spiritual ignorance. China records the wonderful sages who dwell far apart from men in the Jade Mountains that touch the sky. India tells of the great Yogins whose ashrams and hermitages are above the headwaters of the Ganges. The dervishes and the Sufis have their secret Masters who wander about seeking those worthy to receive the Mysteries. Is it not wiser to ponder and consider? These accounts should not be read to be criticized, ridiculed, or dismissed because they conflict with prevailing prejudices. If the universe has reason and purpose, how are these reasons and purposes served and fulfilled? The Adept hierarchy is the only possible explanation for the wonderful and exact control by which the future of humanity is assured. In a strange way the hierarchy itself is an integral part of the Veda. The law produces the lawgiver and engenders from itself its own servants. Contrary to general belief, it is not the lawgiver but the law itself which comes first.

“The Orientalists,” writes H. P. Blavatsky, “know well that they cannot make away with the landmarks, followed by all subsequent religions, set up in that ‘Bible of Humanity’ called the *Rig Veda*. It is there that at the very dawn of intellectual humanity were laid the foundation-stones of all the faiths and creeds, of every fane and church built

from first to last; and they are still there." * Ultimately, humanity will have direct contact with the substance of the Veda, but this maturity has not yet been attained. The eye of the *Dangma* (organ of internal vision) is not yet opened. Until such time, the Adepts serve as intermediaries between the law and the people. It is their duty to clothe the eternal truth in parables and fables or to restate the doctrine on the levels of available understanding.

The first codes were simple, but were all that could be accepted and understood. As minds and hearts unfolded, larger revelations were given. Men had to be approached through their external faculties, so the Veda was collected into Scriptures and glosses. It was taught to the outer mind by Rishis and Gurus. It was incorporated into history, and its laws and rules were embodied in the textbooks of arts and sciences. Until he was conscious of the laws around him, man had not the strength to know the laws within him. Thus the Adepts were the shepherds of the flocks and the keepers of the sheepfolds. Their stories are to be found in the traditions of the shepherd-kings who ruled in the long ago.

All that could be thus transmitted was but the outer part of the teaching. A Hindu Guru once asked a disciple to open a seed pod and describe what he found inside. The chela did as directed and said: "First, there is the rind or shell, and within this a softer substance which is the meat. In the midst of this is a tiny sproutlike structure which is like the germ." The Master was well satisfied and said: "And what is inside of that?" The disciple was perplexed. "Nothing, Master," he replied. "Ah," said the Guru, "and it is that nothing which is All, and without it that which is apparent is lifeless and meaningless." To those who seek with their objective perceptions the mysteries of the causal universe, there is nothing at the root of existence. Only those who have the inward power

can experience the silence at the source of life. The Adepts point the way and reveal intellectually or rationally the facts involved. In the search for truth, the Veda is the nothing and the All. Its manifestations are infinite, but its substance can be discovered only by the secret disciplines of the soul. The Adepts themselves are equally inscrutable. These servants of the Veda are the hands and feet of the Great Lord. When the Lord is known, they, too, are knowable. The experience of the Veda reveals the Hierarchy. Until that time, neither can be appreciated.

The Vedas

The name *Vyasa*, meaning *one who expands or amplifies, a revealer or interpreter of a mystery to the profane*, was bestowed as a title of distinction in ancient days upon the highest initiated teachers of India. The Puranas refer to twenty-eight Vyasas as the appointed custodians and promulgators of the Vedic doctrine. One of these, identified as Vedavyasa is accredited with the compilation of the Vedic writings and the perfection of their literary form. The Brahmans believe that Vedavyasa flourished about 3100 years before the Christian Era, which would bring his date near the beginning of the Kali Yuga. The compilation took place on the shores of Lake Manasarowar, beyond the Himalayas in the region now known as Tibet. The hymns of the *Rig-Veda* are attributed to saints and sages who lived at different times, some of them ages apart. This would seem to indicate that the work was assembled over a period of many thousands of years.

The contents of the four principal Vedas can be adduced from their names. The *Rig-Veda* is the book of hymns; the *Sama-Veda* is the book of peace, or sanctity; the *Yajur-Veda*, the book of liturgical formulas; the *Atharva-Veda*, the book of magical incantations. With the exception of the *Yajur-Veda*, these writings are mostly in

* See *The Secret Doctrine*.

the form of metrical hymns and verses. The cosmological and theological doctrines contained in the Vedas are expanded and formalized through the Brahmanas and Sutras and given a larger philosophical organization through the Upanishads.

The oldest religion of India is Animism, still held by some primitive tribes. Of the earlier pre-Aryan faiths of this vast region, it can be said that the Vedic sacrifice was a sympathetic magic directed to secure the benefits of sunshine and rain in their proper season. The Vedic poems belonged, at least in part, to the primitive religion of a people to whom the art of writing was unknown. They were perpetuated by oral tradition until, in common with other Scriptural writings, the advance of culture made possible their compilation as sacred books.

One of the Vyasas is said to have authored the Mahabharata, and the twenty-eighth of this line of illustrious sages was the compiler of the Uttara Mimamsa, which inspired one of the six schools or systems of Indian philosophy. The date 1400 B. C. assigned to him by Western Orientalists is more than conservative. He probably flourished much earlier. There were other Vyasas not included in the descent here mentioned. Although the procedure is not entirely acceptable to Orientalists, it may be the wiser course to examine the Hindu accounts.

In the third age of each cycle, Vishnu assumes the person of Vyasa and "divides the Veda." This means that some part of the great teaching is specialized or set aside from the rest to bring about the founding of a school. The Veda has been twenty-eight times divided by the great Rishis in the Vaivasvata Manvantara. All the Vyasas who have passed away (i. e. the twenty-eight) are forms or manifestations of Vedavyasa, for in Indian philosophy all particulars are suspended from general and inclusive principles. This applies to the esoteric tradition as well as to various races and species of creatures that inhabit the seven continents. Vishnu as the permeator is the

light of spirit. As this light shines through the Scriptures, it reveals its own effulgency by the Vyasas, the poet-sages, who interpret the eternal teaching (the Veda) for the beings dwelling in the various time cycles. It must be understood that the Hindu chronology compresses enormous cosmic occurrences and the repetitions of these occurrences on different planes of manifestations into one account. Only the symbolist capable of recognizing certain intimations and clues can arrange the elements of the patterns in their proper order and sequence.

Some authorities say there are eighteen vidyas, or parts of true knowledge. The first four are revealed in the structure of the Vedas, which consist of four separate works considered as a unit. Each of the Vedas is divided into sections. The *Rig-Veda* consists of five parts; the *Yajur-Veda*, of eighty-six; the *Sama-Veda*, of one thousand; the *Atharva-Veda*, of nine. The original writings are described as infinite, but were reduced by Vedavyasa to the classification just given. The Hindus themselves insist that the Vedas were not composed by any human being, and while the name of Vyasa is associated with these books, he is referred to only as the compiler of the Vedas. He acted as editor of the vast body of wisdom which was originally revealed by Brahma himself.

The Vedas are associated with the elements: the *Rig-Veda* with fire, the *Vajur-Veda* with air, and the *Sama-Veda* with the energy of the sun. It would seem that these three sections were regarded as the principal parts of the work, and that the *Atharva-Veda* was incorporated into the structure at a later date. It is noted that the name Vyasa was bestowed upon the sage Dvaitayana as a title of esteem after he had compiled the massive work. In the *Bhagavata Purana*, chapter 3, twenty-two incarnations of Vishnu are listed. In the seventeenth incarnation he appeared as Vyasa, and divided the Veda for the instruction of mankind. In Bengal, Vedavyasa is made a son of Parasara and the father of Pandu.

In the Brahman mythology, the god Brahma originally had five heads. One of these is referred to only as an esoteric mystery. From the four mouths of the other heads issued the four Vedas. This explains why there is occasional reference to a fifth Veda, or secret book, which came from the fifth mouth. If the principal source of Indian esoteric philosophy is the Vedas, their mystical theology derives from the Upanishads, in which the mystery of the direct knowledge of God through a divine science is unfolded.



—From *Qabbalah*, by Myer

BRAHMA VIRAJ

The androgenic first manifestation of Brahman,
the neuter creating power

Brahma must be distinguished from Brahman, which is the universal, impersonal principle, the source of all creation and the ultimate state into which existences are reabsorbed. Brahma is the periodic objectification of this principle, and as such is subject to birth and decay. The reabsorption of Brahma into Brahman causes the pralaya, which is the gradual return of the objective into its subjective, unchanging principle. It should be understood that the Vedas are to nameless truth what Brahma is to Brah-

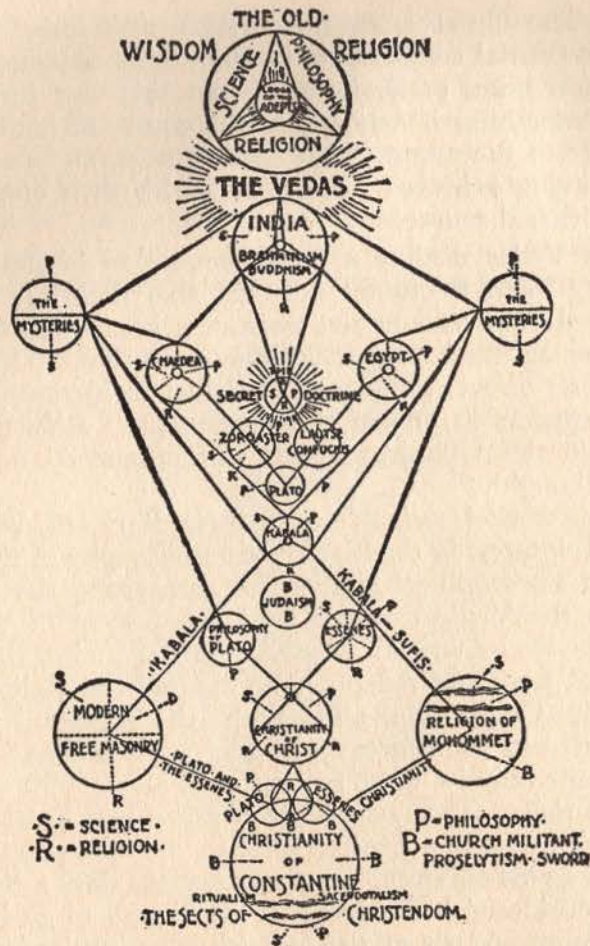
man. The Great Doctrine emerges at regular intervals from its eternal condition to become the satisfaction of the heart and mind of Brahma. From this vast instruction, the Creator himself achieves in the course of his objective existence to the estate of the perfect sage, and passes into sleep having achieved realization of his own eternal and unconditioned source.

The Vedas display a lofty conception of cosmogony. The *Rig-Veda* fluctuates between two theories: one regarding the universe as the work of a great architect, and the other as the result of natural generation. The Vedas contain no direct statement of a belief in metempsychosis, but it appears in one of the *Brahmanas*. Rebirth is accepted in the Upanishads and has influenced nearly all Hindu thought.*

In his work *Mystic Masonry*, J. D. Buck, M. D. † combined his interest in the history and philosophy of the Craft with his Theosophical studies. Summarizing the relation between the Vedic tradition and the descent of the Esoteric Schools, he writes: "Antedating the Vedas, then, was the Great Lodge of Adepts, who created the Religion, inspired the Civilization, and taught the profound Science that made old India great. If only traditions and broken monuments remain, these still outrank all modern achievements of man. The ancient government was Patriarchial; the Ruler was also a Master Initiate, and the people were regarded as his children. In those ancient days a Reigning Prince considered it not beneath his dignity to go into the desert alone, and sit at the feet of some inspired recluse, in order that he might receive more light, which he would again dispense to his people. Instead of teaching superstition and idolatry, when the real meaning of the Vedic symbolism is revealed, it will, perhaps, be found to be the thinnest veil ever imposed between the Sublime Wisdom and the apprehension of men."

* See *The Hindu Pantheon*, by Edward Moor.

† 33° honorary, Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction.



—From *Mystic Masonry*, by J. D. Buck

DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE UNFOLD-
MENT OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM RELIGION

Appended to Dr. Buck's book is a diagram unfolding the descent of religions and philosophies from the Lodge of the Adepts through the Vedas. The figure is reproduced herewith and is concise and self-explanatory. The

learned doctor was convinced that from the Vedic focus descended the streams of the Eastern and Western secret doctrine. All the great schools of religious philosophy that have flourished in the Aryan world were custodians of the Light of the Veda. Each fashioned around the essence of the Veda a form or vestment either theological or philosophical. All the great revealed codes of human ethics are therefore divided within themselves into a higher part which perpetuates the Adept tradition, and a lower part which veils the real intent and interprets the teaching on the levels of morality and social utility. In the diagram, the motion of the Veda, in terms of history, shows how the mingling of Platonism and the doctrine of the Essenes resulted in the formation of esoteric Christianity. Unable to survive as a moral code alone, early church Christianity formed a secondary alliance with Platonism and Esseneism through the ante-Nicaean Fathers to emerge in its surviving form as the Christianity of Constantine.

In his Synchronological Chart of the Religions of the World, issued in connection with his *Rivers of Life*, Major-General Furlong traced the Indian religions from their worship of generation, and was of the opinion that the emergence took place approximately 9000 B. C. In his comments, the General noted that he was attempting a synthetic arrangement which would reveal the mingling of streams of belief and that the dating was highly speculative. He suggested the period around 2300 B. C. as the probable date for the *Rig-Veda* and the rise of the doctrine of Avatars. He placed the codification of the Vedas at the end of the old Vedic period as about 1800 B. C. At this time also, he marked the rise of the mantra era, the organization of moral, social, and ecclesiastical laws, and the compilation of the *Yajur-Veda* and the *Sama-Veda*. The first intimation of Meru, or the Mountain of God, Furlong placed one hundred years later, coinciding with the date of the founding of Athens. He put the code of Manu around 900 B. C. in the same century with the phi-

losophy of Kapila. The *Yaska-Veda* (the fifth Veda?) he assigned to the period during which Buddha and Confucius flourished and slightly before the birth of Pythagoras. Following General Furlong's intention to give a survey of this complex situation, his digest is included herewith. That his findings are highly controversial is taken for granted.

In the Mahabharata, Vyasa, described as the arranger of the Vedas, is represented as a dark, ugly dwarf. His eldest son, Dhritarashtra, is the blind king of this great epic. The symbolism may suggest that Vyasa is remembered only as a shadowy person deformed and distorted by conflicting legends. Horace Wilson, an outstanding authority on the sacred writings of the Hindus, considered it probable that the Vedas were finally collected and arranged by a school or schools of learned Brahmans, of which Vyasa was the nominal head. The sage may have been a personification of this assembly of scholars, or they may have regarded him as the power or principle motivating their program of compilation and arrangement.*

Professor Max Mueller concluded that if Vyasa collected not only the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, the *Vyasa Sutras*, and even prepared a prose commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the work ascribed to him must have been accomplished by several persons or should be assigned to a literary period rather than to one man. Extending his concept, this famous Orientalist continues: "We must learn to look on Badarayana, Gaimini, Kapila, and similar names, as simply eponymous heroes of different philosophies, so that at whatever time these systems were reduced to the form of Sutras, certain opinions could be called by their name."†

Perhaps the professor spoke better than he knew when he suggested that the reputed authors of certain Indian

Scriptures could be identified only as names and intellectual powers. Among the Egyptians, the mysterious Hermes was credited with the authorship of an extensive literature certainly not the work of one man. In sober fact, Hermes was wisdom, which is the true and eternal scribe. Later, certain philosophers carried the name, but it merely implied that they were peculiarly overshadowed by the divine mind. The Vyasas belonged to the same esoteric system of personifying the attributes of the universal intellect. So do other shadowy teachers who cannot be traced historically or established chronologically in the descent of races and nations.

The Mahabharata has been called the national saga of India. Although it occupies a place in Hindu literature similar to that of the *Iliad* among the Grecians, it is a far more important writing. A great part belongs to the class of Scriptures and it enshrines the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Hindu *Book of Psalms*. The Mahabharata unfolds as its principal theme the battle between two families of cousins, the sons of Pandu and the sons of Dhritarashtra. These great clans are called the Pandavas and the Kauravas. In the end, the sons of Pandu conquer, and Dhritarashtra, left childless by the war, decides to retire with his queen, Gandhari, to a place beside the Ganges, there to live out their remaining years in piety and prayer.

The Ashramavasika Parva of the great epic describes the arrival of the old blind king at the hermitage of Vyasa. Here Dhritarashtra was initiated into the ways of the forest hermits and was instructed by great sages according to the commands of Vyasa. Well-pleased with the sincerity of the old king, the foremost of the ascetics renowned for their austerity visited him. Among those who came was the "island-born" Vyasa, with all his disciples and other persons gifted with great wisdom, and even the royal sage, Shatayupa, of advanced years and possessed of great merit.

The celebrated ascetic, Narada, prophesied that Dhritarashtra would live for three years, and after that, accom-

* See *Works*.

† See *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*.

panied by his wife, Gandhari, would go to the regions of Kubera, where he would be highly honored by the "King of Kings." He would go there in a car (vehicle) moving at his will, his body adorned with celestial ornaments. Gifted with a righteous soul, he would roam at will through the regions of the celestials.

Narada is included among the Prajapatis and is often referred to as a Rishi. According to tradition, he was the favorite son of the deity Sarasvati, goddess of wisdom and music. From his divine mother the sage inherited extraordinary skill in all the arts, and was renowned for his ability to play the vina. He is usually depicted as gay and mischievous. He traveled constantly, and there were no mysteries in the three worlds which his curiosity did not solve. He had many of the attributes of the Greek Hermes, and was employed by the gods to carry their messages to all parts of the universe. He was intimately associated with Krishna, with whom, on one occasion, he became involved in a competition of musical skill. Narada, however, did not win against the embodiment of cosmic harmony. Narada occurs in the old legends as a great orator and expounder of the subtleties of the esoteric doctrine.

Later, Yudhishtira, who had taken the kingdom of the Kauravas, visited Dhritarashtra in his hermitage. The victor saluted the vanquished, and was invited to seat himself. On this occasion, Vyasa, surrounded by disciples, appeared to the new ruler. The illustrious Vyasa then took an excellent seat made of kusha grass, placed upon a black deerskin and covered with a piece of silken cloth. Vyasa inquired as to the spiritual accomplishments of Dhritarashtra, and Queen Gandhari told him that her blind and aged husband still grieved deeply for the hundred sons he had lost on the field of Kurukshetra. The wives of these sons also mourned their dead, as did all whose loved ones had perished in the war.

It was then that Vyasa said: "Blessed be you, O Gandhari, you shall see your sons and brothers and friends and kinsmen along with your sires this night like men driven from sleep." Upon the instruction of Vyasa, the assembly moved to the banks of the Ganga (Ganges) where they spent the day performing the sacred rites. When night came, the ascetic Vyasa, possessing wonderful spiritual energy, bathed in the sacred waters of the river, and summoned those who had fought on the side of the Pandavas and those who had battled for the Kauravas, including the blessed kings of the various kingdoms. There was a great sound from the waters, and the kings, headed by Bhishma and Drona, with all their armies, rose by the thousands from the waters of the Ganges. All were dressed in celestial vestments and wore brilliant earrings. They were free from all animosity and pride and divested of anger and jealousy. Celestial musicians sang their praises and bards chanted their deeds. Wearing garlands of heavenly flowers, the heroes were waited upon by bands of Apsaras. Vyasa, through the power of his penances and austerities, gave celestial vision to the blind king, Dhritarashtra, and for the first time the aged man saw his sons. All the sorrows of war had passed; the cousins embraced each other, and all disagreements were reconciled. The spectacle lasted for the entire night, and then the vast assembly, with all its chariots and animals, returned to the river.

There is a report that Vyasa, retiring from the world, remained, however, as an immortal-mortal, and still "resides" at Badarikasrama. This is the name of one of the maths, or holy houses, established by Sankaracharya. It is located at Kedarnath in the Himalayas. It was there that Sankaracharya died at the early age of thirty-two. There is still a temple at this spot served by a Nambutiri Brahman. Sankaracharya established four important maths, one at each of the cardinal points of the compass. Is it to be understood that Vyasa (the arranging mind)

took up his secret habitation in the system of philosophical interpretation founded by Sankaracharya?

When the organization of the Aryan race, under the direction of Vaivasvata Manu, supplied a cultural vehicle sufficiently integrated and refined to meet the requirements, the Mystery Religion "incarnated" in the system of rites and observances which then directed the conduct of the Aryans. By this occurrence, the Veda, or the Imperishable Doctrine, itself nameless, was revealed as the Vedas. The Vyasas were a descent of sages who became the good shepherds or guardians of the Vedas. Through them, the high truths of religion were gradually released by means of a series of editings and revisions. Slowly, the errors which resulted from the mixtures of Dravidian and Aryan traditions were corrected. As the racial vehicle improved, the Vyasas supplied the keys which unlocked the secret symbolism of the ancient writings. In this way the race received its philosophical heritage.

Whenever a fuller revelation of the Vedas was necessary, it was given through one of the prepared instruments of the divine mind. Any sage or saint through whom the teaching was released became by that circumstance alone a Vyasa. The great religious reformers of the West, such as Luther, Wycliffe, and Calvin, would be considered Vyasas according to the Eastern system. All reforms are a kind of re-editing or rearrangement of previous doctrines. The human mind, as it unfolds, inevitably requires that its religions sustain and justify mental growth. Periodically, therefore, old interpretations which have lost their utility are discarded, and the basic teaching is restated in contemporary terms. This may occur through a series of religious councils, but more frequently it is brought about by the rise of an individual who bestows the incentive for a fuller statement of personal faith. The Hindus, observing this orderly process in Nature, were convinced that the events themselves were related. The great stream of the Vedas had its Vyasas who appeared when the need arose, and the

various sects which appeared as the result of the general reformations also had their Vyasas. Reforms are, in turn, reformed; restatements are themselves restated. In this way religions grow and bear their fruit in proper season. The fruit releases its seed which, falling into the receptivity of human nature, is quickened and grows to become new faiths. The story of the Vyasas explains the secret machinery behind the motions of religion.

Vaivasvata Manu

When the time came for the human race to emerge in fulfillment of the divine realization, the "Pervader" accepted upon himself the mood of the thinker. He thus became the mental embodiment of himself and existed as divine power in the quality of mind. By this act the "Pervader," in the terms of the human project, became the first Manu, Svayambhuva, whose name means *the son of the self-existent*. In this system of religious philosophy, the first Manu is the collective intellect of the entire human life-wave. He is the complete man equivalent to the Gnostic Anthropos and the cabalistic Adam. The incarnation of Manu Svayambhuva is accomplished by the sequential embodiments of the seven powers, or principles, latent in the primordial mental essence. Humanity becomes the body of the Manu, and human minds together constitute his mind. The procedure by which the mind of the Manu is unfolded, like the opening petals of the lotus, is through the emergence of six races from the father-mother race.

Each of the races releases into manifestation one of the septenary potentials of the mind of the Manu. These potentials are also personified, and from Svayambhuva appear in order five other Manus and then the seventh. Each represents a mental entirety focused in a mental entity. The Manus incarnate in the races, which not only become their bodies, but also perfect objectively the institutions

through which the higher energies of the Manus labor for their own release. The first race never dies, but as the child disappears in the man, the infant humanity expands through a series of appearances, achieving the likeness of



—From *Qabbalah*, by Myer

HINDU SYMBOL OF THE FOUR WORLDS

The fourfold creation is shown taking place within the spiritual body of Brahma

maturity and, ultimately, of old age. The Manu of the fifth great race, the Aryan, is the mind of that race, its collective genius as well as its individual potential. The great being who ensouls the race and bears it out of himself on the plane of mind is called, in the ancient writings, Vaivasvatu Manu. He is the son of Vivasvat, or the son of the sun.

At a remote time, difficult if not impossible to establish historically to the satisfaction of Western thinkers, a great leader arose among or appeared to a comparatively insignificant racial nucleus, and bestowed the cultural impetus which gradually extended itself throughout the Indian con-

continent and, by the process of migration, came to dominate the world. The life of the historical patriarch is too remote to be examined, and he has been elevated by the Hindus to the estate of a semimythical hero descended directly from the god Brahma. Under the name of Vaivasvata Manu, the father of the Aryas, this ancient leader is venerated as the giver of laws and the revealer of the esoteric tradition. *The Institutes** which he promulgated have spread throughout human society and have become the basic pattern of Aryan ethics.

The laws of the Manu, according to Eastern thinking, were revealed to direct the unfoldment of the fifth root race, which was born within the great circle of Himavat and is now referred to as the Aryan distribution of peoples. Vaivasvata Manu was the "seed father," and the five branches of the Aryas, which have so far appeared, are descended from him through each other. The Manu's life-mind-principle is diffused throughout his race, which has thus become the enlarging embodiment of himself. The Manu was the agent of the Supreme Deity, and, in the terminology of the Scriptures, when the Eternal One desired to enter or assume the form of the fifth racial outpouring he selected the highest Adept of the previous racial group as his instrument. The fourteen Manus are the potentials of Brahma in terms of the mental principle of races. A race, therefore, is the incarnation of a quality of the divine mind. This quality not only distinguishes one race from another, but also has locked within it the destiny of the creatures which it engenders. The works of the Aryas are revealed through the unfolding of the mental capacities of the Aryan subraces.

In the esoteric interpretation, Vaivasvata Manu is, therefore, also the mind of the Aryas. All productions of the race are the manifestations of this mind, and it is

* Unless otherwise noted, quotations from *The Laws of Manu* are from the translation by Dr. Bühler, as contained in *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Müller.

proper to attribute to the Manu the ever-diversified intellectual accomplishments of the racial mind. The Manu is the father of the religions, philosophies, sciences, arts, and crafts which are devised, invented, or adapted through interpretation from earlier cultures by his children. The purposes of the Manu extend like tiny threads throughout the area under his dominion. Each thread is threefold like the sacred cord, for twisted together in its substance are the spiritual, intellectual, and physical energies which are to be manifested through the religions, philosophies, and sciences that emerge from the racial subjective. Thus the Manu embodies Brahma on the plane of racial development. As creator, the Manu bestows the vital impulse which brings the race into existence; as preserver, he supplies the ethical incentives which protect the racial unfoldment; as redeemer, he contains the ultimate completeness of the pattern which is locked within the racial mental potential.

The secret tradition of the Aryas reveals a universal plan administered by the Eternal Divinity through the agencies of immortal beings and mortals who have attained to the state of heroes. Through this system, the Adept tradition was first revealed. The world and its creatures are the parts of one vast political system which has its source in Brahma. Divinity itself is the priest-king and the eternal penitent who must bear the burden of his own works. The Supreme Power operates through and upon humanity by means of an Invisible Government seated in the higher dimensions of space on the summit of the earth-mountain, the fabled Meru.

The governing body of the earth is a miniature of the vast organization which lies behind the cosmic manifestation. As the sun is the visible center of a solar system and a proper symbol of centralized authority, Vaivasvata Manu is described in some of the genealogies as the son of Surya, the solar aspect of Deity. He is the sun or great light-source of the Aryas and the focus of a racial solar system.

He is accompanied by the seven Rishis, who correspond on the racial plane to the planets. These form his retinue and are also the revealers or distributors of his will. During the reign of the Manu-king, it is written that the whole human race was destroyed by a flood except the princely Adept himself, the Seven Rishis, and their wives. At that time a general pralaya, or cessation of the objective universe, occurred. The story is set forth in the eighth book of the *Bhagavata Purana*. The circumstances are as follows:

A demon named Hayagriva, having stolen the Veda (the eternal doctrine) from the custody of Brahma while he was resting at the close of the sixth Manvantara (period of the sixth Manu), the whole race of men became corrupt except Vaivasvata and the seven Rishis, who then reigned in Dravira. In this emergency, the god Vishnu appeared in the shape of a small fish. In so doing, the Lord fulfilled his eternal promise, for he says in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "When virtue fails upon the earth, then I come forth." Vishnu in his fish Avatar increased in size by being transferred to increasingly larger bodies of water. At last Satyvata (the name of the king of Dravira before he was appointed the Manu and received the mystery name, Vaivasvata) placed the fish in the ocean, where it gained huge proportions. The Avatar then turned and addressed the faithful prince in these words: "In seven days all creatures who have offended shall be destroyed by a deluge, but thou shalt be secure in a capacious vessel miraculously formed. Take, therefore, all kinds of medicinal herbs and esculent grain for food and together with the seven holy men, your respective wives, and pairs of all animals enter the ark without fear. Then shalt thou know God face to face and all thy questions shalt be answered."

Having said this, Vishnu, in the form of the fish, disappeared. After seven days the oceans began to overflow the coast lines, and the earth was flooded by constant showers. Then Satyvata, meditating on the substance of

Deity, saw a large vessel moving on the waters. He entered it, having in all respects conformed to the instructions of Vishnu, who then reappeared in the form of the great fish, and suffered the vessel to be tied with a sea ser-



—From Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*

THE FIRST AND SECOND INCARNATIONS OF VISHNU

In the Matsya avatar, Vishnu, represented rising from the body of a fish, destroys Hayagriva and restores the Veda. In the second, or Kurma avatar, the deity takes the form of a tortoise and supports upon his shell the sacred mountain Madara.

pent as a cable to his huge form. When the deluge had ceased and the waters had subsided, Vishnu slew the demon Hayagriva, recovered the Veda, instructed Satyvata in the divine knowledge, and appointed him the seventh Manu, bestowing upon the prince the title-name, Vaivasvata.

Early commentators have been impressed by the parallels between the deluge of the seventh Manu and that asso-

ciated with the Biblical patriarch, Noah. After the deluge, Satyvata, then the Manu, is supposed to have had ten sons, of whom the eldest was Ikshvaku. The Manu also had a daughter, Ila. The progeny of Manu was divided into two great branches: the children of the sun through Ikshvaku, and the children of the moon through Ila. It is said that this Ila married the first Buddha (Mercury), the son of Chandra (the moon). The seven Rishis, although their wives are mentioned, are not listed as progenitors of human families.

Manu is named in the *Rig-Veda* together with other sages of remote antiquity. He is spoken of as the father of a family, and one legend concerning him opens with the bringing of water so that he could wash his hands. He was the inventor of sacrificial rites and the author of the legal code. He was a ruler of men and a Rishi, through whom sacred texts were revealed. He is described as a king and the ancestor of kings and there is a reference to his coronation. The *Rig Veda* contains many passages which speak of the sacrifices made by Manu and of his having kindled the sacred fire and invoked the gods to accept the offerings of the sages. He is said to have invented the funereal sacrifices. He befriended mankind by revealing to humanity the ceremony (esoteric disciplines) practiced by the gods. He is credited with the revelation of mantras. There is also the statement: "All Manu said is medicine." Others have carried the same name which is familiar in the legal descent.

The Laws of Manu, attributed to this ancient legislator, have largely influenced Hindu culture. The age of the code is doubtful, as the earlier texts have been manipulated. Sir William Jones, the first translator of the code, thought that it belonged to the Vedic Age, about 1200 B. C. Later writers supposed that it was compiled in the 4th century B. C. Professor Max Mueller and Dr. Burnell place it about the beginning of the Christian Era. The internal evidence supports the antiquity of the work. It

seems to antedate the practice of suttee, or the suicide of widows. It advises that the son should protect the widowed mother. In the code, Brahmans are called the Lords of the World. The Kshatriya, or warrior, caste is to defend them, the Vaisya caste is to collect wealth for them, and the Sudra caste is to perform menial offices. The great epics of Indian literature are unnoticed as are also many of the deities of the later pantheon; only Vedic divinities are mentioned. The caste system which later came to dominate India seems to have been derived from the *Black Yajur-Veda*, which was compiled probably before 500 B. C. In the code, metempsychosis, as a means of purification of the soul, is taught.

In *The Laws of Manu*, chapter I, verses 32-34, 36-41, the great sages approach Manu, who is seated "with a collected mind." He declares to them the sacred ordinances by first unfolding the proportions and workings of the divine plan. In answering the questions of the sages, Manu often speaks as though he were himself the ordaining power of the world. Desiring to give birth to the race of men, the Lord became half male and half female, and from his female aspect produced Viraj. Manu continues thus:

(33) "But know me, O most holy among the twice-born, to be the creator of this whole (world), whom that male, Viraj, himself produced, having performed austerities.

(34) "Then I, desiring to produce created beings, performed very difficult austerities, and (thereby) called into existence ten great sages, lords of created beings . . .

(36) "They created seven other Manus possessing great brilliancy, gods and classes of gods and great sages of measureless power . . .

(41) "Thus was this whole (creation), both the immovable and the movable, produced by those high-minded ones by means of austerities and at my command, (each being) according to (the results of) its actions."

These holy penitents (sages), by their salutary counsels and the example of their austerities, disclosed the paths of virtue and rectitude to mankind.

The Rishis

The term *Rishi*, meaning *the inspired one*, is used in early Indian literature to designate the great scholars and saints through whom the mantras or sections of the Vedas were revealed to mankind. The title was observed as a mark of esteem upon many ancient scholars, and, by extension, to certain recent and even contemporary religious leaders. Strictly speaking, the Rishis of the East are comparable to the Adepts of the Western esoteric tradition. They are human beings belonging to the present life-wave who have, by the extraordinary cultivation of their spiritual faculties and powers, become conscious instruments of the divine plan and the natural teachers of unenlightened humanity. The Rishis are said to dwell in retirement and frequently select remote places for their habitations. They have their disciples whom they instruct, and are Masters of the esoteric arts and sciences associated with their religious philosophy.

The human Rishis, for practical purposes, must not be confused with the "Rishi-Prajapati,"* *the revealers*, in whose keeping is the secret wisdom of Aryavarta, the land of the Aryas. The word *Aryan*, by which it has become customary to designate the now-dominant race of Europe, is from the Sanskrit *Arya*, meaning *the holy*. This was once the title of a Rishi who had mastered the Aryan path of salvation. The Aryans are, therefore, the sanctified or those set apart to accomplish arhatship through the disciplines revealed by the Rishis. Esoterically, the "Rishi-Prajapati" are equivalent to the Hierarchies described by St. Paul. They are superhuman beings who bring the experiences of previous cycles of evolution to earth-humanity.

* Term used by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*.

These Hierarchies are the patrons, or Elders, who overshadow the Esoteric Schools, binding the human institutions to the cosmic scheme.

It is not always clear in the Hindu writing whether the "Rishi-Prajapati," implying the Hierarchy, or the Rishis, implying the Adepts, are referred to in a particular instance. This is further complicated by the Indian philosophy which associates the human Adepts with their divine prototypes. The vast pattern unfolds through the action of the Hierarchy upon the system of Esoteric Schools formed in its likeness. The superior is forever reflected in the inferior, all things being alike in essence, but different in appearance. It should also be remembered that man himself is the incarnation of a hierarchy. When Vaivasvata Manu became the father of the Aryas, he was accompanied by the seven Rishis. This mystical septenary of illuminating powers reappears in most of the old mythological systems.

Seven rays of light surround and adorn the head of Brahma. In Northern Buddhism, these ornaments are called the Dhyani Buddhas. These are also "the seven spirits that follow their Lord" mentioned in the Egyptian funereal ritual. These spirits before the throne are the revealers, or agencies, through which Deity extends the domain of his consciousness. As the white light is broken into the seven colors when passed through a prism, so the eternal light of the Logos, first differentiated by the prismatic triad, reveals its septenary potentials. The colors bear witness to the principle of light. When this symbolism is applied to the light of wisdom, it explains the phenomenon of the Rishis. They are the seven truths born of one truth, as this is distributed through the threefold substance of the world. When the seven colors of wisdom are brought together and reunited, they become again pure light. This is the secret ritual of the Rishis, who by certain "austerities" return their colors to the purity of colorless radiance.

In the *Vishnu Purana*, book III, chapter I, the seven Rishis are listed with the following account: "These are the seven persons by whom, in the several Manwantaras, created beings have been protected. Because this whole world has been pervaded by the energy of the deity, he is entitled Vishnu, from the root *Viś* 'to enter', or 'pervade'; for all the gods, the Manus, the seven Rishis, the sons of the Manus, the Indras, the sovereigns of the gods, all are but the impersonated might of Vishnu." * Thus the seven Rishis appear in each of the Manvantaras, becoming the ancient sages or advisors. In some accounts, those of each age are descended in a direct line from the original Rishis. There is a further implication that they are the continuous re-embodiments of one great line of teachers.

It is mentioned in the old writings that when Vaivasvata Manu created his race, the seven Rishis did not establish lines of descent. They did not become the fathers of people. Madame Blavatsky intimated that the seven Rishis of the Hierarchy were really identical with the seven Prajapatis, the fathers and creators of mankind, and also with the Kumaras, the first sons (the mind-born) of Brahma, who refused to procreate and multiply.

The Kumaras were esoterically seven and exoterically four in number. Their names all signify degrees of the human intellect, for they were concerned with the development of the principle of mind, which is the distinguishing attribute of the human being. In some of the Eastern Esoteric Schools, the Kumaras are said to be the wave of egos who incarnated through the animal men in the closing cycles of the third root race. They explain, therefore, the account in Genesis, vi: 2: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." This incident is expanded in the *Book of Enoch*.

The Kumaras, or virgin egos, refused to create bodies, but waited until the evolution of form produced vehicles

* Translated by H. H. Wilson, M. A., F. R. S.

suitable for their manifestation. The Kumaras then descended and ensouled the bodies, in this way quickening the species and causing the transition from an animal condition to a truly human state. The Kumaras brought with them the Hierarchy of superhuman teachers, and through these the vast pattern of the Mystery system was revealed, and suitable institutions for its dissemination on the physical plane were established. The Rishis revealed the powers of the Kumaras in the expansion of the wisdom-aspect of the human ego. Thus the several orders are easily confused. The Kumaras are further extended in their symbolism to become Kumara, the virgin warrior, sometimes referred to as the god of war. Sanat Kumara corresponds with Michael the Archangel, the secret god of Israel. Michael is the invincible virgin combatant and appears in the legendry of many peoples as the world hero. He is the dragon slayer of folklore, and symbolizes collective humanity in its aspect of the hero soul. He is involved in all the religious mysteries in the ritual of the dying god. Each candidate re-enacts the drama of the folk hero. Thus the symbolism proves itself, and the Kumara emerges in his original meaning as the collective ego of humanity.

The wisdom religion did not unfold through the primitive structure of animal humanity. It entered the human scheme of things with the descent of the Kumaric egos. The cabala describes a heavenly university where Adam was instructed prior to his fall. This college of the immortals was the Great School which humanity, now a compound of mental powers and animal propensities, is gradually reconstructing through the enlargement and ensoulment of its cultural institutions.

The teachers who belonged to the heavenly university formed one order of Rishis, and their disciples, gathered from the human life-wave, form another. Through the process of physical embodiment, the Kumaras were deprived of their conscious wisdom. They descended into darkness, and in the long difficult process of learning to

control their animal vehicles were guarded and guided by the "fathers." These fathers, in turn selecting vehicles suitable for their purposes, overshadowed or inspired advanced types which emerged from the racial compound. These were the poet-sages who conversed with the immortals in the dawn of time and who received the instructions which were later to be organized as the Scriptural writings of mankind.

While it is not possible to examine in detail the opinions of the ancient Hindus concerning their initiated sages, the doctrine can be summarized with reasonable accuracy. There has always been in the world since the rise of an order of self-conscious life a hierarchy of Adepts. This hierarchy is composed of properly initiated priest-philosophers who serve as the "hands and feet" of the Adept-king. The organization of the hierarchy is analogous to that of the cosmos itself, and through its initiates the Great School is distributed throughout human society like an arterial system. The primary function of the Adept-teachers is to initiate humanity into those sublime mysteries by which the corporeal man, cleansed of bodily limitations, may ascend to reunion with his own divine nature. This note is sounded in the closing lines of the *Golden Verses* attributed to Pythagoras.

This release is possible through the mastery of the seven esoteric arts and sciences, the keys to which were reported to be in the keeping of the King Brahman. Like the Egyptian hierophant who carried the "keys of the kingdom," the Hindu sage is the custodian of the seven interpretations by which the great Scriptures can be unlocked. The attainment of adeptship is possible as an inalienable birthright to all human beings. The path of discipleship leads through the wise to wisdom itself. The truth seeker is first the disciple of some learned man, who may be himself in one of the lower grades of the hierarchy. As the student's abilities increase, he is advanced, and the cultivation of his spiritual faculties properly guided. As the body

passes from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, and from youth to maturity, so the invisible internal man must be matured by the laws of God and in obedience to the laws of Nature. The grades of discipleship represent degrees of spiritual maturity. When the internal self has been properly and sufficiently enlightened, the disciple is ready for formal initiation into the Great School. As a disciple, he sees through a glass darkly; as an initiate, he sees face to face.

The symbolical initiatory system of the State Mysteries of antiquity set forth the machinery of the initiation process. The novice is tested as to character and temperament; the disciple is examined for ability and capacity. If he possesses the proper requisites, his abilities are cultivated and intensified. If he lacks the proper qualifications, he is advised to return to society and further prepare himself. The ritualistic dramas unfold the mystery of the hero soul and are consummated by the resurrection of the dead. The new initiate is told that he is the personification of a great process constantly unfolding about him and within him. Having been initiated, he is entitled to be called "twice-born." He is then one of the philosophic race, symbolized in India by the Brahman—the twice-born man.

As an initiate, he has certain privileges and limitations. He may continue striving for adeptship. If he attains this, he passes from honorary membership in the hierarchy to active membership. Several choices are then open to him. These are paths of service, and his future career is determined by the choice which he makes. The mystic experiences the fact of the esoteric tradition in his heart; the initiate discovers it with his mind. The Adept alone, however, stands in the midst of the mystery, identified with it and utterly dedicated to its release through his own perfected organism. In the several schools of Indian philosophy, the particulars are differently interpreted. All, however, acknowledge the Light of the Vedas and the

Hierarchy of Rishis which administers the distribution of the esoteric tradition.

It is not purposeful to extend this outline to the various specific opinions as to the distribution of the Esoteric Schools at the present time, their locations, or the identities of their Masters and disciples. About such matters there is endless controversy, and numerous sects advance dubious evidence to support their own pretensions. The truth seeker must learn discrimination, and this is gained, not by depending upon the advice of others, but by the development of judgment. Suffice it to say that the Hermetic axiom, "When the disciple is ready, the Master is there," remains effective. The great Aryan Adepts have revealed to the race all the wisdom that is necessary to bring the earnest soul to the feet of the Master. It is not lack of knowledge, but the failure of dedication and the unwillingness of the human being to perform patiently the disciples of self-improvement that prevent the profane from reaching the steps of the sanctuary.

The Rishis are the Adepts of long ago. Dr. Buck calls them the "really Sublime and Perfect Masters." Thus, in the terms of Freemasonry, he acknowledged them as the ancient and wonderful lights of the Great Lodge. It is said that these sage-saints did not die, but, having completed their work for a given time, they retired into the "forests" to remain as meditating ascetics until the Lord calls them, to further work. There is a legend that they will remain until the coming of the next Avatar, then they will rise and meet him and assemble about him, and in the depths of valleys or on the tops of mountains they will tile their Lodge. These Rishis are dedicated to remain with humanity and to guard the race during those intervals in which the Great One is in meditation. They are his servants and they keep his house for him until he shall return. Then he will bless them and say to them: "Well done, good and faithful servants."

The Adept hierarchy, with its magnificent unfoldment, was adapted to Buddhism, and from the Buddhist writings can be gained a clearer exposition of the Doctrine. This will be discussed in the section devoted to the descent of the Adept tradition through Buddhism. The Invisible Government of the World, with its Adept-king and its circles of Adepts, initiates, and disciples, supplies the ethical keynote to the Eastern way of life. To the Hindu mystic, there are no accidents in Nature. Life is unfolding according to a magnificent program. The high destiny of humanity is inevitable; disasters and tragedies belong to the world of appearances. The indestructible self within each human being is eternally growing, and the vicissitudes of mortal existence are like the trials of the Mysteries, tests of courage and integrity. Nothing that is real can be destroyed; nothing that is unreal can be preserved. Beyond what seems to be injustice there is a power of right ever victorious. There can be no doubts about Providence, no fear of the future, no vain regrets for the past. The Invisible Government guards and guides, and its way is certain. Between the unseen causes difficult to understand and the visible effects equally difficult to understand is the great revelation of the Vedas. Between gods and men are the bright shining Rishis, the teachers and the messengers of the Adept-king. They are the witnesses of the faith which is a fact. So noble a doctrine, so enlightened a conviction must bear a wonderful fruit. Those who have accepted it in their hearts and have found it reasonable in their minds can face the eternities to come with a good hope.

Mount Meru

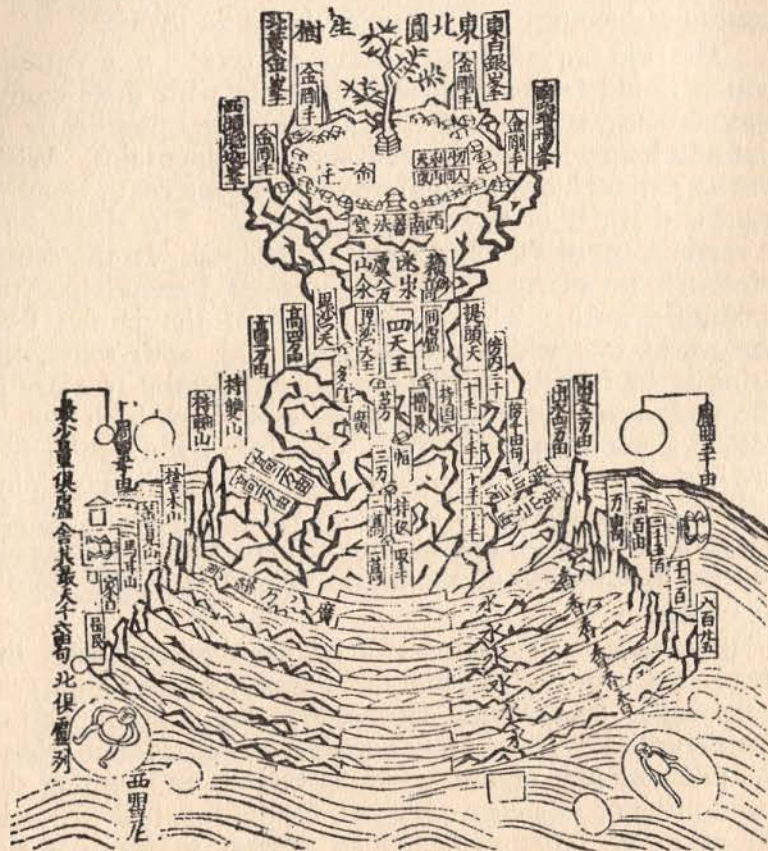
Brahmanism, philosophically and religiously reformed by Buddha and his Arhats, was distributed throughout the vast continent of Asia and adjacent regions. Although Mount Meru, or Su-Meru, is not mentioned in the *Rig-Veda*, there is a brief reference in the *Ramayana* implying

that the theme would be familiar to the reader. The subject is unfolded at considerable length by the sage Parasara in the second chapter of the *Vishnu Purana*. The Puranic literature in general supplies the details of the world-mountain concept, and the numerous sects which inherited the traditions have improvised upon the basic theme.

The old Aryans, attempting to create a geography which would be in physical conformity with their cosmic speculations, represented the earth diagrammatically as flat and bounded by a circular chain of mountains. Within the mountainous circumference were alternate zones of land and water arranged concentrically. The description is reminiscent of Plato's account of Atlantis. In the center of the zones of mountains and seas is Jambudvipa, the habitable earth. This is the island of the jambu tree, the world tree which provided the gods with soma, the drink of immortality. The roots of the jambu tree are in the underworld of Yama, and its crest is so high that it casts a shadow on the moon. The tips of the jambu tree are in the heaven of the gods, and its trunk is the sustaining axis of the universe. The concept can be traced in the Avestan "tree of all seeds," and the symbolism appears in Europe in the form of Yggdrasil, the world ash of Nordic mythology.

Jambudvipa is shaped like an open lotus flower, the petals representing the habitable continents, and its center rising in an immense convexity to supply the abode of the divinities. The Puranas describe how Mount Meru, the pillar or axis of the world, sustaining and uniting the three parts of existence—heaven, earth, and hell—rises in the midst of Jambudvipa. The summit of Meru is the celestial earth in the form of a circular plateau, in turn surrounded by hills. Above Meru, sphere after sphere ascends, expanding in spiritual significance and forming a celestial counterpart of the terrestrial world which is unfolded below. On the summit of Meru is the city of Brahma, and, like filaments from the root of the lotus, numerous

須彌山圖



—From *Tenmon Zukai*, by Iguchi Johan

17th-CENTURY JAPANESE WOODCUT OF THE UNIVERSE MOUNTAIN

mountains project from its face. John O'Neill suggests that Meru means *central* or *essential*, like the Latin *medius* and the old Irish *medon*. There also seems to be the implication of a spear, probably meaning an axis. He be-

lieves the root *Brahm* means *to whirl*, and suggests that Yggdrasil has the same implication. In the Kalevala, the great epic of Finland, the branches of the universe oak shut out the light from the north. The myth of Jack and the beanstalk, especially the Russian version, is a form of the world-tree concept.*

There is a Mount Meru in each of the universal systems included within the cosmic scheme. As early as 1808, J. D. Patterson, in *The Asiatick Researches*, placed Meru at the North Pole, and Lenormant agreed with Renan that the concept also appeared in the Greek myth of Meropis. In Japanese Buddhism, Meru occurs as Shumi or Someiro, both equivalent to Su-Meru; that is, the center of the universe. This is the same as the Mount Alburz of the Parris. Meru is compared to a bell-shaped *dhatūra* (fruit), which is sweet to taste and produces slumber, and to a lotus, the gem of Jambudvipa, or region of the golden apple tree of life, placed also in the center of the "Jewel India."†

The sage Parasara described the world mountain at considerable length. His account is substantially as follows: Within the circle of the Brahma egg revolve the planets. Quite in the middle of the egg, the earth globe is supported by ether and bears the supreme might of Brahma, which is of the nature of self-supporting force. Within the earth are seven cavities, the abodes of serpents and demons. The mountain of gold, Meru, passes through the middle of the earth globe and protrudes on either side. At its upper end are stationed, along with Indra, the gods and the sages. At its lower end in like manner is the habitation of demons. Surrounding the axis mountain on every side is a great ocean, like a girdle about the earth dividing the hemispheres of the gods and the demons. On all sides of Meru are distributed the islands or continents, spread out like the petals of an inverted lotus. In both directions from

* See *The Night of the Gods*.

† See *Faiths of Man*, by Major-General J. G. R. Furlong.

Meru are two Pole stars fixed in the midst of the sky. The caves under Meru are the potalas, and in these mysterious regions the lovely daughters of Daityas and Danavas wander about fascinating even the most austere. Below the seven potalas is the form of Vishnu, proceeding from the quality of darkness which is called Shesha. This is the great serpent with a thousand heads, each marked with the mystic sign of the swastika. It is on this serpent that Vishnu sleeps during the intervals of creation and upon whose numerous heads the world is supported.

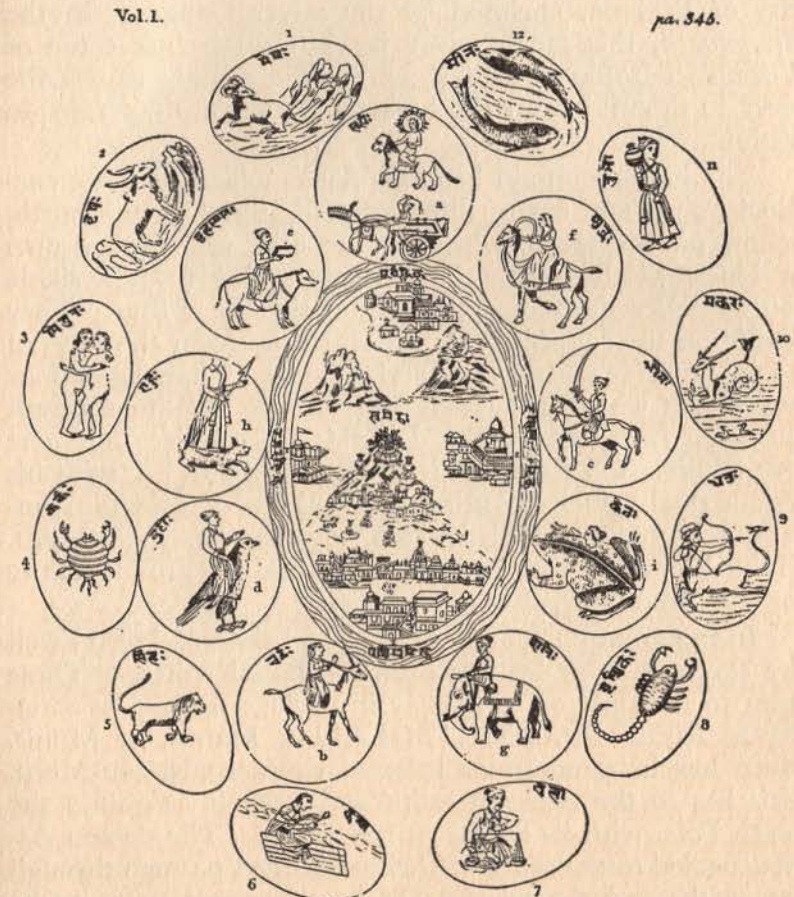
It is obvious from the Indian literature that Meru is located at the Pole, for it is definitely stated that at Meru the degrees of latitude are all one. The caves under the mountains refer to the seven bodies of the planetary globes. Beneath the potalas are the divisions of Naraka, the twenty-one parts of hell. The sun illumines all parts of the surface of Jambudvipa except the summit of Meru. The sun travels around the world keeping Meru always on its right side; therefore it is night beyond Meru when it is day in the southern regions. In *The Asiatick Researches** is reproduced a Hindu zodiac. The outer circle shows the zodiacal signs; the second circle, the planets and nodes, which are marked with letters *h* and *i*. In the center is the earth surrounded by the great sea. Within this rises Mount Meru, capped with the radiant court of Brahma. This is approximately the accepted arrangement of the Hindu cosmogony, and is obviously inspired by the form of the lotus. The six seated figures on the sides of Meru may be Rishis in meditation.

There are several detailed descriptions of Mount Meru, but these differ, and one will serve to indicate the trend of the symbolism. The height of Meru is eighty-four thousand yojans. † The summit of the mountain is greater in diameter than its base, so that it is like the seed cup of the

* (London, 1801, Vol. 2, p. 303) See, also, *The Works of Sir William Jones*.

† *Yojan*—Hindu measurement of distance, approximately five miles.

ORIENTAL ZODIACK.



—From *The Works of Sir William Jones*

HINDU ZODIAC

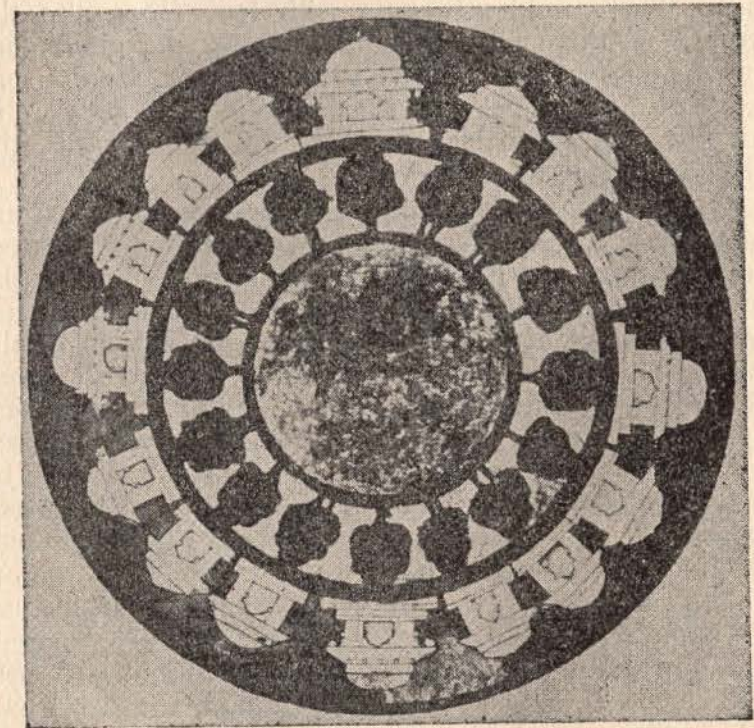
The planets and constellations are grouped about the earth which is surrounded by an ocean. In the midst of the earth rises Meru, on the crest of which is growing the Tree of Life.

lotus of the earth. Meru is divided into three peaks, upon which are situated the three sacred cities. Beneath these are the eight cities in which dwell the regents of the eight

directions of space. On the highest summit is the vast city of Brahma, enclosed by the River Ganges. In the *Bhagavata*, this sacred river flows over the great toe of Vishnu's left foot. The *Vayu Purana* merely causes the river to descend from the lunar orb and does not refer to Vishnu.

The holy mountain has four flanks which face the cardinal points and are of different colors: red on the north, yellow on the south, white on the east, and dark brown or black on the west. Four rivers spring from a single source under the foot of Vishnu at the Polar Star. They divide on the summit of Meru and issue from the jaws of a cow, an elephant, a lion, and a horse. They water four regions, in which grow four trees of life for the different species. Incidentally, the Buddhists recognize only one tree of life. On the summit of Meru lives Indra, with his female dual-principle, Indrani. On the same golden mountain, sometimes called Kailasa, dwells Siva. Su-Meru, Maha-Meru, Kalasa, Kalaya, and Suralaya are all names for the same heavenly peak.

In the great palaces on the top and sides of Meru dwell the seven gods or leaders of the celestial sphere. These seem to multiply or to appear in various degrees of sanctity as Rishis, Septarishis, Maharishis, Manus, or Munis. Meru has its pendant or infernal counterpart, Ku-Meru. This lies to the extreme south and probably signifies the South Pole, with its asuras or evil spirits. The demon Asmodeus fled to the south. Ahriman forced passage through the earth, and the wicked fell headforemost so as to be upside down in the southern hell. According to the Chaldeans, the twelve southern extra zodiacal constellations had dominion over the dead. In the Egyptian mythology, the most northern part of the earth rose till it touched heaven. At the southern extremity of the earth was another mountain where dwelt the gods of the south. These were the deities of Amenti, abiding in the inverted precinct or reversed world.



—From *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, by Kirfel

THE SUMMIT OF MT. MERU ACCORDING TO THE
COSMOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF THE JAINS

Indra, the old Hindu god of the wind and sky, is fabled to have lost for a time his kingdom to the asuras, the stars of the Southern Hemisphere, which were under the dominion of Yama, who held court in the Antarctic Circle. Indra and the suras (good spirits) governed from the Northern Hemisphere. The metropolis of Meru is the Olympus of Indra, the mountain of golden gems. Indra corresponds with the Jove of the Latins. He presides over the celestial band which is stationed on the summit of Meru. Within Meru is the self-moving chariot of the

gods. There resides Brahma with four faces, also the greatest of those who know the Vedas, the great gods and the inferior ones. There is the court of Brahma consisting of the whole earth. Thousands of great gods are in this beautiful court. There abide the Brahmarishis, the wise and wonderful teachers.

The axis tree of the world has three layers, which are called three barks. The exterior layer is Brahma; the second is Vishnu; the inner is Siva. A lotus floating on the water is the emblem of the world. The stalk originates from the navel of Vishnu sleeping at the bottom of the ocean, and the flower is the cradle of Brahma for mankind. Meru is involved in the symbolism of generation representing the male principle. The world was believed to resemble the symbolic lingam which is still venerated by the followers of Siva. The germ is, therefore, both Meru and lingam. The petals and filaments are the mountains which encircle Meru, and are also the type of the yoni.

The deity Siva is represented in Indian art in his terrestrial paradise, Kailasa, which is situated on the summit of one of the numerous peaks of the wonderful and mystical mountain, Meru. Kailas, or Kailasa, is a word possibly of Tibetan origin and is the name of a mountain in Tibet lying to the north of the sacred lake, Manasarowar. This peak rises to an altitude of nearly twenty-two thousand feet, and its shape is roughly like that of a Hindu temple with a conical summit removed. It is a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage. Since the treaty of Lhasa, western Tibet has been opened to the people of India. Both Hindus and Buddhists solemnly make this pilgrimage and march around the mountain, a journey which occupies an average of three days. Of course, the ritual is entirely symbolical, and Mount Kailasa merely represents the inaccessible Meru.

According to the Eastern esoteric tradition, Meru is located at the North Pole of the earth's auric field. It is not actually a mountain at all, but represents the intellec-

tual focus of the powers which govern and sustain the planet. Beneath Meru are the spheres of illusion, the seven layers of the earth's magnetic constitution. In the midst of these, like an island, is the physical globe with its continents. The magnetic pole of the planet is supposed to be directly beneath Meru. When in the great geological processes the polar caps of the planet solidified, they formed continental areas which gradually extended toward the equator. The first solidifications were called the Sacred Islands or the Imperishable Lands. The northern island corresponded with what is now the great region of the Gobi Desert, and here the first living things were generated. The gods abiding in the celestial overearth descended upon the polar cap, which was called the "diadem of the earth mother." The creatures which were to populate the planet evolved in the magnetic plane before the physical globe came into existence. When the planet was able to sustain physical forms, these beings descended to become the progenitors of races and species.

Mount Meru is the abode of the Hierarchy, and in its great audience palace the deities responsible for the management of the terrestrial world assemble in council, like the Olympian divinities of the old Greeks. Here also assemble the human Rishis, the great sages, who are the instruments of the World King. This concept of planetary government is reflected downward to become on earth the great school of Adepts and initiates. By analogy to the human constitution, Meru corresponds to the mind with its powers, and the earthly vehicle of the mind, which is the brain, is analogous to the formal association of Adepts which constitutes the Invisible Government of the earth. From the brain go forth the impulses which control and direct the physical body, but the source of these impulses is not the brain, but the mind which overshadows it. Meru, the planetary mind, is connected with the great solar order, or Hierarchy, through the thirty-two orders of superior beings which ascend to union with the consciousness of the

sun. As mind itself is an attribute of consciousness, an extension of it into the higher substances of the form-world, so Meru is located at the point in the constitution of a planet where the spiritual and material substances meet and form a neutral zone.

The symbolism of Hindu geography, like the Ptolemaic astronomical system, is correct on its own plane, even though it seems to violate the modern heliocentric concept of the machinery of the solar systems. It is the element or substance of earth and not the planet that is placed in the center of an auric field of the real but invisible energies. The descent of the gods from Meru is equivalent to the entry of the entity into its body at the time of incarnation. The same processes repeat themselves on all the planes of existence. Meru is important to the Adept tradition because it explains the descent of divine wisdom into the mystery of generation. The wisdom religion does not accept the belief that man generates within himself, by the mere circumstance of environment, the universal learning necessary to his own protection. As life enters form to become a person, so Universal Truth descends into that person when its organisms are sufficiently refined, and the person becomes illumined. The same procedure by which the Arhat attains identify with universal consciousness by becoming a suitable receptacle explains how the Light of the Vedas, creating first the planetary mind (Meru), flows through it, like the heavenly river, and descends in four streams to water the plains of Jambudvipa.

Meru is, therefore, the archetype of the world to come and is later associated with the Maitreya Buddha. The pattern of Meru will ultimately be impressed upon the whole social structure of mankind. As yet, however, the pattern is reflected into the Adept School, which is the nucleus or seed of Meru. As the school unfolds, like the symbolical lotus, and extends its power throughout the world, its golden heart is the Chang Shambhalla of the Northern Buddhists. This is the city of the Adepts, located

directly beneath the paradisiacal abode of the gods. In India the Council of the Adepts is held to take place in the Gobina, the remote sanctuary located in the inaccessible desert of Shamo, or Gobi. The Gobina stands upon the outcropping of azoic rock, which is the earth's oldest existing material substance. This outcropping is the Imperishable Island and is marked with the first footprints of the gods. The Gobina, then, is the earthly Meru, the center of the great systems of Mystery Schools.

Races and species unfold according to the geography of the Meru concept, and through them the World Government is being slowly but inevitably perfected. Meru is the seal, and the earth reveals the impression of that seal upon and within itself. Naturally, it is not a place, but a condition of consciousness. Even consciousness, however, has its dimensions and abode. The highly symbolical descriptions of Meru are no more remarkable than parallel accounts of the New Jerusalem. The heavenly city of Revelation, like the abode of Hindu gods, is foursquare, is watered by the river of life, lighted by the lamb (the light of God), and within it grows the tree which is for the healing of the nations. St. Augustine's city of God is Su-Meru, and the good saint's city of evil, which he called Babylon, is the Ku-Meru, or South Pole. This doctrine came from Egypt, but as the Egyptians themselves admitted, it was brought originally from India.

Aristotle emphasized the prevailing practice of personifying universal energies and forces, creating in that way pantheons of divinities. The entire concept of Meru is such a process of embodying the universal agencies, in order to interpret and associate in various patterns principles in themselves too abstract to be understandable. When St. John ascended the ladder of the planetary zones, he came to a little door in the wall of heaven. Passing through this, he found himself in the magnificent spiritual palace beyond the sky. By extending the interpretation as St. John did, Meru is not only the mountain of the Pole,

but also a celestial earth which encloses the terrestrial one. For this reason the Hindu says that the generation of the physical world took place within the womb of Meru. The planet is therefore an embryo floating in a sea of amniotic fluid and enclosed within the uterine membrane of the sky.

In Hindu astronomy the planets are all in the fetal state. Only suns have actually been born. The descriptions of the underworld below Meru, with all its caverns and passageways, refer to the physical planet earth and its etheric envelope. As the unborn child is nourished from the energies of its parents, so the unborn planet is sustained by the vitality of Meru by which it is surrounded. The Great School repeats the process on a lower plane. Its purpose is to bring embryonic humanity to birth through the womb of the Mysteries. Man is born when the spirit of wisdom within him is strong enough to give him personal contact with the source of eternal life. Until then, he is nourished by the gods through the Adepts.

Parasara

The story of the birth of the Rishi Parasara is contained in the *Adi Parva* of the Mahabharata. It extends through several chapters, beginning with 178. The father of the sage was named Saktri, the son of the Rishi Vashistha. Once there was a king named Kalmashapada. This king was a great hunter, and one day when he was in the forest he came upon Saktri, one of high soul and the eldest of the hundred sons (disciples) of the Rishi Vashistha. The king ordered the sage Saktri to stand out of his way so that he could pass along the narrow path. Saktri replied gently and in sweet words: "O great king, this is my way. This is eternal religion. The king should yield the way to the Brahmanas according to all the precepts of religion."

An argument ensued. The king demanded that his order be obeyed, and the holy man refused to yield. Finally, Kalmashapada struck the saint with his whip. Saktri,

momentarily angered by this violence against a sanctified person, cursed the king, declaring that an evil spirit should enter into Kalmashapada's body and that from that day he should be a cannibal wandering about the earth eating human flesh. In obedience to Saktri's curse, a rakshasa, named Kinkara, took up its abode within the king so that he was terribly afflicted and lost his reason. Later, tormented by the evil spirit that dwelt in his flesh, the king, wandering about, came upon Saktri in a remote place. He cried out to the holy man: "Because you have afflicted upon me this extraordinary curse, therefore, I shall commence my life of cannibalism by eating you." The demented king then killed Saktri and devoured him as a tiger eats its prey.

Later, Adhrisanti came to her father-in-law, the Rishi Vashistha, saying: "I am Adhrisanti, the wife of Saktri. I am an ascetic woman, engaged in asceticism." Adhrisanti then told the Rishi that she carried in her womb a child begotten by Saktri. The old Rishi was very glad because there was to be a child of his race, so he took the woman to his hermitage. One day Vashistha saw King Kalmashapada wandering in the solitary forest, and he approached the demented ruler and sprinkled over him water which had been sanctified by holy prayers. Then the mind of the king was restored and he saluted the Rishi, saying: "O excellent Rishi, I am your disciple. Tell me what is your desire now, and what I am to do." The Rishi told him to return to his kingdom, rule wisely, and obey the Vedas.

In the hermitage, Adhrisanti gave birth to a son, who was born a Master of the Vedas. This child believed that the Rishi Vashistha was his father, but the mother, not wishing her son to deceive himself, told the boy the entire story of Saktri's death. Thus it was that the young man, who was to be known in the world by the name of Parasara, nursed in his heart a terrible grievance against the rakshasas. When he was grown, Parasara performed mysterious incantations by which he determined to destroy

all the rakshasas. These demons belong in the same classification as the Kabiri of the Egyptians and the Titans of the Greeks.

According to legend, the early Atlantean peoples were divided into two groups: those who retained inner contact with the divine power, and those who darkened their inner vision and dedicated themselves to the advancement of their material ambitions. The rakshasas were the descendants of the latter group, and in the Hindu writings they represent a primitive, debased order of creatures that opposed the Rishis, who were teaching a more advanced and enlightened ethical code. By extension, these demons, or evil spirits, were merely the animal instincts and propensities which attempted to defeat the inspired servants of the Vedas. As a group, therefore, the rakshasas were, and are, personifications of atavism, or reversion to a more primitive type or the recurrence of that type or its characteristics in later and higher levels of culture.

Parasara sat before three blazing fires, and his own body looked like a fourth fire. In the flames were consumed countless of the evil spirits, young and old. In order to end this ceremonial of destruction, the great and liberal-minded Rishi Atri and four other sages approached Parasara, and Rishi Pulastya said: "Oh Parasara, peace is the highest virtue; therefore practice peace.... Oh son of Vashistha, what befell your father came upon him on account of his own curse. It was for his own fault that Saktri was taken to heaven. Oh Rishi, no rakshasa was capable of devouring him; he himself provided for his own death.... Give up this sacrifice. Let it come to an end."

Parasara then threw away the fires which he had kindled, and he threw them so far that they fell into a great forest on the north of the Himalayas, and there the fires may be seen to this day. It was through the favor of the wise Pulastya and the divinely learned Vashistha that Parasara, having received the enlightenment and freed his heart and mind of revenge and remorse, was given the in-

structions which made it possible for him to compose the *Vaishnava (Vishnu) Purana*, containing ten thousand stanzas. In recapitulating the succession of the narrators of part of the *Bhagavata*, the disciple Maitreya states that this first *Purana* was communicated to him by his Guru Parasara, as had been desired by Pulastya.*

The Rishi Pulastya was one of those who were called the mind-born sons of Brahma. In one account, Pulastya was derived from the ear of Brahma. It is said that the patriarch Daksha had twenty-four daughters. One of these, Priti, meaning *affection*, became the wife of Pulastya. This Rishi was the father of Visravas, who was, in turn, the father of Ravana, the king of Lanka, who occurs as the villain of the *Ramayana*. Pulastya rode in the chariot of the sun as one of the seven guardians in the month of Madhu, or Chaitra. In the third book of the *Vishnu Purana*, the Rishis of the present great cycle (Manvantara) are described as descending in a direct line from the seven mind-born sages. In this series, Dattoli was the son of Pulastya. The intent seems to be to indicate through a series of cryptic names the manifestation in each cycle of certain divine powers and attributes. The list is too complicated to be detailed here.

When it became necessary for a deity to manifest itself, it always selected one of the families of descent from the Rishis. Parasara explained the mystery to Maitreya thus: "In the Krita age, Vishnu, in the form of Kapila and other (inspired teachers), assiduous for the benefit of all creatures, imparts to them through wisdom. In the Treta age, he restrains the wicked, in the form of a universal monarch [a Chakravartin], and protects the three worlds. In the Dwapara age, in the person of Veda-vyasa, he divides the one Veda into four, and distributes it into innumerable branches; and, at the end of the Kali (or fourth age), he appears as Kalki, and re-establishes the iniquitous in the

* See *Vishnu Purana*, translated by H. H. Wilson.



—From Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*

THE KALKI, OR WHITE HORSE AVATAR OF VISHNU
Based upon a native drawing.

paths (of rectitude). In this manner the universal spirit preserves, creates, and, at last, destroys all the world.”*

The ages here mentioned are the Yugas, or four divisions of time into which each cycle is divided. In the Kali Yuga, Vishnu will appear as Kalki, the White Horse Avatar. Referring to the dialogue form of the *Vishnu Purana*, H. P. Blavatsky wrote that Parasara, the Aryan Hermes, instructed Maitreya, the Indian Asclepius. The date of Parasara is variously given, and he is said to have flourished between the 6th and 14th centuries B. C. This uncertainty may be due to the name having been applied to several persons who acted as compilers or interpreters of the *Vishnu Purana*.

The deity will reveal himself in the form of, or accompanied by, a white winged horse, adorned with wonderful trappings. The horse is represented with his left foot lifted, but when he shall set it down upon the earth, the wicked and the impious will be punished. Is not this white horse the mysterious horse of the Muses, Pegasus, which reappears as an important symbol in the 17th-century restoration of the esoteric doctrine in Europe?

The Six Systems

Professor Max Mueller, in his introduction to the studies of the schools of Indian philosophy, makes special mention of his admiration for the honesty which permeates the systems. Writing of the old sages and their doctrines, he says: “If they are idealists, even to the verge of nihilism, they say so, and if they hold that the objective world requires a real, though not necessarily a visible or tangible substratum, they are never afraid to speak out. They are *bona fide* idealists or materialists, monists or dualists, theists or atheists, because their reverence for truth is stronger than their reverence for anything else.” †

* See *Vishnu Purana*.

† See *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*.

The schools which descended from the vast structure of the Scriptures and their commentaries are called the Vedanta, the Purvamimamsa, the Sankhya, the Yoga, the Nyaya, and the Vaisesika. The term *mimamsa*, which is associated with the name of each school, means *investigation* or *a method for examining the revelations of the great teachers*. Although the six systems are not in complete accord, it is customary to consider them as essentially complementary. The Indian scholar regards these investigations as forming an evolutionary sequence, each school advancing or unfolding the grand concept. A metaphysical, religious, and philosophical instruction is peculiar to each.

The Vedic period of Indian philosophy is said to have extended from 1500 to 600 B. C. During this time the Indian systems passed through the ritualistic, theological, and spiritistic phases nearly always present at the beginning of an ethical culture. The Epic period extended from 600 B. C. to A. D. 200, and is marked by the reconstruction of the religious concept. Two important reformations belong in the Epic period: Jainism and Buddhism. In these schools, philosophical considerations took precedence and produced what has been called an idealistic materialism. The period of the six systems began about A. D. 200, and the schools originating during this period have continued to exercise a broad influence.

Each of the six systems is associated with the names, lives, and teachings of celebrated sages and saints. In most cases, historical data is meager and biographies difficult to compile, but the founders were regarded as possessing extraordinary faculties and powers. According to the definition of the word *Adept*, the illustrious men who revealed the system are entitled to be included among the initiate-teachers of the Eastern wisdom. There is a curious confusion in the use of names by which several persons have come to be extensions or manifestations of each other. As the teacher always becomes identified with his mission and

the doctrine which he promulgates, it is possible that the descent of the school is implied when the sequence of sages is mentioned.

The Vedanta system is based on the Sutras of Badarayana. Of this Master, little is known. He was referred to as a saint and is one of several ancient scholars to be identical in authority with the original work. Vedanta philosophy can be summarized in the statement: "There is nothing worth gaining, there is nothing worth enjoying, there is nothing worth knowing but Brahman alone, for he who knows Brahman is Brahman." In this usage, the term *Brahman* means *unconditioned reality*. Moksha, or salvation, is release from the tyranny of appearances, which are forever changing or passing from a present to a future state. Maya is not material illusion, but expresses relativity as distinguished from reality. Enlightenment is the acceptance, as experience, that the soul is eternally one with reality. The veil of illusion is the acceptance of that which is less than Brahman. The end of moral discipline is not the victory of right over wrong or the solution of the mystery of existence, but the experience of reality as completeness in Brahman.

The sage Gaimini is intimately associated with the rise of the Purvamimamsa as a text of personal responsibility. Though not essentially a philosophical doctrine, the Purvamimamsa unfolded into a broad system involved with the discovery of the substance of duty (*dharma*). The word *purva* means *former*, and the name of the school can be translated: *the earlier investigation*. There is no indication in this school that the world is unreal or that individual souls are merely unenlightened fragments of totality. Duty is fulfilled by a series of observances largely ritualistic and involving a variety of moral and ethical actions. Life itself is regarded as ritualistic, and every act performed by the human being produces an appropriate effect somewhere or sometime. Thus salvation comes to

be the consequence of a cause which is set in motion by the truth seeker.

In the Sankhya system, there are evidences of borrowing from the Vedanta, Yoga, and Nyaya doctrines. Growth in all its forms is a release into manifestation of latent potentials. Thus it must be implied that behind manifestation there is infinite power awaiting expression. Human souls are separate and individual, and liberation is freedom from prakriti (Nature). The Sankhya system may be summarized in the phrase "freedom through discrimination." The human being attains his true place in the universal pattern by recognizing the availability of superior qualities. He must work out his own salvation with diligence even though he is substantially indestructible. The intelligent self is a spectator and remains so until it becomes absorbed in things seen, heard, or accepted through the testimonies of senses and faculties. Prakriti is active and changeable, but purusha (self) illumines objectivity from within, and is therefore able to be the solitary witness. In practical terms, the Sankhya teaches what the Neoplatonists called "the victory of self over circumstance."

Indian tradition advances Kapila as the author of the Sankhya system. No date is available for him, but he seems to have been a historical person. As Buddhism reveals a dependence upon his teachings, he must have lived before the middle of the 6th century B. C. There are many legends about the life of Kapila, but these are confusing and contradictory. Buddhist lore connects the name of Kapila with the city of Kapilavastu in Kolasa, the birthplace of Buddha. This may be a subtle reference to the source of Buddhistic doctrine.

It is not known that any works by Kapila have survived. Those bearing his name or attributed to him seem to be of more recent data. He is remembered principally as the personification of a philosophical concept. The name of Kapila and Patanjali are associated in the descent of the Sankhya and Yoga schools of philosophy. The par-

allel existence of the systems of Kapila and Buddha gave rise to the old quotation: "If Buddha knew the law and Kapila not, what is truth? If both were omniscient, how could there be difference of opinion between the two?" Professor Mueller was not certain in his own mind that Buddha borrowed from the Sankhya philosophy. Indian scholars are inclined to differ with this eminent German Orientalist.

There is reference to the atheism of Kapila. He is supposed to have stated that there are no logical proofs to establish the existence of one God. He also taught reincarnation, and Patanjali advanced arguments against it in connection with the admission of a Supreme Being generally called Isvara, the Lord. It is clearly noted in the *Bhagavata Purana* that Kapila revived the Sankhya. This would mean that some part of the doctrine existed before his time. Such evasion of responsibility for the origination of a system of thinking is familiar throughout the Hindu religion. Everything is a revival, and sources are seldom discussed. Kapila is accepted as the founder of the Sankhya school, which was certainly based upon earlier traditions.

The Yoga system is best defined by comparison with the teachings of the Sankhya school. Patanjali is accredited with the authorship of the *Yoga Sutras*, but in this case, also, the teacher appears as the reviver and compiler. Patanjali is sometimes called Shesha the Divine Serpent. He has been assigned to the 2nd century B. C., but this would create difficulties if he actually debated with Kapila. He may or may not have been the Patanjali who was a grammarian. As this man flourished about two hundred years before the birth of Christ, this may account for the confusion. A person named Vyasa—the everpresent compiler—prepared a commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*, but this sage could scarcely have been Vedavyasa.

The original concept of Yoga was a rebellion against the tyranny of the mind. True participation in reality is achieved by suppressing mental activity and accomplishing

the state of samadhi. There are several Yogas suitable to those of various interests and inclinations. The path of discipline is fulfilled by a series of controls imposed upon objective life, bodily structure, and the emotional and mental functions. The word *yoga* actually means *union*, but not necessarily identity with any personal conception of Deity. Through the experience of samadhi, the perfect life in and of spirit is known as a transcendence of all objective processes. The Yogi attains an illumination which is essentially without qualities or attributes. The end is a suspension of consciousness in undifferentiated Being.

The Nyaya system seems to have been integrated about 150 B. C. Its basic textbook, the *Nyaya Sūtras*, was written or compiled by the saintly logician, Gotama, sometimes called Aksapada, the eye-footed; one whose eyes are directed toward his feet. This Gotama, or Gautama, should not be confused with the Buddha. The word *nyaya* means *logic*, but the system so-designated is not limited to the Western concept of the term and is unfolded as a complete philosophical system. The Nyaya recognizes four sources of true knowledge: perception, inference, analogy, and credible testimony. Of these, inference is the most important. There is much reminiscent of the categories of Aristotle in the development of the Nyaya syllogisms. Like the peripatetic system, this Eastern school avoids direct examination of God or First Cause. Deity alone is omniscient and omnipotent, and these qualities sustain the universe. God, however, is without such attributes as lead to involvement in the existence-cycle.

The validity of knowledge is not self-apparent. A fact must be established by application on the plane of action. That which does not fulfill the reasonable expectancy cannot be regarded as true. Thus the tendency to religious speculation is curbed, and nonutilitarian ideas or doctrines are passed through the sieve of discrimination. The individual is a self-motivating agent, possessing qualities which make possible the accomplishment of sufficiency. The per-

son and the body are separate entities, and the inner life is enriched by instruction. All that is invisible or beyond conclusive definition is to be known or discovered by disciplined inference. The inevitable conclusion will be correct if the processes by which it is obtained are adequate and without error. The inductive system, later unfolded in European philosophy by Francis Bacon, is an essential part of the Nyaya school.

The Vaisesika system is associated with the name of Kanada, the atom-eater. The names Kanada, Kanabhaksa, or Kanabhuj, all with the same meaning, probably refer to the atomic speculations of this sage and are nicknames. Kanada composed his principal text, the *Vaisesika Sūtras*, between the 2nd and 4th centuries A. D. It is in the cosmogony of this system that the theory of atoms is developed. The universe passes through periodic cycles of creation and destruction, or manifestation and nonmanifestation. During the Night of Brahma, or period of universal dissolution, the particles of the elements remain separate and dissociated. The re-emergence of the cosmos is the result of the union of souls and atoms. This union occurs first in the more attenuated elements, and the compounding continues until all structural forms are manifested. Dissolution is the reversal of this process. Complete annihilation is impossible, as all forms are ultimately reduced to atoms which are indestructible.

Naturally, the overconcept leads to the development of a consistent ethical concept. The souls of human beings are individual but eternal. Though separate from each other, they are diffused throughout space, but the manifestations of soul power—apprehension, feeling, and action—are limited to the bodily focus. The definition of the atom becomes also the definition of the self and is stated as "something existing, having no cause, and eternal." The keynote of the school is analysis, and its trend is toward the discovery of the particulars of the world. True individu-

ality is considered as evidence and proof of the reality of the concept of particulars.

In the words of Professor Hirayanna: "These six systems may be regarded as falling into three pairs—Nyaya-Vaisesika, Sankhya-Yoga and the two Mimamsas—as the members forming each pair agree either in their general metaphysical outlook or in their historical basis or in both."* The same author restates the important observation that it is not safe to assume that the six systems originated at the times when the schools were formalized. High antiquity is indicated by such references to "ancient seers" as occurs in the traditions of origins. Actually, the era of the Sutras, a type of religious literature unique to India, was a period of reduction to written form. Older oral teachings had been carefully preserved and perpetuated from Master to disciple. Originally held as too sacred to be publicly disseminated, the instructions were later made available by interpreters and reformers. The age of revelation followed naturally after the decline of the Brahmanic Mysteries. It was deemed advisable or necessary to broaden the intellectual life of the people. The process was almost identical with the exposition of the Orphic theology of the Greeks through the philosophical schools established by such initiate-teachers as Pythagoras and Plato.

Sir William Jones, the pioneer Orientalist, drew several interesting analogies between the six Indian systems and the schools of Greek philosophy. He likened the Vedanta to the Platonic sect, the Sankhya to the Italic, the Purvamimamsa to the Socratic, the Nyaya to the peripatetic, and the Vaisesika to the Ionic. Sir William concluded that the logician Gotama corresponded with Aristotle, Gamini with Socrates, Vyasa with Plato, Kapila with Pythagoras, Patanjali with Zeno, and Kanada with Thales. Even though the parallels are extremely general, the observations are interesting.

* See *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*.

The Bhagavad-Gita

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, or the *Song of the Lord*, is contained in chapters twenty-five to forty-two of the *Bhishma Parva* of the Mahabharata.* It is in the form of a dialogue between the hero Arjuna and the god Krishna, who manifested himself upon earth to restore righteousness. The *Song* fits so naturally into the place where it occurs that it is difficult to imagine that it could be a later interpolation. Hindu writers are therefore inclined to assign this dialogue to the 14th or 15th century B. C. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is not only the guide of the learned and thoughtful of India, but is also held with deep veneration by the masses.†

The Mahabharata is one of the great epics of Indian literature. It is believed that the nucleus of the story was derived from the struggle between two ancient clans. Although not committed to writing until about the beginning of the Christian Era, it records events which took place nearly three thousand years earlier. The Kauravas and the Pandavas were related families, whose disputes finally ended in war. The two clans, with their allies, arranged themselves on the plane of the Kurus, near the site of the modern city of Delhi. Arjuna, the famous archer and leader of the Pandavas, looking across the plain, beheld in the ranks of the hostile army many relatives and friends. He also saw courageous and honorable men sincerely convinced that their cause was just. Arjuna was appalled at the prospect of bringing suffering and death to many whom he respected and admired. Arjuna turned to Lord Krishna, who had taken human form and stood beside him as the driver of his war chariot, and received the blessed instructions.

The symbolism involved is immediately obvious. The plain of Kurukshetra is the objective or illusionary uni-

* See the Dutt translation.

† See *Hinduism, Ancient and Modern*, by Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath.



—From a native painting

ARJUNA KNEELING BEFORE KRISHNA ON THE
BATTLEFIELD OF KURUKSHETRA

verse. The five Pandava princes represent the perceptive powers of the mind. Arjuna, as the embodiment of the Pandava principle, carries the mighty bow, Gandiva. He

is the race or culture hero, the truth seeker, the objective self who contemplates the knowable. The armies spread out embody the principle of duality, by which the supreme unity is obscured. Each faction sincerely believes in the justice of its cause, but reconciliation is impossible on the plane of objectivity. It is the duty of Arjuna to use the sword of quick detachment that separates the false and true. He is unable, however, to overcome the phenomenal sphere of the not-self with its attachments and antagonisms. The armies cry for battle, for in the world of conflict minds hasten to die for their opinions.

Arjuna stands in his war chariot, and in that decisive moment his soul experiences the darkness of despair. Sri Krishna, the High-haired One, is the overself. He is the experience of the eternal, sought and found on the threshold of pain and terror. Arjuna was resolved to permit his enemies to kill him rather than to raise his arm against them. Krishna, however, rebuked the prince for his lack of insight, and reminded him of the ageless teachings of his race. It is therefore said that the *Gita* is the milk of the Vedas. In no other writing are the ancient doctrines so directly and specifically applied to a mortal dilemma. Even though Krishna is the Lord of Love, he admonishes Arjuna to advance the battle. The prince is to test his own heart, fulfill the deeds which are ordained, and without selfishness or fear serve the greater good.

The substance of Krishna's first discussion is the re-statement of noumenal truth. The wise (enlightened) grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. Krishna says that there was never a time when he did not exist nor when Arjuna himself or the princely men or the most humble soldiers had not existed. There could never be a time when any, be they gods or mortals, would cease to exist. That which dwells within the body passes through childhood, maturity, and old age in that body and passes to other bodies. It is only the obscured instrument of the senses and emotions that causes pleasure and pain or the

illusion of birth and death. All appearances come and go and none of them stay. THAT (the Eternal Being) which fills all the universe and enters into every living creature is imperishable. It is audacity to believe that the Changeless One can be destroyed or injured or its purposes defeated. Only forms and appearances have ends. The Incomprehensible Dweller which inhabits forms and appearances is eternal. He is, indeed, without perception who says: "I am slain," or "I have slain." The soul is never born and never dies, nor can it ever come to the non-existence of itself. Even as a man casts aside worn-out garments and takes others that are new, so the Dweller in the body puts off worn-out bodies and goes to others that are new.

Still Arjuna is not satisfied. How can he know the answer to the riddle of right and wrong? As he stands upon the brink of war, how can he experience in his own heart the mystery of the eternal peace? Krishna then reveals the rules of self-examination when uncertainty weakens resolution. What is the motive that impels to action? Is it love for some and hate for others that lead us into the chaos of unreasonable conduct? Do ambition, pride, envy, greed, yes, even the impulse to survive weaken resolution and make the self the servant of fiery desire? Each man must search his own heart, and by so doing apply to himself the measure of the law. There is only one deed that does not fetter the self: this is sacrifice, the generous giving of all for the common good. This is the true meaning of the sacrificial ceremonies of the *Rig-Veda*. Who gives of what he has bestows only illusion, but who gives all of himself performs the virtuous deed.

When the Creator fashioned the universe, he desired that law and order should prevail throughout all the world. He therefore first brought forth the Prajapatis, the Lords of progeny, and he revealed through them the religion of works. From the Prajapatis descended the great sages and teachers who taught the will of the Lord. In the Esoteric

Commentaries, the Prajapatis were neither gods nor supernatural beings, but advanced spirits from another planet who possessed the skill required to direct the progress of earth-humanity.

The Creator then brought forth another order of saintly beings "without desire or passion, inspired with holy wisdom, estranged from the universe and undesirous of progeny." * These, declining to create or to become fathers of peoples, remained, as the name of the first of their number implies, ever pure and innocent. The *Linga Purana* says: "Being ever as he was born, he is here called a youth; and hence his name is well known as Sanatkumara." In the *Ashiva Purana* the Kumaras (the forever youths) are always described as yogins. The *Kurma Purana*, after listing them, says: "These five, O Brahmans, were yogins, who acquired entire exemption from passion." The period of the Kumaras was pre-Adamic; that is, before the separation of the sexes and before humanity had received the creative or sacred fire as told in the Greek myth of Prometheus.

From the Kumaras came the religion of renunciation, or the path of inner holiness, for they were not directly concerned with the unfoldment of the objective world. Thus the Prajapatis stand behind the building processes of Nature, and the Kumaras sustain the redemptive aspects of consciousness. These concepts mingle to form "the twofold Vedic religion of works and renunciation that maintain order in the universe." † The doctrine which contrasts the path of works and the path of renunciation requires the periodic restatement of the internal as supreme. When in the course of ages men turned from the Vedas and corrupted their faith, the esoteric tradition was obscured. To meet this recurring emergency, the Kumaric power manifested itself through a series of divine incarnations.

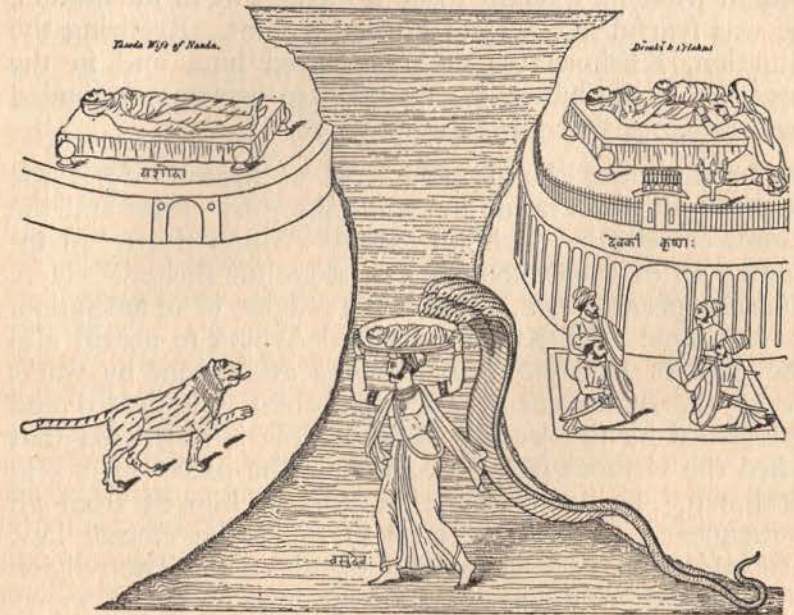
* See *Vishnu Purana*.

† See *The Bhagavad-Gita*, with the Commentary of Sri Sankaracharya, translated by A. M. Sastri.

Such embodiments of powers, substantially beyond the human state and therefore not subject to the laws of physical generation, are called Avatars. In the Hindu system, any part of the Universal Being which becomes impersonated is regarded as an incarnation of that Being. The disciple should not assume that the Supreme Deity took flesh and became mortal. Rather a ray or extension of Narayana, the creating aspect of Vishnu, fashioned by will and Yoga the semblance of a body and manifested through this vehicle for those unable to experience the Divinity by direct effort of consciousness. Certain heroes who are believed to have been chosen as instruments for the revelation of the powers of Vishnu are revered as Avatars of the god.

The legends surrounding the birth of Krishna take the traditional form which is involved in most of the great Indian epical writings. At the close of the third great age, the Dvapara Yuga, a Rajput clan, the Yadavas, had come upon evil times. The rightful king had been deposed by his son, who was in reality a rakshasa (demon) in human form. This evil ruler brought great trouble and misery to his people and neglected all the worthy pursuits. In this emergency, the earth cried out to the gods asking for purification. At the request of the other divinities, Vishnu resolved to incarnate among the Yaduvamsis, and with him came other wonderful beings, saints, sages, and celestials. The parents of the Avatar were Vasudev and Davaki. At this time, Kans, the wicked king, had a dream or vision, in the midst of which a voice spoke from the invisible world telling him that he would die at the hand of the eighth child of Davaki.

When the hour of the birth of Krishna drew near, the king placed a strong guard about the house of Vasudev, ordering that the child be slain the moment it was born. But Vishnu, to make certain that his incarnation survived, caused all the guards to fall asleep and the locks to open in the gates and doors. Vasudev then placed the infant



—From *The Hindu Pantheon*, by Moor

THE INFANT KRISHNA BEING CARRIED TO SAFETY
BY HIS FATHER

Krishna in a basket, which he carried on his head and departed from the place. In the meantime, the sages and astrologers rejoiced greatly, for they knew that the Avatar had come. The king, hearing the reports, ordered all the children to be slain, but he could not outwit the god.

There are many wonderful stories of the miracles performed by the child Krishna. After numerous adventures, he joined the Pandavas and served as Arjuna's charioteer during the great war. When at last his time came to depart from the world, he wandered alone into a forest. There seated in the shade of a great tree, he entered into a state of Yoga. As he was thus meditating, a hunter, mistaking him for a deer, fired an arrow which wounded the foot of Krishna. When the archer came closer and

beheld what he thought to be a mendicant in meditation, he was fearful lest he had injured a saint. Realizing the situation, Krishna rose and comforted him, and in the presence of the hunter he ascended to heaven surrounded by a radiance that filled the whole sky.

In the *Gita*, the supreme goal of human life is the cessation of samsara, or the transmigratory cycles and the causes of rebirth. Krishna exhorts Arjuna thus: "Abandoning all dharmas, come to Me alone for shelter." Here *dharma* means *action*. This is the religion of renunciation. At the same time, Krishna inspired Arjuna to accept also the path of Karma Yoga. This is attainment by works or by the fulfillment of all responsibilities indicated and proscribed by the Vedas. The disciple is instructed that when the virtuous performs an action he places his act in Brahman. In other words, he releases himself from all consequences by existing only to fulfill the eternal law. The end of all Yogas is moksha, or salvation. The religion of renunciation attains the supreme bliss by direct apprehension of the substance of the Kumaras.

Krishna urged Arjuna to accept the dual form of reality and to fulfill both aspects of the law. The first requirement of true devotion is obedience. The illusion must be overcome by fulfillment and not by rejection. The spiritual journey is through the illusion to the real; therefore, Krishna unfolded the principles of Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga. The end is bliss; the means, obedience. Yet Arjuna was not required to obey Krishna, for in the discourse the Avatar became merely the embodiment of the Vedas. All instruction was grounded in the sacred tradition. The hero of the Pandavas was inspired to cling to the timeless truths. All that Krishna did was to restate these principles and to inspire the hero to acknowledge them and abide by them and in them. The peculiar integrity and beauty of the *Gita* is its wonderful summary of all that is necessary to clarify the human uncertainty.

The inner experience of being in the world but not of it finally satisfied the human doubts of Arjuna. He realized that he was but one of that vast throng which populates the world. Like all the others, he must experience pain and pleasure. From the unknown he came; to the unknown he would return, and with him all the princes and warriors. He was involved in a pattern which he could not break without disturbing the intricate network of laws which hold and bind all creatures. Each human being must live out his destiny, and it is not the right or privilege of any man to go against inevitables. Strife and discord, love and hate, hope and despair, joy and sorrow—all these are included in the heritage of illusion. There is no escape through authority, for one man cannot save another. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, each combatant must face an experience; each must learn for himself that which not even the gods may teach. Pressed on by eternal conflict, mortal creatures must come, each in his own way and in his own time, to that moment "which no man knoweth." Yet whatever be the price, that moment is full payment. Who shall say where truth shall first be known?

Brahmanic Mysteries

In ancient times the caste of the Brahmans exercised unlimited authority over all the departments of Hindu life. Supported by the weight of tradition, this remarkable order of men was responsible for the development and perfection of early Indian culture. These men were a class apart, separated from non-Brahmans by the inflexible rules of the caste system. It would be a mistake, however, to accept the popular misconception that the term *Brahman* is synonymous with aristocracy. The members of this social order were not feudal princes or rich and powerful overlords. Their privilege came not from their worldly goods or their noble ancestry. They were recognized as inspired

leaders, sages, and illumined priests who devoted their lives to the mysteries of the Vedas.

Buddha defined a Brahman, not as one born into that caste, but as a noble human being dedicated to the service of truth. Confucius used the term "superior man" to identify a person living according to the highest standards of enlightenment, ethics, and morality. In the writings of Plato, a class called the Philosophic Elect was introduced and advanced as a natural aristocracy suitable for leadership in society. As a sacerdotal order, the Brahmans were the custodians of the esoteric keys of the Hindu religion. After the rise of Buddhism, the Brahman initiates opposed the Buddhist Arhats, whom they regarded as endangering the legitimate descent of the secret doctrine. This divergence of convictions caused the Buddhist teachers to leave India and establish their schools in other Asiatic countries.

In spite of popular opinion to the contrary, the deeper aspects of Brahmanical learning have not been revealed or exposed to foreigners. The one exception was Pythagoras, who became a Brahman by adoption and was initiated at Elephanta and Ellora. He was given the name Yavan-charya. His name is said still to be preserved in the records of the Brahmans as the Ionian teacher.* Even after the rise of Moslem power in India, the initiates of the Brahman temples and monastic communities elected a council of superiors or Elders, presided over by a Brahma-tma. He was a Supreme Pontiff and the sole guardian of the highest mysteries and formulas. This hierophant was always an aged man and served as the teacher and initiator of those who had earned adeptship. So strict were the obligations of these Eastern rites and so heavy the penalty for profaning them that the very existence of the system has been questioned by Occidental scholars.

All Brahmans pass through three symbolical initiations which, however, may be considered as constituting ad-

* See *Ancient Freemasonry*, by Frank C. Higgins.

mission into the caste. It is likely that these rites have descended from the tribal rituals of earlier peoples. The first initiation is given at birth, and the child receives from the family astrologer his mystery, or sacred, name. This he will never reveal under any circumstance. The second initiation occurs at the seventh year, when the boy receives the three-strand Brahmanical cord which he will wear until death. The third initiation takes place at adolescence (about the eleventh or twelfth year) when the youth is accepted into his caste with appropriate ceremonies. When he becomes a Brahman, he assumes all the obligations and responsibilities peculiar to this group. By implication, these rituals confer membership or citizenship in the Empire of the Enlightened. Thus the entire caste is one school of the Mysteries, dedicated to a code of laws more severe than those imposed upon the members of other classes.

Early in the development of Brahmanism, the Adept tradition was revealed through the legends associated with the Rishis. These are generally regarded, like the Greek heroes, as an intermediary order of human beings partaking of divine and mortal attributes. In the order of created beings, these holy sages are placed below such godlings and invisible creatures as belong to the suites of the superior divinities. Although the Rishis were mortals, they possessed superhuman wisdom and power equal to, and in some instances greater than, the gods themselves. Three orders of these wonderful persons can be distinguished in the religious literature of the Hindus. The first and highest group includes those saints who reside with the gods and serve as counselors and ministers. Next are the Brahma Rishis, venerated as the revealers of the esoteric tradition. The third circle is made up of the Rajah Rishis, those of royal or princely origin who led their tribes and nations as illumined rulers.

These sages have flourished in all the periods of the world. Some participated in the creation of the solar sys-

tem; others appeared at the time of the compilation of the Vedas and became the custodians of knowledge. A further list can be compiled of saints who inspired and led the numerous reformations and reorganizations of the Hindu doctrines in more recent times. In the Epics and Puranas, myths relating to the Rishis are more numerous than those told of the divinities. The basic concept which is unfolded through the mass of legendry is simple even though the commentaries make it appear complicated. The gods, although occasionally incarnating or manifesting themselves to their peoples, selected the Rishis as their usual agents and representatives, empowering these heroes to interpret the divine will according to the needs of mortals.

The changes which time has wrought in the form and ideology of the Indian religions are reflected in the popular regard for the Rishis. Originally, these sages were concerned principally with the rituals of the faith and were the leaders of sacrifice. As philosophy enlarged the metaphysical side of Brahmanism, the saints were viewed as great Yogis or ascetics. They were the exponents of meditation and austerity, through which disciplines they acquired and maintained their internal contact with the essence of the doctrine and perfected their superhuman powers. Even today exceptional mystics, especially those who have retired from the world, are venerated as Rishis or as high disciples of these inspired teachers.

Although Brahmanism is identified in the West with esoteric doctrines and practices, such a conclusion is not entirely true. The Adepts and initiates of the order are acknowledged by the modern Brahman, but he has had little, if any, direct contact with such exalted beings. Modern ascetic schools seek through the practices of Yoga and other mystical disciplines to prepare disciples for the conscious experience of the Hierarchy. The number of Hindus dedicated to the quest is considerable, but very few progress beyond a sincere and intense devotion to the instructions of their Gurus. Such contact with the Adepts as

do occur are internal experiences, and about such illuminations little is said and less is written. Most of the published works dealing with the subject are founded upon reports calculated to intrigue foreigners and satisfy curiosity.

Louis Jacolliot, who was for some years Chief Justice of Chandernagor (French East Indies), accumulated considerable lore relating to the theory and practice of the occult sciences in India. His summary is indicative of a serious effort to examine a most recondite subject. Unfortunately, Monsieur Jacolliot did not explain how he accumulated his data; therefore, it is presented entirely upon his own authority. He referred to the Supreme Council of the Brahmans presided over by the Brahmata, who had to have reached his eightieth year before he could hold this exalted office. The Chief Justice writes: "Residing in an immense palace, surrounded by twenty-one walls, the Brahmata showed himself to the multitude only once a year, encompassed with such pomp and pageantry that his appearance impressed the imagination of all who saw him as though they had been in the presence of a God." *

The same author added that the Brahmata wore upon his tiara two crossed keys reminiscent of the insignia of the Roman Pontiff. These keys, in the case of the Great Brahman, were supposed to unlock the sanctuary of the Temple of Asgartha, in which was preserved, engraved upon a golden triangle, the ineffable words. At the death of a Brahmata, his body was burned upon a golden tripod and his ashes secretly thrown into the Ganges. According to present belief, many temples and important shrines are now presided over by holy persons termed Brahmatas. This seems to indicate that the central system of control has retired as the result of Mohammedan and European intrusion. Jacolliot attempted to parallel the Brahmanic Mysteries with the systems of the Jewish Cabalists and the Alexandrian Neoplatonists. He was profoundly impressed

* See *Occult Science in India*.

by the occult phenomena which he saw while residing in Pondichery. Having seen the exhibitions of magic, he was inspired to examine the doctrines which made such remarkable occurrences possible. He summarized his investigation thus: "Our aim is merely to give an account of the philosophical and spiritualistic tenets of the Brahmans, as well as of the external phenomena and manifestations which are, according to them, the means whereby the Petres, or ancestral shades, demonstrate their existence and communicate with men."

It is not always wise to interpret one religio-philosophical system in the terms of another. In this case, however, it is valid to indicate the indebtedness of the Mediterranean and Aegean esoteric institutions to the Hindu system. At least traditionally, the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, and Syrians acknowledged Eastern inspiration. That which cannot be directly discovered by examining the Hindu remains can be partly reconstructed from the systems grounded in Brahmanism. Eastern philosophy reached Europe and the Near East even before the campaign of Alexander the Great. India was the motherland of world religion, and those Adepts and initiates who carried the doctrine to distant places preserved the basic structure of the original revelation.

Centuries after the death of Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana resolved to become a Pythagorean. He voluntarily accepted the disciplines of the school and attempted in everyway possible to practice the Pythagorean life. He assumed the dress of the Brotherhood and bound himself with the vow of silence for five years. Apollonius gained distinction as a sage and is included among the self-initiated disciples of the Mysteries. In order to restore, if possible, the lost Pythagorean keys to the universal science, he made a journey to India, following as closely as he could the route previously taken by Pythagoras. While it is most unlikely that this man of Tyana ever revealed what he

learned in the East, a fragment of his account has been preserved.

The third book of *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, by Philostratus the Elder, describes the journey made by Apollonius and his faithful disciple, Damis, to the region beyond the Ganges River. Here the philosopher was received by the Brahmans. According to Damis, the Indian sages dwelt on a hill which rose above the surrounding plain as high as the Acropolis at Athens. A cloud surrounded this elevation, permitting the wise men to be visible or invisible as they chose. The vapors made it difficult to discover the path that led to the retreat of the holy scholars. When Apollonius reached them, he found eighteen mysterious, learned persons governed by Iarchas, who was seated on a lofty throne of black bronze inlaid with various designs of gold. The chairs of the other sages were likewise of bronze, but not so high and without golden ornaments. Apollonius presented his credentials including letters from the Indian king. The Brahmans addressed the philosopher by name and conversed with him in Greek.

Apollonius remained with the sages about four months, and during his stay they accepted both himself and Damis into their secret rites. There were many discussions of philosophy, and when it came time for the travelers to depart, the Brahmans told Apollonius that in his own country men would believe him to be a god, not only after his death, but while still he lived. During one of their conversations, Apollonius asked Iarchas whether the number of the wise men was significant. Eighteen was not the square of any number, nor had it been held in certain dignity and honor by the Egyptians and Pythagoreans. To this question the head of the religious community made this curious answer: "We are neither slave to a number, nor is the number to us; but we Sages are counted according to our wisdom and virtue, and are more numerous at one time and fewer at another. I am told that my grandfather in his day was chosen to be one of twenty-seven Sages, of

whom he was the youngest of all; and that when he had reached his hundred and thirtieth year he was the only one left here, because none of his colleagues had survived, and no other qualified and philosophic mind existed in India. When the Egyptians congratulated him on being one of the most fortunate of men because he had occupied this throne alone for four years, he begged them to give over reproaching the Indians for the scarcity of their philosophers."

When Apollonius reached the Erythraean Sea, he returned the camels which Iarchas had loaned him for the journey home. With them, he sent this letter: "Apollonius to Iarchas and the other Sages, Greeting:

I came to you by land and you have presented me with the sea, and by sharing your wisdom with me you have enabled me to traverse the sky. Even among the Greeks I shall be mindful of these teachings, so that I will converse with you as if face to face, unless I shall have drunk from the cup of Tantalus in vain. Farewell, best of philosophers."

It is evident that Apollonius and his disciple never revealed the full account of their visit to the hill of the sages. Philostratus said that Apollonius wrote and spoke of the Brahmans enigmatically. There is a sentence twice repeated in which the philosopher summarized his experience beyond the Ganges: "I saw men dwelling on the earth and yet not on it, defended on all sides, yet without any defense, and yet possessed of nothing but what all possess." Philostratus believed that the traveler was referring to the numerous miracles and wonders which he beheld while residing among the Indian sages.

It is incorrect to assume that Brahmanism implies the worship of Brahma. Actually it means the acknowledgement of the authority of the Vedas and all that this acceptance suggests. There was a gradual drift away from the sacrificial and ritualistic aspects of the religion and toward a compound of theosophical speculations. These

are not actually Vedic, but are sustained by extensions of the older tradition. The compound of philosophical systems and mystical preoccupations is more correctly defined as Hinduism. Originally, Brahmanism included several systems of specialized philosophical and scientific knowledge. Just as the Mystery Schools of Greece and Egypt were the custodians of the secrets of medicine, architecture, statescraft, mathematics, astronomy, and music, the scholarly caste of India unfolded the essentials of a broad learning. One by one the sciences broke away from the temple system, and each recognized some ancient initiate as its peculiar patron.

It will be useful to mention a few of the rock-hewn temples associated with the Brahmanic Mysteries. They are scattered about India and are often found close to Buddhist or Jain sanctuaries. Two of the most famous are the cave temples of Ellora in the native state of Hyderabad and those on the island of Elephanta in the harbor of Bombay. There is much difficulty in determining the antiquity of these celebrated shrines. It is usual to date them between the 7th and 10th centuries of the Christian Era, but there is much to suggest a greater antiquity. It is possible that the present elaborate excavations and adornments represent more recent additions and are not the original work. There is a tradition that Pythagoras visited both Elephanta and Ellora, which were centers of Hindu culture as early as 600 B. C. The popular belief that the Brahman cave-temples were inspired by Buddhism is unreasonable. In any event, these caves unfold the essentials of ancient Hindu doctrine through their ornate symbolism. They were certainly used in rituals of initiation, and belonged to a period when these rites were still flourishing.

As opposed to the archaeological approach, there are native traditions about the Elephanta caves. According to one, they were excavated in a single night by the Pandavas, the five hero-brothers of the Mahabharata. Another version attributed them to the Kanara king, Bana-

surā, whose daughter dedicated herself to perpetual virginity and lived for many years on the island. A tradition, probably of Mohammedan origin, attributes the caves to Alexander the Great (Sikandar), whose name is associated with several works and monuments. Contrary to general opinion, the carvings at Elephanta were not mutilated by the Mohammedans and were intact in A. D. 1534 when the region passed into the hands of the Portuguese. These foreigners kept their cattle in the caverns during the rainy season, and went to considerable pains to destroy the carvings, even bringing artillery to make certain the work of demolition.

At the height of its glory, Brahmanism taught a majestic concept of universal processes. Disciplined by a profound knowledge of higher mathematics, the initiates explored many dimensions of the quantitative and qualitative universe. They held deep and learned theories about such abstractions as space, time, energy, mind, and matter. Like the members of other Esoteric Schools, they concealed their discoveries under elaborate emblems and figures. At the height of the philosophic period, the Vedic theology and the post-Vedic scientific method developed a cosmological and anthropological scheme of amazing profundity and integrity. As yet the Western world has been so lacking in appreciation and interest that it has failed to examine systematically the wisdom of the East.

Sankaracharya

The great Dravidian Guru, Sankaracharya, has been called The Adept of Adepts. He is said to have been born in Malabar, about the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century. Orientalists differ, and in spite of the firmness of their opinions it is probable that he flourished earlier than the approved date. The advent of this illustrious teacher coincided with the revival of Brahmanism after the decline of the Buddhistic reform. The Buddhists

made a valiant attempt to preach a doctrine of equality and fraternity, but their emphasis upon the responsibilities of the individual was not popular in a country long dominated by a caste system. Although much is made of the elaborate program by which the Brahmans regained their supremacy, the simple fact is that the majority of Hindus preferred to rest their spiritual destiny in the keeping of a sacerdotal class.

Sankaracharya was himself a strict Brahman and a great teacher of the Vedānta philosophy.* He defended the Advaita doctrine of nondualism against the numerous schools that had denied or ignored the unity or identity of all beings. Sankaracharya has been described as "the great revivalist preacher," but, unfortunately, Brahmanism was no longer able to justify the full confidence of thoughtful persons. A religion once displaced or superseded can never regain its original sphere of influence. Buddhism had broadened the ethical convictions of the masses, and the result of the revival was a compromise and the appearance of a new sect. The Brahmans viewed Sankaracharya as an Avatar come to restate the Vedic doctrine, and the Buddhists looked upon him as a possible re-embodiment of Gautama Buddha returning to cleanse and unfold their own teachings.

There are several accounts of the birth and childhood of Sankara. All of these include strange and miraculous occurrences. In one version the father of the sage was named Sivaguru. He was a learned Brahman, and though married for many years was childless. At an advanced age he and his wife performed special ceremonies and practiced severe austerities before the lingam of the god Siva. Later, the deity appeared to them in a dream or vision. Siva, impressed by the sincerity of the elderly couple, inquired if they would prefer to have one son endowed with exceptional wisdom and virtue but of short

* See *Hinduism*, by Monier-Williams.

life, or many sons lacking such qualities. The prospective parents decided to choose the heroic incarnation. Thus a son was born to them at the moment when the planets and constellations bestowed their most powerful influences.

Another version of the birth story follows the traditional form of the immaculate conception. Visista, the mother of the sage, worshipped before the Siva Linga in Kerala. In the form of his generative symbol, Siva overshadowed Visista, and she conceived a son. By this account, Sankara was actually descended from the deity. That symbolism is implied in both legends is apparent, for in the earlier record the father's name was Sivaguru, which means *a teacher of the Siva sect*. Sankara was, therefore, the personification or embodiment of the esoteric tradition associated with the cult of this deity. It is said that Sankara learned to read at the age of two years, and by his third birthday he was a profound student of the Puranas. He was born with strongly developed intuitive faculties and the power of internal vision. His mother had dedicated herself and her child to the service of the god, and she guided her son with reverent devotion. Sankara was equally attached to her, and several miracles which he performed were for her sake.

While still little more than an infant, Sankara attended the Vedic School and mastered the sciences of his day. He became a sannyasi, renounced the householder's life, and attached himself to the Guru Govinda, a Master whose teachers descended from the great Vyasa. The young mystic increased in fame until the reports reached the king of Kerala. This illustrious personage came with his retinue to invite Sankara to the royal court. The king also desired a son, and believed that Sankara could reveal to him the necessary ceremonies with which to propitiate the deity. The instruction given by the sannyasi on this occasion is still secretly taught.

Although the horoscope of Sankara indicated an exalted destiny, it also warned of an early death. When one

of the Rishis said that the boy would die at the age of thirty-two years, the young man was determined to devote himself entirely to the life of asceticism. He remained for some time in the hermitage of Govinda, and was ordered by his Master to make a pilgrimage to Benares. It was on this journey that Padmapada became his pupil. On the banks of the Ganges, Sankara told Padmapada to walk across the river and join him. The faithful student immediately obeyed, and wherever he set his foot upon the surface of the river a lotus flower appeared to sustain him. The name *Padmapada* means *lotus foot*.

As he journeyed about, Sankara debated and discoursed with famous teachers. Always he answered their most difficult questions and refuted their errors. It was reported that to try his learning, Vyasa himself assumed the form of an ascetic and tested the youthful sage with the most abstract and difficult inquiries. Again Sankara was victorious, for even the powers of the Rishis could not prevail against his wisdom. If Vyasa had found no way of discomfiting the young sannyasi, the goddess Sarasvati was not so easily defeated. She entered into the contest in the form of the beautiful wife of a celebrated scholar with whom Sankara was debating. She requested the privilege of examining the wisdom of Sankara, and then questioned him on the subject of mortal love. For the first and only time the sannyasi had no answer; yet how could wisdom be complete if one of life's most intimate and inevitable mysteries was not solved?

To met this emergency, Sankara called upon the secret sciences of Indian philosophy. He came upon the body of King Amaraka, who had recently died, and by the power of will caused his consciousness to enter the corpse. Amakara seemingly revived and returned to his kingdom. By this device Sankara temporarily assumed the life of the householder and experienced all family relationships. In due time King Amaraka passed again into the sleep of death, and Sankara returned to his own body

which had been guarded by his disciples. He then went back to Sarasvati and answered her question.

Soon afterwards he knew by the power of Yoga that his mother was departing from this life. He hastened to her and gave her all that he could of love and understanding. After her death he broke the rules and observances of the Indian ascetic, who is not supposed to have any contact with the deceased. Sankara cremated his mother's body by releasing from his right hand a tremendous tongue of flame. Those who stood ready to condemn him for disobeying the traditional rules were silenced by this miracle. After his duties to his mother had been completed, Sankara continued to journey about the land and came finally to the Temple of Sarada in Kashmir. Here the priests forbade him entrance and subjected him to a severe examination. But at last when they were satisfied and he stood within the sanctuary, the goddess Sarasvati testified to his holiness and the completeness of his wisdom. He then mounted the seat of omniscience in the heart of the temple. This account relates to one of the degrees of his initiation.

It was in the city of Kanchi that Sankara entered the thirty-second year of his life and knew that he had come to the end of his incarnation. By the highest science of Yoga he seated himself and caused his physical body to be absorbed into the more subtle vehicles. These, in turn, he disintegrated, attaining identity with pure reason. The pilgrimage of his consciousness continued until he experienced identity with the consciousness-intelligence which pervades the universal form. He was buried and not cremated, for so pure and holy a body did not require the purification by fire.* Anandagiri definitely states that Sankara absorbed his physical body and also that the remains of the sage were placed in a tomb. By absorption is undoubtedly meant the withdrawing of the physical prin-

* See *The Story of Oriental Philosophy*, by L. Adams Beck.

ciple of energy and not the actual disappearance of the bodily remains. The apparent contradiction is due to the obscurity of the wording.

Mme. Blavatsky, quoting from the Esoteric Commentaries, differentiated between Gautama and Buddha. After the Nirvana, Buddha returned to the universal consciousness, but Gautama, the human ego, attempted further incarnations. Blavatsky writes: "A few centuries later Buddha tried one more incarnation, it is said, in * * *, and again fifty years subsequent to the death of this Adept, in one whose name is given as Tiani-Tsang. No details, no further information or explanations are given."* The further incarnations of Buddha are listed as Sankara, who died at thirty-two, * * *, who died at thirty-three, two not named or indicated, and Tsong-Kapa, the great Lamaist reformer. Blavatsky speculates that Tiani-Tsang may be Apollonius of Tyana.

As is always the case with the stories of the Adepts, there are numerous inconsistencies in the biographies of Sankara. In spite of the reference to his death, there is the report that he retired to an ascetic's cave in the Trans-Himalayan region. He forbade his disciples and students to accompany him and disappeared forever from the sight of the profane. He is among those included in the Brotherhood of Shambhala and continues to keep his vows of service to humanity. He lives in the doctrine he taught, which can be summarized in one of his statements: "The supreme spirit is real; the world is unreal; the individual self is only the supreme self, and no other."

As a philosopher, Sankara approached one of the most difficult abstractions which can confront the mind of the truth seeker: If there exists a Supreme Being, omniscient, omnipresent, and omniactive, and therefore completely limitless, how can a creation composed entirely of limited creatures be explained? In substance, how and why does

* See *The Secret Doctrine*.

perfection produce only imperfection? Sankara solved this apparently irreconcilable conflict between noumenon and phenomenon by introducing the principle of maya, or illusion. The mind confuses subject and object, the knower and the knowable, and, by imposing the qualities of one upon the other, brings into existence both the cause of doubt and the evidence which sustains the uncertainty. The sage objectified the confusion under the terms *we* and *you*. These terms cannot be used interchangeably. It is not proper to say "we are you," or "you are we." It is also false to transfer the attributes of *we* to *you*, or vice versa. *We* or *I* exist as that which knows or as the state of knowing; it can never be that which is known. Thus *knowing* is subject, and the *known* is the object.

Schopenhauer's *Wille* and *Vorstellung* correspond to the world as subject and the world as object. In Sankara's teaching, the nature of the not-self, or object, can be determined by examination and the testimonies of the faculties and sense perceptions, but the substance of the self, or object-knower, can be discovered only by internal experience. "In conclusion," writes Max Mueller, "Sankara sums up by saying that all that is founded on this wrong transference or assumption, all in fact that we can know and believe to be true, whether in science, or ordinary philosophy, or law, or anything else, belongs to the realm of Avidya or Nescience, and that it is the aim of the Vedanta Philosophy to dispel that Nescience, and to replace it by Vidya, or true knowledge." *

It naturally followed that Sankara recognized a distinction between esoteric and exoteric learning. The secret discipline was a systematic unfoldment of consciousness toward identity with unconditioned Being. The profane schools of education were satisfied to attain an intellectual concept of the object universe. They sought to perfect wisdom by imposing unexperienced qualities, called *defini-*

* See *Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy*.

tions, upon objects and by forcing the knower to condition or restrict its own universality. Accepting the self and the not-self as one results in the greater being burdened with the attributes of the lesser, at least on the plane of mind. A man says: "I am sick," or "I am old," or "I am afraid." His very statement is untrue, for *I* is unchangeable and exists in perpetual detachment from action. It is the not-self, the exterior personality, which is subject to various misfortunes. The man should say: "My body is sick," or "My body is old," or "My mind is afraid." The moment the fact is acceptable, the path of enlightenment is revealed.

The Gurus

For thousands of years the religious disciplines of the Hindus have been in the keeping of spiritual teachers. The Indian sects venerate ancient sages and philosophers as the founders of schools and systems. The old teachings descended through the disciples of the original teachers. These disciples, in turn, gathered devout followers whom they instructed. When the disciples attained illumination, they were recognized as Masters of the sect and as the spiritual sons and heroes of the early sages. Only those who had been faithful disciples of recognized Gurus were entitled to teach the esoteric disciplines. In this way the streams of Eastern wisdom flowed down through time, and now sanctify with their living waters the modern saints of India. Occasionally, as reported in the histories of the various Orders, a Guru gained unusual distinction for his gifts and powers. He was then regarded as peculiarly overshadowed or inspired either by one of the deities or by the spirit of a celebrated ancient Rishi.

While it is probable that much of the old wisdom was lost or obscured through the long centuries of descent, it may be accepted without unreasonable doubts that the modern Gurus of India are the custodians of the wisdom

teachings of the ancient Aryas. It is usual to think of these Hindu religious philosophers merely as teachers, but this is not correct. They more closely resemble the classical Greek philosophers, who formed their schools and became fathers in learning to all their students. The Indian disciple is obligated to obey and serve only his teacher. Earthly ties are of secondary importance, but ethical and moral obligations are respected. In the older times, at least, it would have been considered sheer audacity for any truth seeker to enter upon the religious life without the guidance of a qualified Guru. The selection of a teacher might be determined by the reputation of the Master or by the natural sympathy which the student might feel for a certain venerable person. Sometimes a miraculous incident or the horoscope indicated the proper choice.

Disciples did not feel that obedience to their teacher was a difficult or odious task. Early in their courses of study they were taught that obedience strengthened and liberated the inner consciousness. It might well be that today's student would become tomorrow's teacher. No one had the right to ask obedience who had not himself learned to obey. It was the duty of the Guru to examine into the hearts and minds of his chelas. If he discovered in one traces of pride or arrogance, or in another indications of selfishness or worldliness, these negative tendencies had to be overcome. The mind that was bound to its own conceits was unfit for works of holiness. If, on the other hand, the Master noted that a certain disciple was deficient in the courage of conviction, this weakness required correction. Life with the Guru was daily contact with practical religious experience. The chelas watched and listened and benefited according to their individual capacities.

A promising student was given encouragement and special assistance. He was advanced as rapidly as his merits deserved. In some cases the disciple excelled his Master. If this occurred, the teacher was well-satisfied. Such ex-

cellence, however, did not interfere with the Master-disciple relationship. As long as he lived, the student respected his teacher, considering that lack of such reverence was an offense against truth. Often the disciple remained with the Guru until his death, and was then inspired to form a circle of his own. Sometimes, however, advanced students were required by their teachers to become instructors and were sent out into the world with the blessing and protection of the Guru.

While the term *Master* is applied generally to all recognized Gurus and saintly ascetics, there are many grades of these spiritual teachers. Some are but humble transmitters of the tradition, and others have already attained to the powers of the fabled Rishis. Among themselves, the holy men know which are the more enlightened. The Gurus venerate the great Masters of their sects, even as they themselves are honored by their disciples. Throughout India the old secrets of human regeneration are guarded by these heroic saints, who stand ever ready to sacrifice their lives, if necessary, to protect the integrity of the esoteric doctrine. Under no condition will the Gurus reveal the mysteries of the faith to any who will not accept the path of discipleship. Wisdom must be earned, and those unwilling to live the life can never know the teaching.

The system includes, therefore, the twofold approach. The Guru is both the Prajapati and the Kumara, and he is required to bestow both attributes upon his chelas. Although instruction emphasizes the unfoldment of internal powers of consciousness, there are also many practical considerations. The Guru directs the activities of his students into fields of social usefulness. If the disciple shows the necessary qualifications, he is encouraged to equip himself for a learned profession, as law or medicine. He is required to be a good citizen and to fulfill all the normal responsibilities of living. In whatever field of service he selects, usually with the Guru's assistance, he is expected to use his mystical knowledge. His standard of conduct is

guided by his religious convictions. If the chela is specially fitted to become a religious teacher, he must learn how to guide and direct persons of all classes and degrees of development.

In "The Maharashtra Saints and Their Teachings," Krishnarao Venkatesh Gajendragadkar, Professor of Philosophy, H. P. T. College, Naski, Bombay, writes of the Eastern holy men: "Saints are the citizens of the City of God. They know no limitations of time and space. They live for eternity and in eternity. Their affections are not constrained by the consideration of provinces or nations. They live and work for the good of humanity. Though they apparently speak different languages, the thoughts expressed by them are essentially the same, since the subject-matter of their thought and discourse is the same, the God-head . . . There is no monopoly or privilege in the realm of spiritual wisdom. The saints are the righteous fruits of the intellectual and moral progress of the world and are born for its enlightenment."*

As previously mentioned, Deity, at the beginning of the cycle of creation, caused the Prajapatis and Kumaras to emanate from his own being by the exercise of will and Yoga. As the Supreme Lord passed from the state of solitary self-existence, by the extension of his own consciousness, to the condition of becoming the cause and sustainer of phenomenal diversity, his objective powers awoke and were embodied as the Prajapatis. Through them he brought forth the cosmos out of chaos, and established the laws which were to govern the material universe. These laws, unfolding and descending through time and place, produced the lawgivers, the great sages, and the hero-kings. In this way the wisdom of God was manifested in the growth of the Tree of Knowledge, with its roots in Brahma. The philosophical systems cultured the mentality of those creatures endowed with mind that they might know, and

* If for the word *saint* is understood *initiated sages and mystics*, the definition is clear.

through knowledge might attain mastery over the phenomenal sphere and the materials of which it is composed.

Thus the Prajapatis were the sons of will, but simultaneously the self-existent Lord released through the experience of realization the virgin Kumaras, who were the sons of Yoga. After the Creator became aware of the diversity which he had engendered and in which, to a degree, he was submerged, he restated his own identity in the midst of his manifestations. This restatement was possible because the divine nature contains within itself the seven potencies of the experience of conscious identity. The Kumaras, therefore, became embodied in the paths which lead from the world back to participation in the universal overself. These are the ways of redemption, which begin with regeneration and end in illumination. The Kumaras were not the fathers of progeny, but remained as the seven ascetics, who simply waited to be known through spiritual apperception. Although the Kumaras had no direct offspring, they were, like the Gurus, spiritual fathers. They were chosen and accepted as the chelas choose and select their Masters. In this way they came to be known as the spirit-parents of the saints. The Prajapatis incarnated to become sages, but the Kumaras did not so incarnate; they overshadowed those who sought them and operated from the invisible plane of consciousness.

In the human evolutionary pattern, the Prajapatis therefore represented wisdom by tradition, and the Kumaras, wisdom by mystical experience. There is one law for the world, and another law for the self. These do not conflict, but should be interpreted as a polarization of the principle of law. The code for the world is to expand toward universal sovereignty through knowledge. The code for the self is to ascend through self-mastery to participation in the substance of truth. In the Guru system, the disciple is taught to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which

are God's." The proportions and dimensions of the two-fold doctrine must be recognized and accepted. Physical knowledge alone can never discover truth; spiritual knowledge alone can never fulfill the purpose for the evolutionary process. As man exhales and inhales breath in order to live, he must likewise both objectify and subjectify to fulfill his destiny.

The esoteric system in Asia emphasizes the unfoldment of those internal faculty-resources which remain, like the Kumaras, unwilling to create progeny until they can generate on their own plane. Truth as reality per se cannot be embodied or manifested on the level of material forms and institutions. Those who seek it must rise through discipline to a sympathetic state of acceptance. This hazardous journey inward and upward is concealed beneath the symbolism of the chela climbing the narrow and tortuous path that leads to the remote ashrama of his spiritual Master. Although contact with Western cultural systems has profoundly influenced Hindu thinking, no amount of Occidental materialistic conditioning has undermined the Easterner's faith in the Guru system. To quote again from Dr. Gajendragadkar:

"The aspirant must be initiated into the mysteries of spiritual life only by a master who has realized God. It is only a burning lamp that can light other lamps. Initiation forms the first step in spiritual life. In this respect the parents or other relatives are of no use; nor is God to be realized merely by strenuous independent thinking, or by mastering various sciences. Enlightenment is impossible without a *guru* (master). Sciences, contemplation and devotion and various practices are of no avail without his grace." *

The learned doctor's reference to lighting one lamp from another is reminiscent of certain Rosicrucian teachings. The passing on of the lamp means *the perpetuating*

* See *Cultural Heritage of India*.

of living truth. To such of their disciples as trim their lamps and provide the necessary fuel, the Gurus give the flame of their spiritual intensity. The teacher always objectifies or impersonates the overself, which is the *Jadad Guru*. As the disciple unfolds his spiritual resources, he advances within the mystical Orders until he is overshadowed by one of the rays of the esoteric Hierarchy. By this is meant that he releases the powers of the Kumaras which are locked within his own higher nature. He is then sanctified or sainted by his own overself and becomes the servant and disciple of the Supreme Lord. The elaborate descriptions of the Rishis, who reappear later as the Buddhist Arhats, are unlocked by this same key.

Western civilization must ultimately embrace at least the spirit of the Guru system. New forms and terms to describe the method of instruction will change the outer appearance, but the principle involved is immutable. Knowledge must be ensouled, or both the knowledge and the knower perish together. Regardless of schooling and formal instruction, the Kumaras refuse to create. Without their participation, learning is merely the accumulation of phenomenal information preserved in the memory. The lamp is there, also the wick and the oil, but there is no flame. No matter how beautiful or perfect the lamp of the mind becomes, it is useless if it cannot give light. The esoteric tradition ensouls or possesses knowledge, but can never be possessed by the mind. The Guru raises knowledge from the dead so that it becomes "the first-born of them that sleep." As the dedicated instrument of the Hierarchy, the one who is learned becomes the one who understands. The Kumaras can therefore be said to bestow understanding from within; that is, from themselves. This is a high secret of alchemy, for consciousness is the great transforming and transmuting agent.

It should not be assumed that all the Gurus of India have attained conscious union with the overself. Spiritual unfoldment is measured by degrees of enlightenment.

Some have gone far; others have traveled but a little way. Each, however, has a degree of insight and can open the door to a worthy disciple. Once the essential principles are known, the dedicated student proceeds according to his own capacities. As he advances, he becomes more internally aware of the eternal standard of values. Once the lamp is lighted, the eye of the soul abides in the light. The chela is better able to recognize and discriminate, and he experiences the Guru hierarchy. The seeker searches for that which he needs, and if his little light shines brightly, he will find what he seeks. The higher teachers can only be known and recognized by those who have developed the necessary internal perceptive powers.

The search always involves a series of acceptances. Truth is not required or demanded, but is known by a gentle receptivity disciplined by wisdom. The Prajapatis advance wisdom to its reasonable and possible end, and then the Kumaras carry on the program of inner growth. Adeptship in the East is also a term covering a wide range of spiritual accomplishment. It is applicable to those who have accomplished a synthesis of the mind-and-heart doctrine. The Adepts are not necessarily all-knowing; they are Self-knowing. They have experienced what may not be put into words. The materialist measures wisdom in the extent of things learned and remembered. The mystic measures wisdom in the terms of experience of Self. This Self is Deity in the sense of Vishnu, the Pervader. Union (Yoga) with the Pervader as universal consciousness is the fullness of wisdom; it is the personal experience of the divine will. It is the apperception of that which is eternally true, and not the possession of worldly wisdom or that vast mass of data which has no meaning outside the sphere of phenomena.

The Eastern Adept demonstrates essential wisdom by the use of powers latent in the average human being. He is not a Lord over Nature, but a servant of the universal purpose. Jesus said: "He that would be the greatest among

you, let him be the servant of all." The Adept is the servant of the All. He is greater because in him all self-motivations on the level of the personality have been overcome by the motivation of the Supreme Self. This again is in the spirit of Sri Sankaracharya and therefore represents mystical Hinduism. The Gurus are in the same way the servants of the Adepts, but throughout the Hierarchy the term *servant* is to be understood not as a word implying *a menial* or *a bondsman*, but in the sense of *a priest serving his altar*. The teachers do not merely obey the members of a metaphysical aristocracy; they serve the divine plan as it is revealed by those having greater internal apperception. Principles are served, and the personalities through whom these principles are revealed are respected.

There are many schools in India presided over by sanctified Masters. Each group is a miniature of the great College of the Adepts. The small groups are like cells in a larger body. Altogether they form a spiritual-physical organism, and through this body circulates the consciousness-energies of the Dhyana Chohans. There is no part or member of this wonderful body which can exist if separated from the general circulation. Even though in the material world the sects may seem to differ, they are reconciled in the consciousness of the Adepts who control them. Confusion is apparent rather than real and exists only on the level or plane of spiritual ignorance. As the disciple advances along the Middle Road, he comes to the reconciliation of all differences in the experience of union.

The Adepts

In The Eastern Esoteric Tradition

By MANLY PALMER HALL



Part Two

The Arhats of Buddhism

THE ADEPTS

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THE ARHATS OF BUDDHISM

ILLUSTRATED

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This work is a section of a comprehensive survey of the Adept tradition, which will be complete in fifteen parts. It is issued in the present form because of the unprecedented rise in the cost of book-production. Only in this way can the material be made available to students at a reasonable price.

THE ARHATS OF BUDDHISM

INTRODUCTION

In Buddhism the Adept tradition is but lightly veiled. For hundreds of years the followers of the Doctrine have sought to attain the internal serenity which is the peculiar attribute of the perfected human being. Immediately after the establishment of the Brotherhood, disciples of Buddhistic philosophy were taught that religion could be literally accepted or mystically experienced. Those content merely to acknowledge allegiance could expect only a degree of personal consolation. Even though they were learned enough to examine the structure of the system, they could not know by personal experience the living power of the Dharma. For such, Adeptship was remote because the impulse toward enlightenment was not sufficiently strong.

The Greater Mysteries of Buddhism were reserved for those of larger sincerity who were impelled to fulfill the disciplines and to dedicate their lives and their hearts to the realization of the Law. In the Southern School such dedication required a monastic career, in which all personal responsibilities and attachments were renounced. In the Northern School this was modified, and internal achievement was available to all regardless of their physical stations, trades, or professions. The Mahayana system went so far as to acknowledge that Adeptship could be attained without acceptance of Buddhism and without instruction by any teacher. The light could come entirely from within, and several of the great sages were especially

venerated because they had accomplished solitary illumination.

The Buddhist Adept is usually called an Arhat or Rahat. In some respects the Western and Eastern concepts are not identical. The European Adept was much more concerned with the physical problems of policy, education, and science than the Eastern initiate. One point should be clarified, however: contrary to Western belief, Buddhism is not a doctrine of nonaction. It does not reward the individual who is concerned solely with his own improvement. The attitude is that the external improvement of society must result from the internal enlightenment of the human being. The Arhat, therefore, serves through the use of the Yogic powers within himself, and his sphere of activity is not made manifest through the agitations of his objective personality. Furthermore, Buddhism does not envision the Arhat as a superman. The end which the wise seek is identity with universal truth. Even wisdom is subordinate to union with the Law.

As a result of the grand concept, Eastern Arhats did not become princes over nations, conquerors, or brilliant intellectuals. They remained within the Sangha, and seldom had any sphere of authority outside the voluntary admiration of their disciples. They were forbidden wealth and luxury by their code, but in no way regarded these restrictions as calamities. Some of the Arhats certainly achieved fame and distinction, but always as teachers and as persons of exceptional gentleness and humility. Those who momentarily assumed belligerent attitudes only did so in order to reveal some particular instruction to a confused or arbitrary follower. Like the sea, they might permit their surfaces to appear ruffled, but the depths were always silent and composed.

Like the Western Adept, the Buddhist Arhat was credited with miraculous powers. This phase of the concept was especially emphasized in Lamaism. Actually most of

the miracles attributed to the Buddhist sages were merely symbolical accounts of internal powers and were not intended to be accepted literally. Miracles were performed *through* men and not *by* men, and the miraculous was actually the natural result of an expansion of interior realization. It was always the Law fulfilling itself that appeared wonderful to those who did not understand.

There is division of opinion among modern Buddhists as to the dimensions of the Adept hierarchy. The Northern School certainly believed that the great teachers of the world, including non-Buddhists, formed part of an over-government. This invisible Fraternity of the illumined is the true Sangha, of which the physical assembly is only a shadow. Buddhism does not teach, however, that the Adept hierarchy aggressively dominates or directs human activity. This would be contrary to the original teachings of Buddha. Man grows by his own merit and not by virtues thrust upon him. The activities of the hierarchy are limited to such universal concerns as are beyond the present state of human enlightenment. Otherwise the Arhats wait in silent meditation to be discovered by those who deserve instruction and are willing to earn the right of growth through personal consecration and endeavor.

In some Buddhist schools the Adept or Arhat is regarded as a personification of the overself. Each man's teacher is the focus of reality from which is suspended the illusionary personality. The search for the transcendent self is the quest for the hierarchy. This should be remembered when examining certain fables and legends regarding these exalted teachers. Truth is the supreme reality, or Adi Buddha. The Great Hierarchy is the unfoldment of truth through all the worlds, planes, and conditions of being. As it descends into obscurity in the darkness of form, truth is diluted until only a ray or part remains. Each of these rays is a thread of consciousness, and the truth seeker may ascend this thread until finally he comprehends the source.

In China the Arhats are called Lohans, or those who sing the sacred mantras. These Lohans, in turn, are embodiments of those fragmentary truths everywhere revealing themselves and inviting thoughtful examination. The Law is never entirely formless, but builds appearances which, if understood, will assist the disciple on his lengthy journey along the Middle Path. Those who are observant, first of small matters and, by the gradual enrichment of their inner lives, expand their transcendental resources, advance quietly but inevitably along the way of liberation. The Arhat, however, pauses at the gate and renews the vow of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who refuses to enter the great peace until all creatures have received the Doctrine in their hearts. This decision of self-sacrifice is not ordered or required; it is a voluntary acceptance of responsibility. The disciple does not return to this world in the humble appearance of a monk because God so demands, but because in his own heart he is moved to this decision by a deep and wonderful compassion. For this reason the Arhats and the Arhat-Bodhisattvas are "the most deserving." They have given, not something of what they have, but all of what they are.

MANLY PALMER HALL

Sept. 1953, Los Angeles, California

THE ADEPTS

THE ARHATS OF BUDDHISM

The Life of Buddha

In the esoteric doctrine a Buddha appears during each of the seven races which form the human-life cycle. Gautama Buddha was the fourth of these wonderful teachers, and Maitreya Buddha will be the fifth. Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kasyapa were the three Manushi (human) Buddhas who preceded Gautama. In the Tibetan system there are three hierarchies of wonderful beings who emerge from Vajrasattva, the Diamond Heart of the world. The highest are the Dhyani Buddhas, esoterically seven and exoterically five in number. These are reflected downward to become manifested through the seven celestial Bodhisattvas, of whom two are also concealed. Rays, or extensions, of the celestial Bodhisattvas become embodied as the Manushi Buddhas, the teachers of humanity. By this arrangement Gautama Buddha descended from the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha through the celestial Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Thus it will be understood that behind the earthly ministry of the great teacher was an elaborate metaphysical concept of the universe.

Numerous versions of the stories of Buddha's life are to be found in the Indian, Chinese, Burmese, and Japanese religious writings. These accounts agree substantially, but differ in a variety of details. Obviously the biographical

facts are obscure, and, as is usual with the lives of religious teachers, countless legends have accumulated. These have transformed the life of the great Hindu sage into a veiled exposition of the essential elements of his doctrine. The man has been absorbed into the stream of his own philosophy so that he survives in human memory as the very embodiment of the "Noble Eightfold Path." The earliest records lack most of the familiar embellishments and reveal the simple humanity of the great reformer. It may happen, however, that truths are entrusted to the keeping of kindly and gracious myths and not to a sterile and profane history.

One of the narrations will be typical of them all* and can be supplemented from other records. Prince Siddhartha, or Gautama, (563-483 B. C.) was the son of Suddhodana, King of Kapilavastu, in Kolasa. The discovery in 1895 of a column erected by the Emperor Asoka established the true location of Buddha's birthplace hitherto unknown. Kapilavastu, of which some ruins remain, was in south Nepal, a few miles north of the boundary of India. Suddhodana married two sisters, Gautami and Maya (Mahamaya), daughters of another king of the Shakya race, named Suprabuddha. Maya was the younger, but she was so beautiful and virtuous that the king favored her, to the distress and jealousy of her elder sister.

King Suddhodana was a just and benevolent ruler, but his heart was troubled, for he could not accomplish the happiness of his people because their religious and ethical doctrines were corrupt. Aware of the evils that afflicted the times, the Compassionate One, Prabhapala, who resided in the Tushita heaven, resolved to manifest in the physical world for the salvation of creatures. This exalted Bodhisattva had already performed many sacrifices in the service of mankind, and he therefore looked down into the

illusional sphere to find a suitable place for his earthly ministry. Aware of the natural justice in Suddhodana's heart and the moral excellence of Maya, the Blessed One descended from the abode of the illumined, accompanied by a procession of devas, heavenly musicians, and guardian spirits, and approached, in the dark hours of the night, the palace pavilion where the good king and his wife were sleeping.

Suddenly Maya became aware that the atmosphere about her was filled with celestial music, and, rising on her couch, she beheld a golden pagoda floating in the midst of a purple cloud which was pierced with many rays of light. The door of the pagoda opened, and within its shrine was a golden Buddha seated in meditation. Then a white elephant, with a red head and six tusks, appeared, bearing on its head a white lotus, and upon this flower the golden Buddha took his seat. From the white spot in the forehead of the gleaming figure a brilliant light shone which illumined the whole universe. The radiant presence then addressed the queen: "I have something to announce to thee. Linked to thee already by a chain of causes which had their origin in the past, I have resolved to enter thy womb and so gain a passage into the world, in order to bring salvation to mankind sunk in greedy desire and ignorance."

Maya was terrified, but the Great One calmed her fears, and, stepping down from his throne on the white elephant, he passed into her body like a shadow. In that moment King Suddhodana also awoke and announced that he had received the same vision. Maya and her husband then concluded that heaven had answered their prayers and had bestowed upon them a wonderful son. The legend continues and explains that even before his birth the coming Buddha, as an infant, appeared to Maya in visions, instructing her in the Doctrine and assuring her of a blessed destiny.

* Condensed from the popular Japanese account contained in the *Shaka Jitsu-roku*.

When the period for the birth of the child came, Sudhodana caused a great festival to be held for all his people in the ancestral gardens of the Lumbini Grove. Within this beautiful park were lakes and waterfalls, many rare and exotic plants and flowers, and birds with gay-colored plumage. There also stood the "sorrowless tree" (Sal-tree) bearing gorgeous blossoms. After the feast the king asked Maya to pick for him a flower from the "sorrowless tree." As she raised her arm toward one of the branches, her robe opened and the infant was born into the world from her right side, and she felt no pain.*

From the earth at Maya's feet sprang a blue lotus flower as large as a chariot wheel, and upon this the newborn infant rested, his body surrounded with a radiance. The heavens opened and the four kings of the devas, the two kings of the Nagas, and legions of spirits and Bodhisattvas formed a celestial court around the new-born child. The baby then descended from the lotus flower and took three steps forward and four steps backward. †

Pointing with its right hand to heaven and with its left hand to the earth, the infant pronounced these words with the voice of a lion: "I alone, of all beings in heaven above and under the heavens, am worthy of honor."

The baby was immediately given into the keeping of his aunt, who had repented of all her evil ways. Seven days later Queen Maya died. Her body was cremated and the ashes placed in an urn. The palace where she had lived was removed to the Mount of the Evening Sun, and the vase containing her remains was deposited there. Nearby, a pagoda, one hundred and sixty feet in height, was erected to her memory. The "sorrowless tree" was taken from the Lumbini Grove and replanted in front of her mausoleum.

* Is this a subtle reference to the Caesarian delivery so often reported of world heroes?

† The number of steps differs in the numerous versions.

The boy was named Prince Siddhartha, and he grew so rapidly that when he was three years old his conduct and intelligence were equal to those of an adult. At the age of eight he was placed under the tuition of Mitra, the Brahman. The prince already revealed an inclination for religious meditation and a boundless love for humanity, and having learned all that his venerable teacher was able



—From Ferguson's *The Cave Temples of India*

THE RISHI ASITA WITH THE INFANT
BUDDHA IN HIS ARMS

From an ancient painting in the caves
at Ajanta

to impart, he returned to the palace of his father. It was there that he was visited by the Rishi Asita, who recognized on Siddhartha the thirty-two signs of a perfect Buddha and foretold that he would become a savior of mankind. Sudhodana, desirous that his son should succeed to the kingdom, attempted to turn the mind of the young prince from his mystical reveries, but destiny had decreed otherwise.

At the age of fifteen Prince Siddhartha was proclaimed heir to the throne, but he still chose to live in a world of books and holy thoughts. Lest the prince forsake the world without leaving an heir, a wife was selected for him. Some

accounts indicate that he chose her himself. Three palaces were built by the king for Prince Siddhartha and Yasodhara, his bride. It was while he was thus living in temporal splendor that the four visions or mystical experiences came to him. On the first occasion the Blessed Beings in the Tushita heaven caused the prince to see an aged and infirm man. Destiny, stirring in Siddhartha's heart, reminded him of the shortness of the mortal span and the inevitable decrepitude of years. On the second occasion the sky-sages fashioned for the prince the appearance of a man wasted by the ravages of an incurable disease, and horrible to look upon. Chandaka, who drove Siddhartha's chariot, explained that the sufferer had come to this terrible condition because he had lacked self-control and had become a servant of appetite, excess, and vice. A deep melancholy came upon the prince, and he returned sadly to his palace. On the third occasion the deva Suddhavaśa assumed the likeness of a corpse, and Siddhartha saw death for the first time in his life. As he gazed upon the emaciated body, the prince was inwardly reminded that all earthly beings share in a common mortality. "What, then, is life," asked the prince, "if it must end in this?" On the fourth occasion a stately monk appeared, wearing a simple saffron robe. The face of this holy man was radiant with peace and there was enlightenment in his eyes. Of course, the monk was a great being in disguise, and when he had stirred the sleeping wisdom in Siddhartha's heart, the Arhat rose into the air surrounded by flames and disappeared.

Strengthened by the implications of the four visions, Prince Siddhartha determined to assume the monastic life. The incarnated Bodhisattva was beginning to remember the destiny which had brought him to rebirth. King Suddhodana observed that his son was developing a melancholy mood. Fearful that the young man intended to become an ascetic, the king ordered guards to be placed at all the gates of the palace, but on the night that was des-

tinued the Arhats in the Tushita heaven caused a sleep to descend upon the guards and upon all the court. In the magic silence the young prince rose from his bed, and, standing for a moment by the couch of his wife, took a beautiful robe and laid it over her body. Chandaka, always faithful, met him at the palace door. Swiftly they rode away into the night and there was no sound as they passed, for the Lokapalas silenced the horses' hoofs. When they had traveled to a safe distance, Prince Siddhartha removed his jewels and gave them to Chandaka. Then with a knife he cut off his princely lock of hair and tossed it to the winds, and each of the hairs was taken away by little spirits. Then he removed his fine raiment and put on a rough, hunter's garb. After an affectionate farewell to his faithful friend and his noble horse, the prince walked slowly down the dusty road without food or money, carrying in his hand only a beggar's bowl.

As was the custom of that time, Siddhartha journeyed to the caves of celebrated hermits and the remote ashramas of renowned sages. Always he asked three questions: "Tell me, venerable sir, where did we come from? Why are we here? Where do we go?" The prince learned many secrets of Nature, but the great questions remained unanswered.

After Siddhartha had formally renounced all worldly ambitions, he visited the court of the friendly king of Rajagriha. He came not as a royal guest, but as a mendicant seeking truth. From the court of this monarch he proceeded to Uruvela, a village near Gaya. Here, together with five ascetics who had been attracted by his sincerity, he entered upon the "great struggle." For six years he practiced such austerity and self-discipline that he finally collapsed and it was feared that he would not survive. His body was so reduced and weakened that even those who knew him well were unable to recognize the former prince. Finally convinced that such practices would not accom-

plish the enlightenment which he sought, Siddhartha renounced them forever. After this decision he was deserted by his five companions because they regarded him as having failed in his religious obligations. Alone he departed to continue his wanderings.

Discouraged, weary, and broken by six years of constant pilgrimage and disappointment, Siddhartha finally sank to rest on a little knoll under the spreading branches of what is now called the sacred Banyan tree, at Bodh Gaya. Here he resolved to remain, saying: "Never from this seat will I stir until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom." The old records say that Siddhartha sat on a couch, or platform, of grass on the eastern side of the tree, facing to the east. As the hours passed, he sank into a deep and wonderful peace. Gradually the consciousness within him disentangled itself from the shadow of the mortal frame. He rose through the spheres of space, and before his inner vision unfolded the drama of human existence. He knew within himself both the causes of things and the remedies. All forms of temptation descended upon him, striving to capture his thoughts in the web of illusion, but he remained unmoved. At last the moment of enlightenment came, and the Bodhisattva from the Tushita heaven attained earthly Buddhahood. The universe was filled with rejoicing, and processions of ancient sages and the Buddhas of earlier times came down from the sky, and in the midst of them the Light of Asia sat transfigured.

There is a legend that Siddhartha performed three vigils as he waited under the Bo tree. In the first vigil he gained the knowledge of all his previous existences; in the second, he came to know all present states of beings; in the third, he apperceived all changes, causes, and effects, and on the following dawn he became all-knowing. From that time on Prince Siddhartha was only a name of a young man who had been absorbed into the universal ocean of infinite compassion. In his place was now the Buddha.

The seeker had found that which he sought and had become the teacher of men.

After the illumination the Buddha was doubtful as to the proper time and circumstance for the proclamation of his Doctrine. He then experienced the inward decision that the five ascetics who had been his previous companions should be the first to receive the teaching. He found them in the Deer Park, at what is now the town of Sarnath, near Benares, and seating himself on a low mound he delivered to them his first sermon. At the beginning the ascetics, fearing that they would be contaminated by association with a relapsed mendicant, remained at some distance. When the sermon, "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law," was finished, however, they were at his feet asking to be ordained. These were the first members of the Sangha (Order).

Buddha, mindful of the manner in which he had so hastily departed from his father and wife, resolved to visit them and bring the glad tidings of his doctrine to the people of Kapilavastu. In the sixth year after the illumination, accompanied by hundreds of disciples, he approached the city of his birth, and King Suddhodana, greatly rejoicing, prepared for his reception. Buddha sent a messenger to his father to remind the king that his son was no longer a prince and that he would come only as a holy man serving truth. He would enter Kapilavastu with fifteen hundred disciples and be one among them, in no way to be distinguished.

Yasodhara obtained permission to be among the women of the palace who went forth to pay honor to the monks. She led by the hand Buddha's son, Rahula, a boy of six years. Realizing that she would be unable to distinguish her husband among the assembly of shaven-headed, saffron-robed monks, she gave the boy the robe which Prince Siddhartha had laid over her couch the night he left, and told Rahula to take it to his father. With



—From *Hassokigen Shaka jitsu-roku*

RAHULA PRESENTING THE COVERLET FROM HIS MOTHER'S
COUCH TO HIS FATHER, THE BUDDHA

unerring instinct the boy passed through the vast gathering and fell on his knees before the monk who occupied the third seat in the central group. Buddha took the garment in his hand and pronounced with a clear voice: "Unchangeable truth of the universal law, mysterious insight and state of unconditionedness, the wisdom and the prayer of all beings are both fulfilled." His countenance was transfigured, and the tuft of white hair on his forehead became radiant with the inner illumination.

In the version presented by the *Shaka Jitsu-roku*, Yasodhara, in fulfillment of a prophecy, had carried the son of the Tathagata in her body for six years before the boy was born. For this she had been condemned, for when she gave birth to her child after so long a time it was rumored that she had been untrue to her husband. As Buddha held the robe from her couch in his hand, he pronounced a wonderful spell, and spreading the cloth he showed the assembly that embroidered upon it were the words: "Six years after my departure thou shalt have a lovely boy, who shall be a sage from his birth." Then the king and all his court realized that they had unjustly suspected Princess Yasodhara. In other versions this entire episode is omitted, and the infant Rahula was asleep with his mother on the night when Prince Siddhartha departed in his search for wisdom. When Buddha was about to enter parinirvana, he entrusted the Supreme Law to the sixteen great Arhats and their followers. Rahula is listed among these Arhats, and there are numerous legends about him.

On his journey to Kapilavastu, Buddha also visited the shrine of his mother, and consecrated the site as a monastery. It is recorded that Queen Maya, because of her numerous virtues in a previous state of existence and because she had been selected as the mother of the Great Incarnation, had merited a happy abode in the Paradise of Indra. With two disciples Buddha ascended upon a golden cloud into the presence of his mother and gave her

the advanced instructions. The details are contained in *The Sutra of Buddha's Ascension to the Trayastrimsa Heaven, to Preach the Law for his Mother's Sake*. As a token of her eternal affection Maya then gave her son the mandara flower which she wore in her hair. This is the traditional explanation for the practice of offering flowers before the shrine of Buddha and other Bodhisattvas.

Buddha reached the Trayastrimsa heaven to instruct his mother by three supernatural steps or conditions of disciplined consciousness. He remained for three months in the abode of Indra in order that he might recite all the essentials of the Law. When the time came for the Great One to return to earth, Indra created for his descent three steep flights of steps, or ladders—the center flight of precious jewels, the one on the right side of silver, and the one on the left side of gold. Buddha came down by the middle flight with Mahabrahma, the Lord of the Brahma heavens, and Indra, Lord of the thirty-three divinities, beside him on the silver and gold stairs. These attendant beings held over the head of Buddha a canopy composed of the seven most precious substances. Behind this exalted group followed a multitude of Bodhisattvas, devas, and celestial beings. When Buddha placed his foot upon the earth, the three ladders disappeared into the ground, except for the central one, of which seven steps remained visible.*

Asoka marked the site, the ancient city of Sankasya (Sankisa), with a stone column, and Hiuen Tsiang reported that the seven rungs of the ladder stood in their original position for many centuries, but had also vanished into the earth before he reached Sankasya. There are many different descriptions of the ladders and the substances of which they were composed, but always they were of rare and wonderful materials. To the uninitiated these

* Obviously the seven parts or levels of the visible ladder refer to the esoteric disciplines or initiations associated with Arhatship.

heavenly stairs resembled three rainbows visible at one time. Representations of this incident in the story of Buddha exist in bronze and upon the Tibetan tankas, or religious paintings, but are extremely rare.

Although the doctrine of rebirth is far older than Buddhism, it has come to be directly associated with this system. During his numerous discourses Buddha frequently referred to events which had occurred in his previous incarnations. These accounts were carefully collected by the disciples of the Master and are included in the canon of the Scriptures. The full title of this collection is *The Commentary of the Jatakas*. It contains references to five-hundred and fifty of the previous embodiments of the Buddha. Representations of these incarnations have been found carved on the railings and around the domes of the shrines of Amaravati, Sanchi, and Bharhut. They are magnificently depicted on the galleries at the Boro Budur in Java. In each of his previous forms, whether animal or human, the Master is represented as performing some unselfish service for the improvement of mankind. The *Jataka* stories are important in terms of doctrine, because Buddha used them to explain the operations of the law of karma in his final incarnation as the great teacher.

The Tathagata lived for more than forty-five years after the illumination, and during that long period he had no fixed residence. He journeyed about, teaching and receiving converts into the Sangha. He ministered especially in the kingdom of Magadha, though traditions have enlarged the regions where he taught. During this time he revealed many of the Sutras, which were committed to memory by his disciples. There are detailed accounts of the wonderful occurrences associated with his preaching, but most of these are apocryphal.

Buddha was over eighty years of age when he realized that the time had come for him to attain the parinirvana.*

* Nirvana, as a state of inner consciousness, is possible to the Arhat during his lifetime, but the parinirvana can only come with the dissolution of the body.

Accompanied by Ananda and an assembly of monks, Buddha came to the Sal-tree Grove at Kusinagara. Here he caused a couch to be spread, and on this he rested on his right side with his head to the north. This is called the posture of the lion. It is said that the trees bloomed out of season and scattered flowers over him. A wandering ascetic, named Subhadra, listened to the teachings of the Buddha and was the last disciple Buddha accepted while he was still alive.

The story that Buddha died as the result of eating tainted boar's flesh is probably unhistorical. It may relate to the conflict between Brahmanism and early Buddhism. The *Book of the Great Decease* describes the death of the great teacher, who entered meditation and caused his consciousness to ascend gradually to the supreme state.

Buddha entered the parinirvana on the 15th day of the second month. On the 22nd day, his body was bathed with fragrant water and wrapped with embroidered cloth and white satin. The remains were then replaced in the coffin which was closed. At this time the mother of Buddha descended from the Tanti Paradise to weep over her son. In respect for her the coffin was opened. Immediately Buddha rose, placed his hands together, and said: "You have come down from a distant paradise." He then turned to Ananda with the words: "You should know that it is for an example in after times to those who are not filial that I have now left my coffin to ask respecting the health and peace of my mother." This would conflict with the popular concept that the parinirvana constitutes the total extinction of consciousness.

After this incident, the ritual of cremation took place. The body of the Tathagata was placed upon a funeral pyre and was finally consumed by a flame that sprang from the heart of the corpse. The relics which remained were carefully gathered by the members of the Order and deposited

in appropriate reliquaries. There is a later account that the Emperor Asoka divided these remains into eighty-four thousand parts and raised a stupa, or monument, over each of these parts.*

The Northern and Southern Schools

Early Buddhism in India was an austere school of metaphysical asceticism. The Buddhist monks formed a class apart. They practiced disciplines of meditation and contemplation, and were bound together in a confraternity of study and self-imposed poverty. So abstract were the teachings and so severe the rules and regulations that the school had but slight popular appeal. India has had a long and distinguished tradition emphasizing the life of mendicancy and detachment from worldly affairs. Asceticism in India was far older than Buddhism, and while the Buddhist mendicants and monks were honored and respected, even venerated, they were not regarded as too sacred to be approached by the profane.

It soon became apparent to the more socially-conscious Buddhist leaders that the school would never accomplish its purpose unless it found some way to reach the masses with a doctrine of inspiration and hope. Gradually a division took place within the Sangha. The stream of Buddhist learning separated into two main branches, one of which flowed southward toward Ceylon, and the other eastward and northward toward China and Tibet.

The southern motion of the Doctrine came to be called the Hinayana, or the Small Vehicle—literally, the *little cart*. This was the old austere part of the Buddhist Society. It reserved the benefits of the Middle Path for those who had taken the obligations of the Brotherhood and

* The bones of the human body were supposed to be composed of eighty-four thousand principal atoms. This explains why Asoka wished to build a monument over each atom of Buddha's cremated remains.

dedicated themselves completely to the religious life. Only such as renounced entirely the world and all its attachments could hope to attain nirvana.

The stream of Buddhism which moved toward north-eastern Asia was vitalized by several outstanding teachers who recognized the need for a faith which could offer the rewards of piety and devotion to the laity as well as to the clergy. Gradually the doctrinal structure was modified, and from these changes, and to a degree compromises, the Mahayana School, the Great Vehicle, came into existence. Although Mahayana Buddhism originated in India, it was in China that the system was perfected, and from China it spread to Korea, Tibet, and Japan. Today Mahayana Buddhism is the dominant sect, and its doctrines have influenced, to a marked degree, all the regions visited by its early missionaries.

As early as the 3rd and 4th centuries A. D. the formal center of Buddhism began shifting from India to China, although the Indian schools retained traditional dignity. In the 6th century the great Buddhist patriarch Bodhidharma (Chinese, Tamo; Japanese, Daruma) left India and established himself in China. Bodhidharma was the twenty-eighth patriarch in direct descent from Gautama. He was therefore the unquestioned head of the Mahayana Buddhist Society. He brought with him to China the Esoteric School of the Dhyana (Japanese, Zen), a system of advanced meditation upon the unreality of all sentient phenomena. With the arrival in China of Bodhidharma, Buddhism acknowledged the Middle Kingdom as its principal headquarters.

Among the basic teachings of the Mahayana School is the firm belief that Buddha himself not only sanctioned the Great Vehicle, but also revealed its complete metaphysical structure. So profound were his words, however, that only certain Bodhisattvas who attended the discourses, but were invisible to mortals, fully comprehended the meaning.

After Buddha had preached to the divinities in the thirty-three heavens and had attained the nirvana, these Bodhisattvas assumed the responsibility of revealing the Mahayana to mortals. According to one account, the Bodhisattvas Manjusri and Maitreya either took human form or overshadowed consecrated disciples so that the revelation was made known to the mortal world in the year 116 of the nirvana. Although this took place prior to the birth of the great Arhat Nagarjuna, he was responsible for the first systematic unfoldment of the Mahayana doctrine. Buddha is said to have stated that several hundred years after his nirvana his disciple Ananda would be born with the name Naga and would reveal the Great Vehicle.

One of the characteristics of Mahayana is the gradual deification of the Buddhas and their Bodhisattvas. This was certainly not part of the original concept. From their high lotus thrones these Buddhas could send "magic bodies," formed by will and Yoga, down into the sphere of illusion to guide, protect, and save unenlightened mortals. The worship of these Eternal Buddhas and prayers for their intercession are a prominent feature of Mahayana teaching.

The Mahayana School unfolded through a series of revelations in which the principal doctrine was variously amended and amplified. The real purpose of these modifications was to prove and justify that the doctrines ensured the salvation of all creatures—animate and inanimate—and was therefore a universal philosophy and a universal religion. It went so far as to affirm that non-Buddhists, either those unacquainted with the Doctrine or those addicted to contrary beliefs, still shared in the privilege of salvation through the performance of good works alone. Enlightened action motivated by self-discipline guaranteed the ultimate attainment, regardless of the sect or creed to which the individual belonged.

Nagarjuna, who flourished in the 2nd century A. D., was converted to Buddhism from the older Brahmanic sys-

tem. His philosophical concepts were similar to those which became so prominent in the Zen sect. The stumbling block was Nagarjuna's postulation of what he called "the void" as the only reality. To quote *The Smaller Prajna-paramita-Sutra*: "In this emptiness there is no form, no perception, no name, no concept, no knowledge. There is no eye, ear, body, mind; no taste, touch, objects; no knowledge, no ignorance, no destruction of ignorance, no decay, no death, no Four Noble Truths, no obtaining of Nirvana." * It would seem that such a definite statement of negation would destroy the whole structure of a religious philosophy. It can only be assumed that Nagarjuna was groping for a statement of absolutism, an unconditioned reality as opposed to an infinitely conditioned unreality. There is a Chinese account that Nagarjuna concluded that his doctrine was irreconcilable to the teachings of Gautama Buddha. He continued in this misconception until he was initiated by the Nagas (the word means *serpents*) on the site of the future University of Nalanda. This is one of the most interesting landmarks of the Adept tradition. The serpents were the initiates, or Mahatmas, of the Secret School. They are so symbolized throughout Asia and even in Europe and the Near East. From these Nagas, Nagarjuna learned that what he was publicly preaching had been taught earlier by Buddha, but only secretly. Earlier Buddha himself had been instructed by the Indian sages about the mysteries of the Sungata, "the void" of illusion. He had also been informed of the *Prajnaparamita*, or the knowledge which crosses the river; that is, carries the truth seeker toward the region of the only reality.

The teaching of "the void" shifted the machinery of Buddhist metaphysics from asceticism to devotionism. The internal experience of "the void" itself through the extension of the intuitional powers of the heart alone re-

* See Max Mueller translation.

mains. Almost certainly "the void" did not imply absolute emptiness, but a state so abstract and inconceivable that the human mind cannot affirm that it is or that it is not. This is the conclusion of Professor Dasgupta. * The subtleties of these early Indian philosophers are difficult to those trained in Western realistic schools, yet, strangely enough, many apparently simple doctrines with large followings depend for their validity upon concepts equally abstruse. The difficulty is unrecognized because acceptance is substituted for thoughtfulness.

There was also a marked change in the attitude toward the Arhats or initiated sages. The older attitude of solitary salvation seemed unnecessarily austere. The initiate-teachers gained larger merit by consecrating their wisdom and love to the service of the human necessity. They remained close to their world, choosing to be re-embodied as servants of humanity, and rejecting nirvana until all mankind had received the Doctrine and attained salvation. There was less emphasis upon the immediate perfection of human consciousness. Many re-embodiments were necessary before all karmic experience was assimilated. In Mahayana, the invisible Hierarchy of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats was immediately available through acts of devotion. The great ones did not come in the fullness of their power, but emanations or shadows of them could be known or experienced during the practice of mystical exercises. The magical content increased and ritualism gained a large measure of importance. Gradually Buddha, as a person and teacher, retired from the public attention. He was revered as the Revealer, and honored as a perfectly enlightened teacher. In public and private worship, however, he was usually adored in one of the forms or attributes of the Mahayana pantheon. The Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Avalokiteshvara, and Maitreya were advanced as the principal objects of public

* See *History of Indian Philosophy*.

veneration. Buddha was the mortal instrument of a Doctrine far greater than himself. The celestial beings who embodied the Doctrine were therefore entitled to the greater regard.

To the student of Buddhist thought a most interesting problem rises in connection with the Mahayana School. In its gradual motion from India to China this sect added several metaphysical beings to its pantheon. Foremost among these is the celestial Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of Boundless Light. This great being is entirely unknown to the Southern School, nor does his name occur in the ancient writings of Hindu Buddhism. He has not been adapted from any of the old gods of the Vedas, yet we cannot suppose that the venerable Masters of the Great Vehicle formulated this concept of Divinity without a profound reason and a vital and significant purpose.

Who or what, then, is Amitabha and how came he to be Master of the cult of the Pure Land? Amitabha is Lord of the Western Paradise (Sanskrit, Sukhavati). It is this Western Paradise which is the Pure Land. It is a heaven-world filled with beauty and goodness. Its gates are open to all who make the great pilgrimage of the law. Even the most humble who performs the good works will find rest and peace in the golden pagoda of the West. Here heavenly musicians chant the harmony of the world; here saints and sages meditate in gardens of jeweled trees. Here is the end of pain, a glorious habitation of the redeemed—the city of the golden lotus connected with the earth by the slender bridge of compassion.

In his discussion with King Kanishka, the venerable Buddhist teacher Asvaghosha explained the mystery of Amitabha, thus: "Brahma is a personification of the principle of being, but Amitabha is the standard of being. Amitabha is the intrinsic law which, whenever being rises into existence, moulds life and develops it, producing uniformity and regularity in both the world of realities and

the realm of thought. It is the source of rationality and righteousness, of science and of morality, of philosophy and religion."*

The old Buddhism of India, the stern Hinayana with its narrow gate, had no teaching about the Western Paradise. There was only earth and its illusion, and nirvana, the absolute extinction of all desire. In searching for the solution for this important doctrinal change, several opinions must be considered. One group suggests that the Western Paradise is the result of an early contact between Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity. Other scholars are of the opinion that Amitabha's world of heavenly bliss is the inevitable result of the pressure of the popular mind upon Buddhist philosophy. As the system increased to include nonscholars, the majority of the members were incapable of contemplating the abstraction of nirvana. The critics of Buddhism have intimated that the introduction of Amitabha was a deliberate compromise with popular opinion to strengthen the temporal power of the sect. This attitude, however, seems unfair in the light of the profound integrity which has always been associated with Buddhist teachers.

Amitabha's Paradise is structurally similar to the heavenly world as it occurs in the beliefs of nearly all religious groups. Like Indra's Paradise and Odin's Valhalla, it is an intermediate state between the mortal world and the ultimate of perfection contemplated by the initiated. The informed Buddhist recognizes the Paradise of the West as the summit of the illusionary sphere. It is not a compromise, but the mere acceptance of certain requirements and limitations of consciousness inevitable to the greater part of humankind. In all esoteric systems there are two codes: one for the illumined, and one for the unenlightened. The average person can improve the quality of his living, refine his emotions, and accept the greater respon-

* See *Amitabha*, by Paul Carus.

sibility for his actions. These are the virtues of the laity. The initiated must practice these virtues also, but must go beyond into the great ocean of the Doctrine. The Paradise of Amitabha represents the sphere of karmic compensation for those who obey and live those simple teachings which are suitable for the average man. It is a state of consciousness which he can comprehend and which becomes his reward, because to him it is understandable as a reward. The Western Paradise existed always as a potential in Buddhism, but it was unnecessary to emphasize the concept until the faith was enlarged to include those incapable of the supreme achievement.

The regenerated personal self, enthroned in the heart and impelling the life to the performance of right action, is Amitabha. It is the person refined and enlightened, the human perfected into the god, but beyond the god is space—the Eternal One. The gods are attributes of space, and the personal consciousness of the human being is an aspect of his eternal space-consciousness. All mystical religions lead to the God-consciousness or the attainment of a godlike state of self. Esoteric religions go beyond this point toward the absorption of the self and the self-will into the universal and the universal will. Amitabha's Paradise is the heaven of virtue, but nirvana is the state of perfect virtue, plus perfect wisdom, plus perfect renunciation.

By inward meditation the great Buddhas conceived from within themselves the mystery of the Great Vehicle. This Great Vehicle is the dharma itself; it is the teaching of the good law by which all mankind may attain liberation. Even the life locked within a grain of sand is known within the consciousness of the Supreme One. The love of Amitabha embraces all things within the vastness of the heart doctrine. The compassion of Amitabha draws all life along the noble eightfold path to final identity with space, spirit, and the great white mountains. These are the mountains of the north, the thrones of the eternal

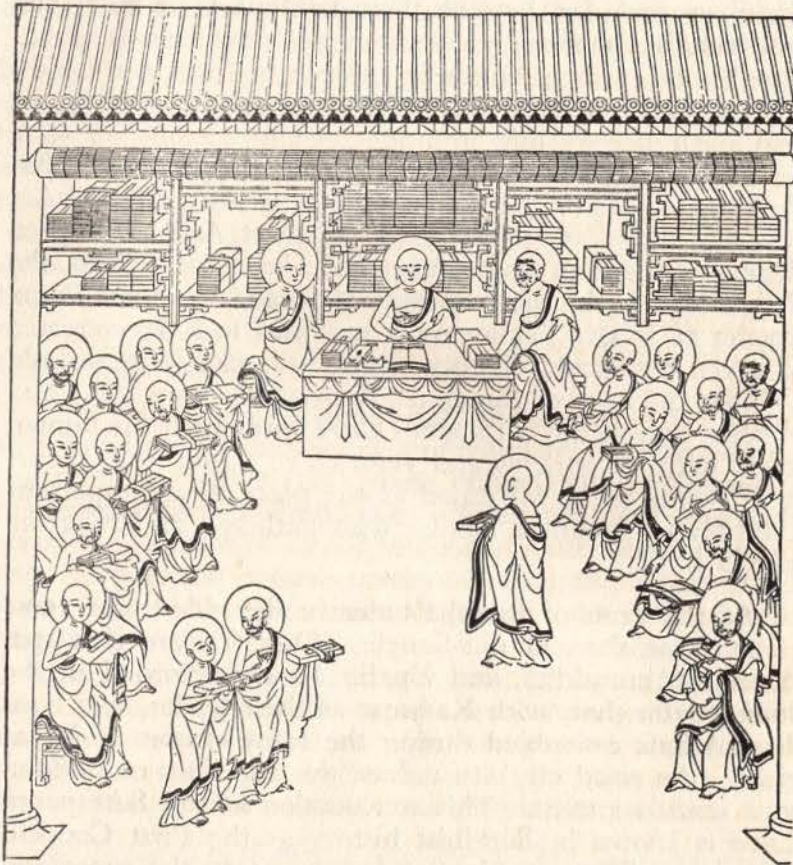
Buddhas, and far beyond their western boundaries lies Amitabha's Paradise.

Asoka and the Golden Age of Buddhism

It was only to the selected circle of his Arhats that Buddha revealed the inner mysteries of his system. According to the secret tradition, the first Arhats received their initiations at the Sattapanni Cave, located in the Rajgir hills in the southern part of what is now the Patna district of Bihar. This cavern was said to have consisted of seven connected chambers, and was called in the old writings the cave of Buddha. Represented as a lotus bud of seven leaves, the Sattapanni Cave symbolized the human heart with its auricles and ventricles. Later this "heart cave" came to be identified as the place of an important assembly of Buddhist monks, who gathered at Rajagriha in 543 B. C.

At the time of Buddha's death, the eldest and most revered members of the Sangha (Order) were Kasyapa, Ananda, Anuruddha, and Upali. It was recorded in the *Mahavamsa* that, with Kasyapa as their leader, five hundred Arhats assembled during the rainy season at Rajagriha (the royal city) to reduce the doctrines of Buddha to a unified system. This convocation at the Sattapanni Cave is known in Buddhist history as the First Council. There are differences in the reports as to the succession of the Patriarchs. It is generally agreed that Kasyapa presided at the First Council. The Northern School holds that Ananda succeeded him, and the Southern School is equally certain that Upali was the first Patriarch if Kasyapa be considered as only supervising the Council.

About 380 B. C. there was an important meeting of Buddhist monks and teachers at Vaisali (Vesali). The first important schism occurred within the Order at this time. Sects or schools began to arise, differing in their



—From *Illustrated Actions of the Sakyamuni Buddha*

CHINESE WOODCUT REPRESENTING AN ASSEMBLY OF THE ARHATS
TO ESTABLISH THE CANON

interpretations of certain essential tenets. This assembly is usually called the Second Council.

After Asoka was converted to Buddhism, he called a Third Council, which was held at Pataliputra, the capital city of his kingdom. The purpose was to purify the Doctrine from the errors of those who joined Buddhist reli-

gious communities for personal or selfish reasons and therefore had no sound understanding of Buddha's teaching. The prestige which Buddhism enjoyed under Asoka caused it to be infiltrated by many unregenerate men with political and other worldly ambitions seeking to advance their various causes.

Kanishka, King of Palhava and Delhi, flourished in the 1st or 2nd century A. D. (historical data is obscure). Shortly after his enthronement he learned that Shima, King of Kashmir, had renounced the world, and, having been initiated into the Buddhist assembly, had become an Arhat. Kanishka visited Kashmir and attended the lectures of many celebrated saints. Within the territories of this king were twenty-eight mines of gold, silver, and precious stones. With the wealth derived therefrom, he maintained the entire Buddhist church. As Kanishka became more informed in the Buddhist philosophy, he learned that the Order was split into four great schools, further divided into eighteen subdivisions. Realizing the need for the codification of the essential rules and disciplines, Kanishka ordered a grand religious congress to be held at the royal mansion of Kusana in Kashmir. There assembled in the hall of congress two hundred and fifty Bodhisattvas. The sage Vasumitra sat at the head of five thousand Mahayana monks, and the Arhat Puranka presided over five hundred Arhats. The practices of the eighteen schools were carefully examined, and the essential religious formulas and many wonderful discourses of Buddha, which had formerly been entrusted to the memory of the teachers, were committed to writing so that they could not be changed or forgotten.

The early career of the great Indian Emperor Asoka (reign 273-231 B. C.) was concerned with those strategies and conspiracies nearly always associated with the rise of Eastern rulers. He certainly united his empire by the usual methods of destroying his enemies and discrediting

their policies. Asoka was only a lad during these crucial years, and by the time he reached maturity his conscience was sorely troubled as he contemplated the costs of empire in terms of human misery. He came under the direct influence of enlightened Buddhist teachers, and made public acknowledgement of his sorrow and regret for all the misfortunes that had come to his subjects as the results of his ambitions. He dedicated his life to works of peace, scholarship, and religion. Asoka was ordained as a monk and put on the yellow robe of the Order. Although he did not abdicate his throne, it is believed that in the closing years of his life he withdrew almost entirely from worldly attachments, and died at peace with all men in a Buddhist monastery.

There is a curious legend relating to Asoka that has been preserved by the Chinese monk Fa-Hian in his travel-diary, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*. It seems that in a former birth, Asoka, as a small boy, was playing by the roadside. On this occasion he met the Kasyapa Buddha (the great teacher who preceded Gautama) who was wandering the earth in the guise of a mendicant. As a childish gesture of friendship the little boy saluted the stranger. When the mysterious mendicant asked the child for food, the boy, playfully and without realizing the significance of his action, gave the monk a handful of earth. The Buddha took the earth and sprinkled it on the ground at his feet. This was an omen, for the boy received the compensation of becoming "a king of the iron wheel." By this is meant a *military conqueror*, for when a king of destiny ascends the throne a chakra (wheel) falls from heaven, indicating by its material (whether it be gold, silver, copper, or iron) the character of his reign. The same symbolism is extended to the mission of a Buddha, who does not hurl the wheel at his enemies, but meekly turns it and conquers the universe by his teachings. When he received the iron wheel, it was destined that in a future

life the child, who was to incarnate as Asoka, should become a great king and rule over Jambudvipa.

The sincerity of Asoka cannot be doubted. Although born an orthodox Hindu of the Saiva sect, he courageously departed from the traditions of his childhood faith and reformed his entire career in harmony with Buddhist principles. The practical aspects of his code were (1) absolute respect for all living things, (2) honor to parents and superiors and consideration for menials, (3) truthfulness and honesty under all conditions. These outstanding sentiments and others equally enlightened, Asoka caused to be carved into rock, forming what are known as the "Fourteen Rock Edicts" and "Seven Pillar Inscriptions." The king was unique in scattering these enduring testimonials throughout his kingdom, causing them to be erected in prominent places so that all his subjects might know his will.

Asoka extended the influence of Buddhism into Ceylon and Burma, and is believed to have dispatched missionaries to Syria, Greece, Egypt, and remote insular regions. The appearance of Oriental doctrines in the cultures of these areas may be traced largely to Asoka's zeal. He combined wonderful skill in leadership with saintly dedication to human service. It was largely due to Asoka's influence that Buddhism became one of the world's most widely disseminated religions. He was second only to Gautama Buddha in the spreading of the Noble Eightfold Doctrine.

Hiuen Tsiang, Historian of Early Buddhism

The delightful old Chinese intellectual, antiquarian, philosopher, and adept in magical arts, Hiuen Tsiang, was born in the Keu-shi district of China about A. D. 605. The father of this distinguished traveler was renowned for his superior abilities, the elegance of his manner, and the moderation of his deportment. He wore his dress long and large and his girdle full, and loved to be recognized as a

scholar. He declined all public office and worldly honors and lived in retirement, much to the admiration of his better-informed acquaintances. At the time of the birth of Hiuen Tsiang, his mother had a dream that she saw him journeying toward the west clothed in white robes. In her dream she said: "You are my son; where are you going?" The young man replied: "I am going to seek for the Doctrine." This seemed to be an omen or an indication that Hiuen Tsiang was destined to travel to far places.

Hiuen Tsiang was one of four sons, and early indicated promise of superior mental acquirements. He began the reading of the sacred books and the classics at his eighth year, and declined to mingle in the activities of other children. While he was still a child, there was a royal mandate for the election of fourteen priests who were to be supported in their studies and holy life without a charge to themselves. Several hundred applicants competed for these positions. Hiuen Tsiang was too young to be a candidate, but he placed himself at the gate of the building where the applicants were to be examined. As he expected, he was able to attract the attention of the High Commissioner. This officer, impressed by the youth's sincerity and the evidence of the superiority of his mind, brought the boy before the other officials, recommending his election. Naturally, the High Commissioner's suggestion was accepted, and Hiuen Tsiang had no further worldly responsibilities.

As the life and history of this distinguished Buddhist recluse were written entirely by himself and he had an admirable estimation of his own abilities, the account of his accomplishments as a young man may be considered flattering. He preferred to refer to himself as the Master of the Law, and this is the title by which he came to be generally known. He was ordained at the end of his twentieth year, and in order to advance his spiritual career he retired to an unfrequented place, devoting himself to study.

He had already experienced consciousness in the "eight expanses," and was deeply versed in the secrets of Nature. He was visited by many celebrities, including the king of the region, and gained wide renown for his skill in discourse and his ability to interpret the deeper parts of the Scriptures.

When the Master of the Law was about twenty-four years old, he was favored by a wonderful sleep-vision. He dreamt that he saw in the midst of a great sea Mt. Meru, perfected with four precious substances. He thought that he attempted to scale the mountain, but the sea became very rough and there were no boats by which he could cross the water. With firm resolution, he saw himself walk out upon the waves, and at that moment a lotus of stone rose from the deep. He tried to stand upon it, but it vanished again. In the same moment he found himself at the foot of the mountain. He could not climb its sharp sides, but in his desire he tried to jump, and as he leaped into the air a whirlwind carried him to the summit of Meru. As he reached the top he awakened, and considered that he had been given the promise of extraordinary accomplishment.

Soon after his prophetic dream, the Master of the Law undertook the perilous journey that was to bring him undying fame. Resolved to reach India in quest of knowledge, he plunged alone into the vast desert of Gobi. Naturally he had numerous adventures, and the stories of his travels rivals the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. In addition to the natural difficulties of so vast an undertaking, the wanderer was frequently confronted with splendid and extraordinary supernatural occurrences. In each incident he emerged victorious and continued resolutely toward the accomplishment of his principal project.

After going southeast and crossing the great snowy mountains, the Master of the Law arrived at the borders of Kapisa. It was while in this region that he visited the

Cave of the Shadow. This cavern lay to the eastward of a stony watercourse, and the entrance faced the west. The traveler was guided by an old man who knew the place, but upon reaching the cave the pilgrims were stopped by five robbers. These, touched by the sincerity of the monk, permitted him to continue unmolested. Following the instruction of his ancient guide, the Master of the Law entered the cave and walked straight to the eastern wall. Then he stepped backward fifty paces and faced the east. Standing thus, he performed most sincere worship and recited the *gathas* of the Buddha, prostrating himself after each verse of praise. After he had performed about three hundred acts of worship with the full devotion of his heart, "the whole cave was brightened up with light, the shadow of Tathagata of a shining white colour appeared on the wall, as when the opening clouds suddenly reveal the golden Mount and its excellent indications. Bright were the divine lineaments of his face, and as the Master gazed in awe and holy reverence, he knew not how to compare the spectacle; the body of Buddha and his kashaya robe were of a yellowish red colour, and from his knees upward the distinguishing marks of his person were exceedingly glorious; but below, the lotus throne on which he sat was slightly obscured. On the left and right of the shadow and somewhere behind, were visible the shadows of Bodhisattvas and the holy priests surrounding them Thus the appearance lasted for the short space of half a meal-time, during which having uttered his praises in worship and scattered flowers and incense, the light then suddenly disappeared."

The Master of the Law reached Kapilavastu, where he saw the old foundations of the palace of Queen Maya where Buddha was born. Near this was a stupa (tower) marking the place where the Rishi Asita took the horoscope of the Great Incarnation. Here also were many monuments built by King Asoka honoring the great events. Towers were erected where Buddha, sitting up in his

golden coffin, preached on behalf of his mother, and stretching out his arm, questioned Ananda and showed his feet to Kasyapa; also where they burned his body with scented wood and the eight kings divided his bone-relics. There were also monuments at places associated with previous incarnations of the Buddha.

The Master of the Law visited many places where the celebrated Arhats of the Doctrine had lived or preached. To the westward of the kingdom of U-sha, on top of a high peak, was a remarkable stupa. This commemorated the discovery, after a great storm which had shattered the mountain, of the body of a meditating sage, who sat with closed eyes and covered with matted hair. This was an Arhat who had entered the most profound meditation long before. After carefully anointing the body according to the instruction of those informed in such matters, the Arhat was aroused. He then asked: "Has Sakyamuni accomplished the unequalled condition of perfect enlightenment?" When told that Buddha, having procured benefit for all mankind, had passed into the nirvana, the Adept returned to meditation, and after a time he ascended into the air and consumed his own body with fire.

The Master of the Law kept a faithful, if somewhat colorful, account of persons met and things seen. He gave special consideration to the myths and legends which always spring up around sanctified places. Scholars are specially indebted to Hiuen Tsiang for his extensive account of the great Buddhist university at Nalanda. He remained for two years in this college of the Adepts. He mastered Sanskrit and made a profound study of the various systems of Buddhist philosophy. He preserved the only eyewitness account of many strange and wonderful shrines and temples, which have since crumbled into ruin or vanished utterly.

The grand tour of the Master of the Law required fifteen years, and he lived to return to China bringing with him a large collection of books, many precious images,

and a quantity of relics. His accomplishments attracted imperial attention, and, at the request of the emperor, he extended and organized his notes and compiled the narration of his experiences. The writing of his book required three years, and during the same period he continued his activities as a teacher and philosopher. When the text of the work was entirely finished, he elaborated it with many pictures.

It would not seem that Hiuen Tsiang was devastated by false modesty. He considered himself as entirely worthy of any approbation which came his way. Shortly before his death, he ordered his disciples to read aloud for his benefit the exhaustive list of their Master's virtues, attainments, abilities, and honors. When the reading was complete, the old scholar applauded his own accomplishments vigorously and resigned himself to death with an expression of smug and intense satisfaction. When the time of his transition came, he closed his eyes and, having repeated certain verses in adoration of the Maitreya, remained perfectly still for several days, departing from this mortal sphere on the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the year A. D. 664.

In spite of the glories of Nalanda and the impressiveness of its cultural concepts, Buddhism in India showed signs of decline even in the days of Hiuen Tsiang and I-Tsing. They left several descriptions of ruined shrines and deserted monasteries. Most of the native princes and rulers were addicted to Hinduism and did little to advance the rival doctrine. The Moslems began to invade and to occupy India about the year A. D. 1000. They destroyed most of the surviving Buddhist monuments and schools, and by the end of the 12th century Magadha fell into their hands. Rather than accept the limitations imposed by the Islamic faith, the Buddhist monks and teachers chose exile. They passed to other regions where the Moslems could not or did not choose to follow. Here the teachings of Bud-

dha found ready acceptance, and the influence of this noble religious philosophy was both lasting and useful.

Nalanda, the Oxford of Asia

The celebrated Buddhist University of Nalanda was located in Magadha, in what is now Bengal. Although the site of the great school is known, the area has not been excavated, and for several centuries natives in the vicinity have used the ruins as a quarry for bricks. The dimensions of the great rectangular complex of buildings still can be traced. This rectangle is about sixteen hundred feet in length and four hundred feet in width.

The Emperor Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism, is generally regarded as the founder of the Nalanda Monastery-University. The project evolved much in the way that the cloister schools of Charlemagne grew into the great universities of Europe. Asoka made costly gifts and offerings at the shrine of Sariputta at Nalanda, and it is recorded that six kings improved and beautified the place. Some of these monarchs actually became priests, and bestowed their entire wealth upon the shrine.

Kenneth J. Saunders writes thus of Nalanda: "Of this great university we must gain some impression before making a further study of its schools. Fire and the sword of Islam have long since destroyed the venerable university, and its stones, 'long buried by myriads of little Indian ploughs,' are today being uncovered by the archaeologist. But for a thousand years it did a noble work and a detailed history of Nalanda 'would be the history of Mahayana from the time of Nagarjuna in the second century A. D., or possibly even earlier, until the Muhammadan conquest of Bihar in 1219 A. D., a period well over a millennium. All the most noted scholars of Mahayana seem to have studied at Nalanda.' A catholic spirit worthy of a great university

seems to have reigned, and side by side with the scholars of the new Buddhism work the 'eighteen schools' of the old, apparently in great harmony."

Two Chinese pilgrims, Hiuen Tsiang and I-Tsing, visited the university during the height of its glory, and both of these travelers state that the earliest monastery on the site was built shortly after the death of Buddha. The history of Nalanda as a great cultural center extends from the time of Nagarjuna, who flourished about the time of Christ, to the Mohammedan conquest A. D. 1197.

Nagarjuna was the dominating spirit in the great Buddhist council, or convocation, held under Kanishka, the Tatar king of Kashmir. At this time the Buddhists were divided into eighteen sects, grouped into four large divisions, and the followers of the various teachers were without any general program. Nagarjuna was then a young monk in the monastery at Nalanda, which James Ferguson calls the Monte Cassino of India. Nagarjuna proclaimed himself the restorer of the faith, performing for Buddhism what Gregory the Great accomplished for the Christian faith. Nagarjuna declared that Buddha, during his lifetime, concealed his true doctrine from human kind and had revealed it only to the Nagas, serpent spirits, by which we should understand certain initiated adepts. Nagarjuna then declared that he had received from the Nagas—the Adepts—the commission to proclaim the esoteric doctrine of Buddha to the world. His reform resulted in what is called the Mahayana sect—the Great Vehicle for the redemption of all men.

With the rise of the Mahayana doctrine, Nalanda increased in fame, and from the 7th century was the principal headquarters of the Tantric-Buddhist cult. It is from this circumstance that it gained its reputation of being the *alma mater* of wizards, sorcerers, and magicians. It is difficult to restore an accurate picture of the place occu-



—From *Rescherches sur les Superstitions en Chine*

A CHINESE PORTRAIT OF NAGARJUNA, THE 14TH
PATRIARCH OF WESTERN BUDDHISM

ried by Nalanda in the cultural life of Asia. Most historical works relating to Buddhism were destroyed in those religious cataclysms that overwhelmed Indian Buddhists between the 8th and 12th centuries of the Christian era. Most of the travelers who visited Nalanda during the years

of its glory were priests, monks, or mendicants, and not inclined to a critical analysis of secular history. The Mohammedans destroyed the university in the 12th century, murdered such of the monks as they could find, razed the buildings, and burned the vast collections of books. The priestly professors who escaped took refuge in Tibet, Nepal, or Ceylon. The common followers of the faith were absorbed in the sect of the Jains, converted to the cult of Vishnu, or crushed out and overwhelmed by the followers of Siva. Buddhist power in India lasted approximately one thousand years.*

It should be noted that the splendor of Nalanda between the 7th and the 12th centuries corresponds in time with the most benighted period in European history. Considering this fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that Nalanda was the most splendid center of culture and education existing in the world of its day. It was not only the principal center of Buddhist learning, but a truly great university. Here a faculty of nearly three thousand resident monks taught the arts, sciences, religions and professions. Medicine, law, astronomy, and philosophy were included in the curriculum. The priestly professors taught comparative religion, the old languages, and even magical rites, rituals, and formulas. It is reported that at one time Christianity was taught at Nalanda as one of the living faiths of men.

The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing gives a detailed description of the buildings and monuments at Nalanda. The principal rectangle consisted of eight great lecture halls or temples, each three stories in height. The buildings were of brick ornamented with stone, and magnificently adorned. The ground was paved with bricks, and the various rooms had floors of an almost indestructible kind of cement, highly polished. The roofs of the buildings were flat and were suitable for walking and meeting places.

* *Cave Temples of India*, by James Ferguson and James Burgess.

The university was surrounded by a great wall. Hundreds of shrines and sacred spots were marked by monuments, some of which were two and three hundred feet in height. The outside of the building was so magnificently adorned with pillars and turrets that artists came from all over Asia drawn by the beauty and inspiration of the place. Among the art treasures was a statue of Buddha eighty feet high, made of copper.

Hiuen Tsiang also left an excellent description of the great monastic university.* He explains that the word Nalanda means "charity without intermission." According to the old accounts, a Naga or serpent spirit named Nalanda lived in a pool on the site of this monastery. It is reported that Buddha in a previous life, while king of a great country, built his capital on this place. During that life Buddha gave away all of his goods and wealth to orphans and the destitute. In memory of this, the land was called the place "doing the charitable acts without intermission." At one time the site was the garden of the Lord Amri. Five hundred merchants bought it for ten lacs of gold, and presented it to Buddha. Here Buddha himself preached for three months, and for their good deeds most of the merchants attained Arhatship.

With typical Chinese devotion to poetic statement, Hiuen Tsiang described the richly adorned towers and fairylike turrets. He mentioned the observatories which seemed to be lost in the vapors, and the upper rooms above the clouds. He waxed eloquent when referring to the soaring eaves of the buildings above which might be seen conjunctions of the sun and moon, and how the wind caused the clouds to produce new forms. The priests belonging to the monastery and other residents, not including the student body, numbered approximately ten thousand. Here was studied the Great Vehicle, the Scriptures of the eighteen sects, the books of magic, and the miscellaneous

* *The Travels of Hiuen Tsiang*.

works. There were one thousand men who could explain twenty collections of Sutras and Shastras; five hundred who could explain thirty collections, and perhaps ten men, including the Master of the monastery, who could explain fifty collections. At the time of Hiuen Tsiang, the great Monk Sila Bhadra was the most eminent, virtuous, and advanced in age, and for these considerations was regarded as the chief member of the community.

Within the university there were about one hundred class rooms, where professors could discourse to their students. The periods of study were so arranged that the classes followed each other in a natural sequence. So difficult and advanced was the course at Nalanda, that out of the foreign students who arrived only twenty to thirty per cent was sufficiently advanced to meet the scholastic requirements.

The priestly teachers dwelt together with such dignity, gravity, and integrity of deportment, that during the seven hundred years prior to the journey made by Hiuen Tsiang there had not been one case of a member of the faculty transgressing, even to a minor degree, a single rule of the university. The king of the country so respected the school that he endowed it with the revenue of one hundred villages. As a result, those who came to study were not required to supply the essentials of life. At Nalanda these were called the Four Requisites: clothing, food, bedding, and medicine. The fact that these essentials were provided, thus freeing the mind entirely for scholarship, was regarded as a principal reason for the perfection of the educational system at Nalanda.

One cannot turn from this fascinating place without mentioning the glorious lotus pools. Here the blue lilies of Nalanda mingled their colors with the deep-red Kanaka flowers in such a splendid symphony of hues that artists traveled thousands of miles merely to look upon the tanks and gardens. It will be a long time before the world will

produce another Nalanda, a college of esoteric arts and physical sciences, taught without conflict, prejudice, or conceit.

The Lohans and Saints of Buddhism

The title *Arhat*, meaning *worthy*, is equivalent to *Adept* as this is used in the Western esoteric tradition. While the word has been more or less loosely applied when referring to those who have accomplished the Noble Eightfold Path, an Arhat is actually one who has attained the internal experience of the state of reality. The term was in use prior to the advent of Buddhism, but without the implication of internal enlightenment. Like the word *adept* in nonmystical literature, it signified a *specialist* or *one proficient in some mental or physical art*. In Buddhism the Arhats are great sages or monks who are approaching Bodhisattvahood; in fact, even the Buddhas themselves can properly be called Arhats. There are a number of instances in which laymen attain to this distinction through some extraordinary action which reveals apperception of universal law. Popular veneration has caused the term to be applied to illustrious teachers of old times and to the disciples of the Buddha, who carried his Doctrine to distant places. The Chinese word *Lohan* is usually considered synonymous with Arhat.

Among those spiritually advanced persons who belong to the human life-stream must be included the Arhats, or Sthaviras, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Lohans. The Hinayana Buddhists are inclined to regard the attainment of nirvana by a Pratyekabuddha (a nonteaching saint) as a state of spiritual finality, the end of all personal consciousness, and the complete absorption of the sattva (self) into the universe reality. The Mahayana Buddhists hold a contrary opinion. To them, nirvana is a condition or state of realization by which certain limitations of understanding natural to the unenlightened have been over-



—From *Illustrated Actions of the Sakyamuni Buddha*

BUDDHA REVEALING THE DOCTRINE TO HIS PRINCIPAL DISCIPLES

come. To these northern mystics the evolutionary processes of the world are eternal, and even the Buddhas, though exalted beyond ordinary mortals, must continue to grow and unfold through all time and space.

A Pratyekabuddha is an exalted saint who in a previous incarnation had been the disciple of Buddha, but who had not been able to attain the nirvana during the lifetime of

his Master. Therefore this highly advanced disciple must be reborn at a time when there is no Buddha incarnate, and illumination must be accomplished by solitary meditation. Such sages remain aloof from all concerns of the flesh, and make no effort to bestow enlightenment. The Northern School regards this self-centered cultivation of the spiritual virtues as a distinct departure from the spirit of the teachings of the Buddha. The Enlightened One gave the example of unselfish service, and the Bodhisattvas inclined their hearts and minds to the requirements of all men of all faiths who stood in need of internal security.

There is a legend by the Mahayana mystics that before his death Buddha commissioned four illustrious Sthaviras to remain in the world to protect his Doctrine until the coming of the Maitreya Buddha. There are references to Arhats in the earliest commentaries, and these servants of the Buddha's teachings protected and expanded the philosophy through succeeding ages.

The Buddha Kasyapa was the immediate predecessor of the Buddha Gautama, and it is believed that this ancient sage sits in contemplation in a cave within the heart of a great mountain. When the Buddha Maitreya comes, he will journey with a vast procession of Arhats and Lohans to this mountain. The rocks and earth will remove themselves, and the entire assembly will see the venerable Kasyapa meditating upon the mysteries of reality.*

According to the Chinese, certain sages who at various times in history had attained to the higher grades of the Buddhist esoteric system are entitled to be known as Lohans. In the ten steps of the "ideal scale" of internal evolution the Lohan occupies the second step just below that of the Arhat. The home of the Lohans is said to be the Western Paradise of Amitabha. In this usage the Western Paradise certainly represents the school or assembly of the Mys-

* See *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, by James Bissett Pratt.

teries. The Lohans are especially referred to as the "sweet-voiced" because of their skill in chanting the mantras with magical effect. It is believed that any devout Buddhist in meditation, if he can attain perfect inward silence, can still hear the songs of the Lohans, especially at dawn.

Each of the Lohans has a retinue of attendant saints numbering from five hundred to sixteen hundred. There are several circles of Lohans. The smallest circle consists of sixteen (in Japan eighteen), and these are the ones most frequently represented in Buddhist art. There is also a circle of five hundred Lohans. In the larger monasteries of China and Japan there is often an elaborate hall or a large room set aside for the five hundred saints. Each is represented by a statue depicting the Lohan with a shaven head, long ears, and a more or less grim facial expression. Every type of physiognomy may be found in these collections of images. In the pagoda of Pi-Yun-pi near Peking, the images of the Lohans give the impression of a convocation of monks. High under the roof of the building sits one solitary saint. It has been suggested that he may represent a sanctified Marco Polo, the traveler who visited many Chinese cities in the 13th century.

The traditional appearance now associated with each Lohan is based upon the works of two or three artists of the Tang dynasty. They, in turn, drew their inspiration from the indefinite description to be found in the old Buddhist records. The Lohans have special appeal to the Buddhist laity, and as a result have been invested with a quantity of exoteric lore. This process of secularization has obscured much of the original symbolism so that in the popular mind the entire subject is sadly confused.

It is not necessary to the present purpose to identify the different Lohans. Each has a definite story to explain his conversion to Buddhist philosophy, and most of them are accredited with the ability to perform miracles. One is represented in the act of snapping his fingers to indicate

the rapidity with which illumination came to him. Another was not converted until he was one hundred years old, and thereafter became young and happy. Still another, born dull and stupid, attained such proficiency in mystical arts that he could fly through the air and change his appearance at will. In the old scrolls the group of five hundred esteemed ancients presents a delightful panorama of whimsical saints. Some wear broadbrimmed hats; others, completely oblivious to their associates, are warming their tea over a charcoal brazier or trimming their fingernails in quiet dignity.

Each of these distinguished persons is justly celebrated for his contribution to the modes of internal knowing. Some dwelt in busy cities; others in distant mountain places. Some governed states and provinces; others lived and died in beggaredom. One was of outstanding virtue; another was an ardent criminal. A few were handsome according to the standard of their time; others were crippled and deformed, but each in his own light had experienced in some way the benediction of truth within. Thus consecrated and ordained by the light in his own heart, each had gone forth to minister according to understanding and opportunity. These serving-saints were the blessed messengers of the Law, and together they signified that no human being was incapable of improvement through discipline and realization.

Non-Buddhists are inclined to view the Lohans as a collection of rascals, rendered smug in their various delinquencies by a series of formulas. It is a little difficult for followers of other faiths to develop a spiritual sympathy for a dour old gentleman engrossed in the amusing task of sewing a button onto his robe with a length of snarled thread, especially while this process is being regarded with rapt attention by a group of reverent disciples. Only those with considerable philosophical insight can understand that the venerable saint is devoting the full majesty of his intellect to experiencing universal law by sewing on a but-

ton thoroughly and completely and to the full elimination of all irrelevant thought and emotion.

At the Council convened by King Kanishka, five hundred Arhats assembled to purify the Scriptures. The later circle of Lohans may be associated with this peculiarly significant number. Those who feel that the spiritual heroes of other religions make a better appearance than the Buddhist Lohans should remember that the saints of early Christendom were also an eccentric lot if considered only in terms of externals. According to the reports which have survived relating to the great Council at Nicaea, the bishops and elders who were to establish Christianity on an imperishable foundation did not exactly resemble the pictures of them now circulated. Some were almost naked, with matted hair and beard; others were dressed in the skins of animals, and nearly all were gaunt and wan from penance and privation. Some were so feeble that they had to be carried, and each had a disposition consistent with the circumstances of his own life. A few were meek, some were pacifistic, many were argumentative, and a number were intensely belligerent. From the best that can be learned, all were illiterate.

A plump Lohan contentedly boiling his rice presents a picture no more remarkable than St. Simeon Stylites sitting on the top of a lofty column in the desert to prevent worldly contamination. St. Simeon is said to have remained perched on this lofty seat for nearly half a lifetime. While the Lohans are unfamiliar and perhaps slightly humorous, they have much in common with the ascetics of other religions.

In esoteric Buddhism the Lohans become the personification of the extensions of wisdom through the numerous conditions of mortal existence. It will require years of patient study to discover the true worth of the fables and myths now associated with these Eastern saints. Actually they were initiates of the great Asiatic Mystery Schools.

Their purported "lives" are really veiled accounts of their initiations. Considered together, they personify the garment or outer form of the Buddhist hierarchy. This is why figures of the Buddha with his robes composed of the bodies of his Lohans are occasionally found. These Eastern Adepts belong to a concept of learning with which Westerners are entirely unfamiliar.

A clue to the fuller meaning of the Lohan idea may be gathered from Zen Buddhism of Japan. The Zen monks are devoted to projects identical to those attributed to the Lohans, whom they resemble in appearance and temperament. The Zen immortals were supposed to have been engaged in such useful pursuits as putting frames of wind on paintings of air. One may be opening the gateless gate, and another may be closing the doorless door. A pensive scholar may be depicted reading intently from a blank piece of paper. A happy-faced saint carries a long broom with which to sweep up himself. Should these various industries prove too arduous, the saint may have several disciples to assist him. These he instructs by disciplines called the "unteachable teachings."

To emphasize some important phases of the Doctrine, a Zen Master may point his finger at nothing and then box his disciple's ears for looking in the direction that the finger indicated. In a quiet corner an old philosopher is represented holding his breath with stern resolution because he has just inhaled the cosmos. Later he will relax and slowly exhale the thirty-three worlds. The average Occidental may be excused for his inability to grasp the implications of this intricate and abstract doctrinal conception.

The title *Lohan* has long been bestowed upon the initiates of those secret rites and disciplines which form the spiritual essence of Buddhistic philosophy. Like all mystical traditions, this hidden Doctrine is too attenuated to be captured and held in the writings or opinions of West-

ern intellectuals who have made but a superficial study of Eastern metaphysics. Naturally these Occidentals deny the existence of that which their own training and prejudice forbid them to examine. It is impossible to give serious thought to the elaborate structure of Mahayana Buddhism, with its intricate symbolism and profound metaphysical convictions, without sensing the existence of some inner meaning more profound and more important than the teachings given to the uninitiated and unqualified laity.

The Migrations of Buddhism

Although it is generally assumed that the decline of Buddhism in India was due to religious persecution, other factors were involved. By the 8th century A. D. the numerous Buddhist sects had developed esoteric systems which mingled with the Hindu revival of mysticism. It was often impossible to distinguish clearly between the mantric and Tantric practices which had gained popularity among the Hindus and the Buddhists. Prior to the Mohammedan conquest, however, the Arhats of the Middle Path carried the Doctrine to many remote parts of Asia. The wonderful powers attributed to these Buddhist saints indicate that the Yogacharya system had already colored the original teachings with extravagant metaphysical speculations.

About the middle of the 1st century A. D. the Chinese Emperor Ming Ti had a wonderful dream, in which he saw a man of gigantic stature with a nimbus about his head. When the emperor described the golden giant to the officers of his court, one of the ministers explained that in the Western quarter of the world there was a god so represented whose name was Buddha. Ming Ti then sent envoys to India to make inquiries respecting the Buddhist Doctrine. E. A. Gordon describes what followed thus: "It was in response to these Imperial enquiries that two religious accompanied Tsai Yin, the Chinese Envoy, back from Kanishka's court in the 'Kingdom of Fo' (as

Gandara was styled by the later Mongols), by the trade-route across the Khyber-pass, taking a sandal-wood image of Buddha and five sacred books which, as they approached the capital, the Envoy caused to be borne upon a White Horse into Lo-yang (*Jap.* Raku-yo), where the Emperor reverently received and had a Pagoda built for them, attached to a monastery in which he ordered the monks should be housed." *

The Buddhist monks Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaraksha, who came to China at the command of the Han emperor, both died within three years and left only translations of some sections of the Sutras. These sections were limited to the ethical importance of Buddhism, and revealed very little of the deeper philosophy. Occasionally thereafter, missionaries from India reached China and were provided with monastic houses. It was not, however, until the beginning of the 4th century that native Chinese were permitted to become Buddhist monks. † From the 4th to the 10th century may be regarded as the golden age of Buddhism in China. The Sung dynasty (908-1280) favored the revival of Confucian philosophy. By this time, however, both Buddhism and Taoism had reached influential proportions and many of their concepts were incorporated into the restoration of Confucianism. It has been noted that the Chinese intellectuals favored the teachings of Confucius, and as a result the Buddhist scholars were not able to reach this level of Chinese society.

No sooner had Buddhism been established in the Chinese area than its influence was extended to regions previously inaccessible. The Doctrine was introduced into Tibet through the marriage of the Tibetan king, or chieftan, Srong Tsan Gampo with the Buddhist daughter of the Chinese emperor. The faith then advanced toward

* See "World Healers", or *The Lotus Gospel*, etc.

† See *An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism*, by Wm. Montgomery McGovern, Ph. D.

Korea, which it reached A. D. 372. Here Buddhism flourished, especially from the 10th to the 14th centuries. It should be noted that in both China and Korea there has been a remarkable expansion of Buddhism since the beginning of the 20th century. Japan received the Doctrine from Korea through the devotion and piety of the Prince Imperial, Shotoku Taishi. Within the last hundred years, Japan, in turn, has been noted for its missionary zeal. The Japanese Buddhist sects have established temples in Formosa, Korea, Manchuria, and China, and have gone so far as to extend their ministrations to the Hawaiian Islands, the United States, and Canada. Essentially the purpose has been to serve the Japanese populations in these areas, but many non-Buddhists have been attracted.

Chinese Buddhism developed several important sects, and these, in turn, were transferred to Japan and Korea. With the exception of Tibetan Lamaism the various Buddhist denominations in China and Japan did not evolve any elaborate ecclesiasticism. It is usual, therefore, to compare them with the Protestant sects of Christianity. They differed in matters of emphasis, but were united in the essential truths of the original revelation. The one dissonant note is the Zen sect, which is intensely individualistic in matters of interpretation. There has been a great deal of expansion in Buddhism since the rise of what are called the modern sects. Actually these groups came into existence in the 12th and 13th centuries and still claim a constantly increasing membership. McGovern is of the opinion that the Zen school has probably the most educated laity, and the Shin the most educated clergy at the present time.

The broader expansion of Buddhism was due to the patronage of important rulers and the zeal of the Buddhist monks and scholars. There are many elements of Christian and Buddhist religious chemistry which have never

been adequately analyzed. In the 4th century, Syriac bishops had seats along the Central Asian caravan routes. In A. D. 411 the Patriarch of Seleucia consecrated a Metropolitan for China. This means that there were at least six bishops under him, and others were added later. Pilgrimage contributed to the spread of cultural traditions. Even at an early date Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian converts were impelled to visit India and pay homage to the sacred places of Buddhism. Thus Kashmir, Afghanistan, and other far places were visited and, to a measure, explored. To reach their ultimate destinations, these travelers had to pass through communities which had not received the benefits of the revelation. The travelers became missionaries, and the marvels and wonders which they reported were long remembered. At least one of the illustrious converts to the Mahayana school, the sage Kumarajiva, is known to have had contact with early Christianity.

Gradually a process of travel and conversion wove the Buddhism of Eastern Asia into one vast fabric. Nestorian Christian teachers were in the court of China during the 8th century, and the then-flourishing religions of the world mingled their traditions, contributing to each other many colorful legends, symbols, and rituals. In time the admixture became so complicated that it is no longer possible to distinguish the source of ideas in substance identical. Buddhism included no doctrinal requirement to advance its cause by conquest or the sword. The old monks mingled peacefully with their neighbors and made no effort to establish strong sectarian groups. Buddhism therefore became a quality in the ethical and moral life of Asia. It enriched without demanding recognition, and it served without hope of honor or reward. For most of the peoples which it reached, Buddhism was a better way of explaining, interpreting, and understanding beliefs and teachings already familiar. This thought underlies the legends which describe how the Buddhist Arhats actually con-

verted the gods and demons of the communities where they established their schools.

Nestorius, the Syrian Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431, was involved in doctrinal difficulties with Cyril, the sanctified bishop of Alexandria. The real cause of the contention was apparently the increasing influence of the see of Constantinople. A synod was called, over which Cyril presided. This assembly pronounced Nestorius and his doctrine to be anathema without permitting the accused prelate and his followers a hearing of any kind. Later the entire session was declared by the emperor to be invalid. Ultimately, however, the Nestorians, being a minority group, were unable to maintain themselves and lost most of their holdings. The majority of Eastern Christians of early times belonged to the Nestorian churches, and there were communities of this sect in many parts of the Near East, India, and China. In 1274 Ser Marco Polo reported two Nestorian churches in Tataria. The modern sectaries venerate Nestorius as a saint, but reject the doctrine that the blessed Virgin Mary was the mother of God.

In many respects the Nestorians shared the moral and ethical convictions of the Buddhists. The simplicity, humility, and gentleness of the Buddhist monks, the monastic system which they had established, and the code of conduct which they practiced brought the two sects close together in their practical purposes. Both were also minority groups at that time struggling for survival against opposing beliefs unacceptable to both. Later the Buddhists and the Nestorians suffered from the rise of Moslemism. It does not seem strange, therefore, that a certain exchange of ideas can be traced in the surviving forms of both groups. Traditionally, the spread of Buddhism was attributed to the zeal of missionary Arhats and Lohans. When it was reported to the Buddhist communities in India that some distant ruler or remote province desired to receive the Doctrine, appropriate teachers were sent out usually ac-

companied by pack-animals loaded with books, images, and sacred relics.

The oldest printed book in the world, discovered by Sir Auriel Stein and now in the British Museum, was published from wood blocks in the 9th century and is the *Diamond Sutra* of Buddha. In many instances the Buddhist missionaries penetrated into illiterate areas where it was necessary to establish schools and to provide educational facilities. In this way the Buddhist teachers were responsible for the rise of national cultures. The Arhats from Nalanda were distinguished for their scholarly attainments, and combined religious, philosophical, and scientific instructions in their program for bestowing enlightenment.

Although some of these teachers suffered persecution and martyrdom, they were, for the most part, received with kindness and consideration. Even cannibal tribes welcomed them and were inspired to reform savage practices. The success of these Buddhist missions was due largely to the pattern universally followed. The monks were quiet, unassuming, humble, and patient. They made no effort to become politically dominant. They were available when their counsel was required or solicited, but were content to be known through their works and the sincerity of their motives. Their contributions were so obviously beneficial that after a time they were accepted without reservation.

The simple stories of the Arhats were soon elaborated by the grateful peoples who embraced the teaching. In those days it appeared miraculous that lonely saints and sages could cross deserts, rivers, and mountains and come safely to the journey's end. Tribes given to Nature worship believed the roads and paths to be infested by demons, evil spirits, and wicked ghosts, yet the Buddhist monks passed through these perilous ways unmolested and undisturbed. Surely their powers must be great and they

must be masters of magic. As the stories grew it was reported that one Arhat walked across a turbulent river, another flew through the wild passes of the Himalayas, and still another floated across an ocean on a palm leaf.

In the Northern system of Buddhism the more celebrated Arhats were regarded as embodiments of, or extensions from, the Bodhisattvas of the superior regions. Gradually, sanctified disciples mingled with the personifications of the attributes of universal consciousness until it is difficult to distinguish the historical saints from the persons of the mystical pantheon. Many of the immediate disciples of Gautama Buddha were elevated to Arhatship either during the lifetime of the teacher or soon after. The two "great pupils" who predeceased their Master, Sariputta and Moggallana, were regarded as the right and left hands of the Doctrine. Next in authority and veneration were the three who presided over the first Council, Kasyapa, Upali, and Buddha's cousin and beloved disciple Ananda. These are recognized by both the Northern and Southern Schools as most venerable Arhats. Later certain founders and reformers were also considered as "most deserving." In this group should be included Nagarjuna, Dharmapala, Vasumitra, Asvaghosha, Gunamati, Sthriamati, and Buddha's son, Rahula,* who became the patron of novices and founder of the Realistic School.

Major-General Furlong points out that there is a distinct tendency to exchange sanctified personalities and press them into the service of other religions. In his *Faiths of Man*, this learned writer gives a curious example. A 7th-century religious romance, *Barlaam and Joasaph*, resulted in the canonization of Buddha under the name St. Josaphat. Josaphat is a corruption of Bodhisat. In the Greek and Latin martyrologies his day is November 27th.

* There is a legend that Rahula has earned the right to be reborn as the eldest son of all future Buddhas.

Colonel Yule, in his *Marco Polo*, states that a church in Palermo is dedicated to this saint."

Asvaghosha was the 11th Patriarch of Buddhism and flourished in the 2nd century A. D. He was born of a Brahman family, but having been converted to Buddhism he devoted his life to its service. He was a poet and a musician, and is mentioned as an early Indian dramatist. He was summoned from Magadha to the court of King Kanishka, and while there probably wrote *The Life of Buddha*. It is possible that the story of Buddha's life and ministry, which was carried to China by the monks summoned to the court of Ming Ti, was either a digest of Asvaghosha's account or parts thereof. The prestige of the learned northern Patriarch was responsible for the circulation of what is now considered the standard biographical work on the life and ministry of Buddha. The story as Asvaghosha told it had a broad and urgent appeal and served to spread Buddhist doctrines through northeastern Asia.

After the books brought by the first monks, a stream of sacred literature flowed into China from India. Liberal and enlightened sovereigns caused these works to be duly translated or transliterated, and the copies were placed in important monasteries. By the year A. D. 684 an extensive catalogue of these collections had been compiled. This assumed the proportions of a connective cord which bound them all together, and the accumulation emerged as a distinct corpus. Several waves of persecution, however, affected the descent of Chinese Buddhism. There was a brief crisis at the beginning of the Tang dynasty inspired apparently by economic factors. The monks and nuns did not marry or establish families, and refrained from economic enterprise, thereby reducing the revenue of the state.

About A. D. 714, twelve thousand Buddhist monks and priests were required to return to secular life, and the

growth of the faith was strictly prohibited. A few years later all this was changed, and Buddhism was in favor until the edict of the Emperor Wu-tsung, in A. D. 845. At that time nearly five thousand monasteries were destroyed and some forty thousand religious houses and shrines were demolished. The properties of the sect were confiscated and their bells and images melted down and made into currency. Two hundred and sixty thousand monks and nuns were forced to give up their religious obligations. Almost immediately, however, Wu-tsung's successor reversed the policy, but naturally did not entirely restore the damage which had been done.

The effort of the fourth emperor of the Manchu dynasty to suppress Buddhism resulted in the so-called Sacred Edict of 1662, which intimated that Buddhism was gaining too much wealth and influence. Although this Edict was broadly circulated, it produced very little effect and, if anything, strengthened the resolutions of the devout and restored the courage of their spiritual convictions. Since that time there has been general tolerance, and those opposed to Buddhism have been forced to advance their own beliefs by reasonable and moderate methods.

A religion seldom expands in a foreign country unless it appeals to the inner conviction of converts. China was in need of a spiritual revelation which placed a strong emphasis upon the principle of faith. As in India, the need for a simple doctrine inspiring the average layman to a constructive code of conduct could not fail to win adherents. While Buddhism did not originally emphasize a congregational worship, there is abundant proof that even as early as the time of Asoka there were gatherings of the faithful for purposes of veneration. The concept of integrity leading to illumination and finally emancipation from the limitations and sorrows of mortal existence also found an immediate response from man's inner convictions. Neither Taoism nor Confucianism effectively filled

this place in man's moral consciousness. Thus Buddhism complemented the marvelous speculations of the Taoist metaphysics and the austere formalities of the Confucian code of deportment. The three schools survived together because they met the three divisions of human aspirations.

The spread of Buddhism was due in part to the distribution of the sacred relics of the Buddhas and the Arhat-Bodhisattvas. When the question arose as to what should be done with his remains after he had attained the parinirvana, Buddha is reported to have left singular instructions. He advised his disciples to forget the subject entirely. It was their concern to preach the Doctrine and not to become keepers of mortal remains. The Master further explained that those incapable by their own attainments of teaching or disseminating the philosophy would find consolation in preserving the relics. This is precisely what occurred. Devout laymen cherished the priceless objects and constructed for them rare and beautiful reliquaries. It was in this way, for example, that the Shwe Dagon in Rangoon, Burma, gained the treasures which were buried beneath it. By a similar circumstance a tooth of the Buddha was carried to Ceylon and there enshrined within eleven containers of priceless workmanship. Although direct evidence is lacking, there is every reason to assume that the Boro Budur in Central Java and the great ruins of Cambodia were also monuments associated with the holy relics.

The spread of Buddhism beyond the boundaries of India was also accelerated by the beautiful religious symbolism through which the original code was unfolded. Eastern peoples are much given to allegory and fable, and the flowering of Buddhist legendry appealed to the deep emotional instinct in human nature. Buddhism has been criticized for the extravagance of its lore, but this was largely the result of the gratitude of worshipers who found countless ways to embellish the original narratives. The West-

ern critic is wrong, however, when he assumes that there is no simple, human story of the Buddha. It only occurred that the seed, falling into a rich and ready soil, grew luxuriantly, nourished by poetry and fancy.

Everywhere those who received the Doctrine felt a profound personal gratitude, as one writer, with entirely non-Buddhist persuasions, grudgingly acknowledges: "I admit that Buddhism conferred many other benefits on the millions inhabiting the most populous parts of Asia. It introduced education and culture; it encouraged literature and art; it promoted physical, moral, and intellectual progress up to a certain point; it proclaimed peace, good will, and brotherhood among men; it depreciated war between nation and nation; it avowed sympathy with social liberty and freedom; it gave back much independence to women; it preached purity in thought, word, and deed . . . ; it taught self-denial without self-torture; it inculcated generosity, charity, tolerance, love, self-sacrifice, and benevolence, even toward the inferior animals; it advocated respect for life and compassion toward all creatures; it forbade avarice and the hoarding of money; and from its declaration if a man's future depended upon his present acts and conditions, it did good service for a time in preventing stagnation, stimulating exertion, promoting good works of all kind, and elevating the character of humanity." *

No other explanation than the above is necessary to an understanding of the forces which caused Buddhism to have a broad and deep appeal. It revealed in tangible form a proper and suitable code, and most of all it encouraged personal integrity. The very honesty of the overconcept was so evident and so undeniable that the Doctrine was eagerly embraced by those of good principles and constructive intent. Especially it appealed to such underprivileged classes as had slight consolation from other

* *Buddhism, in its Connection with Brahmanism and Hinduism, etc.*,
by Sir Monier Monier-Williams.

faiths of the day. Inevitably virtue was interpreted according to local standards, and the original teachings were considerably modified. Even so, the broad program was ethically satisfactorily except to those of tyrannical inclinations.

Even the original Sangha, however, was aware that the teachings of the Buddha would fall upon evil times. There are early intimations and admonitions relating to this phase of the Doctrine. When Buddha relinquished his Bodisattvaship in the Tushita heaven, he transferred this power to the Maitreya who was to succeed him in the great line of instructors. It was then prophesied that after five thousand years the revelation brought by Gautama would be so diluted by worldliness, obscured by error, and perverted by selfishness that its purposes would be frustrated. When this day came, the Maitreya would come into birth as a human Buddha and appear as the fifth of the Great Enlightened Ones. He would carry the symbol of eternal mendicancy, Gautama's begging bowl, which before that time would be transferred to the Tushita heaven and be bestowed upon him. In this day to come, the Arhat-Bodhisattvas, dedicated to the service of truth, will again surround the incarnated Buddha, and a new revelation of the Law will be given. It is not stated that the Maitreya will merely confirm his predecessor. The teaching will be suitable to the times. Appearances change, but the substance is ever the same. Maitreya will not fight against the forces of darkness, but will simply reveal the light, which by that time men will desire because of the disasters which must forever accompany ignorance.

Buddhism in Japan

Umayado, the eldest son of the Emperor Yomei, was one of the most extraordinary men in the annals of Japan. Although he never actually ascended the throne, he was appointed Regent under the Empress Suiko, and held im-

perial powers and authorities. He is known to history as Shotoku Taishi, or Prince Shotoku. This brilliant leader combined political skill with a profound regard for the ethical foundations of a national culture. He realized that his people were divided by a lack of social vision. Shintoism was not strong enough from a doctrinal standpoint to overcome the prevailing conflict of factions and tribes. To unite the Japanese people, a philosophical concept which taught unity as a religious virtue and social requirement alone could meet the pressing need for immediate reforms. Shotoku proclaimed Buddhism as the State Religion of Japan in A. D. 604 and immediately directed his attention to the expansion of the sect.

Buddhism was already the dominant faith of Asia, and Japan, by adopting this system, aligned itself with the civilized races and states on the Asiatic mainland. This vastly increased the prestige of the island kingdom. Because of his resolute determination to disseminate the fundamentals of Buddhist Doctrine, Shotoku came to be regarded as the incarnation or embodiment of one of the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana system. He stands as a political Arhat, combining statesmanship and mystical enthusiasm. Shotoku published in 604 the *Jushichi Kempo*, a constitution consisting of seventeen articles, often referred to as the first written law of Japan. This compilation is actually a collection of moral teachings, depending for authority upon the human conscience and the internal integrity of the concepts. The substance of the seventeen articles was derived from the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism. The prestige of Shotoku as Prince Imperial caused this constitution to receive unusual consideration. With minor exceptions, this code, or compilation of statutes, could well guide the conduct of any community, ancient or modern.

Although a small Buddhist temple was erected at Yamato in A. D. 522, it was not until the closing years of the

6th century that the king of Korea sent books, images, teachers, and holy relics to the court of the Mikado. The first Chinese monks are said to have reached Japan in 623, and the Emperor Ko-toku Tenno (A. D. 645-654) became a sincere adherent and champion of Buddhist doctrines. The Ko-buku-ji monastery at Nara was erected in 710. From this date to the end of the 12th century, teachers came from China, and Japanese monks visited the mainland in search of religious knowledge. Among the prominent Japanese Buddhist sects should be mentioned the Tendai, the Shingon, the Zen, the Jodo, the Nichiren, and the Shin. Each of these differs from the others, much as the Protestant denominations of Christianity have their creedal variants.

The Tendai-shu was founded by the Chinese monk Chishu Daishi. This sect emphasizes the law of meditation and seeks to recognize the supreme power of Buddha as it is concealed by, and manifested through, all the forms and attributes associated with the great teacher. The Shingon-shu, which is deeply involved in mystical and magical formulas, is traced to Nagarjuna, who is said to have discovered the secret formulas in an iron pagoda in southern India. The Zen-shu, or contemplative school, was founded in China by Bodhidharma (Daruma), who lived in that country from A. D. 527 to 535. This school is highly intuitional and believes that the true Doctrine can be imparted only by intuitional means. The Jodo-shu traces itself to the Indian Patriarch Asvaghosha, and also insists upon asceticism and meditation as the proper instruments of salvation. The Nichiren-shu is an indigenous Japanese development, which will be discussed in greater detail. The Shin-shu holds that salvation is dependent upon the inward visualization of the merciful power of the Buddha Amida. It has been termed the Protestantism of Japan, and its principal temples, known as the Ho-dwan-ji, are among the finest in the country. These sects, which maintain amicable relationship, gain comfort from the teach-

ings of Nagarjuna, who reminded his disciples that in Buddhism there are many paths, even as in the physical world there are numerous roads.

The nonmilitant program, which is essentially a part of Buddhist philosophy, never permitted the sect to proselyte by aggressive means. As a result, the differences between the imported philosophy and the native Shintoism were solved by arbitration. With the passing of time, a degree of blending was accomplished, and the two sects flourished together for more than twelve hundred years without serious differences. The Buddhist simply interpreted Shintoism in terms of Buddhism, and the results were generally acceptable. Although not usually emphasized by historians, the Buddhism of Japan contributed a great deal to the preservation of Chinese culture. It is easier to study the religious arts of China, especially those of the Tang and Sung dynasties, through the Japanese exponents of these cultural epochs than in the scattered Chinese remains.

"The story of Buddhism in Japan," writes Kenneth J. Saunders, "is almost the story of her civilization; there is little in her rich tapestry of art and religion which Buddhism has not inspired and molded. From this splendid background there stands out certain great and notable epochs and certain great names. First and most far-reaching in its achievements is the era of Shotoku Taishi (593-622), a contemporary of Muhammad and of Augustine of Canterbury, and like them a founder of a new civilization." *

To impress visitors with this important cultural program, Shotoku caused the Shrine of the Four Heavenly Guardians to be established at a port on an inland sea. Thus strangers arriving from Korea or China immediately beheld a beautiful group of buildings devoted to art, music,

medicine, literature, and philosophy gathered about a monastery and shrine of the Buddhist faith. The prince went farther; he carefully examined the vast Buddhist literature and chose those Sutras or sections of Scripture which would most directly benefit his people. These writings he disseminated as part of a broad educational program. Unfortunately the genius of Shotoku did not pass to his descendants, but Buddhism was sufficiently established to survive and unfold among the Japanese.

Bodhidharma, the Patriarch of Zen

Although the school of Dhyana originated in India and flourished in China, it seems advisable to consider it among the Buddhist sects of Japan. We do this because for centuries the Japanese have been the outstanding exponents of this strange and obscure doctrine. For reasons which will later appear more obvious this contemplative rite, which was introduced into Japan in 1168 (possibly earlier), had particular appeal to the military class. The heart of the soldier is burdened with countless uncertainties and fears, and his dangerous profession inclines him to seek a form of spiritual consolation which gives promise of victory over pain and death.

Bodhidharma, known in Japan as Daruma, the twenty-eighth patriarch of Buddhism, was initiated into the Mysteries by the great master Panyatara. After his initiation, Bodhidharma, who was a Hindu by birth, journeyed to China. According to some accounts he walked the entire distance, but others have called him "the navigating Brahman" and suppose that he came on a ship. He established himself in the Shao Lin monastery where he sat in meditation for nine years, keeping awake by drinking vast quantities of tea. He remained in China the rest of his life, which extended through the greater part of the 5th century.

* See *Epochs in Buddhist History*



—From *Ikkyū Gaijōtsu*

PORTRAIT OF BODHIDHARMA, 28TH PATRIARCH
OF ZEN, BY A TALENTED ARTIST-PRIEST
OF THE SECT

In appearance Bodhidharma was certainly an extraordinary person. His huge body, shaggy brows, and piercing blue eyes have inspired many ferocious representations of him by the artists of his sect. He was likened to a growling bear huddled in his red robe, mumbling and grumbling about everything in general and nothing in particular. But by any qualified estimation he was one of the greatest Arhats of Buddhism and, like Socrates, he has

survived any defect of personal charm by the magnificent capacity of his mind.

When the Dhyana doctrine reached Japan, the word *Dhyana*, meaning meditation, was translated into the Japanese equivalent, *Zen*. The change of locale resulted in modifications of the teachings themselves, but the contemplative quality still dominates to a large degree. The austerity of the Zen concepts appear at first to be cold and forbidding, but this superficial atmosphere of skepticism and cynicism conceals an intensely lovable and genuinely inspiring philosophy of life. Zen does not attack realities, but vigorously opposes all sham and deceit. There is no place in its conception of things for the temporal ambitions of foolish mortals or for the complacent self-assurance of those worldly wise and spiritually ignorant. It sweeps away with a gesture of profound contempt both the greatness of the great and the smallness of the small. It ridicules emperors as cheerfully as it rebukes the lowest ruffian. It makes a fine art of giving offense and delights in embarrassing those who regard themselves as outstanding citizens. If it can not brush away the whole world with its horsehair whiskbroom, at least it makes a valiant attempt. But it does not tear away the marks of false learning or respectability merely to satisfy some frustrated instinct of its own superiority. Its real motive is to reveal the simple beauty of the honest human face behind the mask. It seeks to dignify the real by reminding men that simple ways are the best and all pretense must end in sorrow and suffering.

In 1938 the membership of the three branches of the Zen-shu in Japan totaled about nine and a half million. The largest sect of the Zen communion is the Soto, which was brought from China soon after 1223 by the priest Dogen (Joyo Daishi). The substance of the Soto conviction may be gathered from a statement of the doctrine by

Dogen: "Birth and death are the life of Buddha itself. To escape them is to run away from the life of Buddha."

The teachings of the princely Patriarch Bodhidharma, as he attempted to bestow them upon the Chinese emperor in 520, has exercised a wide influence in most departments of Japanese living. The method of Zen is called Zazen, or the tranquil session.

This mood permeated the art, literature, and culture of the entire country. Dr. M. Anesaki, sometime professor of Japanese literature and life at Harvard University, thus describes the spiritual perspective of the Zenist: "His mind, finding unbroken quiet deep in the heart of nature, perceives the motion and the changes in things as fleet expressions stirring, perhaps, the profound repose of nature's face. In the world many are born and many die; the years roll on, the seasons follow one another; leaves bud out green and wither, flowers bloom and are scattered. Let them come and go as they may; the Zenist observes it all in cool composure, though not in stupid indifference. What interests him is the calmly flowing aspect of this perpetual change, or, more properly, the eternal tranquillity seen through and behind the changes. In his sight, the beauty and grandeur of a waterfall consist in its motion as a whole,—not in the movement of particular drops and bubbles; and it was this motion that the Zenist enjoyed as a symbol of the general, everlasting flow of nature. The world he sees—like the landscapes painted by Sesshu—is without dazzling color and vivid movement. Through his mind all phenomena are drawn into the quiet abyss of the spiritual ocean where there are neither waves nor whirlpools, and where the individual coalesces with the vast expanse of nature and with the unchangeable continuity of the universe. In short, *Zen* is a naturalism which defies the lure of human activity and absorbs nature and life into

the all-embracing tranquillity of the mind identified with the cosmos." *

One of the cardinal tenets of Zen is that "knowledge can be transmitted from heart to heart without the intervention of words." The supreme truth is entirely too subtle to be entrusted to the limited symbolism of language. In silence Buddha revealed the Dhyana; in silence Panyatara conferred it upon Bodhidharma, and in silence this great Adept bestowed the succession upon the Patriarchs of Zen. He poured the doctrine into the vessels of his disciple's heart as into a new pitcher, thus securing the silent perpetuation of the mysteries of the Law.

When the time came for Bodhidharma to depart, he gathered the monks and nuns of the Order about him and questioned them as to the realization they had obtained. Having resolved all difficulties, the aged Arhat retired into the consciousness of the Doctrine. Three years after his reported death a strange story began to be circulated. Some peasants in the hill country had seen the fierce old philosopher plodding on his way through the western mountains of China, his face resolutely turned toward India. He was barefooted, but for some inexplicable reason was carrying one shoe in his hand.

The reports became so numerous that the emperor of China, to settle the matter, caused the tomb of Bodhidharma to be opened. To the amazement of everyone the grave was empty except for one shoe, the mate to the slipper that Bodhidharma had carried away. On the strength of this account it has been affirmed that the great Dhyana monk never really died, but, having completed his labors in China, employed the subterfuge of death as a convenient method of disappearing. Philosophic deaths of this kind are frequent in the accounts of Adepts.

* *Buddhistic Art in its Relation to Buddhist Ideals* (Boston and New York, 1915)

Kobo Daishi, Founder of Shingon

The most celebrated of the Buddhist saints of Japan was the bonze Kukai, best known under his posthumous title of Kobo Daishi. In A. D. 806, this Japanese priest, who had been initiated by Chinese masters, founded the Shingon-shu, or the Sect of the True Word. According to popular tradition, the Shingon school of Mahayana Buddhism is based upon the teachings of Buddha, which had been discovered by the sage Nagarjuna when he opened an iron tower in Southern India about eight hundred years after the death of Gautama.

Kobo Daishi descended from a noble family and, according to his birth legends, he was born in an attitude of prayer with his hands and feet joined together. He started life resolved upon an official career, for which he prepared himself by attending an outstanding university. While a student he became profoundly interested in Confucianism, but this ethical system was not sufficiently deep to satisfy his mind. He then turned to the teachings of the celebrated Chinese mystic Lao-tse, whose abstract speculations were more suitable to the young man's natural capacities.

When he was about twenty-four years old Kobo Daishi received an internal illumination. He had already become a priest and, inspired by the spiritual mystery unfolding within him, he journeyed to China in 804, where he gave himself up entirely to the perfection of his consciousness. Returning to Japan he was encouraged by the emperor to establish the Shingon sect. The new school gained immediate popularity, appealing to the most cultured and at the same time to those of humble attainments.

This celebrated saint is described by E. Steinilber-Oberlin as a prodigious man possessing supernatural powers; a mystic, philosopher, artist, scientist, and a magician,



—From *Les Sectes bouddiques japonaises*

NATIVE PORTRAIT OF KOBODAISHI, FOUNDER OF
THE JAPANESE SECT OF SHINGON.

whose genius could dominate the elements and change the course of things. He was the inventor of the *hira-gana* syllabary, a refined system of writing now used throughout Japan, and was a calligrapher of distinction.*

Beatrice Lane Suzuki notes that Kobo Daishi was an author, sculptor, and the foremost leader of the times in educational enterprises and social work. He dug wells, opened roads, established a school for nonaristocratic students, was the teacher of three emperors, friendly with priests of other sects, and beloved by all. No wonder that his light still shines at Koyasan.†

* *The Buddhist Sects of Japan* (London, 1938).

† *Koya San, The Home of Kobo Daishi and His Shingon Doctrine* (Japan, 1936).

When Kobo Daishi, who could paint with ten brushes at the same time, decided that he had completed the work for which he had come into incarnation, he assumed the posture of ecstasy and was buried alive at his own request. This occurred in 825. Many of the pilgrims who journey to the shrines of the Shingon sect are convinced that the Master never actually died, but remains in his grave in a state of meditation waiting for the Buddha who is to come.

The doctrines of Shingon are a natural expression of the enlightened mind of their saintly founder. He was a gentle, intuitive man, convinced by his broad learning of the natural goodness present in every living creature. He refused to accept the external confusion of life as a reality and sought the solution to the riddle of existence by searching beneath the surface of things for eternal and sustaining values. He believed that both religion and life were outer expressions or symbols of principles invisible to the external perceptions, but to be discovered as experiences of consciousness.

Thus even Buddhism itself was both exoteric and esoteric. There was a doctrine for the many, rich in moral and ethical implications, but inadequate to accomplish the perfect enlightenment of the human being. There is also a mystery doctrine which cannot be attained by the intellect, but must be accomplished by the Ten Degrees of Spiritual Elevation. Such as make themselves one with the esoteric heart of the Doctrine become clear knowers. There are many ways by which the internal organs of knowing may be opened, like the bud of the white lotus, to receive into themselves the pure light of Buddha. This ecstatic state may result from the contemplation of sacred pictures and world diagrams called *mandaras* (Sanskrit, *mandalas*). So subtle is this mystery that mudras (the postures of the hands), mantras (ritualistic statements of spiritual power), and similar religious practices may stimulate ecstasy of identity with the All-pervading.

All the followers of the Shingon sect take five vows as follows:

1. I vow to save all beings.
2. I vow to bring together wisdom and love.
3. I vow to learn all the Dharmas.
4. I vow to serve all the Buddhas.
5. I vow to attain the highest enlightenment.

The ideal of Shingon is to attain Buddhahood during the present life and in the present body. In *Koyo San*, Madame Suzuki summarizes the concept thus: "The chief point is that there is one Absolute Reality and everything, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, men, angels, plants, and other substances have latent Buddhahood, and through the practice of the Three Secrets enlightenment can be attained. Everyone and everything is One with this Absolute Reality, the Dharmakaya, and when this Oneness is realized, Truth is known and suffering ceases."

By this concept Buddhahood is gained, not so much by the tedious processes of growth, but by breaking through the walls of illusion. This is the Shingon ideal—*Sokushinjobutsu*. It is not so different from the Absolutism of European mystics, the belief to know truth and that truth known shall make men free. Most Eastern mystics have sensed the mystery of God-consciousness. They have realized the possibility of identification with universals by means of ecstasy or exaltation resulting from the contemplation of the qualities or attributes of the divine substance and the divine being.

Kobo Daishi taught a kind of theurgy not essentially different from that of the Neoplatonists, for, like these philosophers of Alexandria, he was himself a scholarly and generous thinker. Such a conviction in its purest form is beyond the understanding of the average human being, and it was inevitable that the followers of the faith should

lean heavily upon the ritualistic means and have but a dim comprehension of the spiritual ends. While his teachings fell away somewhat in practice from their exalted theories, Kobo Daishi is entitled to full recognition as an initiate-teacher. He opened a gate for those who had the wisdom, courage, and love to serve unselfishly the light that shines in the heart of man and in the heart of the world.

The Nichiren Sect

The Japanese Buddhist saint and reformer, who took the name Nichiren, was born the son of a humble fisherman on the 30th day of March, A. D. 1222. From childhood he possessed a serious and mystical turn of mind, and his later doctrine was strongly influenced by his early contemplation of the sun and the sea. To him the glorious orb of day was an eternal symbol of the universal light of truth. The perfect religion must be like the sun, shining into the hearts of all men, bringing with its warmth the blessings of physical security, mental extension, and absolute peace of consciousness.

The great ocean also had its message for this strange, sensitive boy. Here was the tideless sea of the Doctrine, deep as the wisdom of the ages, vast as Buddha's conception of the cosmic plan, and as mysterious as the workings of the human heart. To meditate upon the sun and the sea was to leave all smallness behind. The little projects of little men were no longer important. The human purpose was absorbed in the universal purpose, and in the end there was only light, peace, and the eternal silence that flowed on forever and ever.

When Nichiren was twelve years old, he became a disciple of the Shingon sect, serving his novitiate under the venerable abbot Dozembo. The wonderful symbolism and ritualism of the Shingon school were transmuted by the natural beauty of the boy's character into a pure and



—From Suzuki's *Japanese Buddhism*

PORTRAIT OF NICHIREN, THE SANCTIFIED
JAPANESE BUDDHIST TEACHER

Detail from an ancient painting.

holy zeal. So rapid was his progress in Buddhist philosophy that he was ordained to the priesthood when only sixteen years old. It was at this time that he selected a religious name, Nichiren, signifying *Lotus of the Sun*. It is believed that he was influenced in his choice of a name by a story told of his mother. This good woman had a marvelous dream of a white lotus with a radiant sun floating above it just before the boy was conceived.

Like most religious leaders, Nichiren came to his people at a time of unusual calamity and distress. Japan, bleeding from the Mongolian invasions, was also torn with internal strife, political and military. Famines, plagues, and earthquakes spread terror and desolation. Nichiren, who remained always in his heart a simple peasant, suffered with and for the common man. He determined to

find a way of bringing the consolation of Buddhistic mysticism to those who, unlettered and unlearned, must bear the burden of the world's pain.

Something very deep and wise within the heart of the young priest told him that truth was not complex, but infinitely simple. It was because of this infinite simplicity that the real way of the Buddha had been concealed from the scholars. Hidden somewhere among the sermons and discourses of Buddha and his immediate Arhats there must be one *Sutra* which embodied the very essence of all the teachings of the Enlightened One. Nichiren knew that he had been born into the material world to discover this "Sutra-king" that ruled over all the Scriptures.

After deep and earnest prayers to Kokuzo Bosatsu, the deity presiding over the wisdom of the Doctrine, Nichiren began a pilgrimage to the various shrines, temples, and schools of Japanese Buddhism in search of the "Sutra-king." His travels lasted for sixteen years, and he studied with the principal Masters of his time. He also included in his program a thorough examination of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. These studies enabled him to evaluate the numerous sacred books and to compare the merits and demerits of the different teachers and their schools.

Nichiren decided finally that the *Saddharmapundarika Sutra* (*The Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth*) was the one which contained the most complete statement of true Buddhism. The saint's words summarize his conviction: "One who knows that the Lotus of Truth is the king of all scriptures, knows the truth of religion." Having decided that he had discovered the "Sutra-king," Nichiren dedicated his life to the study and propagation of the doctrine which it contained. He conceived of Three Esoteric Principles which summarized all the essentials of the pure faith. The first of these principles was the Holy Title.

In the early morning of May 17, 1253, Nichiren stood alone on the summit of a mountain, his eyes turned toward the sun as it rose from the deep-blue mystery of the ocean. Then for the first time he intoned the formula of the Great Conviction: "*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*,"* which means "adoration be to the Scripture of the Lotus of the Perfect Truth." This is the peculiar mantra of his Order, and it has been chanted by his monks and priests and pilgrims for almost seven hundred years. These are the words of power that have peculiar merit. By the chanting of the sacred title, the human being is united in consciousness with the "Sutra-king" and the Lord Buddha himself.

It may be difficult for the average Westerner to understand the importance of what appears to be merely a formula of words, but we must remember that true mysticism is an inner unfoldment almost completely beyond definition in the terms of physical experience. A gesture of the hand, a mantra, a few notes struck upon the lute, the presence of a holy object, or a tree growing alone on some rocky craig — this is enough. Words, explanations, and lengthy arguments add nothing. They only destroy the subtle substance of unworldliness, conjured up by the rapture of the Saint. "*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*" is the Great Conviction. It lies behind the spoken word; it inspires the chant; it draws forth hope and a gentle yearning after truth itself. It fulfills the wonderful workings of the Law, for those who speak it belongs to it, share in it, and attain it by devotion alone.

The ministry of Nichiren was burdened with all the privations and persecutions usually associated with the career of a religious leader. In 1261 he was banished by his political enemies, but used the opportunity to preach

* *Footsteps of Japanese Buddhism; Part 1, The Nichiren Sect* (Tokyo, 1936).

in the place of his exile. After he was pardoned in 1263, an attempt was made to assassinate him, and later in 1271 he was sentenced to death by beheading. He escaped death by a miracle, but continued to live in extreme peril and was exiled a second time to the solitary island of Sado, in the northern Sea of Japan, where he suffered intensely from cold and starvation. He remained nearly three years at Sado, and was then permitted to return home. The closing years of his life were spent in the forest solitudes of Minobu, where he dwelt in a dilapidated hut, six feet square, in a remote mountain fastness. Weakened by more than thirty years of struggle and poverty Nichiren entered the nirvana on November 14, 1282. He passed out of this life surrounded by his chanting disciples and in a state of perfect internal and external calmness.

The following quotation from the works of Nichiren summarizes his convictions: "Finally, let the celestial beings withdraw their protection, let all perils come upon me, even so, will I dedicate my life to this cause . . . Be it in weal, be it in woe, to desert the Lotus of Truth means to fall to the hells. I will be firm in my great vow. Let me face all manner of threats and temptations. Should one say to me, 'Thou mightest ascend the throne of Japan, if thou wouldst abandon the Scripture and expect future bliss through belief in the 'Meditation on Amita'; or thy parents shall suffer capital punishment, unless thou utterest the name of the Buddha Amita,' etc. Such temptations I shall meet unshaken, and shall never be allured by them, unless my principles be shattered by a sage's refutation. Any other perils shall be the dust before a storm. I will be the Pillar of Japan; I will be the Eyes of Japan; I will be the Great Vessel of Japan. Inviolable shall remain these oaths!" *

* *Footsteps of Japanese Buddhism; Part I, The Nichiren Sect* (Tokyo, 1936).

The Beginnings of Tibetan Buddhism

According to Emil Schlagintweit,* Buddhism may have been introduced to the eastern part of Tibet as early as the year 137 B. C., but if so, the endeavors of the missionary priests were ineffective. The Hungarian scholar and Orientalist, Alexander Csoma Korosi (Korosi Csoma Sandor), extracted from a historical book, written in A. D. 1686 by the Regent of Lhasa, an interesting fragment which he amplified from the History of the *East Mongols*, by Ssanang Ssetsen (Sanang Setsen). These accounts relate that during the reign of the Tibetan king whose name is given variously as Thothori Nyan tsan, or Lha-to To-ri, or Hlatotori, a miraculous circumstance occurred.

In the year A. D. 231, a precious chest or casket descended from heaven surrounded by a brilliant light, and came to rest upon the golden terrace of the royal palace. In the box were four holy objects: an image of two hands folded in prayer; a small *chorten*—a minute tower designed as a reliquary; a gem inscribed with the prayer: "*Om mani padme hum,*" and a religious book called *Szamadok*—a manual of moral conduct. The king had no comprehension of the meaning of these sacred objects, so he ordered them to be preserved in his treasury. From this time, misfortune dogged the royal footsteps. Children blind and deformed were born to the ruling family; the harvest failed; disease destroyed the cattle, and famine, pestilence, and misery afflicted all parts of the kingdom. †

After forty years of these troubles, five mysterious strangers came before the ruler. These foreigners addressed him thus: "Great King, how couldst thou let these objects, so mystic and powerful, be cast into the treasury?"

* *Buddhism in Tibet.*

† *Tibetan Tales*, by Schiefner & Ralston.

Having thus spoken, they instructed Lha-to To-ri in the proper veneration due the heaven-sent treasures. The five strangers then vanished into thin air in the presence of the king. Lha-to To-ri obeyed exactly the recommendations of the supernatural foreigners, and thereafter all his projects flourished and prosperity came to his people. By the blessings and powerful influences of the holy relics, the king attained the age of one hundred nineteen years, and performed many works of merit. Csoma adds to the above that a voice spoke from heaven, saying that after a certain number of generations (in the 7th century) the contents of the book *Szamadok* would be made known.

In his notes relating to the five foreigners, Schlagintweit suggests that these men were Chinese Buddhist priests, but their number and the circumstances involved suggest a different explanation. It will be remembered that five mysterious old men appeared to the mother of Confucius to announce the coming of the Perfect Sage. As this number also agrees with the five celestial Bodhisattvas, it seems probable that a visitation of supernatural beings is intended in the Tibetan account.

Although the miracle of the four precious objects is interpreted to mean Buddhism reached Tibet in the 3rd century of the Christian era, the story belongs to the legendary period and is open to controversy. The more conservative Tibetan historians prefer to date the propagation of Indian Buddhism among their people as commencing in the reign of the king Song-tsen Gam-po, A. D. 740-786. This important ruler exhibited at birth certain marks and signs of predestined greatness, and is now worshiped as a physical conqueror and a spiritual reformer.*

In the early years of the 7th century the Tibetans made their first recorded bid for temporal power. They invaded

* *Buddhism, in its Connection with Brahmanism and Hinduism, etc.*, by Sir Monier Monier-Williams.

Upper Burma and overran Western China, forcing the Chinese emperor to sue for a humiliating peace. As part of the tribute, the king of Tibet, then twenty-three years old, received a Chinese princess in marriage. Her name was Dolkar, and she brought with her to the high mountain country the books and relics of her faith. The king also had a second wife, a princess of Nepal named Doljang. Both these royal ladies were devout Buddhists, and as a result of their influence, the young king was induced to investigate the faith. Practical considerations also were involved. Song-tsen Gam-po had become the ruler of a far-flung empire of mountains and deserts, inhabited by both wild and civilized peoples. A strong religion would be useful in establishing national unity and a secure sovereignty. To this end he resolved to send his prime minister, Thumi Sambhota, to India to study the sacred Buddhist books and the Indian language. This prime minister emerges as the Tibetan Hermes, and after death was deified as an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. This divine being is the personification of wisdom and the preacher of the Great Law. Thumi Sambhota with sixteen companions reached India in the year A. D. 632. After numerous adventures with demons, who attempted to prevent the delegation from leaving the country, the seventeen scholars accomplished their purpose. Thumi Sambhota designed the Tibetan alphabet, which he based upon the ancient Devanagari of India. He rejected some consonants and vowels as unsuitable for the representation of Tibetan sound, and added six new letters. The king approved the new writing and ordered that the sacred Indian books, treating on various phases of Buddhism, to be translated for the use of his people.*

Sambhota compiled a grammar and other language handbooks while in India, and also brought home a work on Tantric metaphysics. Thus he gained the reputation

* *Buddhism in Tibet*, Emil Schlagintweit.

for scholarship which resulted in his sanctification. After Sambhota's death, the extension of the Buddhist faith throughout Tibet was continued by the Chinese and Nepalese wives of the king. After ten years of married life, Dolkar, the Chinese wife, renounced the world and with her husband's consent assumed the garb of a nun and preached Buddhism throughout the country.* After their deaths, both Doljang and Dolkar were canonized under the name Dolma—in Sanskrit, Tara. They are represented in Lamaist religious art as two figures in identical postures, each seated on a lotus-throne with one foot downward. Both carry lotus flowers. Dolkar is usually represented with white skin, and Doljang as green. Legends concerning these deities are to be found in an ancient book entitled, *Mani-Kabhum*. Their intervention is implored by women seeking spiritual guidance or desiring children.

In the years immediately following the death of Songtsen Gam-po, Buddhism declined among the Tibetans due in part to war and invasion. It was revived by another important ruler of Tibet, Ti-song De-tsen, A. D. 730-789. It was during the reign of this monarch that the great Guru Padma Sambhava was invited to take up his abode in the country. This celebrated Arhat possessed a remarkable knowledge of languages and was responsible for the golden age of literature in the Himalayan area. Under his guidance the entire Buddhist canon was translated into Tibetan.

Another important event in the establishment of Lamaism was due to Mongol influence in the person of Kublai Khan, A. D. 1259-1294, the grandson of the greatest of all Asiatic conquerors, Genghis Khan. In a sincere resolution to elevate his people above the life of war and plunder which had previously distinguished the conduct of Mon-

* *The Theosophist* (March 1882), H. P. Blavatsky.

gols, and for certain political purposes, Kublai Khan adopted the Lamaist form of Buddhism. He had already solemnly pronounced a state of religious tolerance throughout his domain as the result of the intolerance of Christian missionaries and their converts. In order to settle the controversy for all times, he ordered a contest between the Buddhist and Christian priests, announcing that he would accept for his empire the religion which should perform the most convincing miracle in his presence. In the contest the Christian missionaries were unable to produce even a very small supernatural proof of their powers, but the Lamas caused the emperor's wine cup to rise miraculously to his lips. Kublai Khan then solemnly declared in favor of the Lamaist faith, and the discomfited missionaries fell back on their well-worn excuse that the devil had sided with the Lamas.*

At this time the high Lama of the monastery of Sakya, located southwest of Shigatse, had attained prominence. The presiding monk of this Red Hat school was called Sakya Pandita. Kublai Khan conferred upon him and his successors a degree of temporal power, making him the nominal ruler of Tibet under the Mongol suzerainty. In return for this elevation, protection, and recognition, the Lord Lama of Sakya was required to consecrate or crown the emperors of Mongolia. The nephew and successor of the Lord Lama resided for twelve years with Kublai Khan, and prepared a written language based upon the Tibetan for the use of the Mongols. These political happenings paved the way for the power of the Dalai Lamas, whose very title is composed of two words, one Mongolian and the other Tibetan. The word *dalai* meaning "ocean" in the Mongolian language, and *lama* meaning in Tibetan approximately the equivalent of the Sanskrit term "*Guru*."

* See *Buddhism*, by Sir Monier-Williams

The title can be broadly translated the Guru or teacher, whose power and learning is as vast as the ocean.

Padma Sambhava, the Great Guru

While the British expeditionary force under Sir Francis Younghusband was approaching Gyantse, it came to the gorge of the Red Idol of Zambang. The gorge is named for a crude and grotesque image of the wizard-priest Padma Sambhava, which stands on the narrowest point of the gorge amid boulders and crimson barberry bushes.* Throughout Tibet, representations of this remarkable Indian Yogi are to be found drawn or carved on the high cliffs, in wayside shrines, the Lamaist temples, and private homes. This hero-priest is the most romantic figure in the culture-life of this lonely, isolated territory of mountains, glaciers, and deserts.

About the year A. D. 743, Ti-Song De-tsen ascended the throne of Tibet. He was only thirteen years old, and his policies were strongly influenced by his mother, a Chinese princess, the adopted daughter of the emperor, and a devout Buddhist. At that time, the priest of the royal family of Tibet was the Indian monk Santarakshita. When the king expressed the desire to invite an outstanding Buddhist priest to found a religious order in his country, Santarakshita advised him if possible to secure the services of his brother-in-law, a celebrated Guru of the Tantric Yogacharya school, who was then a professor of transcendental subjects at the great University of Nalanda. The Guru accepted the invitation, and reached Tibet in the year 755, according to the Chinese calendar, slightly earlier by the Tibetan reckoning. Padma Sambhava is now regarded as the founder of Lamaism, as distinguished from Indian Buddhism.

* *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*, by L. Austine Waddell.



—From *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*

THE BUDDHIST SAINT, PADMA SAMBHAVA,
FOUNDER OF LAMAISM

This powerful Adept-magician was born in Udyana, now Kafirstan, in the opening years of the 8th century. At that time, Udyana was famous for its sorcerers, or as Marco Polo called them "dealers in deviltry and enchantment." The Precious Guru appeared in the material world by miraculous means. A ray of light flowed out of the celestial Buddha Amitabha, and fell upon a beautiful lotus floating upon the lake of Dhanakosha. In the heart of this lotus was seated a luminous child, apparently eight years of age, bearing in his hand the thunderbolt scepter of

Indra. He was brought up under the patronage of Indra-bodhi, the king of Udyana, and gained extraordinary distinction for his knowledge of spells and enchantments. He was able to control all infernal spirits, ghosts, and monsters of space. It was appropriate that such a magician should be selected to convert the demon-infested region of trans-Himalaya.*

He selected twenty-five disciples to perpetuate his esoteric traditions, and each of these attained fame for his powers to perform miracles, control the elements, and project his consciousness to distant places. The Tibetan records would indicate that Padma Sambhava remained in the country approximately fifty years, but it is more probable that he visited Tibet on various occasions over this period of time.

The Precious Guru assembled the leaders of the Northern countries which he had converted, and gave them detailed instructions and encouragement for the perpetuation of his doctrines. He also explained that he had hidden books, manuscripts, and secret magical inscriptions in sacred caverns throughout the land. The circumstances of his death are not known. He departed from Tibet miraculously, and it was the common belief that he set forth to enlighten other lands, probably Ceylon or Java.

When the wizard-teacher had finished his farewell address, a rainbow descended from heaven and surrounded him. Four supernatural beings appeared and he entered a magical chariot, and was borne away in the sky followed by processions of devas and heavenly musicians, filling the air with flowers and music. The chariot was visible for twenty-five days and nights like a comet, until at last it vanished over the southern horizon. Since that time, it is affirmed that the Guru occasionally returned to preserve the peoples he loved and served. Whenever an emergency

* *The Buddhism of Tibet, etc.*, by L. Austine Waddell.

arose, this great magician slipped into the body of some king, prince, or priest, remaining there until the need had passed, and then quietly departed.

In a text upon yellow paper dating back to the first half of the thirteenth century there is an extensive account of the last discourse of the Precious Guru, prior to his departure from Tibet. In this report it is stated that Padma Sambhava traveled to a country which lay in the direction of the sunset that he might convert the Raksasi (demons) dwelling therein. When his resolution to depart was made known to his disciples and converts, the king of Tibet and his entire court prepared to follow him. The royal company journeyed with the great teacher as far as the mountains that divide Tibet from Nepal, all the while offering him treasures and beseeching him to remain in their land.

On the last day before his translation, the Holy One of Udyana delivered a long sermon warning his followers that there was no way to escape the sorrows and misfortunes of the material cycle of existence except by faith in the teaching of the Lord Buddha, and obedience to his Doctrine. The Tibetan form of this address is filled with strange and unfamiliar terms, but many of the Guru's words reveal the deep, mystic inspiration which he brought to the wild mountain dwellers of the land of Bod.

The following fragments are extracted from the farewell message of the Lord Padma: "I have revealed the word (doctrine) out of mercy. Men, who think of me in spirit, my body is no longer to be seen, but I sit above you . . . Be serious and think of me . . . Put my world in gold, silver, and gems . . . Wherever I, the Sublime Lord, appear, there is always my sublimity. Whoever confesses this constantly shall meet me, the Sublime Lord . . . If your belief in my word does not waver at the approach of death, you shall receive power and salvation . . . Now I am going, but I shall always protect you . . . It is not nec-

essary that I remain, there is always my divine blessing to help you."

As the saint was being borne away in the upper air, surrounded by rainbows and singing spirits, he turned back long enough to address his weeping disciples once more: "If you desire eternal peace, cling to the faith You can not follow me now, but you shall find me again. As I am now ready to go to the dwelling of the Gods do not ask to accompany me on the way. You and I shall meet again forever. There will be no end to asking me." Then the Guru flew away.*

Tsong Ka-pa, the Luther of Tibet

Abbe Huc, † described by Madam Blavatsky as the "Lama of Jehovah," examines at some length the Tibetan legends dealing with the birth and early life of the Adept-teacher, Tsong Ka-pa. This celebrated religious reformer is said to have been born circa A. D. 1358 in the land of Amdo, now part of the Szechwan province of China. His foster father was a humble shepherd whose worldly possessions consisted of some twenty goats and a few long-haired cattle. For many years this good man and his wife lived childless and alone in the wild mountain solitudes. Their home was a black tent, and while the shepherd guarded his pasturing animals, the wife occupied herself with the making of cheese or weaving the long hair of the cattle into a coarse cloth.

One day this woman, descending into the nearby gorge for water, was overcome with faintness and fell insensible on a large flat stone, into the surface of which some ancient priest or pilgrim had carved a sacred inscription in honor of Buddha. When the woman regained consciousness, she immediately realized that she had immaculately

* *Padmasambhava und Verwandtes*, by Albert Grunwedel.

† *Travels in Tartary, Tibet and China*.



—From *Kunstgewerbe in Tibet*

DETAIL FROM A TIBETAN PAINTING SHOWING TSONG KA-PA,
THE GREAT BUDDHIST REFORMER, RIDING UPON A WHITE
ELEPHANT AND ACCOMPANIED BY ATTENDANTS.

conceived a child from the magic formula on the stone. In due time she brought forth a son, and the shepherd named him Tsong Ka-pa in honor of the mountain near which his tent had stood for seven years.

It is reported with the deepest conviction that the marvelous little boy was born with a long white beard. He had extraordinary majesty of person and was without any childlike mannerisms. On the day of his birth he spoke with clarity and precision in the language of Amdo, and, though not given to many words, his remarks dealt with such profound subjects as the origin of the universe and the destiny of humankind. At the age of three years, Tsong Ka-pa announced his resolution to renounce the

world and dedicate himself to the religious life. His mother, deeply sympathetic and convinced that her son was destined for some holy work, herself shaved his head, and threw his long, flowing hair outside the tent. From his hair, according to some accounts, there forthwith sprang up a tree which dispensed an exquisite perfume. This is the sacred Kumbum tree, which Huc later examined, each leaf of which bore within its surface a character or letter of the Tibetan alphabet.

Tsong Ka-pa, while still a small boy, withdrew from even his family and sought the seclusion of the wildest and most desolate parts of the mountains. Here he spent days and nights in prayer and meditation upon the eternal mysteries of life. Long and frequent were his fastings, and so devout was his spirit that he never injured even the smallest insect and ate no flesh food of any kind. It was while he was practicing these austerities that a most remarkable incident occurred. A strange Lama from "one of the most remote regions of the West," traveling in the land of Amdo, asked hospitality of the kindly shepherd living in the black tent. According to the old records, this Lama of the Western regions was not only remarkable for his learning, which transcended all human understanding, but also for the strangeness of his appearance. He had a great nose, and in his eyes gleamed a supernatural fire. Tsong Ka-pa, overcome by the learning and sanctity of the strange visitor, fell at the feet of the Lama and begged him to become his teacher.

Abbe Huc, whose mind naturally inclined him to Christian theological speculations, muses thus: "May it not be reasonably inferred that this stranger with the great nose was an European, one of those Catholic missionaries who, at the precise period, penetrated in such numbers into Upper Asia. It is by no means surprising that the Lamanesque traditions should have preserved the memory of that European face, whose type is so different from that of the Asiatics. During our abode at Kounboum, we, more than

once, heard the Lamas make remarks upon the singularity of our features, and say roundly, that we were of the same land with the master of Tsong-Kaba." It would not be natural for the good Abbe to suspect that this Lama of the West might equally well have come from certain regions of India where straight or aquiline features also predominate.

The Adept with the great nose accepted Tsong Ka-pa as his disciple, and in order to give the young man the benefit of personal instruction took up his abode in the land of Amdo, where, however, he lived only a few years. Having initiated his pupil in the esoteric doctrine of "the most renowned saints of the West," the Master seated himself upon a rock and went to sleep; that is, entered a state of meditation from which he did not awaken.

Deprived thus of the Master, who it is specifically stated *initiated* him, Tsong Ka-pa resolved to undertake a journey to central Tibet to acquire further knowledge of the mysteries of Buddhism. He studied in several places including Lhasa, and became convinced that the existing schools were in desperate need of purification and reformation. At that time the Red Hat sect occupied the dominant position, and its teachings had become seriously corrupted. When Tsong Ka-pa reached Lhasa—the land of the spirits—a radiant being clothed in light appeared to him. This divine creature announced that the young reformer should settle in that neighborhood, and there accomplish the work of his mortal life. Selecting a humble dwelling in the least frequented quarter of the community, Tsong Ka-pa began the promulgation of his reforms and soon attracted numerous and enthusiastic disciples. His partisans became known as the Yellow Hat Lamas from the headgear which they wore.

The Living Buddha of the Red Hat sect naturally became alarmed at the confusion created by the new teachings, and finally resolved to have a personal debate with

the little Lama from Amdo. With an appropriate cortege and with great pomp, this high abbot repaired to the little house which had become the sanctuary of his adversary. The door of Tsong Ka-pa's retreat was so low that as the Living Buddha passed through, his high red cap struck against the beam and fell from his head onto the floor. This was regarded by many as an omen. The Living Buddha, in no way disconcerted, entered upon an elaborate exposition of the orthodox tenets, but the debate went against him, due to a rather humorous incident. Those who know living conditions in the trans-Himalayan highlands will appreciate the details. While the abbot of the Red Hat was debating, he slipped one hand under his robe in an effort to kill a small insect that was annoying him. Suddenly Tsong Ka-pa looked up and reminded the Living Buddha that while he was describing the virtues and beauties of Buddha's doctrine of harmlessness, he was at the same time trying to destroy a tiny living thing. For some reason this philosophic shaft struck home, and the Living Buddha prostrated himself at the feet of Tsong Ka-pa and acknowledged his supremacy.

The more that the unfortunate Abbe Huc wrote about Tibetan Buddhism, the less secure his position became in his own faith. He attained the distinction of having his name struck off the list of missionaries at Rome and his book placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* when he pointed out the similarities which existed between the Lamaistic rites introduced by Tsong Ka-pa and those practiced by the Roman Church. He was suspended from his missionary work for an overabundance of zeal and sincerity. The following is typical of the statements that complicated life for the well-meaning Lazarist:

"Upon the most superficial examination of the reforms and innovations introduced by Tsong-Kaba into the Lamanesque worship, one must be struck with their affinity to Catholicism. The cross, the mitre, the dalmatida, the

cope, which the Grand Lamas wear on their journeys, or when they are performing some ceremony out of the temple; the service with double choirs, the psalmody, the exorcisms, the censer suspended from five chains, and which you can open or close at pleasure; the benedictions given by the Lamas by extending the right hand over the heads of the faithful; the chaplet, ecclesiastical celibacy, spiritual retirement, the worship of the saints, the fasts, the processions, the litanies, the holy water, all these are analogies between the Buddhists and ourselves. Now, can it be said that these analogies are of Christian origin? We think so. We have indeed found, neither in the traditions nor in the monuments of the country, any positive proof of their adoption, still it is perfectly legitimate to put forward conjectures which possess all the characteristics of the most emphatic probability."

Tsong Ka-pa lived to see his reforms and innovations win the general approval of his people. In 1409, he built the Galdan (Gahdan) monastery about thirty miles from Lhasa, and became the first abbot of this extensive establishment. He wrote, translated, and compiled many religious texts, reformed the practices of the older sects with special emphasis upon the mystical content, placed heavy restrictions upon the sorceries practiced by the Bhon sect, and advocated strict observances, including fasting, long periods of retirement for the cultivation of spiritual powers, and a high standard of personal morality approaching total asceticism for the clergy. He has been called the Luther of Lamaism. Very little actually is known of his personal life, although the usual extravagant legendry with which Lamaist writers always ornament their saints invests his person. Near the end of his life, Tsong Ka-pa selected two of his most advanced disciples as his successors. He departed from this mortal world in the year A. D. 1419, and according to his followers attained the nirvana. He was canonized. Prayers are addressed to him by members of his sect, and images and paintings,

depicting him seated in a Buddhalike pose, wearing a tall, yellow hat, are almost universally venerated by modern Tibetans.

In the Galdan monastery is an ornate mausoleumlike structure of malachite and marble. Beneath the golden roof of this shrine is the tomb of Tsong Ka-pa consisting of a conical *chorten*, said to be of solid gold. Within this gleaming reliquary, wrapped in quantities of fine cloth, the strips inscribed with sacred Dharani syllables, are the embalmed remains of the great reformer, disposed in a sitting attitude.*

We learn from Mr. Sarat Chandra Das that in the monastery at Galdan there is to this day a college especially devoted to the teachings of esoteric and mystical Buddhism. † Here, also, the most secret of the Master's philosophical doctrines are communicated with elaborate ceremonies of initiation.

Tsong Ka-pa is regarded by some as being responsible for the present Lamaist doctrine of the reincarnating abbots. According to this system, the successors of these deceased high priests are not elected or appointed. Each, upon departing from his physical body, is reborn immediately. This happy event is discovered by signs and wonders. The reborn Lama is then taken to his monastery, installed with appropriate rituals, and continues to govern.

Jetsun Milarepa, the Great Tibetan Mystic

We are greatly indebted to Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz for making available to scholars an English translation of *Jetsun-Kahbum* prepared by the late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub. The *Jetsun-Kahbum* is a biographical account of the life and spiritual accomplishments of the great Kargyutpa Guru, Milarepa. Jetsun Milarepa was the most cele-

* *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*, by J. Austine Waddell

† *Journey to Lhasa & Central Tibet*, by Sarat Chandra Das.



—From *Lhasa and Its Mysteries*

THE KARGYUTPA GURU AND POET, MILAREPA

brated of the Tibetan apostles of the Maha-Mudra school, which reached Tibet from India through Nepal and China nearly a century before the advent of Padma Sambhava. Milarepa was the fourth of the human Gurus from the Divine Guru, the Celestial Buddha Vajradhara, the Holder of the Spiritual Thunderbolt.

It is not necessary for our purposes to examine in detail the incidents in Milarepa's life. Those desiring this information are referred to the writings of Dr. Evans-Wentz* and Dr. L. A. Waddell.† The great Yogi was born A. D. 1052 "under a propitious star" near the frontier between Tibet and Nepal. The early life of the sage was burdened with numerous misfortunes. His father died when he was about seven years old, and the paternal un-

* *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*.

† *Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*.

cle misappropriated the extensive estates intended for Milarepa and his mother and sister. Inspired by the hatred of his mother for her relations, Milarepa devoted himself for a time to black magic and sorcery directed against the uncle and other cruel and dishonest relatives. Later, however, he departed from all evil ways, repented of his use of the black arts, and attached himself to a holy teacher, the Guru Marpa, known as the Translator.

Marpa made many journeys to India, where he gathered rare manuscripts on Tantric Yoga which he translated into Tibetan. Under the wise and gentle instruction of Marpa and after a certain amount of mental rebellion, Milarepa dedicated himself utterly to the Holy Dharma—the way of liberation—and attained the nirvana. He entered his final samadhi and passed from this world in the eighty-fourth year of his life, attaining to the same age as the Lord Buddha. The direct cause of his death is said to have been the eating of poisoned curds. Milarepa left a large number of hymns and sacred poems, many editions of which exist in Tibetan.

Milarepa fulfills all the requirements of Eastern Adeptship. His birth was accompanied by extraordinary circumstances. He practiced the disciplines of Tantric Yoga, gaining a variety of occult powers. He was initiated by his Guru Marpa with esoteric rites, and earned his place in the Kargyutpa apostolic line. He gained the inward contemplation of eternal truth, preached, performed miracles, and gathered disciples about him. He attained the liberation, and his death was attended by proofs of his divine estate. When his body was cremated, heavenly beings appeared in the smoke and flame of the funeral pyre, and his relics possessed miraculous qualities.

The story told of Milarepa by Sarat Chandra Das,* and probably derived from the *Lu bum*, a collection of

* *Journey to Lhasa & Central Tibet.*

tracts attributed to the Guru, is indicative of the supernatural powers ascribed to Milarepa. One day while the sage was traveling to Lhasa accompanied by a conceited disciple, Milarepa resolved to administer an appropriate reprimand. He ordered his pupil, named Ra-chung-pa, to bring him a pair of old yak horns which lay on the ground near the road. Ra-chung-pa did not comply for he could see no advantage to be gained by collecting the horns, and decided that his Master was in his dotage and full of childish fancies. Milarepa picked up the horns himself, announcing that they would be of use some time or other.

Shortly after, a violent hailstorm overtook the travelers, and there was no place where they could find shelter. Ra-chung-pa covered his head with his gown and sat shivering on the ground, severely beaten by the hailstones, until the storm had passed. He then searched for his Lama, but could not see him anywhere. Soon he heard a voice, and looking down beheld Milarepa seated comfortably inside one of the yak horns. "If the son is equal to the father, then," said the saint, "let him seat himself inside the other horn." Ra-chung-pa was properly humiliated, for the horn was too small to serve him even as a hat.

The Epic of Gessar Khan

Although the indigenous literature of Tibet is dominantly religious, there are several cycles of hero myths that reveal in great detail the cultural tradition of the peoples of the Altai-Himalayan zone. These semihistorical sagas are important, not only as records of old times but as veiled accounts of the esoteric institutions, systems, and practices of Northern Asia. The inhabitants of Tibet have no class of literary production analogous to Occidental fiction; in fact, they have no appreciation for the concept of stories written simply to amuse or entertain. Their attitude to-

ward the Occidental novel is direct if not especially imaginative: "If it is not true, it is not worth reading."

In most matters, Tibetans simply refuse to pay the price of Western progress. They will accept from outside only such commodities and conveniences as can be assimilated without in any way altering or distorting the traditional way of life. Thus they combine the most abstract, metaphysical doctrines with an intensely materialistic realism, but this very realism drifts easily and naturally into an elaborate and involved fantasy. To the Tibetan mind, Gessar of Ling is both a person and a personification. None doubts that he actually lived nearly twelve hundred years ago, that he still lives in a paradisiacal court, and that he will come again to cleanse Lhasa of the corruptions of a decadent priesthood.

It is doubtful whether the Gessar cycle originated in Tibet or Mongolia. The bards of both peoples claim him as their own. The poems themselves, however, seem to favor the Tibetans, and efforts to interpret the fabulous geography of the narratives support, at least in part, this conclusion. Such great epics as the *Iliad*, the *Ramayana*, the *Sigurd Saga*, and the *Gessar Khan* are remarkably similar in construction and method of unfoldment, and incline to the suspicion that these similarities are not entirely accidental. Some have suggested that an early Greek or Roman influence can be traced in the Gessar cycle. Even the name of the hero is reminiscent of the Latin title, Caesar.

At least two distinct forms of the legends of Gessar Khan are known to exist: the Tibetan and the Mongolian. While the story line is much the same, there are enough differences, especially psychological, to indicate that each version has a long traditional background. Unfortunately, the complete cycle is not available in English, and the task of assembling the material from native sources presents almost insurmountable difficulties. It is doubtful if any

one Tibetan bard or his Mongolian equivalent is in possession of the complete epic. The recitations of the Gessar poems are best described as interminable. One brief episode may require several weeks in the telling. This is due to the elaborate and highly-traditional manner of involving the smallest fragment of the action of the story in an elaborate structure of mystical, religious, philosophical, and symbolical speculation.

Mme. Alexandra David-Neel, with the assistance of the Lama Yongden, has given us an excellent summary of the Tibetan version under the title, *The Superhuman life of Gesar of Ling*. She made use of scarce manuscripts, and listened for weeks to the native poets in preparing her digest of the legend. As far as she was able to learn, no printed version of the Tibetan poem of the Gessar epic existed. She notes that inquiry among qualified Tibetans, including the present king of Ling, revealed no trace or indication that the work exists in a printed edition. Sir Charles Bell, for many years British political representative in Tibet, stated definitely, after elaborate questioning at Lhasa, that the legend of Gessar Khan had never been printed, and that even manuscripts are quite rare.

A printed version of the Mongolian legend of Gessar appeared in Peking in 1716, during the reign and under the authority of the Emperor Kanghi. In 1836, the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg authorized one of its members, Isaac Jakob Schmidt, to prepare a new edition in the Mongolian language from the earlier text, and three years later a German translation was published under the title, *Die Thaten Bogoda Gesar Chan's*. In his analysis of the text, Professor Schmidt was also of the opinion that the legend was of Tibetan origin. The Mongolian form of this hero saga was the basis of an English text published in 1927 under the title, *Gessar Khan*, by Ida Zeitlin. In this work, credit is also given to the so-called *Little Gessar*, translated from a Kalmuch original, published in Riga in 1804.

Although it is usual to refer to Gessar Khan as a mythological hero, it seems likely that he flourished in the 7th or 8th century of the Christian era, possibly at the one time that Tibet made a bid for recognition as a world power. The peoples of this now-remote and feeble country once conquered a considerable part of China, and even sent an expedition as far as Persia. For our purposes, the historicity of the account is of slight importance, our principal concern being its place in the literature of the Adept tradition. Like the Arthurian cycle and the legends of Charlemagne and Roland, the epic of Gessar is a thinly veiled account of the initiate-priest-king. He is the warrior-Adept, who is to conquer the world under the banner of Shambhala.

As Merlin the magician played a vital part in the advent of King Arthur and was his spiritual mentor, so in the legend of Gessar, one of the greatest of the Asiatic Adepts, the Guru Rinpoche Ugyen Pema Jungnes, is the guide and spiritual counselor. We already know this Precious Spiritual Master under his Sanskrit name, Padma Sambhava. In some parts of the Gessar legend, the hero king appears as little more than a *tulpa*; that is, a mental phantom created by "will and yoga." In other places, Gessar assumes the attributes of a *tulku*. In Tibetan transcendentalism a *tulku* is an emanation or avatar of a deity. This emanation can take flesh and be born, but the spiritual being itself remains apart from its projected personality. We do not need to proceed far with these speculations for the metaphysical importance of the legend to become apparent. In both the Tibetan and Mongolian versions, Gessar is the embodiment, projection, or phantom form of one of the Bodhisattvas, the Enlightened Lords of Compassion, who take upon themselves the illusion of matter for the redemption of mankind.

In the period during which the Gessar saga was developing, it appears that Padma Sambhava had already

departed from Tibet, and had taken up his residence in the copper-colored mountain of Lanka (Ceylon). He communicated with the hero-king of Ling by means of a magical projection, appearing in visions and dreams. From this circumstance we may infer that Padma Sambhava was incorporated into the legend after the end of the 8th century. It is not at all certain that the epic of Gessar of Ling belongs to the Buddhistic period in Tibet. The stories may be much older and belong to the pseudo-historical fantasies of the Bon-po, the indigenous religious Mysteries of this forbidden land.

It is unnecessary to explore here the various details of the Gessar legend. It is sufficient to point out that in both the Mongolian and Tibetan (Kham) versions the hero emerges as the typical defender of the faith, protector of the weak, and avenger of wrongs. He is a trans-Himalayan Lohengrin, a shining figure whose peculiar symbol was an arrow. As the swan knight was the ambassador of the mystic Fraternity of Mont Salvart and a servant of the San Grael, so Gessar Khan appears as the emissary of the secret Brotherhood of the Kalachakra Mysteries, celebrated in Chang Shambhala. Like the Egyptian Horus, he is the destroyer of evil, and in the popular mind of the nations which venerate his memory, he shares many of the attributes of the Maitreya Buddha—the Messiah to come.

Gessar Khan will enter Lhasa at the head of his armies, and will purify the Lamaist doctrines and temples. He will drive the money changers from the shrines and restore the Resplendent Doctrine. At the same time, he will drive foreigners from the land, and under his rule Tibet will rise victorious and attain supremacy among the nations of the world. Those who fought with him in the past, his gallant generals and his faithful followers, wait in Paradise to be reborn with him. His return is promised by ancient oracles, prophecies, and omens; and today, throughout Northern Asia there is an increasing belief that his advent is near.

Like most culture heroes, Gessar Khan attained victory over his adversaries, many of whom were demons under various guises, by means of magical powers associated with the esoteric practices of the Tantra and Kalachakra schools. The hero was immaculately conceived as the result of his mother drinking holy water from a cup of yellow jade, ornamented with the eight propitious emblems of Buddhism. The annunciation was accompanied by miraculous signs and the appearance of a vast assemblage of divinities. Gessar was born with three eyes, but because the one in the center of his forehead was the cause of much wonderment and comment, his mother closed it with the pressure of her thumb. A tiny lidlike mark, however, remained, by which the hero could be recognized by those who had the skill to examine closely.

As is usual in such stories, a wicked and jealous prince sought to destroy the infant, through fear that the divine child might sometime usurp the kingdom. Gessar also includes a certain inconsistent factor nearly always present in the culture hero. Though divine, destined to accomplish a world mission, and equipped with extraordinary magical skill, he passed through numerous misfortunes which he was unable to prevent, and had to depend upon the wisdom of the wizard-Guru Padma Sambhava for guidance in outstanding emergencies. Like Siegfried in the *House of the Gibichung*, he was given a draught of forgetfulness by his own unfaithful wife, and few of his affairs ran smoothly.

The folk hero is always vulnerable but ultimately victorious, and Gessar is no exception to the general rule. He overcomes giants, despots, and supernatural monsters, but his peculiar skill in conjuring into existence phantoms to do his bidding reveals a pattern of sorceries distinctly Asiatic. In the Kham version of the legend, Gessar did not die by mortal hand, but, having fulfilled his mission, made use of the high secrets of the Kalachakra to accom-

plish the instantaneous dissolution of his own body. While in meditation with four of his companions, whose destinies were linked with his own, they uttered secret words of power and vanished together, leaving only their empty robes in the midst of circles of radiant light.

It will be obvious that Gessar Khan is a type of the Adept-king. His story is a "history of power"; even to recite it is to invoke the very presence of Gessar himself. As Pythagoras recited lines of the *Iliad* in treating the sick, so the songs of the Gessar epic are walls of protection. Travelers, wandering through brigand-infested regions, chant the verses, convinced that no enemy can disturb them while they sing of the hero of the world. Many of the choicest secrets of high Asian esotericism are incorporated in this Tibetan epic. It is regrettable that Mme. David-Neel did not see fit to include the philosophical elements of the legend in her translation, but, as she pointed out, the work in its complete form would be of such length and complexity as to discourage the most enthusiastic editor.

While it is not fair to say that the story of Gessar Khan is the key to the mystery of Shambhala, there can be no doubt that the two streams of tradition are intimately associated. The late Nicholas Roerich indicated that the legendary personality of Gessar Khan stands side by side with that of Kulika Manjusri Kirti, the Adept-ruler of Chang Shambhala. Prof. Roerich writes: "In Tibet we had occasion to convince ourselves of this legend. We were told of Gessar Khan's palace in Kham, where the swords of his army are collected, serving as beams for his palace . . . Gessar Khan is armed with arrows of thunder, and the predestined army is soon ready to come out of the sacred land for the salvation of mankind."*

* See *The Heart of Asia*.

Chang Shambhala, the Sacred City

No study of the esoteric hierarchy would be complete without a discussion of that mysterious Land of Quietude, to which occasional reference is made in books relating to Tibet. We cannot subscribe entirely to the enthusiasm of Nicholas Roerich, who refers to Chang Shambhala in his books, *Heart of Asia* and *Shambhala*, as though the name of this kingdom of the Adepts were on the lips of every Lama and shaman from Turkistan to Peking.

The judgment of less-emotional scholars would sustain the conclusion that Shambhala is referred to only on comparatively-rare occasions and presents a number of difficulties, even to the Tibetan mind. Certainly it is held in high veneration, like the secret and sacred places mentioned in other Eastern Scriptures and commentaries.

It is quite possible that Prof. Roerich contacted learned monks who understood the esoteric empire, but it is also highly probable that he contacted other less-learned Lamas and laymen, whose imaginations were considerably in excess of their erudition. We may also be forgiven if we suspect that Chang Shambhala has proved useful in the political sorcery for which Tibetan diplomacy is justly famous.

In a land dominated by a traditional belief in the miraculous and permeated with prophecies concerning the coming incarnations of celestial Bodhisattvas, legendry easily gets out of hand and leads to conclusions impressive to the uninformed, especially to those Occidentals to whom Tibet is synonymous with esotericism.

It is not our intention to discredit the mysteries of Chang Shambhala, but merely to point out that the Adept kingdom is as little known and understood by most of the Lamas of Lhasa as it is by the white unbelievers from beyond the seas. Questions naturally come to the minds of

the uninitiated: Is Shambhala an actual country now existing to the north of Tibet, or did such a place exist in the remote past, to survive only as a legend? According to Emil Schlagintweit, a mystical system of yogic disciplines, called the Kalachakra (the cycle of time), is reported to have originated in the fabulous country of Shambhala, (Tibetan, Dejung), the source or origin of all happiness.

Over a century ago, the mysterious European scholar Csoma de Koros attempted to calculate the location of the earthly Shambhala. He placed the country beyond the Syr Darya (Jaxartes), between 45° and 50° north latitude. In his various works, Csoma pointed out that, according to northern mystical beliefs, the next great spiritual revelation, which was to succeed present-day Buddhism, was to come from Shambhala. Nicholas Roerich summarizes this account in his *Altai-Himalaya*. While this was certainly the conviction of Csoma de Koros, we do not have a great deal of supporting evidence from Tibetan sources for many of his conclusions.

Rin-chen Lah-mo, in *We Tibetans*, gives us a summary of the tradition from the point of view of a native intellectual: "Buddhism would gradually be overcome by alien religions until Shambhala, a great State to the North of Tibet, would take up arms and restore the Faith throughout the world. This was revealed to O-pa-me, meditating in his second reincarnation—that is about two centuries ago. I gather from my Tibetan friends that Shambhala, which is unknown to our geography, does not mean necessarily to exist as a place in the material world, though it is encircled by walls of solid copper. From such mystic realms, incomprehensible to the ordinary mind, but presenting no difficulties of belief to Tibetan mysticism or to our modern spiritualism, came perhaps the angels of Mons."

Ekai Kawaguchi, a Japanese Buddhist monk, who lived in Tibet for about three years and prepared a highly-readable account of his adventures, accumulated some opinions bearing upon Shambhala. The Reverend Kawaguchi believed that a Lama of the Yellow Sect invented or revised the legend of the mythical Land of the North. This same Lama localized Chang Shambhala in the region of Kashmir, and preached that a mighty prince would rise in this district, conquer the world, and convert it to Buddhism. There was also a rumor, in substance, that the Siberian Lama Dorjief had exploited this prophecy with consummate skill, as a means of increasing Russian influence in Tibet. He declared that Russia was the Chang Shambhala of the old prophecies.*

The average Occidental is not overly well-acquainted with trans-Himalayan geography, but Kashmir is to the south of Tibet, and Chang Shambhala is stated specifically to lie to the north, and the word *chang* means *north*. Efforts to shift the kingdom of the Adepts to some obscure location in the vast wastes of Siberia have gained little, if any, popularity. Although there is a belief that Gessar Khan, the Tibetan culture hero, will be reborn in Chang Shambhala, it would be a mistake to assume that the references to Shambhala are an integral part of the Gessar epic. There is much to indicate a late association originating in the popular mind.

Although it is generally assumed that the Shambhala story originated in India and is the Altai-Himalayan version of the mysterious Kailasa of the Hindus, these conjectures neither arise in nor lead to any certainties. It is equally possible that Chang Shambhala was inherited from the Bon-po, along with many other elaborate speculations and doctrines. Perhaps this Northern Paradise was converted or transformed from material belonging to the primitive faith of the wild mountain tribes.

* See *Three Years in Tibet*, by Ekai Kawaguchi, and *Superhuman Life of Gesar of Ling*, by Alexandra David-Neel.

Various religious motions agitate the surface of orthodox Lamaism, much in the same way as schisms and sects confuse the issues of Western theology. We cannot blame the Asiatic for dreaming of Utopia in the terms of his own requirements, while we, plagued with our problems, derive comfort and inspiration from daydreams about Shangri-La.

Sir Thomas More had scarcely finished his *Utopia* when serious-minded men discussed the advisability of fitting out an expedition to search for the Chancellor's phantom commonwealth. Enraptured Lamas, meditating on the mysteries of their faith, might easily believe themselves transported to some ethereal region where the gods still walked with men. We can become very literal in our mystical speculations, and many accounts of Shambhala which pass as factual are really only the subtle substances of a dream. The Shambhala of the esoteric tradition is as little known to the Lamas as it is to scholars of Europe and America. We are dealing with a problem involving extraphysical dimensions, both philosophical and geographical.

Mme. Blavatsky is emphatic in her statement that the Western Paradise, or Western Heaven of Amitabha, is not fiction located in transcendental space; it is an actual locality in the mountains of Asia, or more correctly, encircled by a desert within mountains. It is the residence of those Masters of the esoteric wisdom who have attained the ranks of Lohans and Anagamins (Adepts). It is referred to as western simply from geographical considerations; and "the great Iron Mountain girdle" that surrounds the Avitchi and the seven Lokas that encircle the Western Paradise are very exact representations of well-known localities and *things* to the Eastern student of occultism.*

* See *Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 3.

Here, as in several texts, the Western Paradise and the Northern Land of Quietude appear to be identical in meaning. In *Chinese Buddhism*, by the Rev. Joseph Edkins, who in turn quotes from the Chinese author, San-Kian-yi-su, appears the following:

"Bodhidharma brought from the Western Heaven (Shambhala) the 'Seal of Truth' (true seal) and opened the fountain of contemplation in the East. He pointed directly to Buddha's heart and nature, swept away the parasitic and alien growth of book-instruction, and thus established the Tsung-men, or Esoteric branch of the system containing the tradition of the heart of Buddha." There is a persistent rumor that Bodhidharma, the celebrated Patriarch of Zen, had reached Shambhala, but here this land of the Adepts is directly identified with the Western Paradise of the Mahayana schools.

Several recent writers who have mentioned Shambhala reveal their indebtedness to the books of Nicholas Roerich. Some years ago, the Tashi Lama, who is the spiritual head of the Tibetan theocracy, fled from Tashi Lhunpo, and took refuge in China. His departure was motivated by political agitation within the country. "This is," writes Constance Bridge, "according to prophecy, a sign that the era of Shambhala is at hand. The Tashi Lamas are sacrosanct among the Central Asian mystics. They are the great exponents of Kalachakra, the Yoga of utilizing the high energies. The belief exists that the Tashi Lama, in his mysterious flight, visited the land of Shambhala, to which he has access. The uninitiated cannot know its exact situation, but the writings of mystics in many countries indicate its whereabouts through symbolism." The same author suggested in a general way that the Eastern reports intimate that Shambhala is in the region of the Karakoram. These mountains lie north of India and south of

* See *Thin Air*.

Lake Balkhash. Between this area and Lake Baikal lies Tannu Tuva, an autonomous Soviet Republic. The area under consideration is of immense size, extending from approximately 70° to 110° east longitude, and from 30° to 60° north latitude. Most of the region is only slightly explored.

While the glowing tower of Shambhala may stand on some remote peak of the north, the true significance of the sacred city or philosophic state, ruled over by Kulika Manjusri Kirti (Rigden Djyepo), the Adept-King of the Wheel of Time, is actually the spiritual overstate, and Chang Shambhala is the banner city of the invisible government of the earth. It is the invisible nation, populated by a race of heroes, who have emerged from the ordinary concerns of mortals and have journeyed along the Red Road of the North.

The Tibetans believe that the northern lights shine from the ramparts of Shambhala. By this, they intend to imply that the Land of the Blessed will be understood by those who know the true meaning of the Aurora Borealis and the magnetic currents of our planet. The Masters of the Tantric school of Yoga understand which of the nerves of the human body are the paths of the north. Having mastered the esoteric doctrines of the Kalachakra, they know that Atman is the Perfect Adept. It is the Eternal Self who rules over the dream of time and place from the shining tower of Chang Shambhala.

The way to the throne of Rigden Djyepo, Adept of Shambhala and the coming King of the World, is inward and upward along the narrow path of the internal breath. Only the mystic familiar with the old wisdom can understand fully the Shambhala of the mind, which is discovered by an internal experience of consciousness.

The world is bound together by a plan and purpose beyond the estimation of the average person. The Adepts, initiates, and disciples of the Secret Schools, though scat-

tered about, are all part of an empire of sages who are the servants of the Generalissimo of the World. This Generalissimo, as he was called by the Rosicrucian writer, John Heydon, nearly three-hundred years ago, is the hierophant of the rites of Shambhala. It is his duty to bind together his empire of saints and sages, and to prepare the day when the ruler of the Philosophic Empire will become king of the whole world.

Perhaps his advent is imminent, for they say that the banners of Shambhala show the king with one foot lowered from his lotus throne and placed firmly upon the high earth of Himavat. The horsemen of Shambhala ride through the air, bearing the messages of the King of Kings. Below, on the broad plains, the armies of light and darkness are battling for supremacy. In their extremity, men lift up their eyes unto the hills from whence cometh their help. Humanity waits the fulfillment of the promise of the King of Kings. The benign, all-compassionate Maitreya gazes down from his gilded throne. Suddenly, through the air flies an arrow, inlaid with turquois and feathered from the plumage of heavenly birds. This arrow is the sign of Gessar Khan, the warrior-king of the north. The wind horses bear their prayers to the throne of Rigden Djyepo. The banners of Shambhala are unfurled. The great drums rumble through the seven towers of Asia. The army of the conqueror is come.

All this is symbolism, myth and legend, old predictions and new prophecies, but beneath the fable lies the fact. The Adepts and initiates and the esoteric schools guard the Wheel of Time. The Wheel turns; men hear the Doctrine, and in the day "Be With Us," the great school will return to the world, restoring the succession of the priest-philosopher-kings, who, by divine right and the divine will, are the natural rulers of mankind.

The Adepts

In The Eastern Esoteric Tradition

By **MANLY PALMER HALL**



Part Three

The Sages of China

THE ADEPTS

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THE SAGES OF CHINA

ILLUSTRATED

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This work is a section of a comprehensive survey of the Adept tradition, which will be complete in fifteen parts. It is issued in the present form because of the unprecedented rise in the cost of book-production. Only in this way can the material be made available to students at a reasonable price.

THE SAGES OF CHINA

INTRODUCTION

The immense area of China, its vast population, and its long cultural history, have combined to create a rich and varied tradition. The Middle Kingdom was a world to itself, and although influenced by foreign ideas and doctrines, this interesting and romantic land developed arts and sciences, religions and philosophies, trades and crafts, peculiarly its own. China absorbed racial and cultural systems, and with patient alchemy transmuted all that was not Chinese into that which is forever Chinese. It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that Great Cathay would not be deficient in those branches of learning by which other nations and peoples had advanced their knowledge of man's internal life. We know that so-called esoteric arts and sciences were known in China from most ancient times. These people had their cabalism, astrology, numerology, alchemy, phrenology, spiritism, and demonology. Their ancient writings abound in hints and intimations bearing upon secret disciplines of the mind and body intended to cultivate extra-sensory perceptions and the spiritual potentials of man. It would be inconceivable that what we call the *Adept tradition* should not have arisen among them, or that it should have departed in any essential manner from similar teachings found in other parts of the civilized world.

Unfortunately, the Chinese language has been a barrier which few Western scholars have been able to penetrate. Such scholars were not, for the most part, sensitive

to the mystical overtones of Chinese thinking, and have neglected those works and monuments that deal especially with our subject. In spite of this regrettable circumstance, enough information is available to sustain the basic assumption that the Chinese did believe in the reality of certain superior human beings who had perfected human nature by knowledge of divine arts. These beings were able to communicate with the creatures of the heavenly spheres. They could announce coming events, heal the sick, cleanse the leper, and even raise the dead. In all cases, they claimed to participate in a secret body of learning available only to those who accepted the disciplines of qualified teachers and became disciples of the Masters or Sages who had retired from the world and renounced possession and ambition. The Sages of China, therefore, are substantially identical with the Holy Men of India, and their instruction followed the rules and practices of the Hindu Gurus and other venerated ascetics.

In China, as in other regions, an elaborate symbolical structure was gradually unfolded. The lives of the Sages were involved in allegories and legends which clearly indicate to the informed the presence of a secret teaching faithfully transmitted from generation to generation. As in other nations there were many levels and grades of scholars, teachers, and philosophers, so in China learning was highly diversified. The mystical arts attracted only a certain class or type, and the principal exponents of Chinese esotericism were regarded as beings set apart from ordinary mortals. The same was true in Egypt, Greece, and Persia.

One of the most convincing proofs of the Adept tradition in China is the early rise of secret religious and philosophical societies resembling the Eleusinian rites of Greece and the Osirian rituals of Egypt. These Chinese fraternities absorbed into themselves the principal symbolism of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, and fashioned therefrom a rich tapestry of ceremonial procedures.

Candidates were initiated, taking their obligations and receiving their instructions in the approved manner of the Mystery Schools of classical antiquity. The Chinese initiate, like his Western confrere, was dedicated not only to the perfection of his own inner life, but to the improvement of his fellow man, the reformation of society, and the restoration of the Golden Age.

Under the names of *genii*, *fairy folk*, and other fabulous beings, the Chinese Adepts are perpetuated in the annals of the nation. China is rich in mystery plays, spiritual theatricals, metaphysical dramas, and magical pagantries. When foreign influences—which included Buddhist, Christian, Moslem, Persian, and Jewish—came within the sphere of Chinese thought, they were incorporated without serious conflict or dissension. The principal descent of knowledge was in no way threatened or disturbed, and the elaborate mythology of China continued to veil the ancient sciences. Intimate personal contact with things Chinese results in a complete confirmation of the basic premise. These people did know the mysterious science of sciences, through the mastery of which man can transcend his own mortality and take his place among the Immortals.

The secret societies of medieval Europe, especially those which rose after the Protestant Reformation, had strong social and political programs. This also is true in China. As early as Confucius, the Sages envisioned the perfect human civilization, the philosophic commonwealth. They believed that a hierarchy of illumined human beings, acting as intermediaries between the gods and ordinary mortals, was laboring continuously with divine sanction and approval to bring about the regeneration of society. The philosophic schools were microcosms, or miniatures, of a blessed state which should ultimately be enjoyed by all men. The Chinese Sages, therefore, belong to the Order of the Builders, for they too were fashioning their ever-

lasting house without the voice of workmen or the sound of hammers.

We have attempted to point out some of the more obvious landmarks of this Chinese Freemasonry, this association of Sages who met in secret counsel and who were the uncrowned rulers in the Philosophic Empire. We sincerely hope that our basic assumption, as stated in this preamble, will be adequately supported by the material which follows.

MANLY PALMER HALL

March 1957, Los Angeles, California

THE ADEPTS

THE SAGES OF CHINA

Like all other highly civilized peoples of antiquity, the Chinese possessed a deep and highly diversified religio-philosophic structure of doctrines and ideas, and divided their intellectuals into several clearly defined groups. Their moral, ethical, and mystical convictions were based upon the great triad of venerated instructors: Lao-tse, Confucius, and Buddha. These three are generally included in the list of world teachers or supreme benefactors of humanity, and have been honored far beyond the boundaries of their own nations and races. They were truly divine men, and their missions and ministries were accompanied by portents and miraculous events. Around each of them have developed elaborate traditional accounts, and each has come to be regarded as the founder of an essential religion or doctrine with which his name was ever after associated. Their conduct became a noteworthy example to all who sought self-improvement. Their words were treasured as scriptural revelations, and the orders, schools, or sects which they founded expanded, gradually taking on the coloring and overtones of theological institutions. In the course of ages, recognition for these teachers increased, and they were elevated by popular regard to a divine or semi-divine estate.

Although all arbitrary statements must be to a degree inadequate, it may be said in general that the Chinese

philosopher or Sage, in the most conservative use of such terms, followed in the footsteps of Confucius. He was a sober man, dedicated to learning and profoundly concerned with the ethical improvement of society. Although he might respect metaphysical speculations, as did Confucius himself, he regarded such abstractions as outside the realms of logic and reasoning. These Sages gained distinction as the founders of philosophic schools, were consulted by liberal emperors and statesmen, were entrusted with the instruction of the young, and made numerous contributions to the arts and sciences of their times. Their lives paralleled in many ways the careers of the Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Often they were suspected of a deeper knowledge than they chose to reveal, but they emphasized such practical attainments as were likely to promote the public good. They moralized on the duties of rulers, encouraged the development of democratic attitudes, advocated philosophic disciplines to refine and ennoble human character, and bestowed, generally speaking, good advice which sincere persons intuitively and instinctively recognized to be true and useful.

Both Buddhism and Taoism included scholars of sage-like disposition whose careers paralleled those of the Confucianists. In addition, however, they created orders of mystics or transcendentalists of an entirely different class. Both Buddhism and Taoism involved theological and metaphysical speculations as essential parts of their doctrines. If, therefore, Confucianism had its great Sages, these other groups had their illumined saints, whose attributes and characteristics were similar to the saints of Christendom. In China, the Buddhist saints were called *Lohans* (*Lohan*), and the Taoist saints were broadly referred to as the *Immortals*. The Buddhist Lohans or Arhats were sanctified men who had been either the personal disciples of Buddha or early patriarchs of his doctrine. The group was gradually enlarged, however, to include important leaders and



—From Favier's *Peking*

CHINESE SAGES IN DISCUSSION
From a ceramic of the Ch'ing Dynasty

converts of later times whose dedication to the teachings of Buddha had resulted in illumination and the development of transcendental faculties and powers. Thus, the small circle of sixteen or eighteen Lohans gradually expanded into the larger circle of five hundred saints, and even this term became symbolical of an almost countless assembly of enlightened beings.

In Taoism, it is not known whether Lao-tse had a selected group of intimate associates. He was a lonely, isolated man, who did not expect others to understand him or the profound doctrine which he taught. In the course of time, however, the abstract intimations about wonderful and miraculous things gained favor and attention, and in the second, or metaphysical, period in the descent of his teachings, the doctrine of the Immortals came to be highly emphasized. These mystics claimed to receive instruction from previous saints who had retired from the world and dwelt in celestial regions. They approached favorite disciples in dreams and visions, and revealed the secrets of transcendental magic. Under the guidance of some preceding Immortal, dedicated students were taught the abstractions of the Chinese Cabala, the transmutation of metals, and the secrets of immortality. In this way, a fabulous order of creatures came to be popularly venerated. Legends grew about them, and elaborate symbolical accounts were faithfully preserved as part of Taoist tradition.

Dimly beneath the delicate fantasy relating to the Chinese Immortals, the outlines of a formal structure of ideas are traceable. As in the case of the Western saint, the philosophical aspect is seldom clarified. Nevertheless, these Immortals correspond closely with the orders of Greek heroes, like Achilles, Ulysses, and Aeneas. Such historical factors as may have originally existed became subservient to a broad concept or idea, which probably originated in India. The human being, by the release of divine resources within his own nature, can transcend the normal limitations of the human state and ascend to a middle distance between gods and mortals. He can become an intercessor; prayers may be addressed to him; and he stands as a witness to the potential virtue and wisdom locked within the human breast. Taoism borrowed much of its formal organization from the Buddhists, and included an elaborate concept of the structure of the uni-

verse. There were heavenly worlds, where the higher divinities dwelt together, and there were lower worlds inhabited by creatures of all kinds. Only the world of mortals was visible; the other regions could be visited only by the unembodied or the disembodied. Yet there were powers within man by which he could project his own consciousness beyond the limitations of his corporeal form, and, during meditation, he might be privileged to mingle with the denizens of some transcendent sphere.

The Immortals were not only a whimsical tribe fashioned from dreams and fantasies; they were the projection of man's concept of his own potential. The human being has always liked to believe that locked within him is the capacity for spiritual and intellectual freedom, for happiness and for growth into a better state. The Immortals, therefore, were the projection of man himself. In this way, they were not totally imaginary, for man did not believe that his dreams were merely delusions. The teachings of Taoism and Buddhism assured him that he was actually the citizen of a far larger and nobler universe than he had ever experienced in his daily struggle for existence. He not only believed, but intuitively knew, that there were beings superior to himself. He knew they had to exist, and he was perfectly willing to assume that they constituted orders or hierarchies of gods and godlings like the thrones, dominions, and principalities referred to by St. Paul.

The curious combination of high idealism and intense practical thinking which distinguished the Chinese mind, led naturally to the formalizing of the concept of the Immortals. These creatures were not only possessors of almost limitless magical powers, but were also a convivial group of intensely happy beings who neither hungered nor thirsted, were free from poverty and pain, enjoyed congenial companionship, and were far removed from the tyrannies of corrupt political systems. They had their own

government, and because they combined a blissful state with shrewdness of mind, they could, if properly solicited, contribute to the improvement of human conduct, individual and collective. By degrees, these celestials mingled their characteristics with those of the Buddhist Lohan, becoming teachers of those who could communicate with them internally, and benevolent servants of truthseeking mortals who had renounced worldly wisdom, dedicating themselves to esoteric philosophy.

So involved a structure inevitably expanded and ultimately absorbed popular heroes, scholars, and cultural leaders who were given their various places in the transcendental world of Chinese metaphysics. Nearly every highly esteemed person was posthumously elevated to some dignity which entitled him to popular veneration. This drifted naturally in a religious direction and increased the pantheon to huge proportions. Enlightened emperors, victorious generals, outstanding poets, distinguished scholars, and illustrious ancestors, shared in the common admiration. There were deities presiding over doorways, moats, walls, cellars, gardens, inns, bridges, and the family hearthstone. Most of these, unlike the Greek nymphs, dryads, and satyrs, were not simply imaginary creatures or elementals, but were traceable to living persons who had once attained some fame or dignity, and had been gloriously remembered.

Thus it is possible to divide Chinese illuminates into three general classes. The first was composed of kindly scholars who liked to commune together in some favorite bamboo grove, write poems, discuss politics, and argue problems of logic and reason. There were also wandering monks and priests who, having contemplated deeply the secret books and records of their Orders, had gained intuitive powers and dimensions of internal vision and understanding by which they could explore the invisible universe around them. They therefore possessed a knowledge not commonly attainable or generally available. These

holy men correspond most closely to the Western concept of godliness, and were duly and properly canonized. The third group is a great polyglot founded partly upon man's instinctive desire to glorify the miraculous, partly upon folk-lore and legendry, and partly upon the religio-scientific conviction that it was possible for the human being to grow qualitatively until he transcended all the boundaries of the reasonable and became a creature no longer human, yet not truly divine. He was therefore the Immortal Mortal, living on the boundaries which unite the seen with the unseen. With such a being anything was possible, yet he was not separate and apart from the great universal plan. He more or less indicated the road that ordinary man must follow, for within each human being is an Immortal Mortal, forever striving to outgrow the earth and live in the clearer atmosphere of the celestial regions. The Immortals did not take the place of the great gods of China, but they lived upon the sides of the heavenly mountain, inwardly strengthened by the fruit of the tree of immortality.

Before giving further consideration to the Taoist Immortals, it may be well to pause and point out that the typical Chinese scholar-philosopher combined intensely rational procedures with highly intuitive faculties of reflection and insight. He was not only broadly learned, but deeply enlightened. He venerated tradition, but often interpreted it mystically or symbolically. He was an idealistic realist, living under a strict code of ethical and moral procedures. In his private life, he practiced disciplines suggestive of the Hindu Holy Man, but when he spoke or wrote, he paid strict attention to logic and contributed very little to popular superstition. In the deeper parts of his own nature, however, the Sage had the courage to admit the reality of forces and powers superphysical. Like Plato, he affirmed the existence of the gods and their administration of human affairs, but he also assumed that every man was responsible for his own destiny, and

should occupy himself diligently with the reformation and regeneration of his own character. Thus, in a way, the several types of truthseekers which flourished together in China, while highly individualistic, held many convictions in common.

The Reverend Aubrey Moore supplied an introductory note to the translation of the writings of Chuang Tzu prepared by Herbert A. Giles. Of the Sages, the Reverend Moore, mentioning the meeting of the Emperor Yao with a hermit, adds: "But greater than Yao and the hermit is the divine being who dwells on the mysterious mountain in a state of pure, passionless inaction. For the sage, then, life means death to all that men think life, the life of *seeming* or reputation, of *doing* or action, of *being* or individual selfhood. The sage knows nothing of the distinction between subjective and objective . . . the sage sees the many disappearing in the One, in which subjective and objective, positive and negative, here and there, somewhere and nowhere, meet and blend."

Chuang Tzu lived in the 3rd and 4th centuries B. C. He has long been classed as a heterodox thinker, and his writings were directed against what he considered the materialism of the Confucian teachings. His various literary works, mostly of an allegorical nature, long found favor among elder intellectuals who had been frustrated or disappointed in public or private life. From Chuang Tzu, who was strongly influenced by Taoism, can be gathered the attitude of the learned men of his time as this relates to the Sages. This was before the metaphysical period in Taoism, when the school was still essentially philosophical and the later embellishments had not gained general favor. A few quotations from the books of Chuang Tzu indicate a level of thinking comparable with the Greek outlook. According to this erudite scholar, "It has been said, 'The birth of the Sage is the will of God; his death is but a modification of existence. In repose, he shares the passivity

of the *Yin*; in action, the energy of the *Yang*. He will have nothing to do with happiness, and so has nothing to do with misfortune.'" Another statement also deserves mention: "The sea does not reject the streams which flow eastward into it. Therefore it is immeasurably great. The true Sage folds the universe in his bosom. His good influence benefits all throughout the empire, without respect to persons. Born without rank, he dies without titles. He does not take credit for realities." The subject is again introduced into a dialogue, and Chuang Tzu writes: "The government of the perfect Sage," explained Chi Ch'e, 'consists in influencing the hearts of the people so as to cause them to complete their education, to reform their manners, to subdue the rebel mind, and to exert themselves one and all for the common good. This influence operates in accordance with the natural disposition of the people, who are thus unconscious of its operation.' " *

After the decline of Taoist transcendentalism and its gradual integration into a theological sect, the old Chinese concept of the Sage as profound counselor, wise philosopher, and venerable person who had enriched his inner life through experience and reflection, enjoyed a strong revival. Indicative of this transition is the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming, (A. D. 1473-1529). He was a monistic idealist, affirming that every individual had within himself the capacity to know, but must release and perfect this capacity through the enrichment of his understanding and the constant application of philosophic principle to daily conduct. Of the true Sages, Wang writes: "Men of this type never cease in their pursuit of knowledge. The practice of the sage is to be a man who in the joy of its attainment forgets its sorrows. Men of this type are never distressed. Perhaps it is not necessary to say whether he has been successful or not in his pursuit." Later he expands this definition. "The sage may be compared to heaven.

* See, *Chuang Tzu*, London, 1869.

There is no place where heaven is not present The good man may be compared to a lofty mountain peak, maintaining his lofty height. Nevertheless, one a thousand feet high cannot stretch and become ten thousand feet high, and one ten thousand feet high cannot stretch and become a hundred thousand feet high. The good man does not exhibit and exalt himself." This statement is reminiscent of the story, attributed to Mencius, of the man who attempted to make his corn grow more rapidly by pulling it each day.

Scattered through the writings of Wang are numerous other references to the disposition and attainment of the truly wise. The following quotations are typical.

"The sage returns to the original condition of his intuitive knowledge, and thus the more refrains from superimposing his own ideas. The contemplation (emptiness) of intuitive knowledge is the great emptiness of heaven, and the absence of desire in intuition is the lack of form of heaven."

"When a sage or virtuous man is placed in a decadent age, his treatment of men and his response to things is at times indirect, but his method of procedure has never been other than direct."

"The omniscience of the sage has reference to natural law only; his omnipotence has reference to natural law alone. The mind of the sage is clear and intelligent; therefore in all things, he knows the place of natural law and carries it out fully in practice." *

In summarizing the Chinese attitude toward the Confucian Sages, the Buddhist Lohans, and the Taoist Immortals, it becomes reasonably obvious that these three groups bore witness in various ways to one basic concept or assumption. They all held that two kinds of knowledge exist—the first, traditional; and the second, esoteric or mystical.

* See, *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, by Frederick G. Henke.

They further taught that the second kind was superior to the first, that it had always existed in the world, and that it descended through illumined orders or hierarchies of venerable teachers. These teachers in turn derived their inspiration from secret sources. Therefore, beneath the surface of profane learning was a sacred instruction which could be revealed only symbolically or allegorically, and this instruction was a perfect science or method of human regeneration. By these convictions, the Chinese Sages become the Eastern equivalents of the Western Adepts, or those proficient in the science of sciences. Through the complete knowledge of this, man can transcend earthly limitations and become a conscious instrument for the rehabilitation of society and the restoration of the Golden Age.

The Ancient Masters

The cultural life of China has been deeply influenced by three streams of ethical thinking. The first of these streams was the mysticism of Lao-tse; the second, the moralism of Confucius; and the third, the idealistic agnosticism of Buddha. These systems have mingled and separated and mingled again, until they have merged into a three-fold unity. The elements are no longer completely distinguishable, but the consequence of the subtle alchemy is the Chinese life-way.

Religion and art have always been closely associated. The various schools of Chinese thought have been depicted on the artistic level by many painters, a few remembered by name, but the majority surviving only in their work. Just who first composed the delightful picture called "The Vinegar Tasters" may never be known. The concept, however, has been perpetuated through the centuries by many able interpreters. Today, the most familiar form of the depiction shows three distinguished old gentlemen standing around a vinegar barrel. Two of these august

persons are bearded and venerable in the Chinese manner, and the third has a halo around his head.

The vinegar tasters are Lao-tse, Confucius, and Buddha. The vat is life. Each one has stirred the contents with his finger, and then tasted thereof. Each, according to the grand concept of his philosophy, gives his impression of the flavor of the vinegar. After Buddha has put it to his lips, he declares the vinegar to be bitter; Confucius, performing the same action, then solemnly states the vinegar to be sour; and Lao-tse, after estimating the beverage and rolling it about on his tongue, announces with finality that the vinegar is sweet. From this point on, the interpretation of the picture ascends to the rarified atmosphere of higher psychology.

Perhaps Buddha found existence a little more acid than the facts justified, for the Chinese mind, eager to attain immediate fulfillment, is inclined to seek such peace within the realms of visible dimensions. When Confucius called the vinegar sour, he was making a factual statement. He neither enlarged nor moralized upon the actual flavor of living. There was little over-optimism and less over-pessimism in the convictions of this Sage. He expected little, and occasionally found more than he expected. The more subtle of the humor was reserved for Lao-tse. It was part of Taoism that the alchemy of consciousness should transmute the basic substance of worldliness. Therefore, Lao-tse tasted the vinegar and declared it to be sweet. Some would say that he was mad; others that he was a liar; and still others that he had lost his sense of taste. All would be wrong. For the sly old scholar was well aware of the wisdom of his convictions.

Among the historical Sages of China, therefore, these three — Lao-tse, Confucius, and Buddha — form the great triad. The thoughtful Chinese does not choose between them. He accepts from each according to personal need and the circumstances of the occasion. If one belief is



—From Picart's *Religious Ceremonials*
 LAO-TSE, BUDDHA, AND CONFUCIUS
 The Three great teachers of China, with attendants.

good, two are better, and three are best. It is proper, therefore, to recognize the three ancient teachers who have been apotheosized by the veneration of ages and are regarded as the real, if unsceptered, sovereigns ruling the empire of reality.

Lao-tse

Everything about Lao-tse is mysterious and obscure. It is assumed that he was born about the year 604 B. C., and was therefore a contemporary of Pythagoras. He was born of humble family, and some say under a peach tree. Miraculous events announced his birth, especially a great comet, and a similar hairy star foretold his departure. With the rise of metaphysical speculation in Taoism, this obscure Sage was given a highly glamorous personality and was believed to appear to mortal disciples in their dreams and visions, and also to participate in various adventures relating to alchemy and the activities of the Eight Immortals. The picture in general is so confused that some cautious writers have doubted the historical existence of Lao-tse. There seems to be, however, good ground for assuming that this eccentric Sage was a real person who so conducted himself that legends and myths soon accumulated around him.

For example, Professor R. K. Douglas, quoting from an earlier source, makes several interesting observations concerning the various place names associated with Lao-tse. By translating the involved Chinese glyphs, it would appear that Lao-tse was born in a village named "Oppressed Benevolence," in the "Parish of Cruelty," in the "District of Bitterness," and in the "State of Suffering." * It is curious, certainly, that the various names can be fitted together into so convenient and suggestive an arrangement,

* See, *Confucianism and Taoism*.

and it seems evident to some that such birth data should be regarded as allegorical. This does not necessarily follow, however, as each of the Chinese character-compounds involved is susceptible of more than one translation.

According to one Taoist tradition, the appearance of Lao-tse during the decline of the Chou dynasty was his tenth incarnation. It is possible that the idea of the tenth incarnation is of Hindu origin and should be associated with the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, which was supposed to occur in the future and to constitute the coming of a world teacher or avatar. In later Taoism, there is an entirely different report concerning the previous embodiments of Lao-tse. About the year A. D. 1230, there was friction between Buddhists and Taoists as the result of a series of paintings representing the eighty-one incarnations of Lao-tse. In this sequence of pictures, Buddha was included as one of the embodiments of the venerable Taoist Adept. The Buddhists were properly indignant, but the case was ultimately dismissed. The Manichaeans were also involved in this curious situation by intimating that Manes, the founder of their sect, was likewise an incarnation of Lao-tse. *

According to E. A. Gordon, the Nestorian Stone, a Christian monument in China dated A. D. 781, speaks of "the Rider on the green cart-horse who, ascending to the Western Heaven, left men without moral guidance." He believes that this is a reference to Lao-tse. † The version of this monument reproduced by Kesson does not contain this precise statement, but it is pointed out that due to the nature of the original, it could be subject to several variations. Professor Pelliot discovered, in 1909, a book at Chau-Chau entitled, "The Sutras explaining Lao-tse's ascension to the Western Heaven and his being re-incar-

* See, *The Travels of an Alchemist*, by Arthur Waley.

† See, "World-Healers" or *The Lotus Gospel*.

nated in the land of Hu." Gordon believes this to mean Persia, and he feels that the text implies that Lao-tse was reincarnated as Jesus Christ. It has been noted that several early Church Fathers considered the doctrines of Lao-tse as a primitive Christianity belonging to the descent of that pure religion necessary to salvation, to which St. Augustine refers, and which he says "existed from the Creation of the human race, but was more fully developed by Our Lord in His Gospel." *

Lao-tse himself is credited with the statement that the learned do not usually know Tao, and that it is revealed to babes, the simple ones. Therefore, with a child-like spirit, in the privacy of the intimate life, one must seek Tao. "It is only revealed to the restful spiritual heart, and whoso gaineth it, though he die, perisheth not." Such statements as these, so close to the wording of Jesus, could scarcely be completely denied or ignored in view of their wide dissemination among the Chinese mystics. Perhaps the one point that stands out is the early inter-relationship between religious teachings. It is inconceivable, for example, that so close an understanding should exist on certain levels and not at the same time be present in other relevant and equally important doctrines.

The motion of early Christianity toward China should not cause one to lose sight of still more ancient contacts between the Occident and the Orient. For example, India could not have been unaware of the Mystery Systems of Greece and Egypt after the celebrated journey of Pythagoras in the 6th century B. C. Nor can the cultural interchange resulting from the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the Far East be limited totally to art and architecture. Any doctrines of importance which reached India would ultimately have penetrated into China and, conversely, the spiritual and philosophical treasures of the

* See, "World-Healers" or *The Lotus Gospel*.

Chinese are known to have been disseminated in areas as remote as Persia. The recognized intercourse between Persia and the Mediterranean countries is known to have led to esoteric schools flourishing in Antioch, Ephesus, Tarsus, and Alexandria. There are, therefore, vestiges of a total world-concept of religion on a comparative basis long before recent European man became aware of the widespread foundations of mysticism and esoteric philosophy.

From the available records, it would appear that Lao-tse was a mystic and a quietist, teaching a completely informal doctrine, entirely dependent upon internal contemplation. Man attains to truth by the complete relaxation of error within himself. The mystical experience consummates the quest for reality. Lao-tse wrote: "There is an Infinite Being which was before Heaven and Earth. How calm it is, how free! It lives alone and changes not. It moves everything, but it is not affected. We may regard it as the universal Mother. I know not its name. I call it Tao." Such contemplation is not different from the inner teachings of the Indian mystics or the old Jewish Cabalists, or, for that matter, from the instructions of Jesus, who promised his disciples that the pure in heart shall see God. In the *Tao Teh King*, the Master writes: "The Sage therefore is occupied only with that which is without prejudice. He teaches without verbosity, he acts without effort; he produces without possessing, he acts without regard to the fruit of action; he brings his work to perfection without assuming credit; and claiming nothing as his own, he cannot at any time be said to lose." *

In the seventh section, the Master writes: "Thus the wise man, indifferent to himself, is the greatest among them, and taking no care for himself, he is nevertheless preserved. By being the most unselfish he is the most se-

* For details of this meeting, see, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. I, "Confucius," by James Legge.

cure of all." The curious mysticism of the Master is expressed in Section XXI: "I am but a waif, a stray, a child without a home. All others have an excess of good things, but I am as one abandoned. How foolish and simple am I! I am bewildered. Everyone sparkles with intelligence; I am alone in my obscurity. The people are full of discernment; I alone am dull. I am tossed about like the ocean; I roll and am never at rest. Everyone has something to do; I alone am incapable and without merit. I alone am estranged from the people, but I glory on the breast of my mother!"

The closing section of the *Tao Teh King* concludes the philosophy which the Master left to his world. "Sincere words are not grand. Grand words are not faithful. The man of Tao does not dispute. They who dispute are not skilled in Tao. Those who know it are not learned. The learned do not know it. The wise man does not lay up treasure. The more he expends on others, the more he gains for himself. The more he gives to others, the more he has for his own. This is the Tao of Heaven, which penetrates but does not injure. This is the Tao of the wise man, who acts but does not strive."

It is evident from these and similar teachings, that Lao-tse could not be easily understood by those of worldly inclinations. Even his own followers gradually departed from his simple way and, through countless interpretations, attempted to clarify his basic teachings. These very commentaries obscure the original meaning and, by degrees, his doctrine was made to sustain attitudes entirely inconsistent with the original intention. Yet it may be affirmed that Taoism was and still is the principal school of indigenous mysticism among the Chinese. It has always been to them an escape from the formality of the Chinese life-way. It survives in the arts of the people particularly, and has exercised a sensitive but relentless pressure upon Chinese culture and tradition, impelling men to obey heav-

en and to mold their conduct upon the simple ways of Nature.

According to Sze-ma Ch'ien, who had some standing as an historian, Lao-tse was curator of the Royal Library at Lo-yang at the time of his celebrated meeting with Confucius. In the year 517 B. C., Confucius, then a young man of 33 years, paid a ceremonial visit to Lao-tse, then a patriarch of 87 years. * The original intention of the meeting was to have a discussion of ceremonies, but the conversation quickly took a different vein. It should be noted that the details of this visit rest on very slender foundation, and it is quite possible that the account, if not created at a later date, was considerably colored by the differences which distinguish the two sects. Actually, there is nothing to disprove the possibility of such a meeting, but the ethical and philosophical implications strongly suggest that the story is intended as a statement of doctrine rather than merely the human contact of two distinguished scholars.

Confucius, with his characteristic regard for the proprieties, took a most respectful attitude, giving to the older man all the deference that his years and distinction required. Confucius was certainly sincere in his desire to learn. He told Lao-tse that he had sought truth from the beginning of his career with no other motive than that he might be serviceable to both the state and the people. Lao-tse is said to have acknowledged the respectful greeting of the younger man rather brusquely, saying, "Those whom you talk about are dead, and their bones are moldered to dust,—only their words are left. Moreover, when the superior man gets his opportunity he mounts aloft; but, when the time is against him, he is carried along by the force of circumstances. I have heard that a good mer-

* See *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, Vol. XII (Medieval China), by various translators.

chant, though he have rich treasures deeply stored, appears as if he were poor; and that the superior man, though his virtue be complete, is yet to outward seeming, stupid. Put away your proud air and many desires, your insinuating habit and wild will. They are of no advantage to you—this is all I have to tell you.”

Actually, it appears that the two philosophers had several discussions, but unfortunately their words have not been preserved. Lao-tse is said to have remarked: “If the Tao could be offered to men, there is no one who would not willingly offer it to his prince; if it could be presented to men, everybody would like to present it to his parents; if it could be announced to men, each man would gladly announce it to his brothers; if it could be handed down to men, who would not wish to transmit it to his children?” The old Sage then explained that Tao cannot be so communicated, nor can it be transmitted through the eyes and ears or the other outer senses. It can be known only to those who are capable of receiving it into their own hearts. It comes from heaven; it is given by heaven. It is received by the heaven-loving, and it is known to the heaven-knowing.

As Confucius was about to depart, Lao-tse is reported to have said to him: “I have heard that rich and noble persons make parting gifts; but people who are neither rich nor noble, but are good, give sincere words in farewell. I am neither rich nor noble but I am held to be a good man, so I will give you these words to take with you on your way. Shrewd and clever people are always near to death, for they love to criticize and pass judgment on others. Those who know a great deal about practical affairs, and do things on a large scale, endanger their persons, for by their actions and their knowledge they reveal the mistakes of mankind.”

Later, Confucius, with his accustomed honesty, related his baffling experience with the old Master of Tao-



—From the Shantung Tablets

CONFUCIUS VISITING LAO-TSE TO DISCUSS THE PROPRIETIES
LISTENED ALSO TO THE MUSIC OF THE
ANCIENT MASTER

ism. He made no effort to minimize the criticism which had been directed toward him, nor did he claim to understand Lao-tse. He simply said, “I know how birds can fly, fishes swim, and animals run. But the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flyer shot by the arrow. But there is the dragon; I cannot tell how he

mounts on the wind through the clouds and rises to heaven. Today I have seen Lao-tse, and can only compare him to the dragon."

Lao-tse's criticism seems to have been turned against what he considered the intellectual emphasis which distinguished the Confucian method. Actually, Confucius made it clear throughout his teachings that he was not an originator and that he made no claim to any superior kind of knowledge. He admitted that he was not so constituted by natural temperament or acquirements that he could penetrate into the mystical substratum of human consciousness. He also admitted that there were universal mysteries utterly beyond his understanding, and, had he the time, he might well devote it to the study of the *I Ching* and other recondite subjects. He believed that there were certain immediate and necessary ideas and concepts which men should come to know and apply. If these obvious and natural remedies were ignored, society would fail, good government would perish, and the people would fall into dire extremities.

There are numerous inconsistencies in the accounts bearing upon the closing episode in the life of Lao-tse. The historian Khien is authority for the account of Lao-tse's final departure through the northwest barrier gate. This is hard to reconcile with the narrative contained in the third book of Kwang-tze, who wrote in the 4th century B. C. He described the death of Lao-tse and the crowd of mourners who gathered on this solemn occasion. The story as preserved by Khien is, however, the most widely circulated, and, whether literal or allegorical, is certainly the more meaningful. The beauty of the narrative and the dramatic situations which it suggests have become essential parts of Taoism, and are therefore well entitled to be included in the present survey.

Twenty-five centuries ago, Yin Hsi, an old soldier and scholar, was the keeper of the Outer Barrier gate of China,

which was known as "the way of compassion," that opened to the northwest toward the great desert called Gobi. This Yin Hsi has been reported to have followed the teachings of Lao-tse, and he was a master of signs and omens, could devise magical figures, knew the secrets of the stars, and was gifted with mystical perception. According to tradition, this old gate-keeper regarded Lao-tse as a heavenly light moving upon the earth. He was therefore profoundly impressed when, from his place of lonely vigil, he observed a luminous sphere which appeared in the sky, moving over China from a southwesterly direction and finally vanishing behind the great mountains that rose beyond the desert.

Regarding this as an omen of the highest importance, Yin Hsi consulted the ancient books which dealt with the secrets of the Immortals, and concluded that a very wise and noble human being was to follow the motion of the mysterious light, and might well come to the northwest gate. To prepare for this event, Yin Hsi built a hut of grass and reeds to await the coming of the great Sage, and, seating himself in the doorway, watched the road that led back into China.

In due time, the vigil of Yin Hsi was rewarded. He saw approaching him, along the twisting dusty path, a huge greenish-black ox. Riding this clumsy animal was a strange little old man with long white hair and beard, huddled in the folds of a cloak of coarse cloth. Yin Hsi, because he was gifted with inner vision, immediately knew in his heart that this was the scholar for whom he was waiting.

As Lao-tse approached, the gate-keeper hastened toward him and, performing the most profound obeisances, humbly requested the Sage to rest for a time and share tea with him. Lao-tse graciously consented, and when they were comfortably seated in the hut, Yin Hsi said: "You are about to withdraw yourself out of sight. Let me insist on your first composing for me a book." With some per-

suasion, Lao-tse agreed, and remained with the gatekeeper long enough to prepare the *Tao Teh King*, the only literary work of China's immortal mystic. The writing consisted of five thousand characters arranged in eighty-one chapters, each exceedingly brief. The complete book was also divided into two parts, the first "Concerning Tao," and the second "Concerning Teh." In this usage, *Tao* signifies "the unmanifest nature of absolute being;" and *Teh*, "the revelation of this universal power through the unfoldment of objective creation."

According to the historian Sze-ma Ch'ien, Lao-tse, after setting forth his principles in the *Tao Teh King*, presented the work to the keeper of the gate, and then went his way, so that it is not known when or where he died. * Thus ended the historical record of the venerable Sage "who liked to keep himself unknown." Some say that, tired of the burden of the world, he went forth to die. Others, inclined to mystical speculation, insist that he sought the city of the Adepts, the pleasant garden of the wise by the mountain Kwen Lun.

The Kingdom of Lu, by Maurice Magre, contains a beautiful and reverent description of Lao-tse's last journey. The account is a masterpiece of mystical understanding. While it is doubtful that some of the statements can be sustained by reference to history or the Chinese annals, there is nothing unreasonable or improbable in the substance of the narration.

According to Maurice Magre, Lao-tse had perceived, by the mystical extension of his faculties, that other men were alive in the world who shared his secret of 'the Way.' He had learned from a disciple that in India a good and holy teacher had renounced wealth and a kingdom to serve in absolute humility the spiritual needs of his fellow men. There was also a great philosopher who lived in a

* See *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*. Vol XII. (Medieval China) by various translators.

city of white marble by the shores of a blue sea. His name was Pythagoras, and he also served the Light of the World.

Writing of Lao-tse's vision of the blessed place beyond the desert, the author of *The Kingdom of Lu* says: "Through the valley wound a peaceful river along whose banks grew lotus-flowers larger than he had ever seen . . . A cedar, taller than the rest, which stood in the middle of the valley surrounded by a circular bench of carved stone, was the only indication that the place was inhabited. An impression of security was diffused from this silent spot, causing Lao-tse to think that it must be the dwelling place of those perfected men, guardians of lost wisdom and secret directors of the human race, whose existence had been made known to him by the old traditions. 'Into the valley come my two brothers,' said Lao-tse, 'The man from India and the man from the country where there are marble temples at the edge of the blue sea. That is where I must go.'"

In the 7th century A. D., Lao-tse was canonized by the reigning T'ang Emperor, being elevated to the estate among the divine creatures of the world with the title "The Great Supreme, The Emperor-God of the Dark First Cause." To this was later added the final honor of being known simply as "The Ancient Master."

Confucius*

Ching-tsai, the mother of Confucius, was a girl of 17, and her husband was in his seventieth year at the time of their marriage. In the early legendary account, Ching-tsai, fearing that she should not have a son because of the great age of her husband, made regular journeys to a nearby hill where she prayed for the assistance of heaven. There is also a story that the aged husband and his young wife performed ancient rituals together, asking the inter-

*"The All-Seeing Eye", by M. P. Hall,

cession of the gods, in a secluded place on the side of Mount Mi. When Ching-tsai ascended the hill to perform the sacred ceremony, the leaves of trees and plants stood erect, and on her return, they bent over to pay her homage. On the night that she returned from these holy and ancient rites, she had a dream in which a black deity appeared to her, saying, "You shall have a son, a sage, and you must bring him forth in a hollow mulberry tree." One day during her pregnancy, Ching-tsai passed into a state of trance, and in her vision she saw five ancient men in the hall of her house. These patriarchs referred to themselves as the essences of the five planets, and they led in their midst an animal resembling a small cow with one horn and covered with scales like a dragon. This strange creature knelt before Ching-tsai and cast forth from its mouth a tablet of jade on which was the inscription "The son of the essence of water shall succeed to the decaying Chou, and be a throneless king." In her dream or reverie, Ching-tsai tied a piece of embroidered ribbon around the single horn of the Chi-lin, or unicorn, and the vision disappeared.

As the time drew near for Ching-tsai to bear her child, she asked her husband if there was any place in the vicinity called "the hollow mulberry tree." He said that there was a small dry cave which went by that name on the south side of a hill. She then stated that she wished to be confined in this cave. When her husband expressed surprise, she told of her dream, and he immediately made the necessary arrangements. On the night when the child was born, two dragons appeared in the air and kept vigil on the right and left of the hill, and two "spirit ladies" hovered above the cave, pouring out fragrant odors as though to bathe the mother and child. Immediately after the birth occurred, a spring of clear water, warm and fragrant, bubbled up from the floor of the dry cave, but as soon as the child had been bathed, the spring dried away and was not seen again.

There is a celebrated series of pictures setting forth the principal incidents in the life of Confucius. These are based upon tablets in the Temple of Chufu in Shantung. Three illustrations from this series are concerned with the miraculous occurrences which accompanied the birth of Confucius. The first of these shows the five old men and the Chi-lin as described in Ching-tsai's vision. The second rubbing shows the roof of the house of Shuh-liang-Heih at the time of the birth of the Sage. Two dragons surrounded by clouds hover over the ridge-pole, and nearby are the five ancient ones who descended from the sky to be present at the happy occurrence. In this series of drawings, it is implied that Confucius was born in the family residence rather than in the mountain cave. The third picture shows five heavenly musicians playing their instruments in the sky over the birthplace of the uncrowned king. Immediately after her son was born, Ching-tsai heard this celestial music, and a voice from space said, "Heaven influenced the birth of the holy child." Confucius is said to have been born with the forty-nine marks of a noble and excellent body, and on his breast appeared the words, "The charm of making ceremonies and setting the world in order."

The mythical creatures which attended the birth of Confucius suggest a brief summary of this phase of Chinese metaphysical symbolism. The Chi-lin is the Chinese equivalent of the unicorn. The male of the species is called *chi*, and the female, *lin*. The combination of these two terms gives the generic name for this creature, the *chi-lin*—in Japanese, *ki-rin*. The unicorn is said to have had the body of a cow or deer, covered with scales of five colors. It had the tail of an ox and the hoofs of a horse, and there was one soft horn growing from the center of its head. In Chinese mythology, several mythical animals play important parts. The Chi-lin is the lord of quadrupeds, the dragon presides over reptiles and scaly creatures, and the phoenix is sovereign among the birds. Here

again, Chinese symbolism mingles with that of many other nations. Dragon lore is almost universally distributed; the unicorn appears in the legendry of many peoples; and the phoenix, the bird of immortality, was well known to the Egyptians and Romans and is found among the North American Indians, the Mayas, and the Aztecs. These creatures have always been associated with heroic persons, and their appearances as omens had more than superficial meaning. All three, for example, appear among the curious designs of European alchemy, and on a psychological level, have been explained and interpreted by Jung in his *Psychology and Alchemy*. He noted that the phoenix is known in early Christian art as equivalent to the dove, representing the third person of the trinity.

The Chi-lin eats no mortal food, and is said to avoid walking on growing grass. The phoenix is native only to the mysterious land of the Sages, and the Chinese believe that it originated in the remote wastes of the Gobi desert. The dragon, long accepted as a symbol of imperial authority in China, lived in all elements, and could make itself invisible at will. Although of ferocious appearance, it was usually associated with good fortune in the Chinese mind. By the reference of Confucius, who likened the dragon to the mind of Lao-tse, it evidently also signified true wisdom and even Tao itself.

It is believed that the Hebrew word *reem*, as it occurs in the Bible, should be translated *unicorn*. Aristotle mentions the unicorn, and Pliny describes a fierce animal called the monoceros, which is almost identical with the Chi-lin. In his *Gaelic Wars*, Caesar speaks of a creature shaped like a stag, with one horn projecting from the center of its forehead. It has been suggested scientifically that records about the unicorn are so numerous that such creatures might actually exist, or have existed, as the result of hybridization. In any event, they have always been regarded as extremely rare, and have seldom been seen by mortals.

If, as the alchemists suggested, the single horn represents the one-pointedness of the human will, this elusive animal might well be considered as an appropriate symbol of the Immortal or Adept. Like these fabled Sages, and also like the very principles of truth which they taught, the unicorn can neither be tamed nor captured, but will follow docilely those of perfect faith and gentleness. The Chi-lin is not a ferocious animal, but it will defend its liberty with its life.

Whatever the original meaning may have been, the unicorn, phoenix, and dragon, are represented on most monuments associated with the esoteric tradition. These symbolic creatures, therefore, have become seals or landmarks of secret societies which have taught the Adept Tradition, and references to them, either pictorial or literary, are found wherever temples of the old Mystery rites are known to have been located. They are the protectors of the god-men, and accompany the messengers of heaven. About a year before his death, Confucius learned that hunters had slain a strange creature in the forest. The Sage immediately investigated the report and, seeing the animal, declared it to be the Chi-lin. He was deeply moved, for he said that its death was an omen of his own departure and announced the decline of virtue among men.

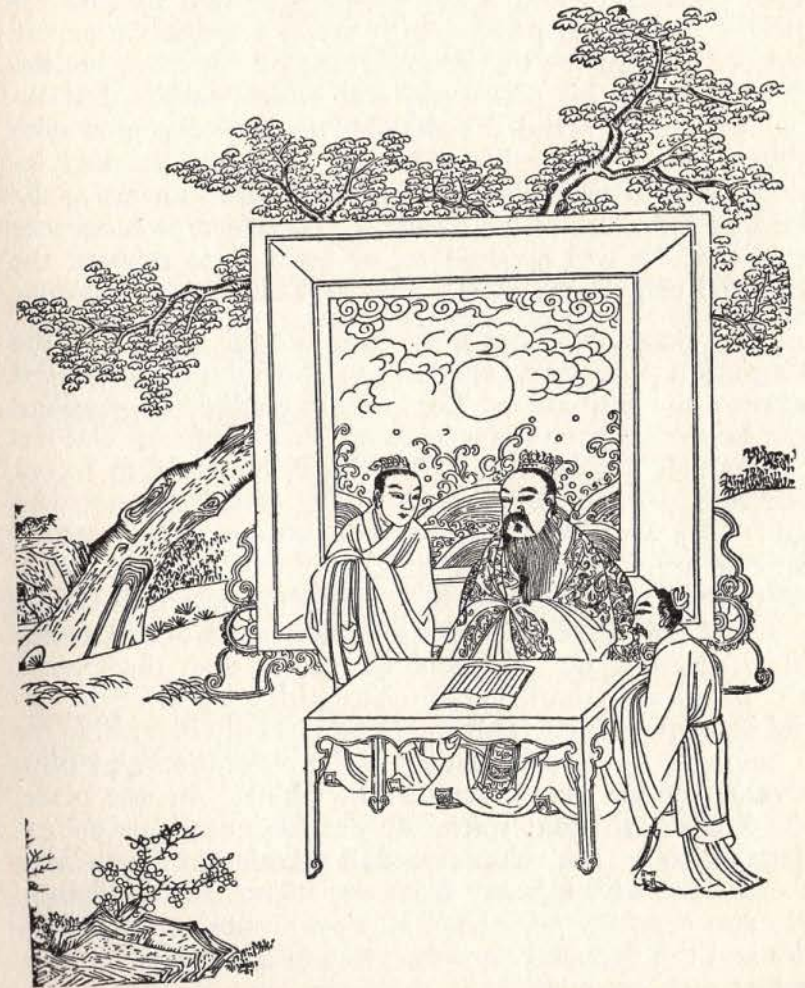
In terms of historical orientation, Confucius was born about the time of the death of Nebuchadrezzar, when Cyrus became king of Persia. The event was considered important, and the Duke of Lu sent congratulations. There had been prophecies that a great Sage was to be born, and the exact date of his appearance was announced by seers and Sages of previous generations. Werner mentions a legend that Confucius was a reincarnation of Wen Chung, who lived during the Chou dynasty (1154-1122 B. C.). Wen was greatly honored as a teacher, and was finally canonized under the impressive title: "Celestial and

Highly Honored Head of the Nine Orbs of the Heavens, Voice of the Thunder, and Regulator of the Universe.” *

Confucius was only three years old when his father died, and his early training was entrusted to his mother's care. The strong spirit of veneration which marked the career of this Sage was due in large measure to the maternal guidance which directed his early life. Even as a very young boy, he exhibited extraordinary love of learning and a profound respect for the ancient laws of his people. At the age of seventeen, he was appointed inspector of the corn-marts, where he energetically repressed fraud and dishonesty. Later, he was appointed inspector-general of pastures and flocks, a position which he occupied with such wisdom and skill that there was an immediate and notable improvement in the condition of his people.

The mother of Confucius died in his twenty-third year, and this circumstance established him in his philosophical career. There was an ancient, but then almost forgotten law among the Chinese, which obligated a man in public office to resign from all official duties at the death of either parent. There were also regulations, traceable to venerable antiquity, bearing upon the solemnity and splendor of the burial services of a father or mother. Confucius carefully fulfilled all these traditional requirements, and revived customs which have continued in practice until the present time. After the funeral, Confucius returned to his house and remained in solitude for the prescribed three years. He dedicated this time as a period of mourning, but in the spirit of the highest admiration for his mother, he devoted his energies to reflection and philosophical studies as an enduring monument to her memory.

After he had completed his ritual for the dead, Confucius immediately sought opportunity to instruct his countrymen. He traveled through the various states of the



—From the Shantung Tablets

CONFUCIUS RECEIVING A REPORT CONCERNING THE
WISE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE OF WEI

* See, *Myths and Legends of China*.

empire, and gained considerable reputation as teacher and reformer. At one time, his followers included five hundred mandarins, and it has been emphasized that he appealed strongly to persons with heavy responsibilities and sincere concern for the improvement of the state. It has been said that his philosophy was ethical rather than religious, but so broad a statement must be accepted with reservations. While living at Lu, Confucius labored industriously in preparing revisions and abridgements of the ancient literature of his country. Therefore, it cannot be said that he was opposed to, or inclined to neglect, the spiritual convictions of the ancient Chinese.

Dr. Legge, who has done so masterful a study of the Confucian literature, appears to have been prejudiced against the attitude of Confucius on religious questions. Dr. Legge has gone so far as to say that Confucius was unreligious, if not atheistic. It is hard, however, to reconcile such a statement with the words of the Master, who said: "He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray." * The use of the term *Heaven* as a synonym for *deity* has always been broadly accepted in China, and can only imply a philosophical concept of deity—entirely reverent, but philosophical rather than theological. Dr. Legge also charged Confucius with an insufficient belief in a future life. This would be virtually impossible for a man who devoted his career to the restoration and preservation of the ancient culture of China. In one place, the Master said that spirits do not hear oaths or obligations which are not voluntary. His devotion to the *I Ching* should rescue his memory from any stigma of materialism. He also carefully performed all rites proper to the divinities and the deceased ancestors, assuming them to be present at such ceremonies.

It is also true that though Confucius was a consistent theist and believed in the immortality of man, his prin-

* *Analects*, 3:13 and 14:13.

cipal purpose was the attainment of perfect virtue in the present life. He held that such a course assured the future state, and was most immediately necessary. More than five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Confucius stated the Golden Rule: "What I do not wish men to do to me, I also wish not to do to them." * Confucius spoke not only to princes and rulers, but to the most simple and humble of men. In the cultivation of the Great Learning, he advocated seven steps by which the human being can ascend to a superior state. These are: the investigation of things; the completion of knowledge; the sincerity of the thoughts; the rectifying of the heart; the cultivation of the person; the regulation of the family; and the government of the state. Such a code, though it may not be theological, can scarcely be assailed as lacking in religious implications.

The Master said: "A youth, when at home, should be filial, and, abroad, respectful to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good. When he has time and opportunity, after the performance of these things he should employ them in polite studies." †

The Master said: "He who exercises government by means of his virtue, may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn toward it." ‡

The Master said: "At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right." §

* *Analects*, 15:23.

† *Analects*, 1:6.

‡ *Analects*, 2:1.

§ *Analects*, Book II:IV.

The Master said: "The superior man is catholic and not partisan. The mean man is a partisan and not catholic." The Master said: "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous." *

Although many princes honored Confucius, it became increasingly obvious to him that the essential principles of his doctrine would not be generally accepted in his own time. He therefore finally retired, in his sixty-seventh year, to his own state of Lu, where he established a school which gained considerable distinction. He chose to do this rather than to follow the suggestion of certain of his disciples who recommended that he retire to some distant mountainous place and become a recluse. He decided to remain in the world as a teacher and establish a formal system of instruction, defending his decision with the following words.

"But I am a man, and cannot exclude myself from the society of men to consort with wild beasts. As bad as the times are, I shall do all that I can to induce the people to return to habits of reason and virtue, for it is in the exercise of these cardinal principles of our nature alone that we are able to find personal happiness, national contentment and harmony. If all men would earnestly uphold the dignity of reason and follow in the pathway of virtue, they would require no instruction from myself or others to enable them to find the escutcheon of wisdom or that felicity of life which is so much sought after. It is the duty of every man to first perfect himself and then to aid in the work of perfecting others. Human nature is our inheritance, it comes to us as a divine gift, yet it is only in the complete subjugation of its compromising qualities that we are enabled to find peace of mind, social joy and freedom." †

* *Analects*, II: XIV-XV.

† See, *The Moral Aphorisms and Terseological Teachings of Confucius*, by Marcus R. K. Wright.



—From the Shantung Tablets

CONFUCIUS PROFOUNDLY AGITATED AT THE
DEATH OF THE CHI-LIN

The students of Confucius numbered over three thousand, and of these, seventy-two were so outstanding that he regarded them as his personal disciples. The life of the Master was saddened by the death of two of his disciples. In the year 481 B. C., the incident involving the Chi-lin occurred. Some accounts state that the strange animal was captured during a hunting excursion, and others say that the creature was found by wood-gatherers. As it could not be identified, Confucius was asked to examine it. He immediately recognized it as a Lin, and legends affirm that it still bore on its horn the ribbon which had been placed there by the mother of the Sage before his birth. Confucius was profoundly affected, and cried out, "For whom have you come?" Then he added quietly, "The course of my doctrines is run."

Early in the year 479 B. C., Confucius stood by the door of his house chanting in a low voice, "The great mountain must crumble; the strong beam must break; and the wise man wither away like a plant." Among his last utterances is that recorded in the *Li Chi II*, Section

I. ii. 20. "I am a man of Yin, and last night I dreamt that I was sitting with offerings before me between the two pillars. No intelligent monarch arises; there is no one in the kingdom that will make me his master. My time has come to die." He then retired to his house and expired seven days later. At the end, the Master passed in complete tranquillity. He indicated no apprehension, nor did he ask or require any consolation. In death, there was no change in his expression. He simply appeared to sleep. It is assumed, however, that his heart was saddened by the conviction that he had failed. If so, he accepted this also as according to the Way of Heaven.

Mencius

In the centuries following the death of Confucius, and prior to the birth of Mencius, the warfare of ambitious princes burdened China with discord and dissension. Even the scholars and intellectuals took sides and, neglecting their books and ink slabs, associated their destinies with successful tyrants. Under such unsettled conditions, sovereigns dedicated to scholarly pursuits ceased to arise, and the intelligentsia fell into argument and purposeless discussion. There was a tendency to neglect the ways of truth and virtue, and to believe that the ancient principles which had guided the nation were no longer valid. A kind of humanistic philosophy appeared, laden with disillusionment and skepticism. Even the teachings of Confucius were neglected—sometimes condemned. It was to rescue the essential learning from prevailing skeptical and cynical attitudes that Mencius presented his own interpretation of the older doctrine.

The Sage Mang-tse (Latinized as Mencius) was born in 371 B. C. and died in 288 B. C. He was therefore a contemporary of Aristotle, Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, and Demosthenes. Like Confucius, he lost his father when a small child, and his early life was strongly influenced by the vir-

tue and wisdom of his mother, who has come to be regarded as a model of Chinese womanhood. Very little is known about the personal life of Mencius. Miraculous events are not emphasized, but it is inevitable that the Chinese mind should embellish the meagerness of the factual records. Dr. Legge has gathered most of the stories available in English relating to the life and ministry of Mencius. *

As a youth, Mencius seems to have exhibited slight promise. He had a strong tendency to take on the pressures of his environment, and because of her concern for the proper development of her son's character, his mother changed their place of abode three times in an effort to improve his habits. Originally, it is said, the widow and her son lived near a cemetery, and Mencius carefully examined the various carvings and scenes associated with the funeral art. He would then amuse himself by acting out the rites and ceremonies depicted on the tombs. Deciding that this was not an especially desirable influence on the mind of her son, the good woman took a house in the market place of a town. Mencius immediately came under the magical spell of merchandizing, imagined himself to be a salesman offering his wares and chatting with customers. By this time convinced that her son was exceedingly impressionable, the mother had an excellent idea. She moved again, taking up residence near a celebrated school. Mencius, true to his native characteristics and previous practices, immediately imitated the manners, politeness, and scholarly interests of the students and professors. In this way, he finally came to a mature way of living and thinking. Even after he was safely settled in his educational program, however, Mencius had a tendency to neglect his studies. When she realized this, his mother took a knife and, in the presence of her son, slashed the material she was weaving on her loom, explaining that

* See, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, by James Legge.



PORTRAIT OF MENCIOUS

—From Favier's *Peking*

this action was equivalent to neglecting lessons. Mencius was deeply impressed and did not thereafter permit himself to fall into unscholarly ways.

Mencius entered public life at about his fortieth year, and devoted himself to the welfare of the state until he was about sixty years old, when he retired and taught disciples privately until the end of his life. He was completely dedicated to the teachings of Confucius, but whereas Confucius has been considered as a practical philosopher, Mencius gained distinction as a metaphysician. He is sometimes referred to as a "Number Two Saint." The conditions of the times accounted largely for the emphasis which Mencius placed upon socio-political problems and their ethical solution. He sought to restore the nobility of man as this applied to both the governing and the governed. His plan was simple. He went to the rulers, one by one, determined to continue his search until he could find

among them a prince who would follow his counsel and commit to his care the administration of the government. He journeyed about for twenty years, teaching the ways of the old Sages, and seeking to purify the conduct of men. He was unable, however, to accomplish his purpose. Perhaps his failure was partly due to his own temperament. He was outspoken, even violent, in his denunciation of public and private abuses. He offended many, and alienated those who might have been his strongest supporters. His extremely revolutionary ideas frightened rulers and statesmen, and they were persuaded to ignore him as the safer course of action.

The independence of Mencius is indicated by two anecdotes mentioned by Dr. Legge. A distinguished person attended the school of the Master, but when he questioned Mencius, the philosopher declined to answer. When chided for his lack of politeness, he replied, "I do not answer him who questions me presuming on his ability, nor him who presumes on his talents, nor him who presumes on his age, nor him who presumes on services performed to me, nor him who presumes on old acquaintance." When a student explained to Mencius that he was arranging to have a house nearby so that he might receive instruction, the philosopher replied, "The way of truth is like a great road. It is not difficult to know it. The evil is only that men do not seek it. Do you go home and search for it, and you will have abundance of teachers." *

Although Mencius was often associated with those of high estate, he never took a salary; therefore, he was free to speak his mind and depart when he saw fit. Han Yu honored the wisdom of Mencius with a curious statement. "Yet had it not been for him, we should have been buttoning the lappets of our coats on the left side, and our discourse would have been all confused and indistinct;—

* See, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. II, by James Legge.

it is on this account that I have honored Mencius and consider his merit not inferior to that of Yu."

It was inevitable that Mencius should suffer disillusionment and discouragement, and these the philosopher bore with deep inner patience and resignation, even though occasionally he appeared to take a rebellious attitude. Having made every possible effort to help the leaders of China to recognize the heaven-bestowed responsibilities of their high stations, and meeting always the same lack of integrity, he ultimately concluded, "Heaven does not yet wish that the kingdom should enjoy tranquility and good order. If it had wished this who is there besides me to bring it about?" His principal recommendations for a successful state were: make the people prosperous and see that they are well educated.

Mencius apparently assumed that the influence of Confucius would extend for five generations and, as he lived within this period, that he was in a favorable position to be instructed by masters through whom the Confucian teachings had descended directly. He therefore says: "Although I could not be a disciple of Confucius myself, I have endeavored to cultivate my character and knowledge by means of others who were." While the doctrines of Mencius have been generally submerged by the fame of Confucius, it cannot be said that Mencius was merely an interpreter of Confucianism. He was an outstanding philosopher in his own right.

The first primer for every Chinese school boy is the *Three Character Classic*, which opens with the statement, "Man's nature is originally good." This is based upon the philosophy of Mencius. He was a strangely optimistic man, for he declared that there is nothing good that a man cannot do, only he does not do it. His most famous saying is: "The great man is he who does not lose his child-heart."

Buddhism in China

After the introduction of Buddhism into China during the reign of the Emperor of Ming Ti, about the year A. D. 67, Indian philosophy began to influence the shaping of Chinese religious thought. Taoism and Confucianism were already firmly established, the former emphasizing the worship of spirits, and the latter, veneration for ancestors. It was quite reasonable, therefore, that a system of thought centering around the individual, his personal problems and needs, should gain favor and win converts. For a time, Buddhism was set apart as a foreign doctrine. By degrees, however, it was absorbed into the Chinese life-way, enriching the native faith and, in turn, itself taking on a distinctly Chinese complexion. In this alchemical mingling of apparently irreconcilable beliefs, Confucianism was the least affected, probably due to the intellectual level upon which it flourished.

The intimate association which developed between Taoism and Buddhism is clearly indicated in the early religious dramas and theatrical productions of the Chinese. In Taoism, the favorite subject for dramatization was the fate of human souls in the after-death state. For many centuries, the Temple of the Universe in Peking was famous for its elaborate sequences of statuary, each depicting the misfortunes and punishments which must be undergone by evil-doers in the after-life. Each group of figures represented a particular form of punishment, and the result was a gruesome panorama of torments and tortures. Incidentally, the courtyard of this temple was the gathering place for lepers, which did not lighten the atmosphere.

The cycle of Buddhist religious plays dealt principally with the law of rebirth. Punishments were included, but always with the optimistic overtone that man would ultimately attain liberation through his own virtue or the inter-

cession of the bodhisattvas of the Mahayana School of popular Buddhist metaphysics. The cycle of reincarnation, with its twelve nidanas, or states of re-embodiment, is traditionally presented in a wistful and whimsical manner. The concept is permeated throughout with an atmosphere of consolation. Everyone is punished for his own good, and in order that his future conduct will bring appropriate rewards and blessings. All Buddhism emphasizes growth and unfoldment. The end of the long road of life, with its periodic rebirths, is illumination and emancipation. The guardian buddhas, with their gilded masks, and the gentle teachers, with their shaven heads, are always present, like kindly parents. They inspire a patient acceptance of karma, and encourage sufferers to fit themselves for future peace and security. The gracious Kuan Yin intercedes for those who suffer, and the luminous Maitreya awaits to receive into the Kingdom of the Blessed all who have conquered the weaknesses and imperfections in themselves. Naturally, the stories, legends, and themes include the lives of good men and emphasize the wonderful virtues which they practiced and for which they have received an adequate compensation.

For the Chinese, dominated as they are by strict traditional forms, all the punishments and rewards after death are regulated by an inflexible code of legality. In each of the purgatories are properly instituted courts of jurisprudence, presided over by judges and lawyers. All evidence is carefully weighed, and there can be no miscarriages of justice. There are also jurists who watch the administration of rewards and punishments. Everything is extremely proper, but this in no way mitigates the dominant code. The Taoist plays emphasize justice, final and absolute, but the Buddhist pageantry emphasizes mercy, immediate and available. The Chinese, therefore, live in a universe in which justice and mercy parallel each other, but do not always meet. It is a foregone conclusion that under such a system, the factual thinking of Confucius should have

appealed to those intellectuals who, considering themselves emancipated from all superstition, chose to cling to a formal system of ethics and deport themselves accordingly.

It is said that early Buddhist monks coming to China built their first temples in strict conformity with Chinese architecture and exchanged their Hindu robes for Chinese vestments. Father Favier, in his elaborate work, *Peking*, devotes considerable space to the establishment of Christian missions in China. Again, it is noticeable that the early missions were patterned after native buildings, and the missionary priests and fathers frequently wore the approved dress of Chinese scholars and mandarins. In the earlier case of Buddhism, Chinese ways and customs encroached heavily upon the imported doctrine, and all phases of it passed through progressive modifications. The historical Buddha retained his Indian identity, but never attained outstanding public favor. He was acknowledged as the founder of the system, but many generations of converts revealed a clear preference for two of the bodhisattvas—Avalokiteshvara, and Maitreya. In due course, cycles of Chinese legends transformed these bodhisattvas so completely that they now appear almost totally Chinese.

Avalokiteshvara, who is prime minister in Amitabha's paradise, is not directly mentioned in the earliest Buddhist writings. Some believe that he was originally a sun deity of central Asia. In the Mahayana system, he is an emanation or extension of the powers of the Buddha Amitabha. He has long been regarded as the personification of the attributes of mercy. Gradually, this Bodhisattva absorbed the Hindu attributes of Brahma and Ishwara, and became a symbol of the spiritual body of the universe. His eyes and arms have been infinitely multiplied, and he gave to the world the mysterious formula "Om Mani Padme Hum," which bestows liberation to those who are able to discover its true meaning and intone it correctly. *

* See, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, by Hal Dayal.

In early writings, Avalokiteshvara is represented as a male being, or perhaps as an androgyne, but, in passing within the Chinese sphere of influence, this Bodhisattva lost nearly all of his Hindu attributes. He was transformed into a gracious heavenly queen under the name Kuan Shih Yin—"The One Who Hears, Knows, and is Aware of the prayers of all mortals." Of this, E. T. C. Werner says, "As Mary is the guiding spirit of Rome, so is Kuan Yin of the Buddhist faith!" The complete transition of Avalokiteshvara to Kuan Yin seems to have been accomplished as early as the T'ang Dynasty, but there are some exceptions in accordance with the doctrine of certain schools. As Goddess of Mercy, or, more correctly, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Kuan Yin is worshipped and supplicated wherever Buddhist influence has been established in China. As the "taking-away-fear Buddha," this gracious lady enters into the intimate life of parent and child. She protects those who travel to far places; she is present at the bedside of the sick; she comforts the dying, and guides the souls of the departed to the Western Paradise of Amitabha. She is closely associated with motherhood, and may be depicted as pregnant or carrying a newborn child in her arms. Numerous miracles are attributed to her, and her miraculous intercessions are identical in quality with those associated with the Virgin Mary. Even in recent years, books testifying to her benevolent protection have been widely circulated among the Chinese. *

The Chinese legend of Kuan Yin is stripped of all Hindu associations. According to this version, she was the youngest of the three daughters of Miao Chuang, who lived in the 7th century B. C. Her real name was Miao Shan, and from her earliest childhood, she was distinguished for her virtue, modesty, and gentleness of spirit. Her ambitious father, who had taken his kingdom by



—From Favier's *Peking*

KUAN YIN REPRESENTED AS THE GOOD MOTHER
Abbe Favier, Vicar-General of Peking, says that this figure is
"reminiscent" of the Virgin Mary.

* See, *Kuan Yin's Saving Power*, collected, translated and edited by Pi-Cheng Lee.

force, was resolved that his three daughters should make rich and powerful alliances. Because he had no sons, the king, upon the advice of his counselors, had decided to name the most fitting of his sons-in-law as his successor. Suitable husbands were found for the two older girls, but the youngest daughter declined to marry, for she was resolved to dedicate her life to works of holiness. This so infuriated her royal father that he inflicted numerous punishments upon her in an effort to overcome her obstinacy. When all these failed, he finally ordered her execution, and she attained immortality through martyrdom.

Actually, however, only the body of Miao Shan was sacrificed. The Immortals, mindful of her noble determination, decreed that she should attain a state of blessedness. They appointed the Guardian of the Soil of Hsiang Shan to transport the gentle maiden to a place of safety. This transcendent being took upon himself the form of a tiger, and when Miao Shan seated herself on the back of the tiger, she was carried in the twinkling of an eye to the foot of the rocky slopes of P'u T'o Island. Here she remained for nine years, and attained perfection. Concerning her life and adventures among the Immortals, there is an extensive lore. In due time, her numerous works of charity and virtue resulted in her canonization. This was bestowed by the Immortals themselves, and the Proclamation read in part as follows: "Miao Shan will have the title of Very Merciful and Very Compassionate Pu-sa, Savior of the Afflicted, Miraculous and Always Helpful Protectress of Mortals. On Your Lofty Precious lotus flower throne, You will be the Sovereign of the Southern Seas and of P'u T'o Isle." *

In his *Outline of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives*, C. A. S. Williams writes that the island of P'u T'o in the Chusan Archipelago is sacred to the Buddhists, the worship

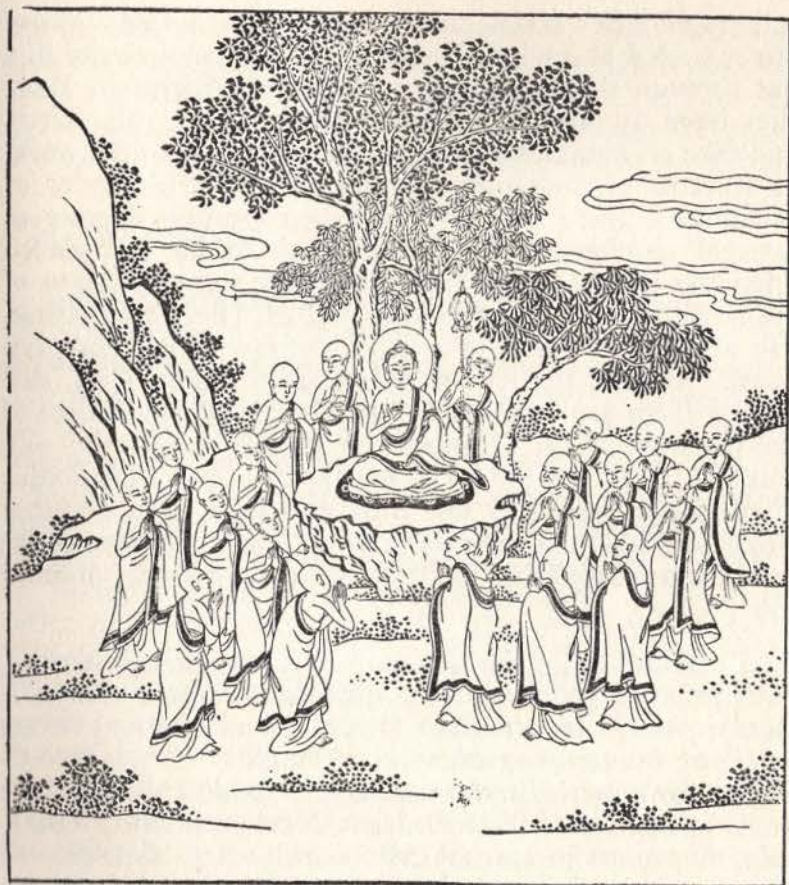
of Kuan Yin being the most prominent feature on account of the fact that the goddess is said to have resided there for nine years. The full name of the island is P'u T'o lo ka, from Mount Pataloka, whence the goddess, in her transformation as Avalokita, looks down upon mankind. There are nearly a hundred monasteries and temples on the island, with over a thousand monks. It has also been noted that Kuan Yin has three birthdates, and gifts are made to her on the 19th days of the second, sixth and ninth moons. It is obvious that this legend cannot be entirely reconciled with the older Hindu version, but this is of slight concern to the Chinese mind, which accepts her as totally Chinese, although her primary functions retain their Indian significance. As a standing figure, she carries a green branch or a vase-like bottle from which she pours the waters of life. She also appears—often, however, with some Indian attributes—in the Buddhist lore of Japan, under the name Kwannon.

The Buddha Maitreya (Chinese *Mi-li*) is often regarded as one of the early Arhats of Buddhism, though not a personal disciple of Gautama, and it is said that he was the founder of an esoteric philosophical school. He was honored by statues and inscriptions as early as 350 B. C. In Chinese religious art, he is usually represented as an exceedingly rotund, smiling figure carrying in one hand a rosary. His name means *gentleness*, but he is popularly called "the Laughing Buddha." Maitreya, as the Buddha to Come, and the nearest equivalent in this sect to the concept of a Messiah, is reported to abide in the Tushita Heaven. It was there that Gautama appointed him as his successor to appear on earth five thousand years after the Nirvana of the great Buddha. The Tushita Heaven is a celestial world in the making. It has existed for great ages of time, but is not yet perfected. It will be the paradisaical sphere in that future day when Maitreya becomes the appointed teacher of humanity.

* See, *Myths and Legends of China*, by E. T. C. Werner.

There is a legend that the Maitreya Buddha incarnated among the Eighteen Lohans, where he is known as the Venerable Pu. In the list of the Arhats or Lohans, he is placed in the seventeenth position, and is called Ajita, although the Chinese prefer Pu Tai Ho Shang, and know him as "the calico-bag monk," since he is frequently associated with a large sack. Sometimes children play around him. There are various interpretations of the meaning of these children. Sometimes they are called "six little thieves," representing the deadly sins, and at other times they are likened to Arhats or disciples who have not yet attained their spiritual maturity. In the Lama Temple at Peking, a palace which was presented to the priests in A. D. 1740, there is a colossal figure of the Lord Maitreya. The image, which is made of sandalwood and overlaid with gold, is seventy-five feet in height, and to examine it closely, one must climb to the various balconies of the temple. Although this deity has taken on the art style of the T'ang Dynasty, and has been adopted totally into the Chinese religious psychology, it retains its essentially Hindu meaning. In the Hung ritual, the reference to the man who is waited for probably refers to Maitreya.

The Buddhist circle of Eighteen Arhats or Lohans is essentially Hindu. The saints were the disciples of Buddha, or famous Sages who arose within the sect. The principal Chinese contribution in this case has been the development of traditional likenesses for these holy persons, as they are now pictured by Chinese artists. These likenesses were the works of painters of the T'ang Dynasty, and as a result, the saintly Arhats take on distinctly Chinese features and fashions. The Eighteen Arhats are Pindola, the Bahraddaja; Kanaka, the Vasta; the Second Pindola; Nandimitra; Vakula; Tamra Bhadra (a cousin of Buddha); Kalika; Vajraputra; Gobaka, the Protector; Pantha, the Elder; Rahula (the son of Buddha); Nagasena; Angida; Vanavasa; Ajita (Maitreya); Pantha, the Younger; A-tsu-ta (also associated with Maitreya); and



—From *Illustrated Actions of the Sakyamuni Buddha*

BUDDHA DELIVERING HIS LAST SERMON TO HIS ARHATS

Po-lo-t'o she (probably a form of Pindola). Each of the Lohans has a traditional appearance, and is accompanied by distinguishing symbols. For details, consult *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives* by C. A. F. Williams.

In the formal side of Chinese Buddhism, each of the Lohans is assigned a station or place in the world and a

retinue of lesser saints ranging from 500 to 1600. They are regarded as having been derived from all walks of life, but through their devotion to the Noble Eightfold Path, they have attained liberation from the wheel of rebirth, and take on human form only to perform benevolent works as servants of humanity. In the Buddhist hierarchy of attainment, there are ten levels, representing degrees of internal unfoldment. The orders of Arhats are placed upon the third to fifth levels ascending from the state of ordinary mortals. The highest, called The Great Arhat, has attained to the fifth step of the ladder of enlightenment. Most of the Arhats belong on the third level, and among them are included the patriarchs or the leaders of the various schools, appointed by a kind of apostolic succession. In China, the list of patriarchs begins with Bodhidharma, recognized as the 28th patriarch from Buddha. After Bodhidharma, five other patriarchs in succession are noted, thus completing the cycle with the mystical number thirty-three.

In summarizing the structure of Chinese Buddhism, it is therefore necessary to recognize the existence of a subjective pattern with certain formal boundaries and strong traces of internal organization. Disciples ascend according to their merits and attainments, passing through the levels or degrees of their Orders. Having attained Arhatship, they move into a subjective world, where their growth continues until they attain complete liberation through the experience of the Nirvana. As indicated by the distribution of the Arhats and their schools, they form an invisible empire of meditating monks bound together by obligations and also by the degree of understanding to which they have attained. Although transplanted from their native Indian soil, these Initiates of the Buddhist Mysteries are citizens of a Philosophic Empire and servants of the King of the World who rules from his throne beyond the snowy mountains. Those Chinese Buddhists who affirm their devotion to the original Hindu system are better informed

on the inner meaning of the symbolism, and recognize that the Buddhist Arhats are in no way essentially different from the Hindu Mahatmas and Rishis. They are the great souls, the properly appointed guardians of infant humanity, and the heaven-ordained teachers of the race.

The Taoist Adepts

During their period of mystical speculations, the Taoists grouped their supernatural Sages into three categories, according to the degree of development each had attained. The most exalted of these orders of Immortal Mortals was called "The Holy," and was composed of those beings whose extraordinary moral and ethical virtues had bestowed complete internal enlightenment through study and meditation, and had also conferred a large measure of control over natural phenomena, and therefore the ability to perform great and wonderful miracles. The second order or degree was known as "The Perfect." Sages of this rank had mastered the wisdom of Tao, or the Way. They had so refined their natures and regenerated their bodies that they seemed to transcend all limitations of natural law. Their physical forms were so ethereal that they could appear or disappear at will, and project their transcendent natures through the air on the wings of thought. It was possible for them to journey to other worlds, ascend to the stars, and live at least temporarily on the moon. The third grade consisted of "The Immortals." When depicted in art, these are usually represented as ancient scholars or shaven-headed saints. Their bodies could grow old, but their spirits were forever youthful, because they possessed the priceless secret of longevity. Such Immortals knew neither sickness nor fear of death. They enjoyed an abstract degree of happiness, utterly beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals.

Of the Chinese Immortals, Ferguson writes that they "... have the appearance of human beings and wear ordi-

nary clothes. They live to a good old age, and when they die their material body is scattered and the soul rises to the immortal ether. Other accounts of them say that their bodies never grow old, and that after a thousand years they have still the appearance of youth. They have fixed abodes in the known universe, but are able to move about from place to place at pleasure." *

In due time, appropriate habitations were assigned to these Immortals, and it was believed that they had their own meeting places and communities, not upon the earth, but in the subtle atmosphere which enveloped the planet. It was also assumed that they had a knowledge of each other, and could communicate by means of what the Western thinker now refers to as extra-sensory perception. They were citizens of an over-state, an invisible empire of the enlightened. They acknowledged obedience to their own rulers, and accepted into their select assemblies a limited number of qualified disciples. The Chinese had early contact with the philosophies of India, and had become aware that the Hindus believed in forest Sages called *Rishi*, and other orders of super-human beings. Thus, the Chinese also learned of the fabulous Meru, or Sumeru, the Mountain of the Gods. On the sides of this mountain were the hermitages and ashramas of great scholars and holy men, who were permitted, at least occasionally, to attend the councils of the divinities. Although fable and lore has obscured many of the essential facts and caused these Immortals to be regarded as little more than figments of Chinese imagination, the older and deeper meaning is at least dimly evident. The Taoist Sages were originally recognized as Adepts of various grades who had advanced themselves by the mystical disciplines of their orders and schools and had gradually become identified so closely with their doctrines that they appeared to be only personifications of metaphysical ideas.

* See, *The Mythology of All Races*, Section "China."

The Greeks believed that their heroic teachers dwelt in temples on mountain peaks, and that these temples were surrounded by clouds so that ordinary mortals could not find them or see them. The Chinese Immortals were believed to dwell in regions to which mystical names were given, but from this it should not be inferred that their places of abode were entirely insubstantial. According to Taoism, the male and female fairies (mystics) had their separate and official dwelling places, but there were also references to special regions reserved for them, such as "The Mountains of the Immortals" and "The Territory of the Immortals." In every case, the land of the Sages is pictured as a quiet paradisaical region, undisturbed by the turmoil of mundane affairs. Here, the initiated dwelt together in peace, governing their realm perfectly and wisely. The most poetic of the fabled lands of the genii and fairies is "The Three Isles of the Blessed." These islands were really mountains, and were said to be located in the Eastern Sea. Mortals have tried to reach the remote homes of the Sages, but have succeeded only through the benevolent assistance of these exclusive beings. Those who sought without guidance, or approached the sacred places without invitation, either lost their way or perished in the attempt.

Ferguson sustains the philosophic interpretation of Taoist legendry as it relates to so-called spiritualized beings when he says: "These Immortals or Fairies are primarily persons who retired to the mountains for study and meditation."* It has been reported that the Archbishop of Peking, after listening to numerous accounts by missionaries and Christian converts, wrote to Rome about a story which had been widely circulated in the clerical papers. According to this story, certain mysterious official deputations were sent in times of danger by the emperor and high officials of the state to their Sheu and Kiuay. These,

* See, *The Mythology of All Races*, Section "China."

they explained, were certain genii of the mountains, endowed with the most miraculous powers, who were regarded as the protectors of China by the ignorant masses, and as incarnations of Satanic powers by the good and learned missionaries. According to Monseigneur Delaplace, a Bishop in China, in his *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, "The Sheu and Kiuay are men belonging to another state of being to that of the ordinary man, or to the state they enjoyed while they were clad in their bodies. They are disembodied spirits, ghosts and larvae, living, nevertheless in objective form on earth, and dwelling in the fastnesses of mountains, inaccessible to all but those whom they permit to visit them." *

The proximity of Tibet might easily have resulted in Buddhistic tradition from this region influencing Chinese metaphysical thought. Among the Tibetans, there are ascetics who, in the performance of their disciplines, refrain from ordinary communication with the laity. These men were sometimes called *Lha*, or *spirits*. Perhaps this was because of their elusive conduct and their remoteness from mundane affairs. Blavatsky concludes that the Sheu and Kiuay with whom the Chinese emperors and scholars were in communication were most certainly Lohans or Adepts of Buddhism or Taoism inhabiting remote places and preserving a solitary existence.

It is recorded in the *Shu King*, the earliest of Chinese literary monuments, that during the reign of the Great Yao many marvelous and miraculous events occurred. This emperor followed in the ways of virtue, and Heaven was gracious to him. In the days of the Great Yao, five venerable old men were seen walking about on the island of Ho, and it was known to the Sages that these were the spirits of the five planets. Such mysteries were understood by Yao, because in each of his eyes there were two pupils, and he was therefore able to see in the two worlds.

* See, *The Secret Doctrine*, V. III, by H. P. Blavatsky.

After they had made certain prophetic remarks, the five mysterious old men rose in the air and flew away, like floating stars, and took up their abodes in the pleiades. Legends of this kind abound in ancient Chinese writing, and can be rationally interpreted only by reference to the Adept tradition.

As might be expected, early European travelers in Asia, hearing fantastic accounts of Eastern mysticism and beholding the miraculous exploits of the Oriental wonderworkers, came to the conclusion that both India and China abounded in magicians and sorcerers and such as worked illusions and diabolical necromancies. Mention is found of this as early as the journey of Apollonius of Tyana recorded by Philostratus in the first century A. D. The most celebrated traveler to spread such reports was Marco Polo (1254?-1324?). He declared that the wizards of Tartary were able by their incantations to raise up images of ancient Sages and divinities. So remarkable was Polo's account of his adventures, and the wonders he had seen, that his book inspired powerful and conflicting reactions. Naturally, he was accused of having made extravagant misstatements, and on his deathbed was urged to confess that he had fabricated his accounts of Eastern miracles. Instead, he solemnly swore to the truth of all he had said, adding that he had not told one half of what he had really seen. For further details, consult *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Yule or Marsdon edition. In the 19th century, Abbe Huc, a Lazarists missionary is reported to have had serious difficulties with his church because of his descriptions of the transcendental arts of Mongolian and Tibetan priests and mystics.

According to the testimonies of reputable and impartial witnesses, the Taoist Immortal is not merely a mythological being, but a real person conversant with the higher disciplines of what have now come to be known as yogic, vedantic, and tantric philosophies. The stream of Taoist

mysticism mingled with the wisdom of the Lohans from Kashmir, who first reached China teaching the "Doctrine of the Heart" about the time corresponding with the beginning of the Christian era. These Lohans also retired to the mountains, where many still believe them to dwell. Nearly all Asiatic peoples unite in the common conviction that holy ascetics who have attained complete victory over limitations of the flesh, not only exist and occasionally concern themselves with the problems of society, but constitute a kind of race of Immortals superior to ordinary human-kind.

As already mentioned, the Chinese mind has a remarkable capacity to venerate and deify its heroes of every class. There are countless Immortals in the Taoist scheme of things, just as there are far more saints in Christian hagiology than even the most pious can easily imagine. The teaching about the delightful and whimsical Taoist Sages has come to center in a particular group regarded as typical of the prevailing concept. This group is called the *Pa Hsien*, a term composed of two Chinese characters, one representing man, and the other, hill. The Pa Hsien are therefore the "men of the mountain," genii who dwell in distant hilly places, and known popularly as the "Eight Immortals." All of these are traditionally accepted as actual persons who long ago, through various mystical experiences, discovered the esoteric doctrines behind Taoism, and therefore, in large measure, personify or exemplify this doctrine. The Eight Immortals are favorite subjects of Chinese art, and their likenesses are used to ornament scrolls, ceramics, embroideries, fans, and bronzes.

The Pa Hsien have power to raise the dead, become visible or invisible at pleasure, accomplish the alchemical transmutation of metals, compound magical medicines, and protect their devotees, but they do not have temples consecrated to them. According to Harry T. Morgan, "They are to Taoism what the saints are to Catholicism

and correspond to the Eighteen Lohans of Buddhism." * Incidentally, the Eight Immortals play a part in the ritualism of the Hung Society, where the candidate for initiation is required to name them and describe their attributes.

The group known as the Eight Immortals was brought together into the present pattern either during the late Tsung or early Yuan period, about the year A. D. 1200. It is known, however, that several of them appeared individually in much earlier traditions. It is usual to arrange their biographies according to official precedence or seniority of age, but the available lists are far from consistent. There is a curious legend of an expedition in which the Eight Immortals decided to journey about the sea in a magic ship, visiting strange and wonderful places. Usually, these celestial creatures preferred to float around on clouds, but in this case they used not only a vessel, but various symbols associated with them, as means of transportation and locomotion. In popular art, the symbolical utensils which the Immortals carried were transformed into sea monsters for this occasion. During their adventures, the Immortals declared war upon the dragon king of the Eastern Sea. After a suitable victory over this monstrous creature, they continued their aquatic journey into realms so romantic that it inspired Chinese literary fantasy of the highest order.

Like the nature spirits of the European mystics, the Eight Immortals were under the government of a proper king and queen, and under the symbolism of these rulers is probably concealed a veiled reference to the Hierophants or Adept-princes of the Secret Schools. It might be more proper to say that they were governed by a queen and king, because it is universally agreed that the Royal Western Mother enjoyed preferment. She is Hsi Wang Mu, who was originally generated from the pure quintessence of the western air. She is sometimes called "The

* See, *Chinese Symbols and Superstitions*.

—From Favier's *Peking*

HSI WANG MU WITH ATTENDANTS AND ACCOMPANIED
BY THE PHOENIX

Golden Mother of the Tortoise." Her palace is described as three hundred and thirty-three miles in circumference, with ramparts of solid gold and battlements of precious stones. The Immortals who are privileged to dwell in this resplendant place are distinguished into seven categories, according to the colors of their garments. It is in the palace garden of this queen that the fairy peaches grow, and these ripen only once in three thousand years. Hsi Wang Mu has five handmaidens, and in art she is usually accompanied by a phoenix or a crane. She also has nine sons and twenty-four daughters. Early Jesuit missionaries tried to identify her with the Queen of Sheba, and Professor Giles noted that she possessed many of the attributes of the Roman goddess Juno.

The Queen of the West reigns on the Mountain K'un-lun, which stands in the middle of the world and around which the sun and moon revolve. She was originally the goddess of epidemics and commanded the demons of the plague. In the Han period, however, she became the goddess who averted or cured epidemical diseases. Thus she came to be identified with longevity, and tended the peaches of immortality in the garden of the Lord On High. If an Immortal was guilty of some misdemeanor, the rulers of the region might require him to go down to earth and be born again. After the punishments had been met, however, he could return to paradise and resume his high rank.

Although nominally called the King of the Immortals, Tung Wang Kung was usually referred to only as the consort of Hsi Wang Mu. In the beginning of all processes by which the world was created, the primitive vapors congealed, remained in suspension for a time, and then began to produce living things. The first of these was Tung Wang Kung, who was fashioned from the purest substance of Eastern air, and was nominal sovereign of the active male or yang principle and of all the countries of the East.

His palace is in the misty heaven, violet clouds form its dome, and blue clouds its walls. He is the registrar of all the Immortals, and keeps in close touch with their activities. Very little is recorded about him, however, in Chinese literature.

The Reverend Hampdon C. DuBose likens the mountain of the royal Western Mother to the Sumeru of the Buddhists, and traces the entire description of the palace, its gardens, and inhabitants, to the older Hindu mythology. Hsi Wang Mu celebrated one birthday every three thousand years, when the Immortal peach tree put forth its leaves. On this occasion, there was a gathering called "The Peach Assembly," which Dr. DuBose describes as "A great ecumenical council of gods." This appears a most unusual selection of terms, unless the author was aware that something more than mythological was implied. *

Like the Taoist Sages, the Hung heroes in the legends relating to this secret society start toward the west in a boat, reach the Western Paradise of Hsi Wang Mu, and then pass by a bridge to the city of willows, representing the Eastern Heaven of Tung Wang Kung. † In Chinese Buddhism, the Western Paradise corresponds closely with the celestial home of Hsi Wang Mu. In the Buddhist version, this region, presided over by Amitabha and his radiant daughter Kuan Yin, is placed midway between the realms of mortal illusion and the unfathomable mystery of the Nirvana. By this version also, Kuan Yin, usually symbolized as feminine, takes precedence in the popular mind. Signifying the quality of compassion, it is her constant and universal tenderness which leads all beings to the realms of light and truth. She is a version of the Mother of Mysteries, and as such signifies the great school or col-

lege of the Arhats. The use of a feminine term to indicate the complete structure of institutional learning is preserved in the term *Alma Mater*, or *Foster Mother*. The Hung Society refers to its parent body as the *Mother Lodge*, and in European Freemasonry, the *Mother Kill-winning* of Scotland carries the same implication.

The legends of the Eight Immortals represent a group of Chinese hero-tales paralleling similar exploits preserved in European legendry and folklore. The Orders of the Quest in the period of chivalry produced their champions whose exploits were always involved in magic and mysticism. It cannot be denied that the legends of Rolland, King Arthur, Sir Galahad, Parcival, and Lohengrin are intended to convey more than superficial meaning. The Taoist Immortals are drawn from every walk of life, and personify numerous human characteristics. Each came in the end to the fulfillment of his quest, and the accounts preserved of them may be interpreted according to the mind of the reader. They certainly belong within a general framework of time and place, and with the passing of centuries, their conduct has become less comprehensible. It would be impossible, however, to estimate the spirit of Taoist metaphysics without taking a kindly interest in these eight exceptional persons and the adventures which befell them.

The Egyptians and the Greeks declared the human soul to consist of eight principles or energies, and it is quite conceivable that these were represented in Chinese art as the magical octagon composed of yin and yang, their three sons and three daughters, reminiscent of the family of Noah. The soul, like the Western Paradise, is the source of the emotions, with their positive and negative polarities. The journey in search of the soul, and the final discovery of its golden palace ruled over by beauty and compassion, might well explain the Taoist concept. The regeneration of the attributes of soul-power might also

* See, *The Dragon, Image, and Demon*.

† See, *The Hung Society*, by J. S. M. Ward.

be fortunately portrayed by the Eight Immortals and their fanciful paths of attainment.

Li T'ieh-kuai

Once upon a time, in the glorious age when men were seeking the elixir of immortality, there lived a handsome and noble scholar by the name of Li T'ieh-kuai (6th century A. D.), who is usually placed at the head of the list of the Pa Hsien. While still a young man, Li resolved to depart from worldliness and dedicate his mind to the subtle arts of regeneration. In the approved fashion, therefore, he departed from the ways of ordinary mortals, and lived for more than forty years in a mountain hermitage. Li spent his days in meditation, seated quietly on a reed mat, and it is reported that he became so absorbed with his metaphysical speculations that he forgot to eat or sleep. As he had the same surname as Lao-tse, it seemed especially appropriate that he should invoke the spirit of the great Taoist Master who had retired from the world long before and dwelt happily in the pleasant shade of the peach tree of long life. Li besought the venerable Lao-tse to assume an earthly appearance, accept him as a disciple, and reveal the secret instruction of the great Tao.

It is faithfully told that Lao-tse did appear to the devout Li—whether in person or in dreams and visions is not clearly indicated. In any event, however, Li attained to the true insight and learned the obscure philosophy of total detachment. Occasionally, Lao-tse invited Li to journey with him into the invisible world and visit the regions of the celestials. In order to do this, it was necessary for Li to leave his physical body and travel about in his transcendent vehicle. In time, the reputation of Li so increased that he had students and followers.

When the occasion arose that he was to take one of his trips into the cloudland, Li left his material form under

the protection of a disciple, with strict instructions to cremate the mortal remains if Li did not return in precisely seven days. * This led to a peculiar complication. After he had guarded the body of Li for six days, the disciple was called to the bedside of his dying mother. The disciple examined the body of his master carefully and, having decided that Li was actually dead, caused the body to be burned one day too soon. When, on the seventh day, Li returned from the beautiful Hills of Longevity, he therefore made the unpleasant discovery that his physical vehicle was no longer available.

Deciding that it was not yet time for him to depart permanently into the realms of immortality, Li sought about for another body that he could inhabit. The only one that seemed to be available had belonged to a lame beggar recently deceased. Considering the emergency of the occasion, Li caused his own astral double to enter the corpse of the beggar through the temples, and, having settled himself in this convenient, if rather inadequate shape, examined his new environment in greater detail. The beggar's body left much to be desired. The head was long, coarse, and misshapen; the face, dark and ferocious; the eyes protruding, and the beard and hair grisly and disheveled. Of more practical concern, perhaps, was the discovery that the beggar had been lame, and one of his legs comparatively useless.

In view of this appraisal, Li was sorely tempted to depart from this unwholesome body, but Lao-tse, with whom he consulted, advised him to remain and perfect his attitude of total indifference. After all, one body was as bad as another. By way of compensation, Lao-tse presented Li with a golden headband to control his unruly hair, and an iron crutch so that he could hobble about as occasion demanded. There is an account that after Li

* The Chinese guarded the bodies of those in trances, lest some wandering decarnate soul should seek entry.

had finally decided to endure his new body, his first journey was to the house of his neglectful disciple, whose mother he restored to life with the precious medicines contained in a gourd which he always carried with him.

The particular symbols of Li are his iron crutch and his gourd. He performed numerous miracles, and must be included among the alchemistic Adepts. He dispensed wonderful drugs which would heal any manner of disease, and which he stored in the gourd. At night when his day of ministration was finished, he would hang this gourd on the wall of his house, step into it, and sleep peacefully until morning. He chose his friends and followers from among those who were poor and underprivileged, and has been widely honored for his benevolence. It is said that he made many excursions into the material world for charitable purposes. In the end, however, the burden of mortality grew tiresome and Li stepped upon a large leaf floating in the water, and was carried away into the land of the Immortals. There is also an account that he vanished in the midst of a great wind which bore him into the other world. In addition to his iron crutch and his gourd, he is represented artistically as standing on a crab or accompanied by a deer. From the neck of his gourd, a scroll-like cloud of vapor emanates to signify that his spirit is free from the body. In the course of time, his miraculous career caused Li to be accepted as the patron of astrologers and magicians.

Chung-li Ch'uan

Many legends have sprung up around the life of Chung-li Ch'uan. He is believed to have flourished during the Han Dynasty (206 B. C. - A. D. 220) and is therefore referred to as Han Chung-li. There is also a report, not so generally accepted, that he lived in the days of the Chou Dynasty, which would place him considerably earlier. His biographers say that Chung-li was born in Shensi

and became a person of high consequence, attaining to the rank of Marshal of the Empire. In light of his unusual career and attainments, he is known as King-Emperor of the True Active Principle. Other writers, of a more disparaging turn of mind, regard him only as a Vice-Marshal, and relate that he was actually defeated in battle, escaping to a distant region, where his philosophical career began. In his place of exile he came into contact with five mysterious heroes (Sages) who were called the "Flowers of the East," and it was from them that he learned the esoteric doctrine of immortality.

There is still another opinion about this elusive man, telling that he was actually a Taoist priest who, having perfected his knowledge of alchemy, had the skill to change base metals into silver. The wealth which he created by his art, he distributed among the poor during a period of famine, thus saving thousands of lives and achieving enduring distinction. All accounts agree that Chung-li was a diligent searcher after the mysteries of Tao, and he was closely associated with the rites and disciplines of the spiritual sciences. Like all the other mountain Sages, he chose to dwell in a stone house in the distant hills, and one day during his contemplation, the wall of his house suddenly split open, revealing a jade casket concealed in a secret recess in the thickness of the masonry. Within this casket were scrolls containing all the information necessary to a fortunate mortal who desired to become an Immortal. Chung-li followed so successfully the teachings thus miraculously revealed to him that his little room was always filled with many-colored lights and luminous clouds, and celestial music attended him. In due time, a spirit-bird in the form of a stork appeared and carried the Sage away on its back into the regions of immortality.

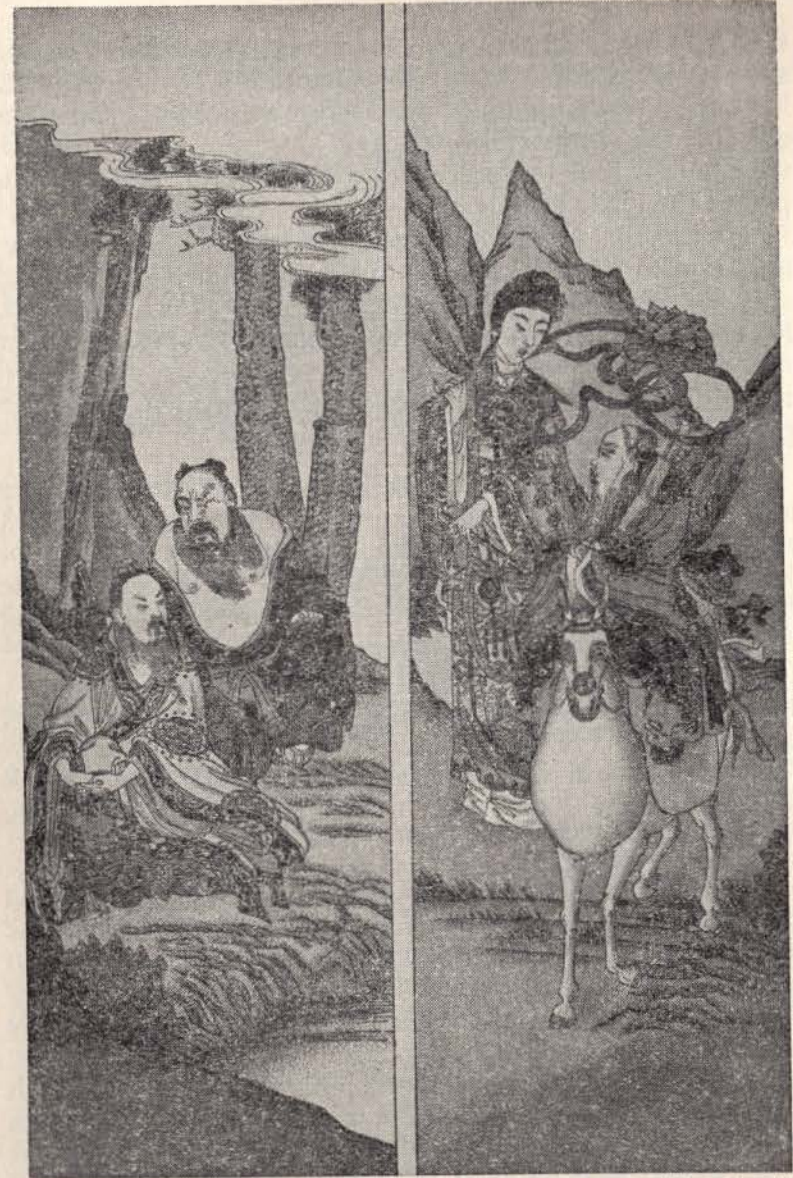
Chung-li is usually shown as a distinguished but happy-faced scholar with a long beard. He carries a fan, to which is attached a horse-hair tassel, and it is believed

that with his fan, he can revive the dead. Sometimes he is shown carrying the peach of immortality, a proper symbol of his alchemical attainments. After his admission into the Order of the Celestials, Chung-li also chose to appear on earth at different times under numerous guises and accompanied by miraculous manifestations of power. Such visits were in his official capacity, for he was the messenger of the invisible beings dwelling in the enchanted garden of the wise. Because of his success in transmutation of base metals, he became the popular patron of alchemists and chemists.

Lu Tung-pin

Among the intelligentsia who forsook the glories and honors of this world in the quest of the secret wisdom, was Lu Tung-pin, a man of good family and a scholar who passed the great examinations of the state with the highest rank. In the case of Lu, biographers are more generous and explicit. It is noted that he was born in Kiangsi, A. D. 798. His illustrious grandfather had been President of the Ministry of Ceremony, and his honorable father was Prefect of Hai Chou. The character of Lu is distinguished by a curious couplet of possibly related details, which states that he was five feet two inches tall, and at twenty years of age was still unmarried. Perhaps due to these circumstances, he decided to travel. Near his twentieth year, he made a journey to Lu Shan in the Kiangsi Province, where he had a wonderful meeting with a fire dragon, from whom he secured a magic sword. With this weapon, he performed many amazing exploits, and it enabled him to hide in heaven when difficulties upon the earth became too great.

The legend seems to intimate that Lu either studied with some Adept teacher whose identity is concealed under the dragon, or was initiated into a mystical secret society making use of the dragon symbolism. Like others of



—From Dore's *Recherches Sur Les Superstitions En Chine*
From left to right: THE IMMORTALS LU TUNG-PIN, CHUNG-LI CH'UAN,
HO HSIEN-KU, AND CHANG-KUO

his kind, Lu became a recluse, taking up residence on the side of the Stork Peak in the mountains of Lu. During his period of discipleship, this Sage was privileged to meet one of the Immortals, Chung-li, previously mentioned, who taught him the secrets of alchemy and how to compound the elixir of longevity. Having thus had direct contact with the immortal Sages, Lu announced his determination to dedicate his life to the instruction of mankind and the service of the true doctrine. To prove his worth, he was subjected to ten temptations, probably a further veiled reference to initiation. Having successfully passed these difficult tests, he was given an assortment of super-physical powers and enchanted weapons.

In his retreat on the Stork Peak, Lu gathered disciples and gave extensive discourses on the five grades of genii, the three categories of merits, and other intriguing subjects. There are also reports that, like a knight of the European age of chivalry, he journeyed about destroying ogres and monsters, championing the helpless, and performing all manner of good and wonderful deeds. Although Lu attained immortality at the age of fifty years, he is said to have had a career which extended for nearly four centuries, and to have attained undying fame. It is actually recorded that Lu "was initiated into the divine mysteries . . ." *

It is reported on "good authority" that Lu, having promised his immortal teacher, Chung-li, to spread the doctrine of the Sages, took upon himself the guise of an oil-seller, resolved to bestow immortality on any customer who did not haggle about the price or attempt to secure more oil than was his proper due. For one whole year, Lu journeyed about, but found only dishonest or selfish customers. The one exception was an old lady who was satisfied with the share to which she was entitled. Lu was so impressed that he went to her house and, seeing a well

in the courtyard, dropped a few grains of magic rice into the water. It was miraculously changed into wine, from the sale of which the lady became wealthy.

The symbols associated with Lu are his magic sword (the Chinese version of Excalibur), and a flywhisk, called a cloudsweeper, which indicated that he could travel about through the air. He is sometimes shown carrying a male child in his arms. Because of his scholarship and attainments he has long been especially honored by the literati and the intelligentsia. More recently he has attained popular favor as patron saint of barbers, and is also venerated by the sick.

Lan Ts'ai-ho

According to popular belief, only one of the eight Immortals is definitely stated to be feminine. Therefore, Lan Ts'ai-ho presents a rather unusual problem. This Immortal is usually figured as a young person carrying a basket of fruit and playing upon a reed-like musical instrument. There is considerable dispute as to the sex of this being, who is sometimes referred to as male, at other times as female, and occasionally as an hermaphrodite. In the Chinese theater, Lan is dressed to represent a woman, but always speaks with the voice of a man. A number of ballads, of which Lan was most fond, and some of which Lan is said to have composed, are still popular. It is said that he or she lived during the T'ang Dynasty (A. D. 618-907), and may perhaps be best described as the troubadour of the Immortals.

Lan was a most eccentric character, and wandered about the earth wearing a tattered blue robe, secured by a dark wooden belt precisely three inches wide. This Immortal wore only one shoe and, during the chill of winter, slept in the snow, protected by a heavy padded garment. According to legend, Lan made a livelihood by singing in

* See, *Myths and Legends of China*, by E. T. C. Werner.

the streets of the villages, but was so indifferent to all worldly things that when paid for the songs, Lan often contemptuously scattered the coins upon the ground, so that the poor could have the money. Although this singer was generally regarded as a lunatic, the songs were strangely and subtly philosophical, condemning the fleeting pleasures of worldliness and the insubstantial glories of mortal existence. There is certainly a definite parallel between this Chinese minstrel and the European Trouviers, whose apparently superficial ballads concealed the esoteric teachings of the ancient Mysteries.

One day, while in a trance, or, as those less kindly have suggested, while intoxicated with a magical liqueur, Lan sailed away on a cloud to the celestial regions and, departing, cast back upon the earth the tattered robe, wooden belt, musical instruments, and the single shoe. Lan has gradually become the patron saint of florists, probably because of the basket of flowers and fruit always associated with this Immortal.

Chang-Kuo

One of the most delightful of the select group of Taoist Immortals was Chang-Kuo, who is said to have lived in the 7th or 8th century A. D. and gained considerable reputation as a hermit. His place of retirement was on the Chung T'iao Mountain in Shensi Province, although he was quite a traveler and might be seen in several places at one time. Two emperors of the T'ang Dynasty invited this celebrated eccentric to the imperial court, but he declined to attend. When, however, the Empress Wu Hou (A. D. 685-704) earnestly requested his presence, Chang-Kuo agreed to visit her, but on the way to the palace, is said to have been struck down by death at the gate of the Temple of the Jealous Woman. Even after his death, however, when his body had begun to decay, he was seen in another place alive and well.

Among his other peculiarities, this Immortal rode about, usually seated backwards, on a white mule made of paper. This magical animal could carry its master thousands of miles in a single day, and when he was finished with the mule, Chang-Kuo merely folded it up and put it away in his large and capacious wallet. It was not unreasonable, therefore, that Chang-Kuo should gain the reputation of being a sorcerer, and there was a popular belief that in a previous incarnation, he had been Grand Minister to the divinely enlightened Emperor Yao. Although it is reported that Chang-Kuo preferred to live in his remote hermitage, he was summoned to Honan about A. D. 735, where he was elected head of the Imperial Academy with the flowery title "Very Perspicacious Teacher." No details are available as to his activities at the Academy.

About this time, there was a very famous Taoist magician named Yeh Fa-shan in the imperial court. Because Chang-Kuo acted so mysteriously and declined to explain the reasons for his conduct, the emperor asked the court magician to discover and reveal the true identity of the hermit. Yeh Fa-shan replied that if he told what he really knew about Chang-Kuo, he would be instantly killed and remain dead unless the emperor would go immediately afterwards in person, with his head and feet bare, and ask Chang-Kuo to forgive him. If these conditions were exactly kept, the magician could be revived. The emperor immediately gave his promise, and Yeh Fa-shan said: "Chang-Kuo is a white spiritual bat which came out of primeval chaos." As soon as he had spoken, the magician fell dead at the emperor's feet. His majesty kept his promise in every detail, secured the forgiveness of Chang-Kuo, and the magician was revived. Not long after this experience, Chang-Kuo is said to have fallen sick, and in due course departed from this life. After his death, however, several of his disciples opened his tomb and found it empty. It was therefore reported that he had merely

chosen to appear dead, and had been carried into the realms of the Immortals without actually passing through the experience of death.

While in the court of the emperor, Chang-Kuo performed many marvels of magic, and was offered the hand of the Imperial Princess in marriage. He declined this honor, and also refused to permit his picture to be placed in the Hall of Worthies. This Immortal is frequently pictured riding on his white mule, which is represented as rather grotesque, perhaps to suggest that it is made of paper. His likeness is cherished by newly married couples, in spite of the fact that he was an ascetic and himself declined matrimony. He may be shown carrying a phoenix feather or a peach of immortality, but most frequently he bears a musical instrument in the shape of a bamboo tube or drum with two rods which served as drumsticks. He used this instrument to attract crowds, and when they had gathered, he liked to disappear by making himself invisible. He seems to have been conducted along the path of wisdom by friendly Sages and Taoist genii who visited him in his mountain retreat. He has gained popular distinction as a patron of artists and scribes.

Han Hsiang Tzu

In the happy years of the T'ang, there lived an illustrious scholar, statesman, philosopher, and poet, by the name of Han Yu. This great man was sadly burdened by the conduct of his nephew—some say grand-nephew—a bright and promising lad by the name of Han Hsiang Tzu, who was destined to become an Immortal. This boy was entrusted to his elder relative in order that he might be properly educated and prepared for the public examinations in classical studies. Han Yu was violently opposed to the magical and mystical speculations of Taoism, but his young ward early indicated a profound interest in alchemical and transcendental speculations. He especially desired

to make wine without the use of grain, and to cause flowers to blossom spontaneously. Han Yu felt it his duty to insist that such pursuits were impossible and opposed to all the laws which governed sober thinking.

To convince his uncle, or great-uncle, Han Hsiang put some earth under a pot, and a few moments later, lifting the vessel, revealed two flowers (peonies), on the leaves of which were written the lines of a poem traced in characters of gold. This poem was prophetic, for it warned Han Yu that he was to be disgraced and would be sent into exile. When all this occurred, the old scholar bewailed his ill fortune and the physical infirmities that had come upon him in the unhealthy region where he was in exile. Han Hsiang, who was by this time advanced in his magical studies, presented Han Yu with a prescription which would preserve his health, and said that the elder statesman would not only return to his home and family, but would be restored to all his former dignities. These things occurred as prophesied, and it was no longer possible to deny that Han Hsiang possessed remarkable powers and the ability to foresee coming events.

There is a story that Han Hsiang became the favorite pupil of the Immortal Lu Tung-pin, which would seem to point out that there was a basic relationship among these scholars. At this point, the account takes a curious turn. After having been advanced considerably in his esoteric disciplines, Han Hsiang was carried on a cloud into the presence of the wonderful peach tree of the genii, on the branches of which grew the fruit of immortality. Unfortunately, Han Hsiang fell from the branches of the tree, apparently while seeking to secure the fruit. But while falling through the several regions of the invisible world, he attained by inward consciousness to the state of immortality. A more prosaic account says that he was killed by this fall, was then transformed into a spiritual being, and visited the earth in a superphysical body, passing through numerous adventures.

Artists usually picture him carrying a gourd-shaped basket in both hands. This basket is filled with the peaches of immortality. Occasionally, he is shown holding only a bouquet of flowers. Han Hsiang was also an accomplished musician. When he played his flute, birds and animals came to hear the music. He has therefore been compared to the Greek Orpheus, and shares some of the attributes of the Buddhist Lohans. He is popularly regarded as a patron of musicians.

Ts'ao Kuo-chiu

It is given to some men that they shall attain to merit by good works, but a few appear to have fortune thrust upon them. Ts'ao Kuo-chiu seems to have belonged to the latter group. According to one record, he was the younger brother of the Empress Jen Tsung (A. D. 1023-1064). The Empress had two brothers, but the elder led a dissipated and worthless life. Ts'ao was so disillusioned by his elder brother's unseemly conduct that he remonstrated with him frequently, saying: "You may escape the penalty of the law, but you can never elude the net of Heaven which is invisible but always present." In spite of every effort, however, Ts'ao could not reform his dissolute brother. At last, disillusioned by the life of the court, and feeling heavily the disgrace which his brother had brought to the family name, Ts'ao departed into the mountains, where he dressed himself with the leaves of plants and trees and resolved to become a hermit. There is probably considerable legendry in this account, for the historical records do not say that this Empress had a brother who turned to asceticism.

In any event, the Immortals Han Chung-li and Lu Tung-pin visited Ts'ao in his hermitage and politely inquired as to the young man's aims and purposes. Ts'ao explained that he had resolved to dedicate himself to the study of Tao, or of the Way, and when asked what Way,



—From Dore's *Recherches Sur Les Superstitions En Chine*
From left to right: THE IMMORTALS LAN TS'AI-HO, TS'AO KUO-CHIU,
LI T'IEH-KUAI, AND HAN HSIANG TZU

he pointed to the sky. The two Immortals were greatly pleased, and bestowed upon him the secret formula of perfection. It is expressly noted that in the upper spheres, where the Immortals dwelt, there were eight grottoes, but up to that time, only seven Sages had come to dwell in them. These seven gathered in solemn counsel to select an eighth master to complete their number, and they unanimously nominated Ts'ao because his disposition in general resembled that of a genie. Thus it came about that he took his place among the Immortals and shared the blessings of the celestial regions.

There are other long and confused accounts of this Immortal, but the story here set forth is the one most consistent with the prevailing pattern. It is quite possible that several individuals have become confused, thus resulting in the conflicting reports. Ts'ao wears the headdress of the imperial court, together with long flowing official robes. He is likely to be seen carrying the court tablets which gave him free access to the palace because of his royal blood. He has gradually come to be accepted as the patron saint of the theatrical profession.

Ho Hsien-ku

The only woman included in the group of the eight Immortals was Ho Hsien-ku, a native of Canton Province, who also lived during the time of the Empress Wu Hou. Some say that her father was a shopkeeper. At birth, six long hairs were observed growing on the crown of her head, but in pictures she is to be seen with a full head of hair arranged in the traditional form. On a mountain near where she lived, a stone abounded which was called "mother of pearl," but should not be confused with the Western use of this term. In a dream, Ho Hsien-ku was visited by a spirit who told her to powder and eat one of these stones, and that if she did so, she would gain great skill of movement and solve the mystery of immortality.

Ho Hsien-ku followed the instruction of the genie, and also took the vow of virginity, retiring to the mountains where she made her home. From that time on, she spent her days floating from one high peak to another, bringing to her house at night the various fruits she had collected. By degrees, she discovered that she had no need for food, and lived for a long time without eating. This remarkable condition was brought to the attention of the emperor, who invited the maiden to visit his court. On the journey, however, Ho Hsien-ku suddenly vanished and took up her abode among the Immortals. She has appeared in visions on numerous occasions, and was seen floating among clouds at the Temple of Ma Ku. There is a popular dramatic play in China in which the splendor of this queen of the fairies is vividly depicted. Her palace garden was filled with strange flowers and rare herbs. Beautiful birds wandered about, and there were remarkable animals different from any seen on earth. There were also many peach trees, and in the pavillion musicians played celestial harmonies.

In art, Ho Hsien-ku is presented as a beautiful woman, carrying in her hand a lotus flower or the peach of immortality given to her by the Sage Lu Tung-pin. This further emphasizes the association of the Immortals, and how they initiated disciples into their mysteries. Once when she was in great danger, Ho Hsien-ku was rescued by Lu Tung-pin, who appeared at the critical moment with his magic sword. When she appeared to her devotees, she might seem to be standing on the floating petal of the lotus, or bearing a flywhisk in her hand. At that time, no system of female asceticism had been developed, and there has been considerable speculation as to why Ho Hsien-ku was elevated to such a high place of dignity in the Chinese concept of life. Even the Immortals themselves faced a delicate problem. To each was assigned a particular task or duty, and it was necessary to decide the proper chore for so charming and pure a maiden. She

was finally appointed to the sweet labor of sweeping up the fallen flowers at the South Gate of Heaven. Though not actually patroness of the home, she assists in the management of the house.

Early Christian Influence in China

According to Heckethorn, systems of mysteries and initiation were not introduced into Chinese life until a few centuries before the Christian era. * While so broad a statement should be accepted with reservations, there is material within the structure of Chinese philosophy to indicate that about the time of Christ, a strong impetus was given to the integration of esoteric societies among the Chinese. It should also be noted, however, that the *I Ching*, the ancient work attributed to a pre-historic emperor, contains most of the elements necessary to the development of a highly involved esoteric philosophy. Several authors are of the opinion that Buddhism and Christianity were introduced into China at approximately the same time. Both of these systems recognized and celebrated certain Mysteries, practiced forms of initiation, and claimed to possess knowledge which could be conferred only upon disciples and worthy followers who had taken certain obligations and who practiced various degrees of asceticism.

Eusebius, secretary-historian to Constantine the Great, is authority for the statement that after the fall of Jerusalem, the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ were scattered throughout the world. At this time, the apostle Thomas received Parthia as his allotted region. It would appear, therefore, that the sphere assigned to St. Thomas for his missionary activities was an immense region which at that time included Persia, Afghanistan and Northwest India. During the same period, the boundaries of China

* See, *The Secret Societies of All Ages and Countries.*

were more or less hypothetical and extended far into the areas now belonging to other Asiatic countries. In the breviary of the church of Malabar, it says, "By St. Thomas was the Kingdom of Heaven extended even to China." Gregory, son of Aaron, called Bar Hebraeus, the Jacobite Primate of the East, eulogized by the historian Gibbon, declared that Thomas was the first Pontiff of the Orient, and that he announced the Christian message in the Eastern region in the second year after the ascension of our Lord. This Thomas passed through India and visited those parts of Asia located in the "utmost confines of the East."

John Kesson, in his learned treatise relating to the fortunes of Christianity in China, states: "In the Chaldean ritual there is still an office to the apostle of India: 'By the blessed St. Thomas the Chinese and Cushites were converted to the truth. By the blessed St. Thomas the Indian idolatries were dissipated. By St. Thomas they received the virtue of baptism and the adoption of children. By him the kingdom of heaven penetrated into China.'" * The same writer adds that the Syrian Christians, who are still to be found on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, hold firmly to the position that St. Thomas was the founder of their churches, and they further say that he preached the Gospel in the city of the great Khan (Peking) and there built a church. Later St. Thomas was martyred at Coromandel because he excited the enmity of certain Hindus. His death is said to have occurred in A. D. 68. The apostle was originally buried in India, but in the year A. D. 380, his bones were brought from India to Edessa and re-interred. A work known as the *Acts of Thomas*, originally composed in Syriac, relates the details of his missionary labors.

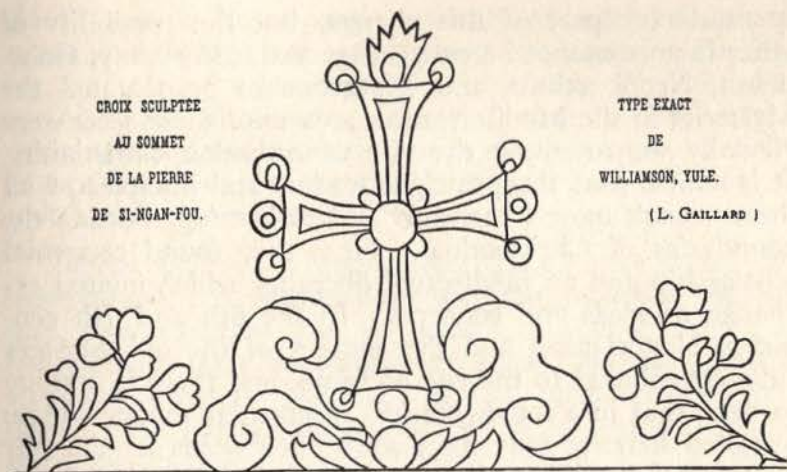
It has been suggested that St. Thomas was laboring in China at the time when the Emperor Ming Ti had his

* See *The Cross and the Dragon.*

vision of the golden figure which suggested to him a saying of Confucius, "The Holy One is in the West." He therefore sent ambassadors to India and, as a result, Buddhist missionaries returned and established their first vital contact with the Chinese. Kesson suggests that it would be quite possible that both Buddhist and Christian teachers were included in the group which reached China through the invitation of this emperor. All this has a definite bearing upon the subject of an Adept tradition in China. The Syrian church became involved in what are called heretical doctrines, and as early as the 4th century, the *Acts of Thomas*, as originally compiled, was branded as an heretical writing. This was due to the strong Gnostic and Manichaeian influences detected in the work and formally pointed out by St. Augustine. To again quote Kesson, "Add to this that Central Asia at an early period was the stronghold of Gnostics and Manichaeians, and it is not difficult to believe that traveled natives of China might have become acquainted with their doctrines." *

Du Halde, on his own authority, declares that a famous Chinese emperor living about the beginning of the 2nd century, caused monuments to be erected testifying to the birth of Jesus in a grotto, his resurrection, his ascension, and the vestiges of his sacred feet. It is possible, of course, that Nestorianism, also an heretical Christian sect, which is known to have penetrated China in the 6th or 7th century A. D., is responsible for ancient monuments such as those described by Father Favier. The important point is that early Christian influence, according to Western records, would have reached China at approximately the time when mystical, magical, and esoteric doctrines first received general attention. The Gnostics and Manichaeians had well-developed esoteric schools, initiated candidates into their Mysteries, and emphasized a two-fold division within the structure of sacred knowledge. Both taught

* See *The Cross and the Dragon*.



—From Favier's *Peking*

DETAIL OF CHRISTIAN DECORATION FROM
THE SI-NAN-FU TABLET

that ancient traditions, philosophies, and symbolic systems, concealed profound spiritual truths under allegorical forms, and therefore certain keys were necessary to unlock the secret doctrines of antiquity. It was at this time that the Mahayana school of Buddhism, with its highly mystical overtones, rose, especially in China, corresponding closely with the second, or transcendental, period of Taoist philosophy. To this period, also, the Chinese trace the origin of their secret societies, which, as Ward points out, appear to have derived their symbolism from sources outside of China and to have revived the then declining initiation systems of Egypt, Greece, and the Near East.

Obviously, the necessary records are imperfect, and therefore any dogmatic attitude is unrealistic. Yet, from a series of coincidences some inferences may be gathered. It is certain that in the first or second century A. D. profound changes were wrought in Chinese religion. Systems of initiation had long existed in India, and could be re-

sponsible for part of this change, but the possibility of other factors cannot be entirely ignored. Certainly, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Manichaeism perpetuated the Mysteries in the Mediterranean area until these sects were virtually destroyed by the rise of orthodox Christianity. It is known that the principal leaders and disciples of all these schools moved eastward and took refuge outside the boundaries of Christendom. Here they found congenial scholarship and an intellectual liberality which invited exchange of ideas and concepts. In the 6th and 7th centuries, Nestorianism and the vestiges of the old Mystery cults contributed to the rise of Islam, and there is nothing to deny that in a somewhat less spectacular manner, these so-called heretics may have sown their seeds in the Far East and that the later harvest is to be found in the schools of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan mysticism.

Allowing that the semi-historical records of the old Chinese secret societies are at least partly true, all would fit together to a recognizable pattern. In due time, this pattern inevitably became so utterly Chinese that it was no longer subjected to critical examination as to its origin or primary purpose. The collapse of European civilization and the prevailing confusion of the Dark Ages created intellectual boundaries and caused the European mind to become so introverted that it ignored and finally forgot the older cultural relationships between the Occident and the Orient. It is only within the last century that this large subject has been re-opened.

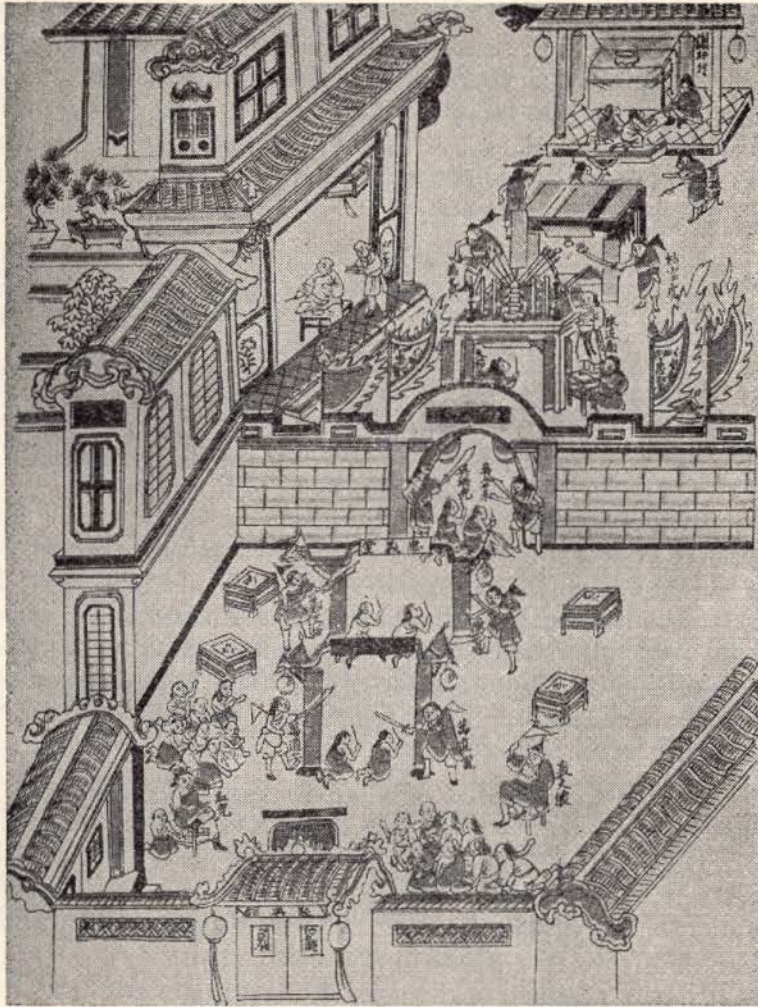
Chinese Secret Societies

As in other parts of the world, the Adept tradition in China was intimately associated with societies, fraternities, and esoteric orders, most of which acknowledged the existence of immortals or heroic persons venerated as embodiments of extraordinary wisdom or power. Buddhism, with its doctrines of Bodhisattvas, Arhats, and Lohans, and

Taoism, with its emphasis upon Sages, alchemists, and miraculous beings, not only strengthened previous beliefs, but formulated a concept of a hierarchy of semi-divine teachers and illuminates. An elaborate legendry inevitably accumulated around venerated personages, and this in turn contributed to the rise of mystical brotherhoods and philosophical associations.

Secret societies existed among the Chinese from time immemorial. At various periods in the history of the empire, these exclusive groups played a variety of roles. In one century, their concerns were largely spiritual, and in another, intensely political. Their memberships were drawn from various classes, but so far as can be learned, they systematically defended honor, truth, and integrity. There is difference of opinion among the historians of these fraternities. Some assume that they were separate and distinct bodies, mostly short-lived, and arising due to the pressures of contemporary circumstances. Other researchers are convinced that the almost countless organizations—some remembered by name only—were actually branches and offshoots of one fraternity which, under numerous forms, survived, and even flourished, beneath the stoical surface of Chinese culture.

The most celebrated of Chinese secret brotherhoods is the Hung Society, which still exists and which, according to recent report, is spreading rapidly as an anticommunist force in China. Accounts bearing upon the origin of the Hung Society divide sharply. The traditional story implies that this fraternity arose in the third century A. D., at a time when political difficulties were threatening the survival of the Han Dynasty. This would mean that the Hung League, under one of several names, had a stormy history, covering more than 1400 years, before its reorganization and revival in the period of the Manchus. The Society was involved in many political intrigues and uprisings because it strongly supported the rights of afflicted



—From *Chinese Secret Societies*, Tientsin, 1935

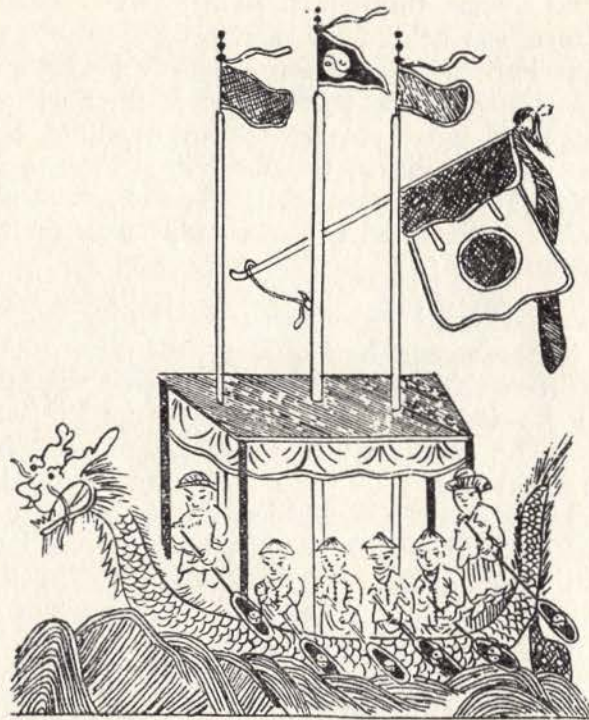
SCENE FROM THE INITIATION RITUAL OF
THE HUNG SOCIETY

masses, and sought, through its rituals and ceremonies, to unite its members behind just and proper causes. Its attacks upon imperial corruption led to vigorous reprisals. Every means possible was used to destroy the Society. The initiates of the League were sought out, captured, and executed, and it was several times reported that the Order was extinct. It always rose again, like the fabled phoenix, and certainly contributed to the establishment of the Chinese Republic.

The conventional report that the Hung Society was founded in the second half of the 17th century A. D. is subject to reconsideration. This is not what the candidate is told at the time of his initiation. In the lecture which he receives, he is assured that the League has been in existence for at least 1800 years. The implication is inevitable, and supports the contention that it is the successors to the older groups which are generally supposed to have vanished in limbo. This is further supported by the symbolism and rituals of the Society, which are not only of great antiquity but widely diversified.

The finest work available on the Hung, or Triad, Society, is that which was compiled by J. S. M. Ward, and W. G. Stirling. The preface opens with these words: "Like Freemasonry in the west, the Hung or Triad Society seems justly entitled to claim that it is a lineal descendant of the Ancient Mysteries. Its signs are of primeval antiquity, but it represents the Higher Degrees in Freemasonry rather than the Craft in that the main part of the ritual deals with what is supposed to befall a man after death. It has many striking analogies with ancient Egypt; for example, the Hung Boat is similar to the Solar Barque of Ra, and just as in the Egyptian Book of the Dead we find that the soul of the deceased is symbolically weighed, so too we find a similar procedure in the Hung Ceremonies." *

* See, *The Hung Society*.



—From *Chinese Secret Societies*, Tientsin, 1935

THE HUNG BOAT

The Hung Society has actually been referred to as the Freemasonry of China, and there are undeniable parallels that deserve attention. Although Freemasonry as it exists today is believed to have originated in the 17th century, it is known to have existed prior to this time. The traditional history of the Order carries it back to the building of Solomon's Temple, but there are also indications that it was derived from the Mystery Schools of Greece, Egypt, and India. The legendary accounts of Freemasonry set forth an unbroken descent of its essential symbols through the Dionysian Artificers, the Roman Collegia, the Coma-

cini Builders, the European Guilds, and the secret societies of the 16th and early 17th centuries. This is the precise situation in the case of the Hung Society.

If it be assumed that the masters and higher officials of this fraternity are properly informed, their conclusions have some weight. In early times, the almost complete absence of public programs promoting collective security and the universal disregard for the life and rights of the private citizen in China led to the foundation of several powerful fraternities. These apparently were dissolved when the reasons which created them and the ends which they sought to accomplish failed of significance. Actually, however, their greater purpose was not accomplished in their own day, but was passed on as a heritage of labor to future generations. This larger purpose was the emancipation of the human mind from the tyranny of ignorance, and the establishment of an adequate government and social policy which would ensure the happiness and security of mankind. It is therefore worthwhile to make note of at least some of the Chinese fraternities.

The earliest recorded mention of a secret society is found in the annals of the Later Han Dynasty. About the year A. D. 185, an organization called The Red Cap Rebels, composed entirely of scholars and intellectuals, secretly attempted a rebellion against the throne. The Red Eyebrow Society, so named because the members painted their eyebrows vermillion, began about the same time with a similar purpose. Other curious and wonderful names have descended, bearing witness to the inclination of the Chinese to foster fraternities and brotherhoods. There was the Triad Society, The Family of the Queen of Heaven, The Society of Heaven and Earth, The Flood Family, The White Lily, The Water Lily, The Society of Celestial Regions, The Incense Burners, The Origin of the Dragon, The Wonderful Association, The Blue Lotus Hall, The Golden Orchid District, The Justice and Prosperity Asso-

ciation, The Perfect Intelligence, The Non-Acting, The Pre-Celestial, The Pill of Immortality, The Society of Glory and Splendor, The Sea and Land Society, and The Society of the Three Rivers.

It is obvious from even the names of these groups that their symbols and rituals came from legendary-religious sources, and are traceable to Buddhist, Taoist, or Confucian concepts. In each case, a special meaning or interpretation is implied. There is often a social or political emphasis sustained by reference to some ancient teaching or precept. The Tibetan religious theater, with its masked and robed actors portraying such hero-sagas as the Ghesar Khan, reveals clearly a pattern or ritual presented dramatically and intended to emphasize such abstract truths and beliefs as the journey of the soul along the road of transmigrations and the participation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Arhats and Sages, in the government of the world. Such societies were broadly ethical and educational, although some of them certainly deteriorated and were responsible for acts of violence.

The Triad Society, or Heaven and Earth Association, used many Buddhist and Taoist symbols, and was formed in an effort to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty and restore the splendor of the Ming. Apparently far from such concerns was the Golden Orchid Society, an organization of young girls who swore never to marry. Members of this group were in secret revolt against the heartless Chinese marriage customs. At the beginning of the 18th century, five monks and seven members of the laity bound themselves by an oath which included the ritual of blood brotherhood to restore the Ming Dynasty. They formed the Society of the White Lily. This organization gained considerable strength due to a prophecy that one of the members would be emperor of China. The leaders were finally captured and executed, but in 1777 the Society reappeared, was again overthrown, and the moving spirits, including two women, suffered the death penalty.

During the reign of the Emperor Kai' King (1799-1820) a Society called The Queen of Heaven spread throughout Cochin China, Siam, and Korea, with headquarters in the southern province of the Chinese empire. This Society was thought to have been exterminated, and is the one from which, according to popular account, the great Hung League arose. Hung means literally *flood*, and the idea of the organization was to flood the earth. They established branches under several names, the better to conceal the scope of their activities. They were variously known, therefore, as The Triad Society, The Blue Lotus Hall, and The Golden Orchid District. The directing power of this League was vested in three persons, the chief being known as the elder brother, and the other two as the younger brothers. About 1895, a number of Mohammedans arose against the Chinese government and captured the important city of Kansu. The secret societies of Central China then cast their lots with the Mohammedans, but a few months later the insurrection was crushed. Fifteen of the leaders were captured and beheaded, but among those who escaped was Dr. Sun Yat Sen, later to become the moving spirit of Chinese democracy.

Although popularly regarded by the uninformed or partly informed as a political organization, the symbolism and lore of the Hung Society is of real interest to students of comparative religion and Oriental philosophy. Dr. Sun Yat Sen resigned from the Hung Society after his election to the presidency of the Republic of China. Although a man of modern mind and direct action, Dr. Sun is known to have had deep respect for the ancient institutions of his people. It is especially significant that he should have been affiliated with an organization deeply involved in old Chinese religious customs and ceremonies, even though he was himself Christian.

In Europe, there were many apparently unrelated groups whose activities have never been adequately de-

fined. For example, there can be no reasonable doubt that there was a connection between the troubadours and the Albigensian heretics. Both these groups seem to have mingled at one time or another with the Order of the Temple. The Cabalists, both Jewish and Christian, had much in common with the alchemists and other scattered orders of Hermetic interests. The Rosicrucians were tied to alchemy, Arabian philosophy, Christian mysticism, and the Reformation of Martin Luther. The Illuminati of Bavaria twined their destiny with 18th-century revivals of Arabic, Greek, Egyptian, and Persian metaphysics. From such strange compounds of old traditions and rare working secrets, modern Freemasonry emerged. With the formulation of the Higher Degrees of what is now the Scottish Rite, there was a broad survey of all the secret rituals of antiquity as eloquently set forth in the writings of General Albert Pike.

Compare this pattern with the broad conclusions of Ward. "It may be added that there are many little phrases in the Hung ritual which may be capable of a mystical, or even of an occult, significance, such as, for example, the term 'ELDER BROTHERS,' which, although possessing a practical interpretation, as meaning the Masters and Past Masters of a Hung Lodge, may once, at any rate, have referred to beings far higher in the scale of spiritual evolution. We must not forget that the ritual is permeated with Buddhist and Taoist beliefs, and both these religions speak of evolved men who, having reached a stage of spiritual development approximating to a semi-divine nature, are believed to take a hand in the ordering of this mundane world, and to act, as it were, as OVERSEERS, inspiring and helping their less evolved brethren on earth to advance toward the Light." *

* See, *The Hung Society*.

The Lodges of the Hung League are governed by five Masters belonging to the five principal lodges. It is noteworthy that in China the number five was held in the highest veneration. The candidate for initiation was introduced into the Hall of Fidelity under a bridge of swords. After he had taken the oath, his queue was cut off, unless he lived in a neighborhood dominated by the Tartars. He exchanged his clothes for a long white dress, preferably new, but otherwise spotlessly clean. Prayers were made to certain divinities. The new initiate then received a diploma, a book containing the oath, and a manual setting forth the secret signs of recognition. These signs were numerous, and a brother could make himself known by the way in which he entered a house, carried his umbrella, held his hat, or picked up a cup of tea. Such elaborate precautions were justified by prevailing conditions.

To conceive of an invisible empire of dedicated mortals bound together by secret knowledge, was to be receptive to the idea of a hidden government controlling mortal affairs. There is no reason to doubt that the Chinese used the same methods which are found operating in other areas. A circle of legends contributing to Chinese hero lore, including spiritual and philosophical elements, was sustained and probably encouraged by the secret societies. They are known to have taken historical persons, such as Confucius and Lao-tse, and to have invested them with super-physical attributes by which their lives were transformed into symbols of esoteric doctrines.

Beneath the surface of all these diverse and sundry procedures, the concept of the Chinese Adept was gradually clarified. He found his place in the world's belief that the natural growth of the human being could be intensified by "art" or method, and that the exact formulas appropriate to the attainment of Adeptship actually existed and, under various rituals or symbols, were recognized and taught. Those who possessed such knowledge were il-

luminated Sages, and those who had further advanced so that they could fully practice the secret operations of this knowledge, were true Adepts or Immortals. It was assumed, of course, that all great world teachers were really Adepts of this kind, and that the instructions which they gave, though apparently only moral or ethical, were so stated as to conceal a further meaning understandable only to the wise and the initiated. Thus, the Hung Lodge signified an island of integrity in a world of unregenerated mortals. It was a model or pattern of a better way of life and, as such, can be likened to More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and Bacon's *College of the Six Days' Work*.

Oriental Alchemy

Taoism developed within a definite historical reference frame, passing through three distinct periods. The first phase, extending from the lifetime of Lao-tse to the beginning of the Christian era, has been defined as "the ethical epoch." During this time, the teachings of the Master were held within the strict boundaries of philosophy. The Taoist Sages devoted their lives to the contemplation of the universal plan and the application of natural laws to human conduct. These scholars were the scientists of their own day, and were responsible, to a large measure, for the rise of Chinese cultural institutions. Finding their way of life too abstract for general understanding, the Taoist philosophers formed their own schools in quiet and remote places where they instructed disciples and gained a solid reputation for integrity and insight.

The second period of the unfoldment of Taoism extended from the 1st century of the Christian era through the 7th century, and has been described as "the magical phase." It should be noted that this aspect of the sect did not completely end, but passed from popular acceptance to be preserved or maintained by isolated mystics and

small groups. In this second period, a new type of metaphysician came to dominate the policies and projects of Taoism. Various transcendental arts were introduced, including cabalistic speculations and alchemy. The Chinese alchemist claimed the same objectives as his European confrere, and it is rather obvious that the Taoist, like the Hermetist, was seeking to accomplish transmutation in the sociological sphere as well as in the kingdoms of the minerals and metals. The Chinese alchemist was concerned with the mystery of longevity, and if the highly ornamented chronicles of the time be trustworthy, many succeeded in extending their physical lives far beyond the pattern of normal expectancy. The magical medicines, drugs, and simples, discovered by these experimental chemists were believed to possess extraordinary virtues and to bestow numerous blessings upon those capable of working the secret formulas. In its third period, Taoism became largely theological, and this is not within the scope of the present interest.

The second period of Taoism is closely associated with Chang Tao-ling, often referred to as "the first Taoist Pope." This celebrated man was born in A. D. 35, probably in the province now called Chekiang. It is stated that he was a most precocious child and, by the time he had attained his seventh year, had penetrated the inner mysteries of the writings of Lao-tse and was familiar with the deepest philosophical and magical books. He was ennobled by the Emperor Chang Ti, but declined all worldly honor, and retired to a retreat in the mountains of western China. Here he dedicated his mind and heart to the metaphysical aspect of alchemy and the cultivation of personal virtues. So profound was his mental abstraction that the Immortals considered him worthy to be successful in his researches, and through their aid, he succeeded in compounding the elixir of immortality. The precise instruction for this elaborate formula was communicated to him

in a vision, in which Lao-tse appeared to his devoted disciple and placed the treatise in his hands.

While experimenting with the "dragon-tiger elixir," a genie appeared to him, saying that on the Po-sung Mountain there was a stone house, and in this house were concealed the magical writings of the three ancient emperors and also a scriptural book dealing with the mysteries of the doctrine. If Chang Tao-ling obtained these books, he could ascend to heaven without death, providing he followed exactly the disciplines which they contained. Chang secured the writings, and, having mastered their contents, gained the power of moving through the air, of perceiving things occurring at a distance, and of leaving his body at will. He practiced a thousand days of discipline, could "walk among the stars," and could command the winds and the thunders. It was because of the numerous recipes and medications which he discovered or invented that Taoism began to emphasize various aspects of healing.

It is further related of Chang Tao-ling that, having by alchemy succeeded in compounding the pill of immortality, he took only one half of the medicine because he did not wish to depart from this world and ascend to the region of the Immortals until his teachings had been well established and his disciples properly instructed. His final departure into the celestial world is believed to have occurred when he had attained his 123rd year. Prior to his transition, this Taoist Sage completed the final projection of the grand elixir, and communicated his choicest secrets to his son, who also gained considerable fame. In A. D. 748, the T'ang Emperor confirmed the hereditary privileges of the family of Chang Tao-ling and his descendants. Later the Mongol emperors also took a friendly attitude and became patrons of this family. When the Tibetan doctrine of re-embodied lamas attained popularity in China, this was also applied to the descendants of Chang. Each of his successors, at his decease, caused his

soul to transmigrate into some infant belonging to the same family. When this occurred, it was attended by miracles and supernatural circumstances through which the correct child could be identified. This brief account is based upon Mayers' *Chinese Readers Manual*.

The Reverend DuBose, referring to the Taoist Pope, writes: "The name of Chang, the Heavenly Teacher, is on every lip in China; he is on earth the Viceregent of the Pearly Emperor in Heaven and the Commander-in-chief of the hosts of Taoism. Whatever doubts there may be about Peter's apostolic successors, the present pope Chang LX., boasts of an unbroken line of three score generations. He is the chief of the wizards, the 'true man' (i. e., the ideal man), as he is called, and wields an immense spiritual power throughout the land." * Recent authors, commenting on Chang Tao-ling, take the attitude "that he was after all a deceiver of the people." This judgment is based upon the elaborate lore with which his person has been embellished. Actually, nothing is recorded about him that is inconsistent with the traditions associated with celebrated Adepts of Indian, Persian, Egyptian, and Greek transcendentalism. Most derogatory remarks are based upon the simple premise that miracles are impossible and those who claim to perform them must be pretenders and imposters. Such an attitude openly assails all religions, and denies traditions which have existed since the beginning of historic times. It might be wiser to examine these accounts more carefully in the light of expanding knowledge, much of which points to the unexplored inner life of man and the potential powers and faculties locked therein and susceptible to release and cultivation.

Although there is every reason to believe that the Chinese alchemical tradition was indigenous, and derived its authority from the broad inspiration of ancient writings, it appears more than coincidental that the practical phases

* See, *The Dragon, Image, and Demon*.

of the subject should have developed in two widely separated areas at approximately the same time. J. M. Stillman notes that the earliest records of philosophical alchemy among Western people are those associated with Zosimus, Synesius, and Olympiodorus, who flourished between the 3rd and 5th centuries A. D. It is known that in the 2nd century A. D. there was a Roman embassy to China during the reign of Antonius Marcus Aurelius. * Obed Simon Johnson writes: "It is not unreasonable to believe, therefore, that during these early centuries, the basic ideas of Chinese alchemy should have found their way Westward to the shores of the Mediterranean and—in later centuries—to regions beyond." †

Assuming that the mystical chemists of China were delving into the secret of scientific immortality nearly two thousand years ago, it might well follow that their researches could have drifted along caravan routes and in the course of time have reached the Near East and North Africa. Certainly the subject took deep root in the Arabian mind, as testified to in the *Arabian Nights Entertainment* and other similar works, some of which are now extremely rare. The rise of Moslem culture in Spain revived European interest in esoteric chemistry and contributed to the great era of alchemy which extended roughly from the 14th to 18th centuries. As in China, the European writers like to attribute the principles of their art to remote antiquity and to legendary or semi-legendary sources.

The earliest speculations of the Taoist philosophers relating to the prolongation of human life emphasized principally a regime of moderation and purification, not essentially different from present attitudes on health. Some superphysical overtones were introduced, involving the control of breath, meditative disciplines, and the use of drugs

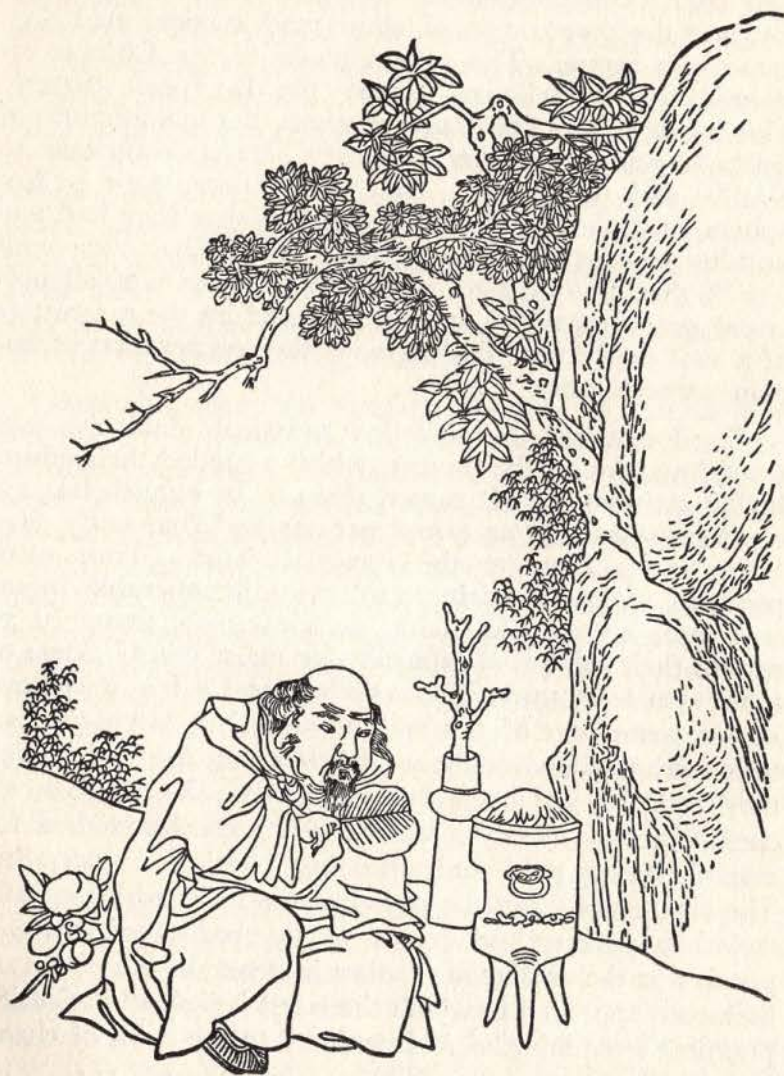
suitable to clear the mind or to purify the body. Considerably later, transcendentalism emerged as a prominent factor, and the preparation of elixirs and magical medicines came into vogue. The second phase of the Chinese alchemical quest followed closely the European pattern. This involved metallic transmutations, the manufacture of synthetic gems, and other objectives likely to contribute to wealth and prosperity. The first Taoists were philosophers and scholars, and it is doubtful that they had any pressing interest in manufacturing gold. They were convinced that Lao-tse had revealed the pattern of all universal procedures, and they were moved by the magnitude of a vast experiment dealing with the regeneration of human consciousness.

In due time, the so-called practical alchemists appeared and found the prestige which attended their efforts highly satisfactory. It caused them to be regarded as exceptionally learned or gifted persons and frequently gave them access even to the imperial court. They compounded various medicines and made innumerable promises, and, being gifted with persuasiveness, managed to sustain their spheres of influence for many years. Some of these men were undoubtedly skilled, and a few may have known some part of the esoteric tradition, but their motives were not always above question, and the ends which they attained are open to speculation. By degrees, alchemy became merely a search for a scientific method for manufacturing gold and attaining physical immortality. The result was a strange and elusive pursuit which usually ended in poverty and death. A by-product of this emphasis was the decline of Taoism in general. An elaborate literature appeared in which the latest beliefs and scientific practices were mingled and confused to the point of chaos.

It is obvious that the truly enlightened scholars did not want to be identified with the foibles of the gold-makers. While the real Sages assumed the principle of

* See, *The Story of Early Chemistry*.

† See, *A Study of Chinese Alchemy*.



—From Favier's *Peking*

A CHINESE ALCHEMIST FANNING HIS FURNACE

gold to be universal and acknowledged that the seeds of gold existed in all things, they were not interested in nurturing this plant into productivity. By degrees, therefore, a separation took place among these chemists. Those possessing actual knowledge would not impart it to the unethical wealth-hunters. In due time, the venerable Taoist Adept withdrew from all involvement in popular Taoism, and the doctrine as an esoteric philosophy immediately began to decline. By the 8th century A. D., philosophical Taoism had virtually disappeared, and the sect drifted toward its present religious position. It became a creed, borrowing many of its rituals, ceremonies, and formal structures from Buddhism. Only legends remained, intimating the older concepts of the teaching.

The effect of Buddhism on Chinese alchemy was subtle but profound. It should be remembered that Chinese Buddhism is not the simple ethical doctrine taught by Gautama. When it reached China, it was already committed to an elaborate pantheon of divinities and saints. The Buddhist Arhats possessed most of the magical powers which the Taoist alchemists were seeking to cultivate. The doctrine of rebirth, as taught in Buddhism, came into sharp contrast with the Chinese belief in the possibility of physical immortality. A direct result was a powerful stimulus toward the discovery of some means for continuing the life of man in this world. Although it appeared that the Taoist Immortals had simply taken on Buddhist vestments, this was not strictly true. Taoism dipped deeply into materialism, and while men visualized with satisfaction the heavenly regions to which they would depart, they preferred to delay their journey until the last possible moment.

There were certainly a few of the higher Taoist Initiates—the real Adepts of the sect who had already retired into silence and seclusion—who found a meeting of minds with the Arhats and Lohans of Buddhism. Both

groups recognized the yogic implications of transmutation. They knew that man himself was the laboratory in which the experiment of transmutation or regeneration must be perfected. Lao-tse's doctrine of Tao, and Buddha's path to Nirvana, could be reconciled by the wise because the two concepts stood for the single attainment of union with eternal value. The meditative disciplines were much the same in both schools, and the real Arhats also chose places of retirement and built their retreats in vicinities long associated with the Taoist Sages.

The enlightened Buddhists and Taoists were well aware that the public forms of their teachings were falling away from the original intentions. Truth-seekers, disillusioned by the conflict of cults, were in many cases turning toward direct mysticism as the only solution. The personal experience of God or reality was cultivated under various names. At various times, the Sages and Arhats attempted to restore the old wisdom through reforming or redirecting the popular religion. They sent forth their disciples to call men from the errors of their ways, and to reinfuse rituals and formulas with meanings long lost or ignored. This resulted, as in Europe, in a gradual division within the structure of religion into a secret, mystical body and a revealed theological form. The first sought to ensoul the second and thus become its guiding principle, reopening the door between truth and error.

This procedure has always resulted in the rise of esoteric societies or secret groups holding great fascination for the more serious-minded. In the course of centuries, therefore, the belief that there was a secret world-religion became widespread, and those dissatisfied with the outer structure of worship sought to penetrate into the ethereal realm of mystical contemplation. It was said that in old times the Arhats and Sages mingled with men and publicly taught them, but gradually this practice declined because men became ambitious, cruel, and disorderly in the ad-

vancement of their material careers. The wise ones then returned to their own spheres, disappearing from their traditional places, which were soon occupied by the professors of false learning.

Alchemy in China was founded in the total concept of existence, as this was unfolded in the ancient books and legends. Primordial existence contains a potential duality which is the source of the permutations or changes which are continually unfolding, mingling, separating, coming together, and, by these occurrences, sustaining the diversity of creation. The philosophy relating to this concept is unfolded through the *I Ching*, or *Classic of Changes*. This work and the celebrated commentary thereon by Confucius, are regarded with deep veneration by the Chinese. Of this book, Dr. Paul Carus writes: "The Yih King is one of the most ancient, most curious, and most mysterious documents in the world. It is more mysterious than the pyramids of Egypt, more ancient than the Vedas of India, more curious than the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylon." *

In their ancient symbolism, the Chinese represented the positive principle of the universe by an unbroken line, which was *yang*; and the negative principle by a broken line, which stood for *yin*. When they united these two symbols, the compound was called yin-yang, and signified the interaction of negative and positive fields of energy. This yin-yang is a central vortex present in the universe and also in the deepest and most mysterious parts of all creatures. Everything that exists is rooted in the yin-yang design, for creation implies a mingling of negative and positive principles. The unbroken line stands for strength, and the broken line for weakness. In this case, however, weakness actually means receptivity, or a capacity which is filled or fructified by the positive principle. It follows naturally that in this philosophic shorthand, *yang* is the prin-

* See, *Chinese Thought*.

ciple of heaven, and yin, the principle of earth. Yang becomes the sun, yin the moon, and the words mean *brightness* and *darkness*. Always yang is aggressive, and yin submissive. Thus all creatures partake of both qualities.

The aggressive principle is a kind of air, or spirit of air, in continuous motion. It would be proper, therefore, to symbolize this perpetual rhythmic undulation as a male dragon writhing in space. The dragon was supposed naturally to inhabit the air and, when represented with five claws (elements), it became the imperial symbol. When yang was revealed as the male dragon, yin spontaneously presented itself as the female dragon. Thus with all forms in Nature, the male engenders the female out of the passive principle, and no creation could exist alone. Aggressiveness cannot be separated from submission, and can have no reality apart from its polarized opposite. Light and darkness are interdependent, for the concept of one cannot exist without the concept of the other.

The first mingling of yin and yang resulted in the production of the great monad referred to as "the imperial heaven." The great monad is an infinite sphere of the positive mind principle, and immediately upon its production, the yin principle clothes it in an ethereal body. In this manifestation, yang, therefore, becomes the rational soul of the world and of man, and yin becomes the sentient soul of both. The sentient soul is the anima, which acts upon the subtle vehicle of the animus. All forms are compounds, and only the formless remains, a simple or undifferentiated nature. In the alchemical speculations, either philosophic gold or the wise man's stone must be prepared by inducing an inner action between the two primary principles in their elemental or metallic forms. In the laboratory, yin and yang are caused to accomplish an artificial union made possible by art or knowledge. It should be remembered that the European alchemists described their process as the marriage of the sun and moon.

The Chinese have an almost identical terminology, for they assign lead to the sun, and mercury to the moon, and in turn conceal these elements under the symbol of the dragon and the tiger respectively.

As might well be expected, the formulas of transmutation are exceedingly complicated and mysterious. As in the West, diagrams and symbols are introduced, but without the proper keys, these are worse than meaningless. The alchemist attempted to reproduce within his vessels the grand process of universal creation, hoping thus to gain mastery over the purified substances by which all living things receive their primary nutrition. Poem 17 of Chang Po-tuan's Alchemical Treatise *Four Hundred Word* indicates clearly the use of the same type of idiom found in the writings of the Western alchemists. "The dragon comes from the eastern sea. The tiger rises up in the western mountain. The two creatures fight a battle and change into the marrow of heaven and earth." Here the experiment clearly relates to the union of lead and mercury. It should be understood, however, that the ordinary base substances generally known are not implied, for the alchemist is dealing with the spirits of lead and mercury. He used the phoenix to represent the volatile principle; the toad or tortoise was the true earth, or primordial matter; the crow appeared as the symbol of the sun; the rabbit, of the moon; and the unicorn was the universal spirit which he was seeking to capture. This is a key to the myths involving all these creatures, which are actually elements of an elaborate formula.

The constant reference to purified forms of lead, mercury, and cinabar, is probably intended to remind the mystical chemist that he is dealing with a spiritual art, and not merely with a physical science. The Chinese themselves say that the philosophical garden where these elements can be found in their most natural forms, is man's own body, in which true lead and true mercury abound, if one knows how to gather them and distinguish

their attributes. The further one proceeds in the study of Chinese alchemy, the more completely he will be convinced that all phases of the art of transmutation were involved in a secret science of human regeneration. The master alchemist was the immortal mortal, for he was able to bring about any miracle that he desired, not by imposing his own will upon Nature, but by understanding natural laws and assisting them to perfect their operations.

According to Arthur Waley, "Often in the alchemical literature of the Renaissance and later we have a suspicion that we are reading not about material experiments, but about a spiritual quest allegorically described in terms of the laboratory. In China this suspicion is a certainty. From the 10th century onward exoteric alchemy (*wai tan*) gives place to esoteric (*nei tan*), which instead of using tangible and material substances as its ingredients, uses only the 'souls' or 'essences' of these substances. These 'souls' are the 'true' or purified mercury, sulphur, lead, etc., and are in the same relation to common metals as is the Taoist, Adept or Chen-jen (purified, perfected man), to ordinary mortals. By the end of the 11th century a fresh step has been made. These transcendental metals are identified with various parts of the human body, and alchemy comes to mean in China not an experimentation with chemicals, blow-pipes, furnace and the like (though these survive in the popular alchemy of itinerant quacks), but a system of mental and physical re-education." *

Lu Tsu wrote: "I must diligently plant my own field. There is within it a spiritual germ that may live a thousand years. Its flower is like yellow gold. Its bud is not large, but its seeds are round and like unto a spotless gem. Its growth depends upon the soil of the central palace, but its irrigation must proceed from a higher fountain. After nine years of cultivation, root and branch may be transplanted to the heaven of the higher genii." † Although

* See, *The Travels of an Alchemist*.

† See, *The Lore of Cathay*, by W. A. P. Martin.

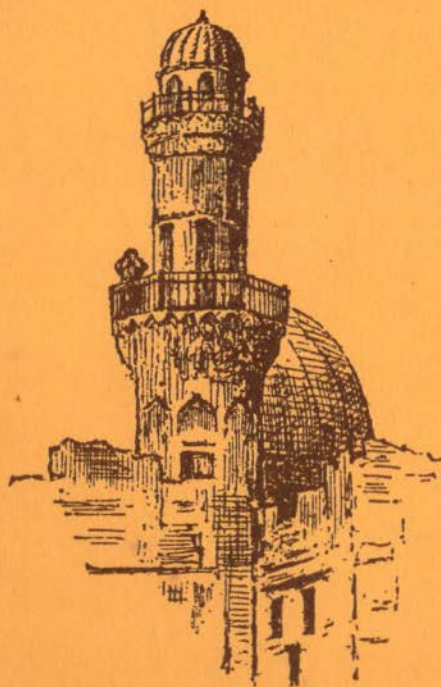
Johnson, already quoted, considers that this statement defies rational interpretation, it actually reveals the entire mystery. The field is the physical body of the alchemist; the golden germ is the seed of the soul; the central palace is the heart; and the soil is the quality of virtue; the higher fountain is Tao, or true spirit; the nine years are the stages or degrees of esoteric discipline; and the heaven of the genii is the state of illumination. The entire account should be clear to a student of yoga.

As in all other parts of the world, the alchemical tradition in China assumed that a few enlightened or skillful masters actually attained the perfection of the art. These were immediately endowed with extraordinary virtues and powers, and were regarded as the true scientific Adepts. There are many legends about their wealth and their benevolence. They served the needy, supported just rulers, endowed institutions, and advanced learning. Although they disdained worldliness, they appeared abundantly supplied with ample means at all times. In some generations, they were persecuted, and in more enlightened times they were applauded. Each tried to select an appropriate successor, to whom he communicated the deeper of his secrets. The mystics insisted, however, that these alchemical Sages were devoted entirely to the works of heaven. They alone realized that the production of a perfect government or a happy human society depended upon the same formulas as those used in the transmutation of metal. The end of alchemy was the realization of the Golden Age, when all creatures would live together in peace, worshipping the gods, honoring the ancestors, and loving one another. By this extension, alchemy became only another statement of the widespread belief that an order of human beings was working continuously for the improvement of mankind. As only those who were themselves wise were worthy to become the leaders over their brethren, so the Master Adept of alchemy was the just monarch, the Grand Master of the Philosophic Empire.

The Adepts

In The Eastern Esoteric Tradition

By MANLY P. HALL



Part Four

The Mystics of Islam

THE ADEPTS

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THE MYSTICS OF ISLAM

ILLUSTRATED

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THE MYSTICS OF ISLAM

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present work is to point out the original existence and present survival of an Adept tradition in the Moslem world. We must therefore demonstrate that such a belief was anciently held among these people, and also that it has survived in modern times as a mystical or secret conviction. There can be no doubt that the belief in Adept and Initiate teachers and mystical sages possessing supernatural powers is the "mind" of Islam, though not actually canonical. Devout believers were not criticized nor rebuked for holding such opinions. The Moslem world has always acknowledged the importance of mysticism and bestowed the highest approbation upon its poets, visionaries, and metaphysical thinkers. In conformity with world custom, it has also invested its saints with legends, and ascribed miracles to them. It has also acknowledged the existence of esoteric disciplines for the unfoldment of the potential spiritual resources of the human being.

Moslem scholars have frequently implied in their writings that secret schools arose early in the unfoldment of the Moslem faith. Some of these were founded by philosophers and scientists. Others, however, seem to have originated among mystics for the peculiar purpose of perpetuating the inner meaning of the Moslem faith. The principal arcana of these colleges or assemblages were concerned with systems of meditation, concentration, and Yogic practices similar to those of Hindu mystics. Such spiritual exercises resulted in the development of internal faculties and the ability to control natural phenomena. Writers have noted

that the teachings of the secret Moslem sects also derived important philosophical and theurgic elements from Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Judaism and Christianity.

In the light of a gradually increasing insight into the Moslem esoteric tradition, it becomes easier to relate the beliefs of these people to the universal pattern of comparative mysticism. What may at first seem to be a fanciful and extravagant literature, reveals an important philosophical system to those who are willing to recognize mysticism *per se* as a rational approach to the mysteries of life. It becomes apparent that the religion founded by Mohammed was always divisible into two clearly defined streams of tradition, one esoteric, and the other, exoteric. As in Greek philosophy, the esoteric part was intentionally concealed, and its true keys were transmitted orally. There are, however, broad hints and intimations to be found in the writings of initiated scholars. These men, faithful to their obligations of secrecy, have followed the traditional procedure. They have concealed their deeper secrets under elaborate symbolical devices completely meaningless to the uninitiated.

Jaffur Shurreef describes the rituals used by the Moslems of India in initiating a devotee. He writes: "The *Moorshud* then reveals to the disciple, in a whisper, (lit. breast to breast, hand in hand, and lip to ear), all the secret mysteries of godliness."* The reference here to the ritual of Blue Lodge Masonry has been noted by a number of Masonic writers. In his *Indian Masons' Marks of the Mogul Dynasty*, A. Gorham concludes that guilds of operative Masons were employed by the Mogul emperors from the time of Akbar to the decline of the empire. He assumes, therefore, that guilds of builders, with their usual philosophical objectives flourished in this region, preserving the old mystery religion as perpetuated by various groups since the time of the Dionysian Artificers of Greece. The masters of these guilds and their qualified workmen marked the

stones of the great Moslem monuments with distinguishing symbols, as was later the practice of the Cathedral Builders of Europe.

The contact between Islam and Christendom during and immediately following the tragic cycle of the Crusades, resulted in the introduction of Islamic philosophy among European peoples. Paracelsus visited Constantinople, where he discovered that the Moslem physicians were far more advanced in the diagnosis and treatment of disease than the European doctors. The early alchemists, including Roger Bacon and Basil Valentin, began to refer to the Arabs as masters of the alchemical philosophy. Geber and Avicenna are referred to as "Adepts of the Stone," and numerous truth-seekers journeyed to the Near East and North Africa to study with famous Masters of the Law of Islam. There seems to have been comparatively little prejudice among these savants, and they returned in due time to their European homes with extraordinary reports of the wisdom and liberality they had encountered in the schools and universities of Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus.

Moslem mysticism may be regarded as a heritage of spiritual insight, served and perpetuated by a minority group among the followers of the Prophet Mohammed. Edward William Lane-Poole in notes to his translation of the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, discusses the lives and miracles of Moslem saints. He embellishes his account with stories of their miracles and other remarkable evidences of their sanctity. He writes, "The distinguished individuals (saints) above mentioned are known by the common appellation of 'Welees' or particular favorites of God. The more eminent among them composed a mysterious hierarchical body, whose government respects the whole human race, infidels as well as believers; but whose power is often exercised in such a manner that the subjects influenced by it know not from what person or persons its effects proceed . . . Their supernatural powers they are supposed to obtain by right of the most exalted piety, and

* Qanoon-E-Islam.

especially by constant self-denial, accompanied with the most implicit reliance upon God; by the services of good genii; and, as many believe, by the knowledge and utterance of 'the most great name' of God."

This classic statement is applicable to all systems teaching the existence of Adept or Initiate sages. It is by a scholar who devoted the greater part of his life to the study of the religion, philosophy, and literature of Islam. He lived for a great many years among Moslems and was sympathetic to their ideas and doctrines. His words leave no doubt that these people were not only aware of the doctrine of Adepts, but embraced it as an essential part of their basic concept of the operation of the Divine Power in the material world.

MANLY P. HALL

Los Angeles, California

1975

THE ADEPTS

THE MYSTICS OF ISLAM

*"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful."**
(The Koran)

The prevailing spirit of Mediterranean Christianity during the 5th and 6th Centuries A.D. resulted in the relentless persecution of non-conformists within the faith itself and those pagans who declined to become converts. To escape danger and embarrassment, Grecian teachers, together with the leaders and members of heretical Christian groups, sought refuge outside the temporal jurisdiction of the rising and expanding Church. Many of these scholars, including Jewish and Syrian mystics, found the Arabian atmosphere congenial to study and meditation. They were honorably received, and their doctrines were tolerantly examined. This spirit of temperance toward learning resulted in the assembling of a brilliant constellation of learned men, who contributed powerfully to the glory of Baghdad, Alexandria, and other Moslem cities.

The temperate atmosphere of Arabian culture, however, also led to disastrous complications. Fanatics of every degree also found asylum in the towns and villages of the desert. Most of these extremists had suffered in their own lands, and to their basic intensities were added psychological pressures and powerful personal animosities. Gradually, the dignity of Near Eastern living was seriously disturbed. Dermenghem summarizes the spiritual confusion among the Arab people which undoubtedly inspired Mohammed—

* Every section of the Koran, except one, begins with these words.

a sincere and naturally devout man—to instigate a sweeping program of theological reform. “Arabia was the meeting-place of heresies, *haeresium ferax*,” said one of the Fathers in the Fifth Century. It would not have been easy to know where one stood amongst the Sabellians, the Docetes who denied Christ’s human existence (regarding his body as a phantom), the Arians who denied his divinity, the Eutycheans, the Jacobites and the Monophysites who denied his double nature, the Nestorians who saw in him two persons, the Mariamites and the Collyridians who worshiped Mary, the Antidicomariamites who denied her perpetual virginity, the Judeo-Christian Nazarites and Ebionites, the anti-Jewish Marcionites, Gnostics, the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Carpocratians, the Rakusians, etc. . . . There is an Abyssinian proverb which says that the Christians never agree except on one point: the birth of Christ.*

The region in which the faith of Islam had its origin was by no means an untutored or uncultured area. The people apparently belonged to the Semitic family, and the land was supposed to have been the allotment of Shem, the son of Noah. The inhabitants are physically a splendid type, distinguished for their clean, simple abstemious habits; and the illnesses of Western civilization are almost unknown among them. This is pointed out by D. F. Warin, who visited the area at the time of the conflict between King Hussein and the Wahhabis under the leadership of Ibn Saud, Sultan of Nejd (1916-1924). At an earlier date, Sir William Willcocks, Consulting Engineer to the Turkish government in Mesopotamia, had this to say of the happy state of affairs enjoyed by the natives of Arabistan: “Long may the Arabs keep to their simple and natural life in their native deserts and conserve a type of manhood and womanhood which does credit to the world. Few people could say as I have heard these people say, that they know of no illness except the illness of death.”†

* Emile Dermenghem, *The Life of Mahomet*.

† *From the Garden of Eden to the Crossing of the Jordan*.

If these people are so naturally fortunate, they are subject also to certain misfortunes. Their way of life has long been burdened with problems of physical survival. These people are agriculturists and shepherders, and the need for water has brought these ancient vocations into dramatic conflict as typified by the tragedy of Cain and Abel. The wise men of the desert say that if water for the land and the sheep could be assured, the brotherhood of man could come to the Hejaz. Government has also rested heavily upon these Arabs, even though rulership has seldom been tyrannical or oppressive. The citizens simply grow weary of leaders, good or bad, and most administrations are short-lived.

The pious Moslem assumes that the centuries which preceded the birth of the Prophet were times of benightedness and ignorance. However, as has already been noted, this is not strictly true, except in the sense that a strong central spiritual leadership was lacking. It is noted that in earlier days, writing and poetry were encouraged as fine arts, eloquence was particularly admired, and annual assemblies and contests were held, devoted to skill in poetry and oratory. Religion consisted of the worship of heavenly bodies, and most uncomplicated idolatry. Arabia was not an uncultured region at the time of the birth of the Prophet, but actually heavy-laden with philosophic speculations. Dermenghem paints an interesting picture of the intellectual environment in which the faith of Mohammed arose.

“Every corner of the town,” said a Father of the Church, “is filled with discussion: markets, clothing-stalls, money-changers and provision-dealers. Do you want to change a gold-piece? They begin to philosophize upon what is begotten and what is not begotten. Do you want to know the price of bread? They reply: ‘The Father is greater than the Son.’ Do you ask if your bath is hot? The attendant tells you: ‘The Son was created out of nothingness.’”*

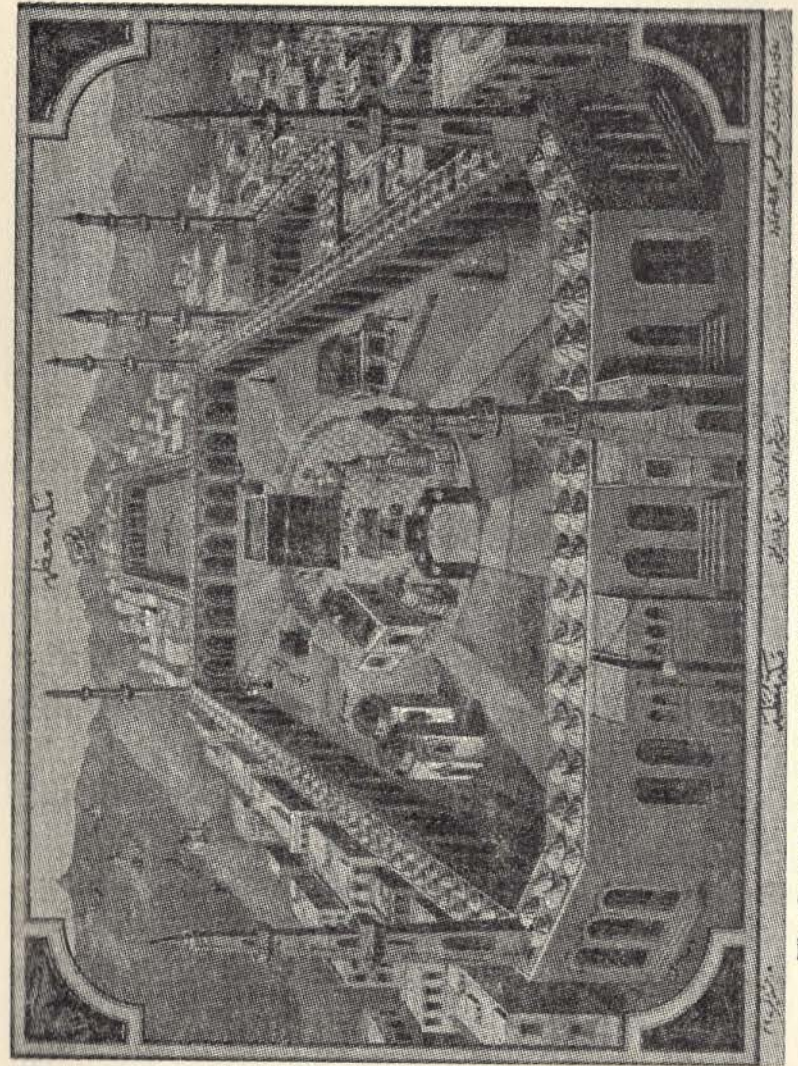
* Dermenghem, *op. cit.*

It is evident that Arabia received into itself the doctrines and beliefs of many peoples. At least several of the sects known to have flourished there practiced philosophical disciplines, formed secret schools and colleges, gathered disciples, initiated their advanced students, and actually claimed to participate in the Adept Tradition. This is not only clear from the historical orientation, but is proved by the later rise of mystical speculations among the Moslems themselves. They reveal their indebtedness to the same essential sources of knowledge that enriched Greece, Egypt, and the Valley of the Euphrates.

It was not against the democracy of true learning that Mohammed introduced his faith. He undoubtedly experienced in himself the need for a simple and direct religion that would relieve the faithful of the burden of distracting uncertainties. That such was actually the case may be gathered from a statement made by Mohammed's first cousin, Ja'far ben Abi Talib, to the Negus of Ethiopia. He told this great sovereign that the people of Arabia were in the shadow of a strange kind of ignorance, worshiping idols and conducting themselves according to the concept of the survival of the fittest. In this emergency, God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, established among them a man of their own race who commanded them to worship one God, cast out superstition, shun vice, practice virtue, and in all things to be sincere, devout, charitable and chaste. He caused them also to recognize the dignity of prayer, the goodness of sharing with the needy, and the self-discipline of fasting. Because this man was good, and practiced his goodness in his own life, his people accepted him and believed in his mission.

Mohammed, Prophet of Islam

That part of Arabia Felix which is known as the Hejaz, a province extending along the coast of the Red Sea from the Gulf of Akaba to Taif, may properly be called the Holy



The Great Mosque at Mecca with the Kaaba in the center. From an Indian Print.

Land of Islam. Within the boundaries of this region are the two sacred cities, Mecca the Honored, the birthplace of the Prophet; and Medina the Good, where Mohammed died. In this area of strange contrasts of arid deserts and flowering gardens, one of the great religions of the world came into being, and from this humble and distant land, it extended its authority to many nations and the most remote parts of the world. Today the faith of Islam numbers nearly four hundred seventy-five million beings. Five times a day the faithful face Mecca and give thanks for the spiritual convictions which have descended to them from the pages of the Glorious Koran.

A man walking the streets of Mecca in the early years of the Seventh Century A.D., might have noticed a quiet and thoughtful Arab of middle life, a mantle across his shoulders and his head-scarf drawn over his face. In his book, *The Procession of the Gods*, G. G. Atkins gives an impression of this dignified Arabian, who was to change the history of the whole world. "Mohammed was spare in figure, above middle size, well boned and broad-chested. His head was unusually large, his forehead broad and commanding. He had large, black, searching eyes under arched and meeting eyebrows, an aquiline nose, good teeth, well apart. His expression was pensive and contemplative, his beard . . . was thick and black. He walked quickly as though he were going uphill. He was of winning manners, generally silent in company; but when he spoke, it was to the point." Upon this citizen of Mecca, prominent both by birth and by marriage, was to descend the wrath and hatred of many associates who now cultivated his acquaintance.

It is inevitable that there would be two divergent accounts of the birth and early life of Mohammed. The first and natural account set forth simple facts, which were commonplace, and, to a large measure the account which the Prophet himself preferred. He used every possible means to prevent himself from being considered glamorous. He performed no miracles, claimed no supernatural powers, and

insisted that, like all other men, he was subject to infirmities of mind, soul, and body. He desired to be respected for one virtue alone: sincerity of purpose. The second and more glorified account originated among the tents in the desert, where men gathered in the dark evenings under stars and vied with each other in the art of storytelling. Their fabrications were not merely contests of oratory; they were the homage of the Arab paying tribute in his own way to the admiration, veneration, and even awe in which he held the person, the life, and the teaching of the founder of his faith. The popular account of the Prophet's life can logically be introduced by the familiar line, "Once upon a time . . ."

In the twenty-fifth year of his age, Abdallah, whose name means "the servant of God," was affianced by his father to Amina, the beautiful, virtuous and lovable daughter of Wahb. Abdallah must have been the most prepossessing of all young men, for it is reported—and who shall deny the story—that on the day of his marriage to Amina, two hundred damsels of Mecca died of broken hearts. Not long after his marriage, Abdallah, bidding his bride, Amina, an affectionate farewell, departed on a mercantile expedition which led him into the southern part of Syria. After successfully completing his business, he hastened to return to his wife but was taken sick at Medina and died shortly after, leaving a heritage of five camels, a herd of goats, and a faithful slave girl.

Due to the lack of reliable biographical information available in English, there is some question as to whether Mohammed was born prior to or after his father's death. However, the most approved tradition among the faithful, states that he was a "widow's son." Even if the story has been changed to contrive this circumstance, it would indicate an effort to make the birth conform with an ancient mystical tradition. Among peoples where the concept of the "widow's son" had general acceptance, this term implied a prophet or an initiate of sacred rites and mysteries, or an adept of the secret doctrine.

Mohammed, Prophet of Islam, upon whose name be peace, was born between A.D. 570 and 572. Some historians, including Moslems, favor April 20, 571 A.D., as the most authentic date. Again legend embellishes intervals of historical silence. Accounts usually associated with the birth of a divine or sanctified person are present, and many marvels are duly recorded. It is said that the Prophet existed before the creation of the world, and that, had it not been for him, the sun and the moon and the stars would never have been created. He was fashioned out of the light of God, but it was also affirmed that this statement applied to his spiritual essence rather than to his physical body. It was predestined and foreordained that Mohammed's birth-place should be Mecca, that he should migrate to Medina, that his name should be Mohammed, and that he should never utter an untruth.

The mother of the Prophet, upon whose name be honor, related that immediately prior to his birth, a terrible sound filled the atmosphere. While she was trembling with fear, a white bird came out of the invisible laying its wing upon her breast, and filling her heart with peace and serenity. According to the storytellers, many frightening occurrences accompanied the nativity of the Prophet. Lake Sawa flowed back into its secret fountains; the River Tigris burst its bounds; the palace of the King of Persia shook, and its towers fell; all the idols of the world were overthrown; and a great light came from the sky, filling the hearts of men with hope and gratitude.

When she gave birth to her babe, the widowed Amina was refreshed by a wonderful beverage in a jeweled cup presented to her by an unseen hand. Voices were heard in the house, and although there were sounds of footsteps and the rustle of garments, no person was to be seen. Were not these invisible beings the saints of old times, the prophets, and the patriarchs who had come to witness the predestined event? A veil let down from the sky covered Amina, hiding the birth from mortal view. Strange birds with beaks of

ruby and wings of emerald strutted about singing beautiful songs.

The moment the child was born, he prostrated himself on the ground and, raising his hands, prayed earnestly for the forgiveness of his people. His aunt, Safia, recorded that Mohammed was born circumcised, and that a few moments after his birth, he recited the creed. The seal of prophecy was upon his body in letters of light. Also at this time, three persons, surrounded by a brilliance like the sun, appeared from heaven. One held a silver goblet; another, an emerald tray; and the third, a silken towel. These heavenly visitors bathed Mohammed seven times and then saluted him as the "Prince of Mankind." In the midst of these other wonders, a glorious light surrounded the house, and this light seemed to emanate from the body of Amina. So brilliant was this lumination that it was visible from a great distance. Amina reported that she felt no discomfort at the birth of her child, and that a messenger had come to her from the sky before her son was born. This messenger told her that she had been elected to be the mother of the Prophet, who was to be the Lord of his people. The messenger told her that she was to call her child Ahmed (Praised), and that he was to be the Desired of All Nations. Through him, the original faith of the world would be restored to mankind.

As soon as her child was born, Amina, according to the fashion of her people, sent a messenger with the good tidings to Abd al Muttalib, the father of her late husband. When the news reached him, this venerable man was seated within the sacred court of the Kaaba in the midst of his sons and the principal men of his tribe. The old man rejoiced greatly, and went immediately to Amina, who narrated to him all the miracles that had occurred. Then Abd al Muttalib took the child in his arms and went to the Kaaba and, standing beside the Holy House before the Aerolite of Abraham, gave thanks to God. It is written that at that time, the name Mohammed was bestowed upon the child.

According to Katib al Wackidi, a miraculous circumstance took place when Mohammed was a child of three or four years. He was playing one morning with his foster brother and sister near the encampment of his people when suddenly two angels appeared. One of them, presumably Gabriel, opened the body of the little boy, took out his heart, and cleansed from it the black drops of original sin which all mortals have inherited from their forefather, Adam. The angels then washed the inside of the boy's body with water of snow held in a golden platter. They then weighted his body against a thousand of his people, and he outweighed them all. The angels then returned the heart to its proper place, and the body of the Prophet became luminous. He seemed to shine with a mysterious radiance like that which has flowed from all of God's messengers, according to the records of ancient times. Many who could not actually see this light experienced it in their souls so that they were drawn to Mohammed and believed in him.

These accounts are not more extravagant than the legends which have accumulated around the founders of most religions. It is fully evident that the followers of Mohammed accepted him as a messenger sent from God, bearing the Divine authority and destined for his ministry. The birth stories parallel in many ways the accounts circulated about the nativities of Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus. Although the tendency has been to dismiss these tales as pious inventions, the psychological aspects of such archetypal legends are now being given greater consideration. There is a reason for everything in this world, and the definite effort of Moslem mystics and philosophers to bring the story of Mohammed's advent and nativity into line with the mystical tradition is neither accidental nor fortuitous. Under the surface of fantasy is a firm symbolical structure unchanging since the dawn of time.

Because of the numerous sects which have arisen in the Moslem world, it is difficult to speak in a way broadly representative of current opinion. It is certain, however, that the

Prophet has become a personification of holiness and the path by which it is attained. The Prophet personifies a degree of consciousness which, when born within man, is attended by wonders. In him ancient beliefs, like the towers of Persia, are shaken down, materialistic instincts are troubled, fountains of false inspiration become dry at their sources; and the directions of revelation are reversed. The chalice of ecstasy sustains the soul of the mystic through his ordeal. Trances and visions are accorded to him. He is born again to become one with the Prophet, who stands as an embodiment of the Messianic Dispensation. This becomes more evident when the doctrines of the Dervishes and the Sufis are examined.

It was the custom of the Arabs of that day to appoint a nurse for a newborn infant, and Mohammed was given into the care of Halima, belonging to the tribe of Banu Sa't. He stayed with her until his sixth year, and was then returned to his mother. Shortly after this, Amina resolved to make a journey to the tomb of her husband at Medina. Mohammed traveled with her, and during this journey his mother died. Although the father of the Prophet had many brothers, it was Abd al Muttalib, the grandfather, who assumed the guardianship. When Mohammed was eight, however, his noble grandfather died, and Abu Talib, the paternal uncle, took the lad into his house and heart. Mohammed developed the deepest affection for Abu Talib and was his constant companion. The various people with whom he was intimately associated in early life formed the Assembly of the Companions, and their words and opinions were second in authority only to the precepts of the Koran.

When Mohammed was about twelve years of age, it is believed that he accompanied his uncle, Abu Talib, on a caravan journeying to Syria. In due course, they arrived at Basra, which lay beyond the Jordan and was the country of the tribe of Manassah. At that time, there was a strong settlement of Nestorian Christians at Basra, and the caravan of Abu Talib encamped near a community of Nes-

torian monks. Here the travelers were entertained with all hospitality. One or two of the monks conversed with Mohammed on this occasion, and were deeply impressed by the precocity of his mind and his eager desire for information on matters of religion. It has been assumed that the doctrines he learned from these Christian monks turned Mohammed against idolatry. The Nestorians were so opposed to worshiping images of any kind that they seldom displayed even the cross, although it was then a general emblem of Christianity. In later visits to Syria, Mohammed continued his interest in the teachings of the Christian community. When he was about twenty-five years of age, and once more in Basra, he is said to have had an interview with Nestorius, who embraced him as the coming prophet. As the founder of the Nestorian sect died in the Fifth Century, Mohammed must have met a later monk of the same name.

Critical study has caused some doubt as to the source of Mohammed's knowledge or opinions about Christianity. References in the Koran do not seem to emphasize the Nestorian concepts, although the Prophet appears to have had special respect for certain communities of priests and monks, as indicated in the Koran by Sura V:91. It is also believed that, had Mohammed been deeply versed in Nestorianism, he would have specifically referred to it in the Koran, for direct reference was his common practice. Certain it is, however, that as a young man, he was seriously disillusioned with such available information about the general state of Christendom as he was able to acquire. There is much to indicate that he might have accepted Judaism or Christianity as his own religion rather than founding a new sect. The pressures of bickering and controversy of the early Church impelled him to seek the original and pure religion of the prophets and patriarchs, which he felt had fallen into evil times. Moslemism is firmly established in the conviction that there is no God but God. Because Deity is one and alone and there can be no other God besides Him,

Mohammed could not accept the divinity of Jesus or the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He was willing to acknowledge Jesus as a holy prophet whose teachings were true, but not believe the dogma that the Nazarene Master was coincidental and consubstantial with God, the Father. He also clearly stated that he regarded himself as merely a human being, and the entire example of his life proves conclusively that he was not depreciating the spiritual attainments of others in any effort to advance his own reputation. He forbade the deification of his own name or memory, affirming of his life that there was "no God but God."

In various periods of the world's history, God, in his infinite wisdom, caused prophets to rise up and bear witness to the pure revelation of spiritual truth. Of such were the great teachers described in the Old Testament, and likewise Jesus. Mohammed went so far as to say that his own coming was prophesied in the Old Testament, and also that after him, another teacher would appear who was to be "the Desired of All Nations." Christian scholars have liked to affirm that Mohammed had a very slight and superficial knowledge of Christianity, and that his opinions, therefore, were based mainly on hearsay. This may be questioned, however, for it is known that members of his own family had been converted to Christianity, as it then existed in that region. The truth probably is that the Christian communities in Arabia were themselves comparatively uninformed, and that their beliefs were uncertain and conflicting and therefore not suitable to advance a solid knowledge of the faith.

Abu Talib, the esteemed uncle of the Prophet, is authority for the statement that during his entire youth, Mohammed never quarreled with anyone. When he was about twenty years old, he joined a society known as the *Hilful-Fuzul*, the members of which had taken a solemn oath to help the needy and the poor, safeguard the rights of the oppressed, and support the cause of justice.

When he was about twenty-six years of age, Mohammed

was manager of the estate of a wealthy widow named Khadijah. She so admired his ability and his integrity that they were married, although she was fifteen years his senior. Six children were born of this union, but Fatima, the youngest of the daughters, alone survived her father, and she outlived him by only six months. By another alliance, made later in life, Mohammed also had a son named Ibrahim. This child also died in infancy.

After his marriage with Khadijah, Mohammed came under the influence of her cousin, Waraqua ibn Naufal, who was a man of philosophical attainments and esoteric interests. It is said that his insight was great, even though his body was feeble and long study had brought blindness to his eyes. Washington Irving says that he was "originally a Jew, subsequently a Christian, and withal a pretender to astrology."* The word *pretender*, in this case, probably reflects only Washington Irving's skepticism about astrology. In the days of the Prophet, this science was highly reputable, and followers thereof were usually men of mystical attainments and philosophical distinction. Waraqua ibn Naufal is mentioned as the first to translate sections of the Old and New Testaments into Arabic. Seeking for some rational explanation for Mohammed's acquaintance with the *Mishnah*, the *Talmud*, and related works, his wife's cousin looms large as a possibility. The wise Waraqua may well have strongly influenced the mind of Mohammed. It is said that Waraqua was waiting for the advent of the promised prophet, and he supported Mohammed's claim to his ministry.

There are many ways in which a thoughtful man can come under strong religious influence. The Roman governor of Egypt sent to Mohammed a Christian slave girl, who is remembered as Mary the Copt. She became the mother of the Prophet's son Ibrahim, and this in itself should indicate that Mohammed was free of all unreasonable prejudice against the Christian sect. It is interesting to speculate upon

the possibilities, had Ibrahim lived to establish the descent of the House of the Prophet. Coptic Christianity, therefore, came into the home of Mohammed, and its teachings, at least in a simple form most agreeable with his own thinking, were readily available.

It is generally assumed that up to his fortieth year, Mohammed was a devout and sincere follower of the beliefs of ancient Arabia. He seems to have differed from the people around him mainly because of his mystical inclinations and strong imaginative powers. He customarily spent the month of Ramadan on Mount Hira, living in a cave and performing ascetic exercises. This form of retreat included nights devoted to prayer, a period of fasting, and the bestowal of gifts upon the poor. When he returned to Mecca, Mohammed would then walk seven times around the Kaaba before returning to his own house.

It was during the rites of Ramadan that Mohammed began to question the integrity and sufficiency of the prevailing religion. Some say that while on Mount Hira he met an eccentric mystic who induced him to consider more seriously the elements of Jewish and Christian beliefs. As confusion and uncertainty increased within him, Mohammed returned more frequently to Mount Hira. Sacrificing many of the practical concerns of living, he became a recluse, returning home only to secure the necessities of existence. Accounts indicate that he passed through metaphysical experiences similar to those described in the lives of many mystics, including mystical experiences as described by St. John of the Cross in his book *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

It was in the cave on Mount Hira, now known as the Mountain of Light, that a vision or superphysical occurrence took place. Mohammed beheld an angelic figure surrounded by light, holding in its hands a silken shawl or scarf with mysterious characters traced upon it. Holding out the scarf toward Mohammed, the angel said to him, "Read." There is some uncertainty as to the meaning of the answer given

* See *Mahomet and His Successors*.

by Mohammed. Some versions state that he could not read; and others, that he did not wish to read. In the end, the angel read to him the verses written upon the scarf. On this same occasion, the angel, said to be Gabriel, declared Mohammed to be the true prophet of the living God.

After the mystical experiences, Mohammed hastened home and described the occurrence to his wife Khadijah. He was confused and alarmed lest some evil spirit of the old pagan faith was attempting to deceive him.

The deep change that came about in Mohammed's personality was interpreted in various ways by his friends, rivals, and later, by the orthodox members of the prevailing religion. A few regarded him as inspired; some as a *kahin*, or soothsayer; many believed him to suffer from hallucinations; and at least a few forthrightly considered him insane or under the supernatural influence of Satan and his minions. According to Khadijah, he shared most of the negative opinions of himself, and frequently asked if he was possessed by *jinn*, or malicious sprites. Khadijah was a constant source of courage and inspiration. She reminded her husband that he had always been a good and honorable man, that his motives were honest and devout, and there was no reason to assume that the powers of evil would have any authority over his conduct. Khadijah seems to have sensed his destiny, for it is recorded that she said to him, "Thou wilt be the Prophet of thy nation."

To give him further faith and assurance, Khadijah took Mohammed to her cousin Waraqua, whose wisdom was widely respected. Waraqua verified that Mohammed had been given the great *nomos*, the law which is like the *nomos* of Moses. The term *nomos* is from the Greek, and seems to signify a spirit or a being who knows the most secret thoughts of man. Also spelled *namus*, it is the law, a communicator of secret messages, an institute or a power, a transcendent means by which things are accomplished according to the Divine Will. It has been associated with the word *Torah*, as the revealed law of the Jews.

Waraqqa declared that the vision which had come to Mohammed indicated that he was destined for a great mission among his people, and that he, Waraqua, believed fully in him, and desired to assist him but regretted that he would not be alive when the day of destiny came. Khadijah also went to a monk known as Addas, who confirmed the words of Waraqua, and this support of those near to him and wise in such mysteries was of the greatest consolation to Mohammed. Khadijah, upon her let the grace of Allah rest, was the first of his house to embrace the doctrine and is referred to as the first Moslem woman and the mother of the believers.

It is recorded that Mohammed was seven years in preparation for his ministry. His long vigils had not only impaired his health, but had brought about fainting spells, which the Moslem mystics considered to be ecstatic trances. Similar occurrences are also reported of Dante and St. Francis of Assisi. Most of the Suras, or sections, of the Koran were written while the Prophet was in this trance-like condition. These attacks often came without warning. In some cases Mohammed would fall unconscious, and at other times he would sit wrapped in blankets with cold sweat pouring from his face and body, even on the hottest days. While in this strange condition, he would speak, and his words were either written down, or else memorized by his small circle of devoted friends. It was in this way that a considerable part of the Koran was written. Later in life, Mohammed said to Abu Bakr that every white hair in his beard was a Sura of the Koran.

The Glorious Koran

The word *Koran*, (Arabic *Qur'an*), literally means *recitation*, and indicates the method by which the Suras, or sections, of the book were revealed to the Prophet. *Islam* is translated *submission*, and the religion, therefore, pro-

their place. After the death of the Prophet, it appeared that some part of his instruction had not been committed to writing. The secretary of the Prophet, Zayd ibn Thabit, was entrusted with the sacred task of assembling all the sections and verses into one volume. For a time, apparently, only this one copy of the Koran existed. Later, this same Zayd was appointed to revise his previous compilation. This became the standard text, and most of the earlier manuscripts were destroyed. Thus there can be some doubt on particular aspects of the work, but as these revisions are early, they would not have been accepted had they deviated too widely from the popular tradition.

The Koran has been divided into four general institutes. The broad foundations of faith are associated with the earliest period of the revelation. Under the second heading are listed the procedures and forms of worship; under the third, the ethics or code of conduct; and under the fourth, the moral burden of the teaching, presented through legends, myths, fables, parables, and even historical incidents. The career of Mohammed, as revealed through the writings, is also divisible into three epochs. The first epoch reveals Mohammed as unfolding his own belief, and setting in motion the spiritual concept of his religion. In the second epoch, the faith takes on a more aggressive form and moves against the idolatrous systems and various other sects within the Moslem sphere of influence. In the third epoch Mohammed emerges as a ruler over his people, the Prince of the faithful, with both spiritual and temporal powers. His attitude becomes paternal, and the believers are regarded as his children. As necessary, he makes new laws, and revises those which had previously been given. Some have said that the Koran is a sacred commonplace book, combining doctrine and diary. Mohammed does not seem to object to revealing the transitions in his own nature which are inevitable to the development of his message.*

* For additional material, see HORIZON, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Winter 1953), "The Story of the Koran" by Manly P. Hall.

The Hegira

The household of the Prophet supplied the first converts to his faith, and the circle rapidly increased to include a solid core of persons well known for their good moral character and respectability. After about four years of teaching privately to a group which had grown to exceed forty members, the Prophet was commanded by revelation to promulgate Islam publicly. Almost immediately his growing prestige caused fear and anxiety to the people of Mecca who profited greatly from the religion then prevailing in the city. They therefore decided to waive the ancient tradition that blood should not be spilled within the holy city and end the threat of Islam by assassinating the Prophet.

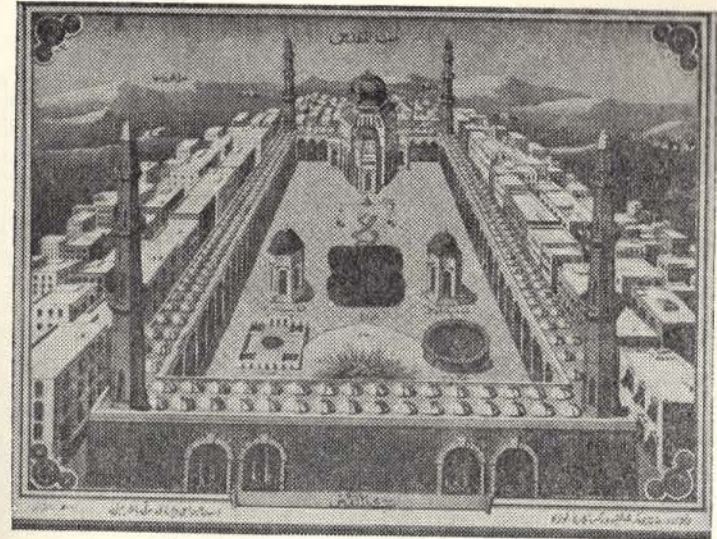
Mohammed, however, was given a revelation in the form of a warning, and God commanded him to take flight from Mecca or his life would be lost. This presented a rather difficult problem. The people of Mecca had so trusted the honesty of the Prophet that they had deposited their valuables in his house for protection. It was necessary to make arrangements to deliver all these belongings to their owners, and at the same time not reveal the intention of departing from the city. The Meccans surrounded the house of the Prophet, but the Angel of the Lord came in the night, and they fell asleep. In obedience to the Divine command, Mohammed came out of the house and, turning his eyes to the Kaaba, cried out, "O Mecca, thou hast been to me the dearest spot in all the world, but thy sons would not let me live."

Accompanied by Abu Bakr, the Prophet took refuge in the cave of Thawr, about three miles from Mecca. When the band of assassins discovered that Mohammed had escaped, they sent out parties to intercept his journey. One of these groups actually found the footsteps leading to the mouth of the cave. Then occurred the only miraculous circumstances said to be recorded in authentic Mussulman

history. Emile Dermenghem gives a gracious description of the wonderful occurrences. "It was then that the miracle happened — a harmony of the soul of man and the outer world. In the arid crack of the rock, a mountain shrub had sprouted. It seemed suddenly to grow; its branches gripped the rocks; its graceful tendrils stood up in the air until almost all of the cave entrance was covered. In its shadow, a dove lay cooing, and a spider, performing its daily miracle, spread the intricate, geometrical pattern of its web. Between the light of the outside and the cool darkness of the cave extended the delicate threads at the end of which the spider balanced himself, climbed up, descended, and finally came to rest in the middle, lying in wait for his victim. And the white dove — the bird of love — laid her eggs in the sand. The male fluttered about her there at the entrance of the cave, their home. What joy on the earth, what love and peace in this tiny corner of the world! . . . The Qoraishites looked into the dark hole. They saw the dove but they did not want to crush her eggs. They saw the bush and the spider's web, and shook their heads, convinced that no one had entered the cave lately." *

On the fourth day, the Prophet and his party continued on his way to Medina, which they reached after a weary journey. In this city, Mohammed and Abu Bakr were given a warm reception, for the people were proud that the Prophet had decided to honor their community. The flight of Mohammed to Medina is called the *Hegira*, which literally means the *migration*. When capitalized, the word stands for the beginning of the Moslem era. It also distinguishes the circumstance of the departure of Mohammed from Mecca and, by extension, is applicable to the act of any Moslem leaving a country of another faith. Mystically, it is the moral act of fleeing from sin through dedication to the spiritual life. Various dates are given, differing, however, but slightly. It is said that Mohammed reached Medina on June 28,

* Dermenghem, *op. cit.*



The Mosque at Medina where Mohammed began his ministry and where he died. From an Indian print.

A.D. 622 (A.H. 1). In the Moslem world, all dates are given in terms of the Hegira, which is generally abbreviated as A.H. in the same way that the Christian Era is indicated by the letters A.D. After the Hegira, the power of Mohammed rapidly increased, and in the eighth year after the Hegira, he began his march on Mecca at the head of ten thousand saints.

The Night Journey

The celebrated Night Journey to Heaven is called the *Miraj*, which literally means an *ascent*. It is said to have occurred in the twelfth year of the Prophet's mission, about a year before the establishment of the Moslem era. Although the Koran contains no account of this event, it is supported



Mohammed's Night Journey to Heaven. 15th Century example in the early writing of a Tartaric tribe. This remarkable manuscript in the Bibliothèque Royale at Paris, includes the lives of the seventy-two Imams, or miracle-working saints. In the illustration, Mohammed is riding upon Al Borak, and accompanied by the Angel Gabriel. From *Universal Palaography* by M. J. B. Silvestre.

by the seventeenth Sura, which may be freely translated: "Praise to Him who carried His servant by night from the temple of Mecca to the temple of Jerusalem."*

On the occasion of the vision, Ayesha, who was then married to the Prophet, is quoted as authority that Mohammed's physical body did not disappear, but that God carried him away by night in the spirit. Most pious Moslems have held the validity of the vision, at least as a mystical experience, and as such, it cannot be assailed without directly attacking the integrity of Mohammed. This would appear unreasonable in view of his lifelong reputation for absolute honesty and sincerity. Washington Irving sets forth the essential features of the Night Journey, although he admits that he has not presented the story in its full amplitude.

On a certain night, described as the darkest and the most silent that the world had ever known, Mohammed was roused from his sleep by the angel Gabriel, who brought to the Prophet a strange and wonderful creature different from any which existed in the natural world. This creature had a human face, the body of a horse, the wings of an eagle, and eyes as radiant as the stars. It was female, and because of its dazzling splendor and incredible speed, it was called *Al Borak*, or *The Lightning*. Mounted on Al Borak, the Prophet was carried over Mount Sinai, upon which God spoke to Moses, and also Bethlehem, where Jesus, the son of Mary, was born. Accompanied by Gabriel, they arrived finally at the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. After dismounting from his flying steed, Mohammed entered the temple, and found there Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and many more of the prophets. According to a work by E. Dinet and Sliman ben Ibrahim,† Mohammed was met, on his arrival at Jerusalem, by a man holding forth a cup of wine and a cup of milk. Mohammed chose milk and Gabriel approved, saying that had he chosen wine, his people would have preferred error to truth.

* See *Sufism*, by A. J. Arberry.

† See *The Life of Mohammed*.

Mohammed joined in prayer with Jesus and the ancient prophets for a considerable time. At the end of their sacred exercises, the sky seemed to open and a ladder of light was let down from heaven until the lower end of it rested on the stone, which is called the Rock Moriah. Assisted by the angel Gabriel, Mohammed ascended the ladder with strange ease and rapidity. In this vision, the celestial regions were divided into seven zones, which correspond with the orbits of the seven planets in the system of astronomy developed by Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria. When the prophet arrived at the first heaven, Gabriel knocked at the gate. A voice from within then demanded, "Who is there?" And the angel replied that it was Gabriel, and that with him was Mohammed. The Guardian of the Gate then asked if the Prophet had already received his mission, and when this was answered in the affirmative, he was made welcome and the gate was opened to receive him. The first heaven was of silver, and the stars were suspended from the vault by chains of gold. In each star an angel was placed who acted as sentinel. As Mohammed entered, his forefather Adam appeared as an aged man. The Prophet paid homage to the first mortal, and Adam embraced his descendant. This region was also filled with many kinds of animals. Gabriel explained that these animals were really angels who, having taken on the forms of countless creatures, interceded with God for all the species of animals upon earth.

Gabriel and Mohammed then ascended to the second heaven, where they were received by Noah, the Patriarch of the Deluge, who embraced the Prophet with the greatest of kindness. In each case, the ritual of knocking at the gate and of being questioned was repeated. In the third heaven, was seated an Angel of immeasurable height, and Gabriel explained that this was Asrael, the Angel of Death. In the fourth heaven, they found the Angel of Tears, who wept over the sins of the children of men. The fifth heaven was of the finest gold, and here Mohammed was met and embraced by Aaron, and here also dwelt the Avenging Angel,



Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem. It stands on the site of Herod's Temple.

who presided over the element of fire. The sixth heaven was composed of an immense transparent stone resembling a carbuncle. Here was a great Angel who was guardian of heaven and earth, and here also was stationed the Prophet Moses. Ascending still higher, Mohammed came to the seventh heaven, where he was received by the Patriarch Abraham. This wonderful place was formed of the Divine Light, and was of such transcendent glory that the tongue of man cannot describe it. Here there was a sacred house resembling the Kaaba at Mecca, which was suspended directly above the physical building. The order of the Patriarchs in this vision is changed in different accounts, and this will be considered in the analysis of the meaning of the Night Journey.

From the seventh heaven, the Prophet continued his strange journey, passing through a region of light and

another of utter darkness. From this gloom he emerged to find himself in the presence of God, but the face of Allah was covered with twenty thousand veils. From the veils Deity put forth his hands, placing one upon the breast, and the other upon the shoulder of Mohammed. On this occasion many doctrines and prayers were communicated to the Prophet. The nature of the instruction is not recorded, but is said to have been preserved as part of the secret tradition in Islam. Mohammed then descended again by the golden ladder to the temple at Jerusalem, where he found Al Borak fastened as he had left her, and was then carried back to the place whence he had come.*

It will be noted that in his summary of the Night Journey, Washington Irving, for some reason, fails to name the Prophets who received Mohammed at certain of the gates. Several lists are available. According to one, for example, Mohammed met the ancient wise men in the following order: Adam, Noah, Aaron, Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon, Idris (Enoch), Yahya (John the Baptist), and Jesus. In this arrangement, it is implied that the total number of Prophets exceeded the number of the heavens; therefore, two or more must have occupied one sphere. Among other alternative lists found in the early commentaries, the seven gates of the seven heavens were attended by the holy ones in the following order: Adam, John and Jesus, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham. In the significant arrangement, which places Jesus at the gate of the seventh heaven, each of the older patriarchs asks Mohammed to intercede for him before the throne of God; but, reaching the sphere of Jesus, the situation is reversed, and Mohammed asks the Nazarene to intercede for him.

According to Godfrey Higgins, whose learning in comparative religion was prodigious, Mohammed, by asking Jesus to intercede for him at the seventh gate, placed Jesus Christ

* Digested from Washington Irving's *Mahomet and His Successors*, unless otherwise noted.

above himself, and indirectly but clearly declared himself a Christian. Higgins writes: "This is in perfect accordance with the Mohammedan doctrine — that through the excessive depravity of man, the mission of Jesus — of love — of peace — of benevolence — having failed, a strong one — that of the sword — must follow."* Due to the extraordinary nature of the vision, it was only reasonable that the details should be altered by various sects in different times, so as to conform with prevailing attitudes or serve for the introduction of esoteric and symbolical contemplation.

The Sufi Bengalee, in summarizing the importance of the Night Journey to the pious Moslem, states: "This vision was of enormous spiritual significance. The Ascension to Heaven meant that the Prophet's cause was destined to triumph. Secondly, that he would make the highest spiritual progress and would leave all behind in his nearness to God. The seven heavens meant that the path of spiritual journey was to be traversed gradually, and *step by step*."† This Sufi, in harmony with the natural inclinations of this highly metaphysical sect, also affirms that the ascension to heaven was definitely a mystical experience, or, as he calls it, a mental vision, and he quotes several Moslem authorities to support this conviction.

From Irving's account, together with certain additional material, it can be strongly suspected that the Night Journey involves the ritualism of an esoteric or mystical society. The description of the ornamentations of the seven spheres or levels suggests the decorations of a Lodge or sanctuary of initiatory rites. For example, in the first heaven, the stars are suspended from the sky by golden chains. This would scarcely be so specifically noted in a simple vision of the universal mystery, but would be necessary in a physical sanctuary where ritualism was performed. The Night Journey itself is highly reminiscent of the Apocalyptic vision

* *Anacalypsis*.

† *The Life of Muhammad*.

of St. John, the account of the ascent through the seven spheres described by Hermes in the *Divine Pymander*, and the descent of Ishtar through the seven gates in the Babylonian legend of Tammuz. There is also a similar description of the wonders accompanying the delivery of the tablets of the Law to Moses on the flaming peak of Sinai. A cloud appeared which, opening like a mouth or door, permitted Moses to walk out upon the firmament, where he beheld the angels, came into the presence of God, was permitted to behold the seven heavens and the celestial tabernacle which was later to hover in the sky above the Everlasting House of Solomon the King.

It can only be assumed that a common tradition underlies all these accounts, and this tradition provides the basic structure upon which the initiatory pageantries and dramas were constructed. Certainly, the mysteries of Mithras, with their journey through the seven worlds, the rites of Samothrace, and the mortuary rituals of the Egyptians, which included the interrogation of the soul by the guardians of the gates of the underworld, fall in this archetypal concept. As Anubis conducted the souls of Egypt's dead, and Virgil led Dante through the inferno, there is always a companion or a guide to speak for the candidate until he has received the secret words of the degrees. In the case of Mohammed, Gabriel occupies this place. The Night Journey, therefore, is a valid landmark of the Adept Tradition, revealing beyond question that those fashioning the account, whether it was Mohammed himself or his early disciples, were following an established concept and bestowing it as a key to their teachings upon those of the faithful who came after them.

The Rise of Islam

The eighth year after his flight into Medina, Mohammed reentered Mecca after what was intended to be a bloodless victory over his foes. Because certain of his followers dis-

obeyed him, there were thirteen casualties. The march on Mecca began on the tenth day of the month of Ramadan, and when the Prophet entered the city, he carried a standard made of the black veil of his wife. Having circled the ancient Kaaba seven times, he ordered the images worshiped there, probably the *Lat* and *Uzza*, to be cast down. Mohammed then rededicated the temple, establishing the precedent for the annual pilgrimage to the Holy City.

Two years later, in the tenth year of the Hegira, Mohammed led what has been called the Valedictory Pilgrimage. For the last time, he rode at the head of the faithful upon his great black camel. The premonition of death was strong upon him, and it was his most devout desire that this pilgrimage should be the perfect model for the thousands that would follow in the course of centuries. During this last visit to the sacred city of his faith, the Prophet is said to have spoken frequently from the pulpit in the Kaaba, and in the open air from the back of his great camel. There is a legend, unsubstantiated, but certainly held in regard by the faithful, that during one of his sermons, the heavens opened and the voice of God was heard saying, "This day I have perfected your religion, and accomplished in you my grace." When these words were uttered, the assembled throng knelt in admiration and Mohammed's camel fell upon its knees and lowered its head to the earth.

The Prophet suffered much physical pain in the closing years of his life as the result of an effort made to poison him at Kheibar in the seventh year after the Hegira. Although he was miraculously prevented from eating the food, he had tasted of it, and the poison continued the slow work for which it was intended. Mohammed passed at Medina in the eleventh year of the Hegira (632 A.D.). His last words were remembered by Ayesha, his young wife of twenty years. Shortly before his passing, the Prophet prayed in a whisper: "Lord grant me pardon; and join me to the companionship on high!" Then, at brief intervals, he murmured, "Eternity

in Paradise!" "Pardon!" "Yes; the blessed companionship on high!" Then, with a soft sigh, he expired.

Mohammed was buried beneath the floor of the room in which he died. This chamber is now called the Hujrah, and was originally the private apartment of Ayesha. The present state of the grave is described thus: "Above the Hujrah is the green dome, surmounted by a large gilt crescent, springing from a series of globes. Within the building are the tombs of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar, with a space reserved for the grave of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Muslims say will again visit the earth, and die and be buried at al-Madinah. The grave of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, is supposed to be in a separate part of the building, although some say she was buried at Baqi'. The Prophet's body is said to be stretched full length on the right side, with the right palm supporting the right cheek, the face fronting Mekkah. Close behind him is placed Abu Bakr, whose face fronts Muhammad's shoulder, and then 'Umar, who occupies the same position with respect to his predecessor. Amongst Christian historians, there was a popular story to the effect that Muhammadans believed the coffin of their Prophet to be suspended in the air, which has no foundation whatever in Muslim literature, and Niebuhr thinks that the story must have arisen from the rude pictures sold to strangers." *

After the passing of the Prophet, the succession of Islam was vested in the Caliphate. The nature of this institution has been subject to many conflicting accounts, and some Moslem sects hold it in slight esteem. Generally, however, it is regarded as according to the will of the Prophet. In the Sunni writings, which represent the words of the Companions of the House of the Prophet, a Caliph must be a man who has attained adulthood, a sane person, a free man, a learned divine, a powerful ruler, a just governor, and belonging to the tribe from which the Prophet himself descended. Some hold that a Caliph must be descended from the family

* *A Dictionary of Islam.*

of the Prophet. Several elements contribute to the suitability of a candidate making claim for the Caliphate. First of all, he must be the *de facto* holder of the title for which no better claimant has appeared. He must be in a political or military position to support his claim. He must be elected through the sanction of a legal body of elders. Second, he must, if possible, receive the right of succession from a previous holder whose position was unquestioned. Third, he should be the guardian of the two shrines, Mecca and Jerusalem, and he must have the possession of the sacred relics: the cloak of the Prophet, the hairs from the Prophet's beard, and the sword of the Caliph 'Umar.*

As the whole subject of the Caliphate is exceedingly complicated, it may be as well to summarize it by a direct quotation from a Moslem writer. "The succession of Muslim sovereigns varied. Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet, was chosen by the most influential party in the Muslim community: Omar ('Umar) was designated by Abu Bakr; Othman, by electors whom Omar had named; the election of Ali led to civil war; with Muawiya the dynastic rule was established, first in the family of the Umayyads. Even in the dynasties, the order of succession was not always constant. Sometimes the Caliph chose one of his sons as his heir-apparent; for example, Haroum-ur Rashid designated three of his sons with entail. The first of the three, Al-Amin, wished to oust the second, Al-Mamun; but the latter revolted and Al-Amin was killed. Among the Ottoman Sultans it was rather the brother who succeeded." †

The functions of a Caliph are also vaguely defined. Theoretically, this dignity is the vice-regent or deputy of the Prophet. In the Koran, the word *Caliph* is used in reference to Adam, who was regarded as the vice-regent of the Most High. David is also mentioned as a Caliph. In practical terms, however, the Caliph can function only within certain

* For further details, see *The Future of Islam* by Wilfred Scawen Blunt.

† *Islam in the World*, by Zaki Ali.

arbitrary boundaries unless he is strong enough and exercises sufficient personal glamor to attain autocracy by the consent of the governed. In principle, all legislation is based upon the will of God. The laws of Deity are revealed through the Koran. Next in authority are the traditions derived from the words of the Companions of the Prophet and certain immediate commentaries thereon. This body of instruction is known as the *Sunni*. Finally, authority is vested in the consensus. The Caliph can be duly invested only with legislative prerogatives by the express will of the entire Moslem community or nation. Finally, therefore, the proofs of the Caliphate are, at least theoretically, nomination by the preceding Caliph and the voluntary acceptance by a pronouncement of the people.

From the early Caliphs, and some outstanding leaders of later times, the principal sects of the Moslems derived their names and authorities. One by one, the various dynasties had their days. Some enjoyed comparatively slight power and influence; others endured for a long time. Around each, legends have sprung up, and these, weaving together through the centuries, form the elaborate pattern of Moslem philosophy, theology, and history. Also at this time, the term *Imam* must be introduced. By most conservative interpretations, the word *Imam* is regarded as synonymous with *Caliph*. The moment such a leader transgresses the laws of the Koran, or fails in the traditional virtues and benevolences of his office, it is the duty of the faithful to reject him or replace him, and to deny that he is their true leader.

According to the *Sunni*, those who cling to the tradition acknowledging the first four Caliphs, the Caliph is the true Imam. But the more mystical sect of the Shi'ahs applies the term *Imam* to the seven or twelve leaders of their own sect, and among them an elaborate metaphysical doctrine has developed. The Imams of this sect descend from Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, through the eldest son of Ali and Fatima. Their second son, Al-Husain was the third Imam, and his son was the fourth. The twelfth and last Imam, who

is yet to come, will be named Mohammed. It is believed that he has been alive for centuries, but lives in secrecy. When the proper day comes, he will appear among the faithful as the Mahdi, the comforter of the last day, whose advent was predicted by the Prophet.

Bernard H. Springett gives a ray of insight into the Imam concept. "The Persian kings of the Sufee dynasty styled themselves 'slaves of the Lord of the Country,' that is, of the invisible Imaams; they always kept two horses saddled and bridled in the royal stables at Isfahan, one for the twelfth Imam, whenever he should appear, the other for Jesus Christ, by whom they believed he would be accompanied." *

Religious Philosophy in Islam

This is not a general study of Moslemism, but a section of an encyclopedic survey dealing with the descent of the Adept Tradition among the various religions of the world. It cannot be said that all of the members of these faiths are in common agreement upon the esoteric aspects of their own beliefs. Many Christians reject Christian mysticism, although it has been taught and accepted by the most illustrious and venerated leaders of the faith. Many orthodox Jews have been taught to regard the Cabala as dangerous and unlawful, yet it cannot be denied that speculations based upon its elaborate symbolism have dominated the interests of many Rabbis and scholars. It would not be appropriate for a non-Moslem, therefore, to speak for the faith of these people, or to dogmatize upon its doctrines. It is intended in this work to point out the parallels between certain aspects of Near Eastern metaphysics and the universal belief in the existence of sanctified persons possessing extraordinary insight into the mysteries of God.

* *Secret sects of Syria and the Lebanon.*

It is extremely difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of the more subtle aspects of Moslem religion and philosophy from the attitudes and opinions of non-Moslem authors. The general attitude of the European writers toward the faith of Islam has been, for the most part, extremely critical. No other living religion has been so openly and aggressively attacked. As this policy has long endured, and is present on many levels of thought, it must be suspected that most available accounts are to some degree prejudiced, even though the writers themselves declare their impartiality or even sympathy.

The impact of Islam on the Christian world was unfortunately timed. It occurred during the Dark Ages, when Europe was under the heavy clouds of intolerance and illiteracy. The Christian world stood aghast at the audacity of Mohammed, when he claimed that he had been commissioned by God to succeed the earlier teachers, and further unfold the mysteries of the true faith. Here, then, was a vast and growing heresy which even the Crusades could not stamp out, and which for centuries threatened to overwhelm Europe. Devout medieval theologians prayed to heaven for deliverance from the plague, the Turk, and the comet.

Today the faith of Islam is firmly established in most parts of the world. After analyzing the distribution of Moslems according to continents and nations, Zaki Ali concludes: ". . . it may be safely assumed that there about 400 million Muslims in the world." * Under conditions as they now exist, there is every inducement for understanding and appreciation between the principal faiths of mankind, and it is on the level of mysticism, with its deep and generous understanding of values, that this union can most naturally and easily be accomplished.

There is no doubt that Mohammed had learned of the

* *Islam in the World.*

lamentable procedures which in his day were disfiguring the rise of the Christian church. There gradually integrated within his own consciousness the concept of a natural religion, a faith of extreme simplicity in which there was slight possibility of elaborate controversies or feuds or schismatic quarrels. He did not believe that men should be divided by the transcendental elements of creeds. About that which cannot be seen or known with certainty, little satisfaction can be gained by argument. The Prophet was an Arab among Arabs. He knew their ways, and he recognized their needs. To him, it was far better that the conduct of the individual should be wisely and lovingly directed along familiar paths rather than that he be involved in disputes which might well cause him to live destructively and intemperately in the name of religion.

The outcome of the Prophet's personal spiritual experience was a faith for the men of the desert. These were the men who kept the sheep and journeyed along the caravan routes. They should be honorable in their dealings, charitable in their inclinations, and they should be able to pray side by side, seeking the strength of heaven in time of sorrow or danger. What simpler theology could be devised than the basic substance of Islam? There is no God but God; worship him with a full heart. There is one law; keep it with contrition of spirit. There is one humanity; cooperate in all things for the common good. Mohammed sincerely believed that if these essentials were honestly cultivated, there would be no more theological despotism. Unfortunately, he was not able to so completely instill his teachings into the hearts of his own people that they could live the fullness of his message. This should not be regarded as his fault, however, but rather the common weakness of all flesh.

The early relationships between the rising Moslem world and the followers of the Jewish and Christian faiths were not essentially difficult or unhappy. Mohammed designated the Jews and Christians as the people of the Book, referring to the Bible. In his time, of course, the Koran had not been

integrated. The Moslem was therefore dependent upon the words of a living teacher for his spiritual instruction. Gradually, a contrast was established and the Moslems considered themselves the people of the family, or the household, with Mohammed as their common father. The Prophet forbade the persecution of any man for his faith, so long as he lived it with sincerity of spirit, but he did regard it as virtuous and necessary that the Moslem should defend his own belief against oppression and tyranny. If he were attacked, he should use every possible means to achieve victory and to discomfit his adversary. If, however, his adversary surrendered, or asked for peace, there should be no spirit of vengeance. Again, unfortunately, human nature was stronger than revelation.

For most of the differences which seem inevitably to arise in the evolution of religions, Mohammed had a simple remedy. "If God had pleased, he had surely made you one people; but he has thought fit to try you in that which he has given you. Therefore, strive to excel each other in good works: unto God shall ye all return, and then he will declare unto you that concerning which ye have disagreed."*

The conflict between early Moslem and Christian teachings may be said to have strengthened both faiths, but it also increased the barriers between them. In the world of Islam, however, there was little indication of a broad tendency toward religious persecution. The early Moslem was permitted to marry Christians and to share food with them, and these acts were regarded as certain evidence of basic tolerance. Both Christians and Jews were elevated to high office, and were respected for their attainments in medicine, art, literature, law, and science. Under the Caliphs there was a brilliant restoration of learning, centering in Baghdad, Cairo, and other important Moslem cities. Other elements also began to emerge from the original focus of Islamic ideology. Conflict impelled the Moslem to strengthen his own

* Koran, Sura V: 53.

doctrinal position, seek to define orthodoxy, and prevent, so far as was possible, the breaking away of schismatic sects.

Obviously, the Koran, though a work of great spiritual insight and gracious literary style, could not meet all the requirements of the proud civilization that was rising in Asia Minor and North Africa. The scholar and the natural mystic also had requirements peculiar to their natures, and it was inevitable that Islam, like all other religions, should divide into an esoteric and exoteric part, the former drifting toward metaphysical speculation, and the latter retaining a conservative and orthodox allegiance to the letter of the revealed law.

Because Islamism is a strict monotheistic faith, it emphasizes the need for saints or intermediaries between God and man. This is the same situation that led to the Buddhist veneration for Arhats or illumined teachers. Godfrey Higgins refers to a secret doctrine taught by Pythagoras, Jesus, and Mohammed. Always and everywhere, such a doctrine is associated with the concepts of a hierarchy of initiate-teachers, advanced beyond the state of ordinary mortals. These are not divine beings in any sense of the word, or Islam would not and could not have accepted them. Rather, they are sanctified mortals, who have attained a divine insight through faithful observance of the esoteric disciplines of their orders, and who have become vigilant guardians over the spiritual destinies of uninitiated mortals.

In reply to the question as to whether the followers of Mohammed actually accepted an Adept Hierarchy, John P. Brown, an outstanding authority on Moslem secret societies, writes: "The Dervish Order put full faith in all the grades of spiritually superior men and angelic beings. The former composed what are ordinarily termed saints, or friends of Allah. These, in the Koran are designated as 'the friends of God who fear nothing; they are not subject to any affliction, because they entertain the true faith; they have lived consistently with it, and in exact obedience with God, from

whom they receive a reward in this life and in the other.' 'They are the title of the book of the law of God; the demonstration of all the truths and mysteries of faith; their external appearance leads us to an observance of the laws of God, and their interior incites us to abandon and detach ourselves from all the pleasures of this world.' 'They commenced their career before the beginning of time, and labor only for eternity.' 'During their lives they never left the portals of the sacred palace of the Divinity, and finally enter therein.' 'They discover and behold the spiritual secrets which God reveals to them, and maintain therein a religious silence.'"*

According to certain mystical calculations, the true saints of the Moslem world are called The Three, The Five, The Seven, and The Forty. These are the "unseen men" who journey to all parts of the world according to the Will of God and are given authority over the affairs of mankind, both Moslem and non-Moslem. Sometimes these saints are collectively referred to as The Owners, or Masters of Destiny. The chief among them is known as the Center, and each morning, the saints assemble at Mecca, presumably by some mystical projection of their higher natures, and report all they have learned and done to the Center. On these occasions, there is a religious rite of prayer and dedication, and they then return to their proper labors. The various mystical orders are the gates of the eternal city of Wisdom which, according to the sayings attributed to the Prophet, is that vast community of the sages where the blessed dwell in their conditions of attainment.

Nearly always, extraordinary achievements in arts and sciences bear witness to the rise of metaphysical speculation. This is especially true when the life of a people is bound intimately to its revealed religion, which is the dynamics behind all progress and achievement. *The Library of Original Sources* thus summarizes the early accomplishments of

* *The Dervishes.*

the Moslems: "The results of Mohammedism have been greatly underestimated. In the century after Mohammed's death, it wrested Asia Minor, Africa and Spain from Christianity, more than half of the civilized world, and established a civilization, the highest in the world during the dark ages. It brought the Arabian race to their highest development, raised the position of woman in the East, though it retained polygamy, was intensely monotheistic, and until the Turks gained control, for the most part encouraged progress."*

In his work, *Islam in the World*, Dr. Zaki Ali summarizes the scientific, ethical, and educational achievements of Islamic civilization, with special reference to the state of Spain under Moslem rule. He points out that in the 10th century, the population of the city of Cordova was computed at about one million. At this time, under the Moors, Cordova had fifty hospitals, nine hundred public baths, eight hundred schools, six hundred mosques, and a library of six hundred thousand volumes, in addition to seventy private libraries. The same author gives a description of the establishment of infirmaries for the blind and for lepers at Damascus. The great ruler, Haroum-al Rashid established a tradition of his own by attaching a college and hospital to every mosque. He opened an asylum for the insane, and it is universally admitted that those mentally ill were treated with much more humanity and far greater wisdom in Islamic hospitals than in European hospitals of a much later date. In the 10th century, many hospitals appeared in the city of Baghdad, each under the direction of a renowned and skillful physician. Inspectors were appointed to make certain that there was no abuse or mismanagement in these institutions. In the 12th century, a Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, passing through Baghdad, found sixty hospitals, all adequately supported from the king's stores. Every patient asking for assistance was given the best of food and care until the cure was completed.

* Vol. IV, Section: "The Era of the Arabs."

Speaking of Haroum-Al Rashid, W. Wilson Cash writes: "Owing to the conquest of Jerusalem by the Arabs, Haroum Al-Rashid had in possession the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. These he dispatched to Charlemagne, the representative of Christianity in the West, an act that was meant to seal a new friendship between East and West, Islam and Christianity." * There can be no doubt that the early leaders of Islam sought to advance the securities of their own people and to bridge the religious interval between their faith and the religions of surrounding peoples. Everything depended upon the genius of inspired leadership. Under good men, virtue triumphed, but with the passing of time, power and luxury undermined the simple austerity of Mohammed's personal example. This changing of times, combined with the increasing resentment of Western peoples, brought about a tragedy of misunderstanding which was climaxed in one of the most disgraceful episodes in recorded history — the cycle of the Crusades.

From the time of the conquests of Genghis Khan (1162-1227), splendid empires flourished beyond the Euphrates. Over these incredible conglomerates ruled magnificent tyrants, some benevolent and others cruel and ignorant. Many were richly endowed with abilities and capacities, and nearly all of them were better educated and more thoughtful than their Western contemporaries. While the kings of Europe still made their marks on official documents or had their own edicts written for them and read back to them by hired scribes, the princes of Asia were endowing libraries, studying the stars, publishing editions of Plato and Euclid, and encouraging art and literature. Most of these Eastern empire-builders were devout Moslems, and while they did not allow their belief to interfere with their territorial ambitions, they had the wisdom and the wit to govern their peoples by means of surprisingly lofty ethical codes.

* *The Moslem World in Revolution.*

Timur Shah

The mingling of mystical religious ideas with powerful political programs is clearly revealed in the case of Timur Shah (Timur I Leng). This ruler, better known as Tamerlane, the Shaker of the Earth, was born in 1336 (?) at Kesh in Transoiana, a region now included in the U.S.S.R. Republic of Uzbek. Through his mother, he was the great-grandson of Genghis Khan, and, like his illustrious ancestor, was originally a petty tribal chieftain in the neighborhood of Samarkand. His career developed around the concept that there was only one God in heaven, so there should be only one ruler on earth, and in 1369, at Samarkand, he was proclaimed sovereign over a conglomeration of peoples. Convinced that he was to be a master of the world, he followed the traditional policy of conquest, and most of his life was devoted to military campaigning. Like many Asiatic princes, however, he combined the attributes of a despot with those of a scholar. Ruthless in warfare, he was devoted to art, music, and literature, and having become master of a region, governed it with tolerance and wisdom.

It is known that Timur was a profound student of the Koran as early as his twentieth year. He was acquainted with the numerous commentaries upon the basic writings of Islam which had been prepared by mystical sects, and he was much given to metaphysical speculations. According to Eastern records, Timur left several manuscripts, of which the most important are the *Memoires* and *Institutes*. Timur died at Ortar in 1405. His body was embalmed with rose water and musk, enclosed within an ebony casket, and returned to Samarkand for burial. By the time of his death, his empire extended from the Great Wall of China to the frontier of Asia Minor, and from the Sea of Aral to the Ganges and the Persian Gulf. He was contemplating a campaign against China at the time of his demise. In the



Illumination representing Timur Shah receiving the homage of a conquered king. Probably 19th Century.

creation of his vast domain, according to one writer,* he extinguished twenty-seven separate states and nine dynasties.

The books written by Timur were discovered after a diligent search, and presented to the Mogul emperor, Shah Jahan, in 1637. Critical Western scholars are inclined to some doubts and reservations about the authenticity of the writings attributed to Timur, but they have been generally accepted by Eastern historians. A translation of the *Institutes*, etc., of Timur was made by Joseph White, D.D., and published at Oxford in 1783. The English version is unusually sympathetic, considering its source, and we must recognize Dr. White as an honorable and careful scholar. Unfortunately, this translation is scarce, and it has not received the consideration and approbation which the text deserves.

From the *Institutes* it would appear that Timur leaned heavily for advice and judgment upon a mysterious sage whom he called his "ghostly father." In the text, this elusive sage is consistently referred to as "The Peer," a word of Arabic extraction which signifies all that is venerable. In moments of emergency, and especially on such occasions as required broad policies for the just administration of conquered territories, this Peer communicated with Timur, and several of his letters reveal lofty and noble sentiments. Summarizing the contributions of this remarkable and sanctified scholar, Dr. White writes: "Kootub ul Aktuab Sheikh Zine u deen Aboo Bukkur a devout and learned man descended from the Mahummudan Lawgiver, who foretold to Timur the power and greatness to which he would arise. It appears that this prince considered him in the light of a ghostly father, consulted him on all occasions, and paid the most implicit attention to his counsels." It would seem that this wonderful philosopher was a Dervish, a member of a sect for which Timur had special regard. *The Book of the Adepts*, so highly prized by the Dervishes, has numerous

* See *Studies in Indian Painting* by Nanalal C. Mehta.

references to these shadowy saints who guided the rise of the Moslem spiritual and temporal powers.

Timur surrounded himself with scientists and prominent intellectuals. In one place he writes: "And, with the assistance of astrology, I ascertained the benign or malignant aspect of the stars; their motions, and the revolutions of the heavens."

When Timur developed a system of government based almost entirely upon existing knowledge of astronomy and astrology, he established a precedent of considerable political interest. He divided the peoples within his domains into twelve groups, according to their trades, professions, and social conditions. He then set to work to unfold through these groups the potentials symbolized by the constellations. Later Timur placed over each of the divisions a counselor or leader, who was responsible to him for the people whom each directed. There was also a privy council, analogous to the planets, and this operated through all classes. Finally, this remarkable person imposed upon himself twelve rules, based also upon astrological concepts, convinced that only by governing his own conduct was he entitled to rule over others.

Timur learned discretion and discrimination through a hazardous career. His practical teachers were trial and error. He might not have done so well had he not received counsel from his "ghostly father." This wise old Dervish reminded Timur that it is one thing to build an empire, and quite another thing to preserve it. Courage builds, but only discretion preserves. Stronger even than the powerful person of the prince is the code of laws, which must survive him and continue to serve the people after he has gone. Weak men elevated to high positions can sometimes preserve the state if the laws are strong and just.

Akbar the Great

Reference should certainly be made to Akbar the Great, Emperor of Hindustan (1542-1605). In the nature of this extraordinary man, personal ambitions and impersonal aspirations were strangely and intimately mingled. Of him, C. W. King writes: "Again, the greatest of all Mohammedan sovereigns, the Mogul Akbar, was a true *Sufi*; equally so was his prime minister and historian, Abul Farez. It would be difficult to find in a modern Christian prayerbook, much less in any one composed in his age, an address to the Deity so sublime, so consonant with our present notions, as the invocation opening his *Ayeen-Akbari*. In all such outpourings of Oriental adoration, no allusion whatever to their special lawgiver is to be detected, nothing to betray any distinctive sectarian prejudice; the reader, if unacquainted with the history of the author, would admire, but know not what creed to adjudge the composition." *

To his brilliant court, Akbar invited representatives of many faiths, requiring of them mutual respect while in his presence. He was considerably influenced by Jesuit Fathers, and it was thought for a time that he intended to embrace Christianity. He was also thoughtful of the teachers of Hinduism, and was profoundly influenced by the faith of Zoroaster. Later, he investigated the claims of the Jains, and kept teachers of this sect at his court. His contact with the Sikhs was not so intimate, but he became proficient in their beliefs. Moved by a powerful desire to unite the spiritual convictions of mankind and bring to an end the discords and antagonisms of faiths, he founded, at Fatehpur-Sikri, his House of Worship. After describing the construction of this building, Sir Laurence Binyon reports thus upon the meetings held there: "So it was ordained that on the south side should sit the Learned Doctors; on the north, the

* *The Gnostics and Their Remains.*

Ascetics and Mystics; on the west, reputed descendants of the Prophet; on the east, such Nobles as cared for these matters. And Akbar presided over them all; not enthroned in immovable dignity, but moving in his restless way freely among them, and talking now with one and now with another."*

Although Akbar's religious experiment was essentially unsuccessful, it indicates the natural workings of his mind, and his desire to fulfill a deep spiritual conviction. Sir Laurence Binyon mentions mystical experiences which occurred to Akbar, and it was also known that he came under the influence of learned mystics belonging to various Eastern and Near Eastern sects.

The Foundations of Islamic Mysticism

Located at the crossroads of the ancient world, the Near East was a veritable alchemical laboratory, in which elements of Asiatic and European doctrines mingled to form strange and unfamiliar compounds. Average members of religious organizations are seldom aware of the strange chemistry which creates faiths, crystallizes creeds, and formularizes dogmas. The story of religion is the account of numberless minglings of streams of human conviction, and all surviving creeds contain elements from numerous and widely scattered moral systems. In the Islamic complex of states and countries, the religion of Mohammed generated from within itself several important mystical sects. These sects, although dominated by the prevailing faith, found justification for existence by luminous explanations of obscure or controversial elements of the dominant faith. Sometimes these dependent sects inclined to be more materialistic than the parent religion, but more often, they

* Akbar.

unfolded and enriched spiritual overtones, and inclined to asceticism or strict observance.

The Moslem is a devout person who keeps the letter of his creed more consistently than the followers of most other religious groups. But even the merchant is a poet in his heart, and shares the Asiatic inclination to dramatize his spiritual convictions. Many strange forms of learning flourished in the Near East, and emancipated Christian intellectuals were perfectly willing to hazard their reputations, and even to endanger their lives, by studying with Islamic masters and dabbling in the magical arts of the Arabs, Moors, and Saracens.

Among the most interesting of the mystical groups of southwestern Asia are the Druses of Syria and the Lebanon, and the Dervishes and the Sufis, who originated in the Persian-Arabian region and have extended their influence throughout the Moslem world. The origin and ethnological affinity of the Druses is as yet unknown. Although they speak Arabic with admirable correctness, the main body of this group does not belong to the Semitic family. They like to regard themselves as unitarians, and many of them are described as "fair-haired, of light complexion, strong and well-made, and often as tall as northern Europeans."* At the present time, they follow in general the custom and culture of their Moslem neighbors.

Most writers have not clearly distinguished between the Dervishes and the Sufis. John P. Brown, an authority on these sects, treats the two groups without any clear differentiation. By way of definition, D. S. Margoliouth writes: "In general, we may distinguish between *Sufi* and Dervish as between theory and practice; the former holds a certain philosophical doctrine, the latter practices a particular form of rite." † Stanley Lane-Poole, in his notes on the 10th

* See *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1898)—"Druses."

† See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*—"Dervishes."

chapter of the Arabian Nights, states that there is an order of Moslem Dervishes called *Sufis*, who make a profession of more regular and more contemplative life than Dervishes in general, and many of this class have written books of spirituality, of devotion, and of contemplation.

Mystical sects in general are motivated by the desire for the personal experience of spiritual reality. With similar, if not identical objectives, the disciplines practiced to attain the enlargement and extension of consciousness are approximately the same, regardless of geographical distribution. Thus it is that the mystics are more inclined to be tolerant and to accept the fact of inter-religious unity. It is rare to find an advanced mystic who is not aware that all faiths have the same objective, and, broadly speaking, the same methods for the attainment of internal security.

Mystical religious movements founded by sincere and enlightened persons, and long sustained by devout and dedicated members, sometimes fall into evil days. The tendency of all religions is to drift away from their foundations, and to become involved in the materialistic ambitions of the masses. Few religions have endured for any great length of time without some measure of corruption. The faith depends upon the faithful for its vitality, and when the followers of a doctrine compromise its principles, and these compromises are in turn further compromised, the end is confusion. Mysticism represents a level of conviction difficult to maintain, and suitable only for those by nature sensitive and contemplative. So subtle are the values, that they are easily obscured, and the degree of this obscurity is difficult to estimate. Research is further complicated by the syncretic structure of mystical convictions. Usually the underlying concepts are derived from so many sources that it is almost impossible to determine what constitutes the essential elements of the pattern.

The study of Islamic metaphysics gradually leads to the conclusion that a marked change of world significance took

place between the 10th and 13th centuries of the Christian era. Nearly all of the esoteric societies of the Moslem world developed within this period, and their leaders and founders appear to have been inspired by a common heritage of information. At this time, a group of schools arose in Islam involving elements of Platonism, Bactrian Buddhism, Syrian and Alexandrian Gnosticism, orthodox Judaism, unorthodox Cabalism, Moslem metaphysics, Aristotelian philosophy, Sabianism, and Iranian fire worship. The careful and astute ordering of these elements into a compound of religious, political, and philosophical significance, did not come about by accident, but by a thorough and careful plan. To appreciate this plan, the truth-seeker must penetrate a maze of records and reports, prejudiced and unprejudiced, reasonable and unreasonable, always bearing in mind that the Moslem was a sincere person, not inclined to corrupt his faith, but seeking rather to expand its sphere of influence and perfect its internal parts. For practical purposes, therefore, it seems appropriate at this time to explore the mystery of the House of Wisdom in Cairo.

The House of Wisdom

One of the most extraordinary of all secret societies arose in Egypt in the 10th century A.D. The Caliph Abu Mohammed Abdallah claimed the caliphate because he was directly descended from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed. He broke away from the Abbasside Dynasty and founded the Fatimite Dynasty, establishing his throne at Cairo. The motives which impelled this bold action have never been adequately examined, but they must have been acceptable to a considerable number of devout Moslems or the new Dynasty could not have survived. In light of later events, it would appear that the Caliph Abdallah was a man of more than average intellectual attainments. The principal

college in Cairo, the Dar-ul-Likmat (House of Science) was a distinguished center of learning, and to this the Caliph attached a Grand Lodge, dedicated to the advancement of philosophical and esoteric doctrines.* This was called the House of Wisdom, and here candidates for initiation into the mysteries of Ismaelism were regularly instructed. The instructions, which took the form of philosophical conferences, were given twice weekly, and both men and women attended this school. Wearing white robes, the neophytes and disciples were seated around the Grand Prior, who read to them discourses approved by the Caliph, who was the Grand Master of the Order.† Originally, Abdallah divided his system of initiation into seven degrees. The teachings of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, were included in the sacred curriculum, and aspirants advanced from one level of knowledge to another, only a few attaining to the ultimate teaching of the Lodge.

The principal historians of the House of Wisdom are Joseph von Hammer and Stanley Lane-Poole, both of whom showed marked prejudice against Moslem mysticism in general and the House of Wisdom in particular. It is generally admitted, however, that the seven basic degrees contributed to nobility of character, and the teachings included in them were above reproach.

The first degree was the longest and the most difficult, for it involved broad attainments in knowledge and most solemn obligations to the teacher and the Lodge. The second degree conveyed a knowledge of the Imams, whom Makrisi‡ describes as certain sacred beings or persons, the source of all knowledge, who appear at various times to preserve the holy doctrine. This gives the impression that the Imams were actually Adepts, the higher members of a spiritual over-government founded in the esoteric tradition of antiquity. The third degree gave the number of the holy Imams as

* See *A Short History of the Saracens* by Amer Ali.

† *Secret Sects of Syria and the Lebanon* by Bernard H. Springett.

‡ Native authority quoted by von Hammer.

seven, and related this number to the seven heavens, the seven planets, the seven musical sounds, and all the other septenaries familiar to students of ancient symbolical philosophy. The fourth degree described the seven divine law-givers, the apostles of God who had succeeded one another, beginning with Noah and Abraham. The fifth degree extended the secret knowledge to the consideration of the number twelve, taking up such matters as the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve tribes of Israel, and so forth. The sixth degree was essentially philosophical, with emphasis upon Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras. The seventh presented an Oriental mystical theology, including the doctrine of unity which the Sufis exhibited.

This program of instruction followed broadly the form of the philosophic ladder of Plotinus, the Alexandrian Neoplatonist. The disciple advances systematically through the abstract branches of learning, always dear to the Eastern heart, and while modern educators might consider the subject matter irregular, there would be no cause to question the piety of this Grand Lodge. To the original seven degrees, two additional phantom levels are said to have been added, and that the teaching of these completely destroyed the spirit and intent of the House of Wisdom. The Initiate was required to reject all the knowledge he had previously learned and cultivate total atheism. We are required to assume that the Moslems who attended the House of Wisdom would ultimately consent to beliefs and policies totally inconsistent with the doctrines of Mohammed. The average Moslem is a good man, and the scholars, philosophers, and mystics of Islam would never have sanctioned, even for a moment, a system of instruction which would open the teachings of their prophet to condemnation and ridicule. The most reasonable assumption is that the so-called eighth and ninth degrees were a fabrication intended to discredit a secret society with a wide sphere of influence. There is a parallel in Europe in the falsifications invented to justify the condemnation of the Knights Templars.

There is a reasonable possibility that the House of Wisdom may have practiced esoteric exercises, encouraged its members to detach themselves from worldly ambitions, and liberate their hearts and minds from the authority of tradition. The belief that material ambition is an illusion, worldly goods merely a burden upon the spirit, and extreme intellectualism a detriment to mystical insight, corresponded closely with the accepted teachings of the Dervishes and the Sufis. The House of Wisdom could have been influenced by Far Eastern sects which are known to have penetrated the area. In farther Asia, Buddhism and several schools of Hindu mysticism were persecuted by ambitious rulers because such ideals cannot be reconciled with tyranny.

Instead of assuming, as Lane-Poole did, that the House of Wisdom was attempting to destroy the religion of Islam, it may have been a valiant effort to restore the original mystical tradition in Islam. It is known that the simple moral code of the Prophet was being dangerously undermined by political conflicts over the Caliphate, or descent of leadership from the Prophet.

It was acknowledged that God was always represented in the material world by a spiritual leader called an *Imam*. It had become apparent, however, that the descent of the Imams had been historically broken, and it seemed that the spiritual security of the faithful was endangered. To meet this emergency, a doctrine was formulated by which the *Imam*, or spiritual leader, was not always visible, but was nevertheless present as a concealed, but all-powerful being. The hidden Imam, who was a secret ruler of the inner destiny of the Moslem world, would reveal himself to his faithful followers when the proper time arose. Meanwhile, it was the duty of those of good faith not only to await his coming, but to strive to hasten this event by personal piety.

The doctrine of the hidden Imam must be zealously preached, for in this mysterious being, all the secrets of the Most High were deposited and protected. It was proper that

his missionaries should go forth, calling men to the truth, like Prophets in the wilderness.* As the concept of a coming world teacher is common to many religions, it cannot be held that this doctrine was essentially dangerous or heretical.

If this is the teaching which the House of Wisdom is accused of promulgating, it would seem that this secret society was actually a group of religious and philosophical reformers, who suffered the misfortune natural to such groups. To protect itself, the Society therefore subjected its disciples to initiations and tests, bound them to secrecy concerning the ultimate objectives, and encouraged them to spread the teachings throughout the Moslem world, including Arabia, Mesopotamia, and North Africa. These missionaries were called *da'is*, and they were carefully trained to teach in a manner understandable to the levels of society which they sought to influence. To the uneducated, they presented their ideas in simple form, based almost entirely upon the accepted morality of the Koran. To this they added only certain references to the coming of the Mahdi. For those more philosophically inclined, the groundwork of the concept was more carefully unfolded.

These missionaries were accused of appealing to members of various religions, and this is quite possible. If they firmly believed that they were the custodians of an esoteric plan for the union of faiths, the overthrow of tyranny, and the final liberation of the human mind from ignorance and fear, they would certainly not pause at the boundary lines of creeds. To assume that these teachers were all guilty of a gigantic hypocrisy is merely to reveal personal intolerance. There is much to indicate that the broad program of the House of Wisdom reached Europe, and influenced many progressive thinkers. It is believed to have assisted in the restoration of learning after the benightedness of the Dark Ages, becoming a center of arbitration for the disputes between Europe and Asia. It is suspected that the Florentine

* See *The Story of Cairo* by Stanley Lane-Poole.

Academy of Lorenzo de Medici was patterned after the Holy House of Cairo.

The Arabian Nights Entertainment

The origin of a collection of ancient stories, legends, and traditions now called the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, or *The Thousand and One Nights*, has been a subject of considerable speculation. All that can be said with certainty is that these stories were gathered from a variety of sources over a considerable period of time. Sir Richard Burton, whose name has long been associated with the English translation of these Oriental tales, concluded that the author or authors responsible for the writings are unknown. Burton, therefore, is in substantial agreement with other editors and translators who have explored the same field. It appears most "unlikely" that the work was subject to any early editorial policy. There are many diversified themes and clearly distinguishable levels of literary ability. Certain diverse chronological references in the text have also inclined learned interpreters and translators to take refuge in the opinion that the stories simply accumulated without rhyme or reason.

In the "Terminal Essay" appended to his translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, Burton attempts to analyze, out of his broad knowledge of Arabian culture, the background and historical descent of this famous collection of Near-Eastern stories. Summarizing the nature of the people among whom these tales originated, he says: "Considered in a higher phase, the medieval Moslem mind displays, like the ancient Egyptian, a most exalted moral idea, the deepest reverence for all things connected with his religion and a sublime conception of the Unity and Omnipotence of the Deity." On the negative side of the picture, Burton is no less exact: "Our Arab at his worst is a mere barbarian who has not forgotten the savage. He is a model mixture of

childishness and astuteness, of simplicity and cunning, concealing levity of mind under solemnity of aspect." Against this background, Burton attempts to orient the vast prose poem which, in terms of originality and drama, has few equals among the literature of the world.

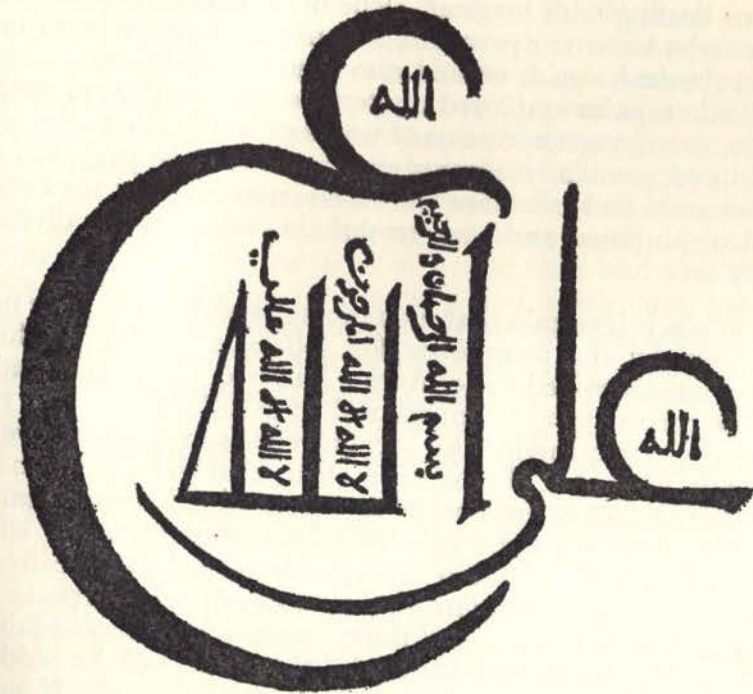
It has been suggested that some of the earliest parts of the *Arabian Nights* may date from the 8th century A.D., and that additions were made as late as the 16th century. There is some evidence that, as a collection, the work took on its present form about the 13th century, and that the addition of supplementary material did not alter the general pattern. Some of the thematic elements are probably of Far Eastern origin. The principal types of narrations combined to form the stories are animal fables, fairy tales, and historical, pseudo-historical, and traditional anecdotes.

The popular belief that the stories contained in the *Thousand and One Nights* belongs to a "tavern-literature," or were treasured only by the less privileged classes of Moslem society, is obviously untenable. It might as well be said that the Shakespearean plays were only appreciated or understood by the rustics frequenting the Globe Theater. The morality of both productions has been subject to some question, but in the case of the *Arabian Nights*, the natural disposition of the people, and the prevailing customs of their day, must be considered. Noble sentiments are frequently expressed, and the stories are permeated with the peculiar doctrines of mystical sects, and that broad transcendentalism which has always intrigued the Moslem mind.

For those willing to suspect that the *Arabian Nights* stories are more significant than at first appears, it is evident that many of the tales have double meanings, and when properly understood, are cleansed of all profane elements. As the studious mind has failed to solve the mystery of authorship, and even to identify those responsible for editorial policy, it may not be amiss to suspect that these relevant facts have been intentionally concealed. By a happy

coincidence, the approximate dating for the original stories corresponds closely to the founding of the House of Wisdom in Cairo, and the broad program for the dissemination of philosophical knowledge which spread through Arabia and North Africa between the Ninth and Twelfth Centuries of the Christian era. The Greeks found much of philosophical importance in the writings of Homer, and when the *Odyssey* is compared with the journeys of Sinbad, the Sailor, one finds numerous parallels of meaning, and the ingenious use of esoteric symbolism. The same has been claimed for Virgil's *Ennead*, and today it would certainly be little better than a public proclamation of ignorance to deny that works like *Don Quixote de la Mancha* and *Gulliver's Travels* contain profound ideas cunningly concealed under extravagant fantasy. The works above mentioned have all been associated rather closely with secret societies functioning beneath the surface of European thinking. While it may be true that the average Moslem has made no systematic effort to "decode" his literary epic, it has received considerable attention from Western thinkers, who have found therein numerous traces of a worldwide esoteric tradition. It is very probable that a few learned Dervishes possess the true keys to the stories, but as usual are not inclined to reveal their knowledge.

Edward W. Lane-Poole appends to his translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* a valuable and extensive collection of notes, many of which support, at least indirectly, the serious intent behind these stories. In one of his notes, Lane-Poole gives attention to the spiritual magic believed in and practiced by even modern Moslems. Lane-Poole feels that this spiritual magic constitutes a link between the followers of Islam and other ancient religious groups. The Moslems recognized two basic forms of magic: one, divine or good; and the other, satanic or evil. Of divine magic, Lane-Poole gives us some rather interesting notes. It is a subtle science studied by good men, only for good purposes. Perfection in this secret science consists in the knowing of the most great name of God. This ultimate knowledge is imparted to none but the



A magical figure held in wide veneration and regarded as a powerful talisman to attract friendship and affection, according to the Cabala of the Saracens. From *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* by Athanasius Kircher.

peculiar favorites of heaven. It was by virtue of this name which he caused to be engraved on his signet ring, that King Solomon subjected to his dominion elementary spirits, birds, and even the wind.

It is known beyond question that among the learned Moslems there was a magical science equivalent to the Cabalism of Jewish and Christian mystics. The Jesuit scholar, Kircher, in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, devotes considerable space to the Arabic Cabala. According to him, all specula-

tions dealing with magical, alchemical, and theriaturgical mysteries known or practiced in Europe, or descending from the classical world, existed also among the Moslems. The Islamic mystics employed mysterious combinations of numbers, strange arrangements of words unintelligible to the uninitiated, peculiar diagrams and figures. In the preparation of charms and talismans they used enchantments for benevolent purposes, and were remarkably skilled in the divinatory arts.

While it is certain that such practices and beliefs were not favored by the more orthodox followers of the Prophet, they have survived the centuries, and may therefore be said to be according to the mind of the faithful. Where such researches were carried on, certain reports or accounts were circulated among the believers, who held the practitioners of these secret sciences in the highest admiration and regard. Those versed in these cabalistic arts were accredited with the wisdom and skill associated with the Adepts of Europe and Asia. The Arabian Nights abounds with reports of superphysical powers, and the accounts of the elusive saints of Moslem tradition mingle with the reports of the hidden Holy Ones of Jewish and early Christian legends. If such legends gained favor with less enlightened Moslems, it could only mean that the belief in the miraculous powers of sanctified persons was generally acceptable.

The Faithful Brethren

About the year A.D. 950, a secret society gained prominence at Basra, a port now in Iraq, on the Persian Gulf. This learned fraternity has been variously known as The Brethren of Purity, or The Faithful Friends. These designations have arisen from the original name, *Ihwan Al-Safa*. Although essentially a scientific group, at a time when science embraced nearly all forms of knowledge, sacred or profane,

there is some indication that the Faithful Brethren were prepared to attempt a political reformation based upon the universal dissemination of essential learning. According to K. K. Doberer, this society had four degrees of initiation, and the inner teachings were compiled by sages forming the inner circle of masters or teachers. It was the practice of this fraternity to conform outwardly with the orthodox tenets of Islam, but inwardly to gather a vast storehouse of essential knowledge which could lead to a complete and practical philosophy for living. The society had many adversaries among orthodox Musselmen, especially in Baghdad, and efforts were made to destroy the books and tracts of the Order. These endeavors, however, were not successful, and the writings of the Faithful Brethren reached Europe, where they exercised influence on the political aspects of alchemy.*

F. Sherwood Taylor gives a further account of the Faithful Brethren. According to him, this organization is said to have composed an encyclopedic collection of letters, and he notes that it is suspected that this society was responsible for the extensive group of writings attributed to the Arabic chemist-mystic Geber who flourished in the 8th century.† As a young man, Geber became the disciple of the sixth She'ite Imam, from whom he received instruction in the occult sciences, and it is believed that he later joined the Sufi order.

The Faithful Brethren of Basra have been of interest to several Masonic writers. They are mentioned by John Yarker in his work on secret societies which have influenced the descent of Masonic traditions.‡ According to Kenneth Mackenzie, in his *Royal Masonic Encyclopedia*, the Brothers of Purity appear to have been influenced by the Essenes, and to have taught similar principles. Later, their writings were much studied by the most learned Spanish Jews. They

* See *The Goldmakers*.

† See *The Alchemists, Founders of Modern Chemistry*.

‡ See *The Arcane Schools*.

had forms of initiation and have come to be regarded as a kind of Freemasons, and are so mentioned by the distinguished scholar Moritz Steinschneider. Albert Mackey, in his *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, quotes Steinschneider (*Jew. Lit.*), who describes the Faithful Brethren as, "The Freemasons of Bosra," and "A celebrated society of a kind of Freemasons."

In his introduction to the *Mesnevi* of Jalal-ud-din, James W. Redhouse makes an intriguing observation: "One day, it is said, the Prophet (Muhammad) recited to 'Ali' in private the secrets and mysteries of the 'Brethren of Sincerity' (who appear to be the 'Freemasons' of the Moslem dervish world), enjoining on him not to divulge them to any of the uninitiated, so that they should not be betrayed; also, to yield obedience to the rules of implicit submission." Were the Brethren of Sincerity the same as the Basra fraternity of the Brethren of Purity? And does this further imply that this Society existed at the time of the Prophet, who either belonged to it, or was influenced by its teachings?

According to the doctrines of the Faithful Brethren, the moral nature of man is influenced by four factors, constituting together what psychologists might call environmental pressure. These modifying forces are bodily structure, climatic circumstances, educational conditioning, and the influence of the stars. If all the good qualities latent in the human being are cultivated, the perfected person exhibits the attributes of Plato's philosopher-king and the truly wise man of the stoics. Although they flourished within the Islamic community, these Pure Ones of Basra seem to have considered Socrates and Christ as equal to, if not actually superior to, the Prophet Mohammed. The sect is described as practicing a mystical intellectualism, but this did not prevent them from developing an encyclopedic system blending Neo-Pythagorean and Neoplatonic metaphysical speculations with the increasingly popular logical method of Aristotle.

The principal writings of the Faithful Brethren consisted

of fifty-two treatises divided into four sections. The first section was devoted to the abstract and speculative sciences; the second, to the natural and human sciences; the third, to metaphysics and the constitution of the soul and its rational attributes; and the fourth, to God, the divine world, and the mysteries of worship. They acknowledged prophetic revelation, practiced austerities, and sought to attain union with the spiritual power or principle which permeated all creation.

Mention is made of Maslama al-Majriti, who flourished in the 11th century. He was a Moslem born in Spain, and gained wide recognition as an encyclopedist. He traveled into the East, bringing back to Madrid a collection of the writings of the Faithful Brethren. The library in Vienna contains a work of this author, entitled *The Perfection of the Sage*, which deals with magic squares, arithmetical formulas, and the construction of talismans. From what little can be gathered, it appears reasonably certain that the Faithful Brethren represented a nucleus of universal scholarship involving both Eastern and Western doctrines, and not entirely limited to the Islamic world. Several writers who gained distinction in Europe during the medieval period, were influenced by the encyclopedic pattern advanced by the Brothers of Purity.

Among early European philosophers, scientists, and theologians who came under Moslem influence through contact with Spain, were Michael Scott and Roger Bacon. Scott (1175?-1234?), a Scottish scholar and astrologer, traveled to Toledo in order to gain a knowledge of Arabic and the Moslem sciences. While still at Oxford, Roger Bacon (1214?-1294), English friar-philosopher, achieved brilliant success as an exponent of Arabian Aristotelianism. Roger Bacon's work *Optics* was based on el Hazan's *Theosaurus Optica*. The works of Albertus Magnus, Vincent of Bovay, and Robert of England, all show indebtedness to the concepts outlined by the Faithful Brethren. It should be remembered that Christian Rosenkreutz, mysterious founder of the Rosi-

crucians, was said to have compiled an encyclopedia of universal knowledge while in the Near East, and that, returning to Europe, he stopped first in Spain to promulgate his doctrine. This may be a veiled reference to a motion of scholarship which has historical validity.

The Cult of the Angel Peacock

The Yezidis are a small religious sect of uncertain origin, dwelling in the neighborhood of Mosul on the Tigris River in Northern Iraq, near the ruins of ancient Ninevah. In the 15th century, the Yezidis numbered approximately two hundred and fifty thousand. Since that time they have been subjected to many persecutions, and the membership has dwindled to not more than fifty thousand. The basic faith of these people is derived from early contacts with the numerous streams of religious tradition that have flowed through the valley of the Euphrates.

Isya Joseph, who made an extensive survey of the sacred books and traditions of the Yezidis, writes: "They say they have taken fasting and sacrifice from Islam; baptism from Christians; prohibition of foods from the Jews; their way of worship from the idolators; dissimulation of doctrine from the Rafidis (Shi'ites); human sacrifice and transmigration from the pre-Islamic paganism of the Arabs and from the Sabians."*

Although most historians and writers of fiction have assumed that the Yezidis were devil worshipers, the sacred writings and oral teachings of the sect do not sustain this assumption. A minority group of this kind, surrounded by powerful religions, whose doctrines they refused to accept, naturally was regarded with intense disfavor.

* *Devil Worship.*

In the Yezidi theology, the supreme deity, who was the first cause of the world, created the universe and then entrusted it to the keeping of seven gods, each of whom rules for ten thousand years. The present regent is Melek Ta-us. When his age or time is complete, the authority will pass to the next deity in the divine order. In the *Al-Jilway*, a sacred writing of the Yezidis, Melek Ta-us speaks through one of his prophets: "I am ever present to help all who trust in me and call upon me in time of need. There is no place in the universe that knows not my presence. I participate in all the affairs which those who are without (outsiders) call evil because their nature is not such as they approve. Every age has its own manager, who directs affairs according to my decrees. This office is changeable from generation to generation, that the ruler of this world and his chiefs may discharge the duties of their respective offices everyone in his own term."

Although the enemies of the sect insist that Melek Ta-us is the chief of the Fallen Angels, this is inconsistent with the basic concept which affirms seven gods to be the appointed representatives of the sovereign power that ordains all things in nature. Here we are certainly in the presence of Asiatic esotericism, and Melek Ta-us is the lord of the material world, and therefore the custodian of souls that have fallen into a state of generation.

The Yezidis venerate Melek Ta-us under a peculiar symbol which they call the *sanjak*. This is the figure of a peacock, described with a swelling breast, diminutive head, and wide-spread tail. Commonly made of brass, and crudely formed, this bird stands upon a base resembling a tall slender candlestick. In the religious ceremonies, two lamps with seven burners are associated with the central device. There are reports that magnificent forms of the peacock symbol, fashioned of pure gold and encrusted with gems, exist, but these have not been seen except by members of the Order.

Originally there were seven of the sacred *sanjaks*, one of which presided over each of the seven districts of the Yezidi

communion. Some of these images were captured — that is, stolen — by the Islamites, in an effort to repress the faith. But the Yezidis only smiled, explaining that the idols taken from them were merely copies and that the originals were in a secure place.

The Yezidis believe in transmigration and reincarnation. They teach that the souls of the virtuous are reborn in human bodies, but those who have sinned against the faith or the faithful may come back to this world in the forms of animals. They practice mystical rites and disciplines, and believe that Melek Ta-us can speak to them through the lips of sanctified persons. If the messages given at various times differ or conflict it is of no consequence.

In the *Black Book* of the Yezidis, it is stated that the *sanjaks* were fashioned originally by one of the seven gods, who gave them into the keeping of Solomon the King. In the same work, it is stated definitely that Melek Ta-us descended to the earth in a remote time, dwelt with men and delivered to them his doctrines, rules, and traditions. The laws which he bestowed became a sacred heritage, and were passed down from generation to generation. There is constant insistence that the books and traditions of the Order shall be concealed from all unbelievers, lest the texts be perverted and the mysteries profaned.

In the period between November, 1845, and April, 1847, Mr. Austen Henry Layard, D.C.L., carried on extensive excavations at Nimrod. While at this site, he made several excursions into adjacent regions. He visited the mountain retreats of the Nestorians, and was privileged to attend the important yearly festival of the Yezidis. The details of his adventures are set forth in his book, *Nineveh and Its Remains*. Mr. Layard was especially successful in establishing the most friendly relations between himself and the native peoples, and was therefore permitted to be present at rites and ceremonies not usually accessible to foreigners. His summary of the Yezidi community is therefore of the greatest interest to scholars, as his information was secured first-

hand, and he was able to make numerous discreet inquiries among leaders of the sect.

It was Layard's opinion that the mysteries of the sect can be traced to a form of worship introduced by Semiramis, Queen of Babylon, but he is convinced that the modern Yezidis practice none of the debased rites associated with the Babylonian cult. He found them a quiet and moral people of inoffensive demeanor and most kindly disposition. The rituals which Layard saw, though animated and including ceremonial dancing, were all of the most moral kind. He insists that no acts such as the Jewish law had declared to be impure are permitted. Layard testified that the Yezidis recognize one Supreme Being, but did not appear to offer any direct prayer or sacrifice to him. They especially feared the power of the Fallen Angel. Layard writes: "The name of the Evil spirit is, however, never mentioned; and any allusion to it by others so vexes and irritates them, that it is said they have put to death persons who have wantonly outraged their feelings by its use. So far is their dread of offending the Evil principle carried, that they carefully avoid every expression which may resemble in sound the name of Satan, or the Arabic word for 'accursed'."

According to Layard, when the Yezidis speak of the devil, they do so with reverence as Melek Ta-us, King Peacock, or Melek el Kout, the Mighty Angel. The Sheik Nasr admitted to him that they possessed a figure of a bird, but insisted that it be regarded as a symbol, and not as an idol. Without an adequate knowledge of the esoteric doctrine of the Yezidis, it is difficult to reconcile various accounts and reports, even if they be derived from members of the sect. According to Layard, "They believe Satan to be the chief of the Angelic host, now suffering punishment for his rebellion against the divine will; but still all-powerful, and to be restored hereafter to his high estate in the celestial hierarchy. He must be conciliated and revered, they say; for as he now has the power of doing evil to mankind, so will he hereafter have the power of rewarding them."

From this it cannot actually be inferred that these people worship evil; rather, that they are disinclined to antagonize the Fallen Angel. They live virtuous and honorable lives, so that when Satan is redeemed and becomes reunited with the principle of good, they may then enjoy rewards appropriate to their conduct. The men of the deserts and the mountains have always been of practical mind. With other old religions, they share the conviction that it is not necessary to make offerings to the Good Principle because, by its very nature, it will not injure them. Rather, they are concerned with the hazards and dangers of living, personified as an adversary who must be appeased, lest he bring immediate calamity upon those who incur his enmity. Were they truly devil-worshippers, they would not have venerated Christ, who to them was a great angel who had taken the form of man. If we understand by their concept of Satan the "Prince of this World," referred to in the New Testament, who is to govern the interval between the fall of man and his redemption, and interpret this in the experience of a simple and isolated group, the apparent conflict of ideas becomes comprehensible, if not entirely consistent.

The Yezidis hold the Old Testament in great reverence, believing in the cosmogony of Genesis, the Deluge, and other Biblical events. They do not reject either the New Testament or the Koran; they look upon Mohammed as a prophet, and also venerate Abraham and the other patriarchs. They look to a second coming of Christ, and also expect the reappearance of the Imam Mahdi. The Sheik Adi is regarded as their great saint, but Layard was unable to learn any particulars concerning him. Even his date of existence is uncertain, and the Sheik Nasr asserted that he lived before Mohammed. This Sheik Adi had communion with celestial personages and performed miracles. Legendry suggests that he might be included among Near Eastern Adepts. Layard also suspected that from their chronology, the Yezidis might have been connected with the cult of Manes. At the time Layard attended their ceremonies, they chanted an ancient

melody, a part of which was called the Song of the Angel Jesus. The language was so corrupt, however, that the words were unintelligible.

All this symbolism is part of the usual paraphernalia of a lodge of initiates or adept-teachers. The seven brazen peacocks stand for the masters of the Yezidis, and behind the outer form of the sect is a secret doctrine of ideas. The persecutions through which they have passed have caused the Yezidis to protect their esoteric cult in every way possible. It is extremely doubtful if any non-Yezidi understands the mystery of the Dark Star with its brooding regent. Occasionally, some fragment of this old wisdom-religion comes to light, but for the most part, the secrets are reserved for those who have solved the mystery of the Angel Peacock.

The Druses of the Lebanon

In the mystical sect of the Druses, several streams of highly specialized and extremely profound religious teachings, both Eastern and Western, have been imposed upon a people neither profoundly learned nor especially suitable to become so. Today the sect numbers approximately one hundred fifty thousand, and is scattered through the smaller communities of Syria and contiguous areas. The Druses follow a system involving elements of the Orphic mysticism of the Greeks, Indian esotericism, Near Eastern and North African transcendentalism, Old Testament moralism, Islamic ethical speculations, star worship, and the Avestic literature of Persia. Obviously, such ingredients are incomprehensible to the average Druse, who is satisfied to believe that his faith is predestined to unite the religions of the world and to end forever those fanatical tendencies which have from time immemorial, divided the devout.

Even the simple and natural desire to reconcile men of good spirit contributed to the misfortunes which have

plagued the Druses for centuries. Tolerance has never been popular, and the sects and creeds flourishing in the regions occupied by the Druse communities have slight sympathy for the votaries of this strange faith. The Christians resent the Moslem sympathies of the group, and the Moslems are suspicious of the Christian and Jewish content in the Druse doctrines. Altogether this minority cult is between the upper and lower grindstone, and has survived precariously for centuries. Nor have the Druses become more popular as the result of proclaiming their special interest in the moral and ethical culture of China. They feel that the Chinese are Druses by conviction, if not by name.

To escape the persecution of powerful neighbors, the Druses have incorporated into their code an article of faith which permits them to conceal their membership in the Order and to proclaim themselves orthodox members of any faith dominant in the area where they live. Thus they live in a state of public conformity and private dissension. They further justify their attitude on the grounds that all other religions are corrupt forms of Drusedom. Fortunately, they are not inclined to proselyte, and have no interest in making converts, and this disinterestedness has prevented their extinction. Although it is usual to consider them as an offshoot of Islamism, it is doubtful if that assumption is correct. The sect arose among the Moslems, but from the beginning, exhibited characteristics suggesting Gnosticism. The Gnostics flourished in North Africa, where Drusedom was born, and it might be more accurate to trace the sect to the revival of classical philosophy among the Moslems. Just as Mohammed himself was strongly influenced by Nestorian Christianity and Judaism, the founders of the Druse sect were evidently acquainted with several philosophical systems. The Drusean attitude toward the complex problem of the man Jesus and the Christ principle, is certainly based upon the teachings of the Alexandrian Gnostics.

The Druses have an excellent reputation for thrift, hospitality, and courage. They will converse freely on almost

any subject except the secrets of their religion. If pressed too far, they may have a convenient lapse of memory or experience unusual difficulties with language. Like most devout peoples, however, they have a keen sense for estimating human nature, and a few non-Druses who showed an honest desire for knowledge, and appropriate capacities of temperament, have been permitted to learn some parts of the Drusean doctrine. By living quietly in a community of Druses and gradually gaining the respect of the sect, it is possible to overcome slowly the reticence of these people.

According to history, Drusedom was founded in the 11th century of the Christian era by Ismail Ad-darazi, a Persian mystic. At that time, Al-hakim bi'amrillahi was the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt. Under the pressure of a rising mystical conviction, this Caliph proclaimed himself to be an incarnation of God, and being apparently of unsound mind, he reigned erratically and despotically until his final disappearance in A.D. 1021. It seems probable that he was assassinated, but, as his fate was never clearly established, curious legends gained wide circulation. Actually, Al-hakim was little more than a name, and it cannot be assumed that he originated the doctrines associated with him. The Druses of the Lebanon have been falsely accused of deriving their religion from a mad Caliph, whose temperament was reminiscent to that of Nero. Actually, both Moslem and non-Moslem Druses follow an elevated moral and ethical code which causes them to be considered more or less puritanical by neighboring unbelievers.

There are a number of Druses in the United States, but they usually pass as Syrian Christians and are not likely to discuss their faith unless the listener is informed and sympathetic. There is nothing in the manner or attitude of the educated Druse to suggest that his background is in any way remarkable. In business he is honorable; in his private life, kindly and tolerant; and in public matters, he exhibits a strong sense of civic responsibility. In discussing their religion with Syrian Druses who have become American citi-

zens, it has been my experience that they regard many of their older beliefs as folklore, but are quickly responsive to references made to the esoteric doctrines of Oriental nations. One told me that he had heard from his mother about the existence of adepts and secret schools in remote Asia, but had not given the matter serious thought until he contacted mystical groups in America. Like the followers of most other faiths the Druses are receptive to the idea of a secret doctrine concealed beneath the outer forms of religious systems. As one expressed it: "I was told these things when a child, but I did not understand."

The Drusean system of initiation, like that of most esoteric sects, includes visions, trances, and related psychic phenomena. The Masters of the sect are undoubtedly well trained in natural magic and, like the priests of most ancient sects, are able to cause miraculous occurrences. Perhaps their disciplines were derived from the Ophites, who were skilled in secret arts. Certainly the higher members of the Drusean sect are so convinced of the validity of their esoteric sciences that they cannot be converted to any other faith. Their rites include fasting, rituals of purification, and obligations of secrecy. They also share in the concept of many fraternities, as these relate to mutual aid, to the protection of members, and to the performance of charity.

The Druses have seven commandments, or tenets, which they obey and practice: 1) God is one and indivisible. 2) Truth is supreme. 3) Religious tolerance is a virtue. 4) All men and women of good character are entitled to respect. 5) Complete obedience to the decrees of God. 6) Purity of mind, soul, and body. 7) Mutual help and support in time of need.

Both men and women are eligible for initiation on terms of complete equality. This in itself is unusual among Eastern sects. Masters of the Drusean faith are regarded as exceedingly venerable and are consulted on important matters. Their advice or opinion is usually followed without ques-

tion. Children are well treated in the Drusean community, and the family life is simple and dignified. In older times, education was largely in the keeping of advanced members of the group. Though not especially warlike, the Druses are ready to defend their culture, and there have been periods of intense strife between them and the Moslem groups. Most of these difficulties, however, belong to the past, and today the communities are peaceful and industrious.

It is not easy to summarize the doctrine of the Druses. Most available information is derived from antagonistic sources, either Christian or Moslem. Even those who desired to be fair have either lacked direct contact with the sect or have been influenced to some degree by popular reports. The summary given by the Earl of Carnarvon is about the best available: "The imposing doctrine of faith in one God, in whom there are no parts, to whom no attributes can be assigned, before whom the tongue refuses to utter, the eye to see, the mind to understand, whose very name is ineffable, which crowns the pyramid of Druse theology, might seem to remove Heaven too far from men and their affairs; and therefore the weaknesses of human nature have been well accommodated by the reflexion and incarnation of the Deity in successive ages. Nine times previously in India, Arabia, Persia, and Africa—so Hamze taught—had the Supreme Intelligence deigned to reveal himself under the form and name of mortal men. In the person of Hakem, for the tenth and last time, God's will was republished, His forbearance manifested, and a final appeal made to the obduracy of the world. For twenty-six years 'the door,' in the figurative language of the Druse doctors, stood open to Christian or Mahommedan, Jew or Gentile; but when that term of grace had expired, the work of conversion was closed, and the world was left uninvited and unenlightened for the future, till in the great consummation of mortal things, amid the gathering of armies and tribulations of the faithful, when Mahommedanism shall

fail and Mecca be no longer sacred, Hakem shall reappear to conquer the earth and to give supremacy to the Druse religion."

Missionaries who have attempted to penetrate into the secret rites of the Druses have occasionally been permitted to witness ceremonials manufactured for the entertainment of persistent unbelievers. This has led to the conclusion that Drusedom consists of two conflicting systems of doctrine—one for the laity, and another for the initiated. Actually, the esoteric content is merely an extension of the exoteric tradition, whereby, through interpretation, mysterious realities are first sensed and finally known.

Another quotation from the Earl of Carnarvon, who "passed through the region," conveys the bewilderment of the Occidental: "Gradually—very gradually—he (the neophyte) is permitted to draw aside the successive veils which shroud the great secret: he perceives the deep meaning of numbers, he understands the dark sayings in which the sacred writings, that he has hitherto accepted in their literal sense, convey in doubtful phrase a double and a different meaning to the ear and the mind. The Koran becomes an allegory; the life and actions even of his own Immam are but the shadows of distant truths; . . . Still, as he presses on, he perceives that he is unravelling the web that he had just woven—that he is learning only to unlearn; he makes, and he treads on the ruins of his former beliefs; slowly, painfully, dizzily, he mounts each successive degree of initiation, until the mystical seven, or the not less mystical nine, are accomplished, and—as if to mock the hope of all return—at each stride he hears the step on which he last trod crumble and crash into the measureless abyss that rolls below him."†

Lord Carnarvon's description is dramatic, if not completely factual. The Western mind is not conditioned for

cabalistic speculation. To the literal theologian, the possibility of a secret faith which can bestow an inner illumination and transform the material substances of a belief through inspiration and revelation seems little more than a fantastic superstition. Even after a Druse teacher has emphasized the importance of the allegorical key to his faith, the outsider seldom applies this key to the fables which the Druse patiently unfolds. Would it be likely that the members of a mystical sect, the Masters of which have been enlightened by meditation, prayer, and lives of piety, could literally believe that the unsavory Caliph Al-hakim was actually the incarnation of God, or that the door of salvation stood open for only twenty-six years?

In all probability, the legends of the Druses must be approached with the same attitude with which one should examine the mythology of the Grecians. Only by acknowledging the existence of a profound language of symbolism can the conduct of the Olympian deities be reconciled with the lofty convictions of Pythagoras and Plato. The Greek philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, and legislators would not have acknowledged the divine authority of an order of divinities whose characteristics were less heavenly than the manners of the decadent Athenian aristocracy. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* acknowledges that the sacred books of the Druse religion "contain moral teachings of a high order on the whole."

The Druses consider both the Christian Gospels and the Koran to be inspired writings, but only the Druse Scriptures are accepted as correct guides to spiritual conduct. All other religions, by allegorical interpretation, are made to support the Drusean revelation. Here is a broad application of the Neoplatonic concept that all religions and philosophies are identical, when unlocked by the proper key. Mystics, regardless of their affiliations, pass through the same experiences when they apply the principles of internal growth. Although the Druses do not require ascetic practices, their beliefs lead inevitably toward detachment from

* *Recollections of the Druses of the Lebanon* (London, 1860).

† *Ibid.*

materialistic interests and pursuits. The Drusean mystics share the attitudes of unworldliness which distinguish the more advanced Dervishes and Sufis.

The sect believes in reincarnation, and holds that each embodiment is nobler than the previous one. The process of rebirth continues until the mystical resurrection. The physical body, with its lower mental and emotional attributes, is the enemy of man's spiritual purpose. There are elements of anthropomorphism similar to those in the Mazdian cult, where powers of light and darkness struggle for domination over the human destiny. Security against evil is attained by obedience to the Drusean code, which was given by God, through His embodiments, for the preservation of His creatures. The neophyte must learn the false doctrines of the world, in order to receive into his heart the secret of the mystery of life. This process of unlearning becomes increasingly severe as the disciple advances through the grades of the sect. He is struggling against illusion, and in so doing, must overcome his own mind and accept without reservation the impression of the divine purpose.

Lord Carnarvon's description of the neophyte treading on the ruins of his former beliefs would be the natural reaction of the uninitiated. True humility is complete submission to the Divine Will. To overcome the world, the neophyte must overcome the worldliness in himself. Not only the shadow (materialism), but also the works of the shadow must be conquered. To the Druse, the works of the shadow include even the human attitude toward God, religion, and philosophy. He has been accused of choosing a path which leads, in the end, to a monstrous unbelief. The simplest explanation of his faith is to compare it with Buddhism and the Buddhist concept of Nirvana. To the Christian, the Nirvana is simply total extinction of self, an idea frightening and repulsive to the average believer.

The Druse resurrection is the re-identification of the spirit in man with the universal spirit, which is all-per-

vading. This is not extinction, but universalization. The one does not become nothing; it becomes all. Certainly it is impossible for mortal man to know, as inward fact, an unlimited condition of consciousness. The Druse system gradually enlarges and impersonalizes the spiritual convictions of the individual, until the ideal of universalization becomes not only attractive, but also completely satisfying. To awake from the illusion of diversity to the realization of unity is the fulfillment of man's supreme destiny. Just as the word *yoga* means *union*, the Druse prefers to be called a unifier. He strengthens his resolutions by the constant discovery and experience of unity. He sees the religions of the world gradually awaking to the awareness of unity. He contemplates the coming together of nations and the gathering of knowledge by emphasis upon common denominators. With the aid of allegory and interpretation, he is able to perceive those eternal verities enthroned behind the shadowy and illusional divisions which have so long prevented men from laboring together in common causes.

From the earliest time, God has sent His teachers and His prophets to reveal His will and to purify doctrines corrupted by human ignorance. Mankind has not the strength or courage to practice or preserve the Divine wisdom, and the revelations brought by the anointed messengers were perverted through selfishness and ignorance. To prevent doctrinal errors from frustrating the spiritual aspirations of humanity, reformers came to purify earlier revelations and to restore the essential principles of religion. In the Druse system, one hundred and sixty-four great teachers are enumerated, and because of their mighty efforts, there has never been a time when the world has been without spiritual guidance. There is the implication that all the teachers brought one essential doctrine, although they appeared in different places and their revelations received various names.

In addition to these messengers, the Deity itself became peculiarly and particularly embodied in ten Messiahs, who correspond with the Avatars of Vishnu in the Hindu sys-

tem. The prophet Hamsa was the precursor of the tenth Avatar of the Druses. Like John the Baptist, he announced the coming of Al-hakim. More mystically speaking, Hamsa represented Jesus, and Al-hakim the Christ. Obviously, the mystical tradition is not actually concerned with personalities at all, and the effort to associate universal principles with historical personages has resulted in serious misunderstandings. Hamsa, in a way, personifies the Druse Adept, who, having advanced to the highest state of personal sanctity, has become a vessel capable of receiving into itself the Divine incarnation.

In the Druse communities, places of initiation are set aside for the performance of the rites and ceremonies. These chambers are underground and, with the exception of certain celebrated sanctuaries, have only the simplest of furnishings. The prayer rug can be symbolical of the chamber of initiation. The room merely represents a state of aloofness from material concerns. It is not essentially a place, but a condition of consciousness. The initiation rituals follow closely the rites of Greece and Egypt. The candidate is tested by trials of physical strength and endurance, moral temptations, and is further examined for his aptitude in the learning and disciplines of the sect. Very few are able to pass all the tests successfully, but those whose ability and character are worthy of consideration may wait a year and try again. The severity of the physical ordeals accounts for many failures, but there are indications that these tests are not so severe now as in earlier times. Those who pass the examination successfully are accepted into the inner sanctuary of the Order, and are given signs of recognition and further instruction in the esoteric sciences.*

Referring to the initiation rites of the Druses, Mme. Blavatsky points out that on certain occasions, a solemn ceremony takes place during which the initiates of the higher

* For details concerning initiation into the Druse sect, see the letter by Professor A. L. Rawson, describing his own initiation, in *Isis Unveiled*, by H. P. Blavatsky.

degrees start out on pilgrimage into certain hidden places in the mountains. She writes: "They meet within the safe precincts of a monastery said to have been erected during the earliest times of the Christian era. Outwardly one sees but old ruins of a once grand edifice, used, says the legend, by some Gnostic sect as a place of worship during the religious persecution. The ruins above ground, however, are but a convenient mask; the subterranean chapel, halls, and cells, covering an area of ground far greater than the upper building; while the richness of ornamentation, the beauty of the ancient sculptures, and the gold and silver vessels in this sacred resort, appear like 'a dream of glory' according to the expression of an initiate."*

Although seldom mentioned in the accounts of this sect, there is evidence that the Druses acknowledge the existence of an association of Adepts and Masters, who form a superior council. These illumined teachers, like the fabled Mahatmas of India, are extremely elusive, but may appear when the need arises. They are known by their wonderful powers and remarkable sanctity, but their comings and goings are inexplicable. Some of the more venerable Druse doctors are believed to have contact with these immortal-mortals, who alone are perfect in the doctrine. In the areas where the Druses flourish, legends and reports about these Adepts are quietly circulated. They are seldom, if ever, mentioned to strangers.

It is quite possible that American Druses and more enlightened members in the Near Eastern communities could be induced to prepare a reasonably correct account of the sect and its doctrine. Groups of this kind are concerned over the encroachment of modern materialism, and recognize the desirability of providing qualified persons with reliable information. The project languishes, however, because the sect is one of many minority groups about which there is no general concern. When we realize that the Near

* See *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II.



Typical Dervishes belonging to Eastern Moslem communities.

East has supplied the religious incentives to three great continents, and that nearly half the civilized world is influenced by doctrines originating in the area of the Lebanon, there should be more interest in uncovering the foundations of now-dominant faiths.

The effects of Drusedom upon Europe were considerable during the medieval period, and the modern world is still dominated religiously, politically, and culturally by medievalism. The Crusaders, especially the Knights Templars, the Knights of Malta, and the Teutonic Knights, contacted the Druses and were influenced by many of their doctrines. The direct result was the Renaissance, and among later consequences was the Reformation. Mystical interpretations of Christianity increased rapidly and broadened the foundations of the faith. It is believed that a number of the European Knights were actually initiated into the Syrian Mysteries and the Secret Orders of Islam.* Through them the great heresy reached Europe, supplying the impulse which ultimately overthrew spiritual, intellectual, and physical feudalism. "The constant intercourse between Syria and Europe, maintained first by the flocks of pilgrims perpetually crowding to Jerusalem, then by the Crusades, and lastly by the establishment of the Frankish kingdom in Palestine, and of the different principalities upon the coast, produced vast effects, both apparent and concealed, upon the nations of Europe, more especially those seated upon the Mediterranean."†

The Dervish Fraternity

In western Asia, there are a number of mystical sects which have evolved from and within the faith of Islam. Among these, the Dervish Orders are the best known and

* See Adler, *Drusus Montis Libani* (Rome, 1786).

† C. W. King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains*.

the most likely to be contacted by travelers and tourists. Within the Dervish Fraternity, there are twelve principal Orders, each governed by a chief to whom is given complete allegiance. The members are initiated by rites which appear to the uninformed to be barbaric and fantastic. The spiritual fraternities of the Dervishes are highly respected throughout the Moslem world. The attitude toward them is not so different from the esteem in which wandering bands of friars were held in Christendom of the Middle Ages. The Dervishes are regarded as persons possessing supernormal faculties, and are consulted in matters requiring extraordinary discernment.

Two general types of holy men are to be found in the mystical fraternities of Islam. The first is the scholarly and consecrated Dervish, whose life is devoted to the study of the secret spiritual forces of the universe. The second is the religious mendicant, who, for one reason or another, has renounced worldliness and lives by the generosity of the faithful. It is believed, however, that exalted souls may conceal their identities under most pitiful appearances; therefore, it is unwise to neglect the requirements of even the most lowly of the religious mendicants.

The Orders of Dervishes can be distinguished by the color and form of their garments and the number of folds in their turbans. The peculiar powers of the Dervishes have been attested by many Europeans, and the fakirs are famous for their skill in conjuration. Some of the Dervish sects are in more or less close association with Eastern Freemasonry and the Druses of Syria. The esoteric rites and practices of many Near Eastern sects belong to a common stream of tradition, a fact that is recognized by the better-informed members, even though the less enlightened cling to fanatical attitudes of isolation.

The outer or visible body of Dervishes consists of organizations or groups of disciples who study the mysteries of life from ancient and venerable teachers. Behind the visible structure of Dervish mysticism, however, is a secret in-

visible institution composed of illumined Masters, who only upon rare occasions contact disciples of the lower grades. This inner body of God-instructed men possesses the fullness of divine knowledge, and membership comes as the reward for outstanding achievement in the lower grades of the Brotherhood. L.M.J. Garnett writes of the Dervishes thus: "According to the mystical canon, there are always on earth a certain number of holy men who are admitted to intimate communion with the Deity."* J. P. Brown refers to these spiritual ones as the "Master Souls."† They are still in the physical body and wander about the earth, but are recognizable only by the elect. The Dervishes teach that any person whom they meet, even the poorest beggar, may be one of these Master souls.

At the head of the hierarchy composing the inner or mystical Dervish Order is a most august soul, who is called the "Axis" or "Pole" of the universe. His identity is unknown, even to the highest members of the Order, and he often wanders the earth in the garb of a novice. He is a Master of the power of magic, can make himself invisible at will, and traverse vast distances with the speed of thought. On either side of the "Axis" are two great souls subordinate only to himself. When the time comes for the "Axis" to leave his physical body and ascend into the sphere of light, then the "Faithful One" on his right is advanced to the dignity of Axis, and all the other members of the Order correspondingly advance one degree to fill the vacancies created. This great body of spiritual mystics, collectively the "Lords of Souls" and "Directors," is an invisible government controlling all the temporal institutions of Islam, and far surpassing in power all earthly monarchies. There is a considerable discussion of the hierarchy of Divine Friends (Walees), in the *Fawaed-i-Rukni* of Shaikh Sharfuddin Maneri.‡

* *Mysticism and Magic in Turkey.*

† See *The Dervishes.*

‡ See *Letters from a Sufi Teacher*, translated by Baijnath Singh.



Dervishes performing their Cosmic Dance. From *Picart's Religious Ceremonials*.

With an outer organization of many thousands of Dervishes of varying degrees of holiness, and an inner body composed of God-men so highly advanced and so superior to ordinary humanity that they seem more mystical than real, it is evident that the Dervishes form a very powerful Order in the Islamic world. Each Dervish, it is said, is founded in the faith through having passed successfully a thousand and one days and nights of temptation. Renouncing everything pertaining to the flesh, these men have devoted their lives to the perfection of consciousness.

One of the most interesting sects of the Dervishes is the Order of Mevlevi, more commonly known as the dancing or whirling Dervishes, and popularly supposed to have been

founded by the great Persian Sufi poet and philosopher, Jalal-ud-din Rumi (1207-1273). The astonishing ability of the whirling Dervish to spin with incredible velocity and then to stop suddenly to lean over and pick up a pin is amazing. He can continue this dancing motion for a considerable time, and no amount of spinning causes dizziness. From what can be gleaned in the fragmentary extracts from the doctrines which have come into the hands of the profane, the purpose of the whirling is to attune the rhythm of the body to the circular motion of the celestial spheres.

Like many religious Orders in various parts of the world, the Dervishes have strange practices intended to produce the ecstatic condition. In some cases, they even resort to the use of hashish to bring about a temporary clairvoyance, but this practice can hardly be considered representative of the true ideals of Dervishism.

The Mevlevi wear tall but not pointed caps, and their garments are tight about the waist, but flare out below, like an extremely full skirt, to the ankle. During the whirling dances, these skirts stand straight from the body in a large circle, making the Dervish resemble a spinning top. The various groups of Dervishes wear different styles of caps, all of which are more or less significant. One type of head-gear is vase-shaped and symbolizes the urn of spiritual light in which God kept the soul of Mohammed before the birth of the Prophet.

There is another interesting point brought out, at least theoretically, in Dervish philosophy. Obeying the ancient custom of the Brotherhood, the various members of the Order always travel in certain directions of the compass and at certain angles. Consequently, if one desires to meet a certain Dervish saint, it is first necessary to learn the angle upon which he travels. If the seeker will then place himself at some point along the line of this angle, and await the Dervish, the latter will ultimately appear.

The Dervishes possess a secret doctrine concerning hu-

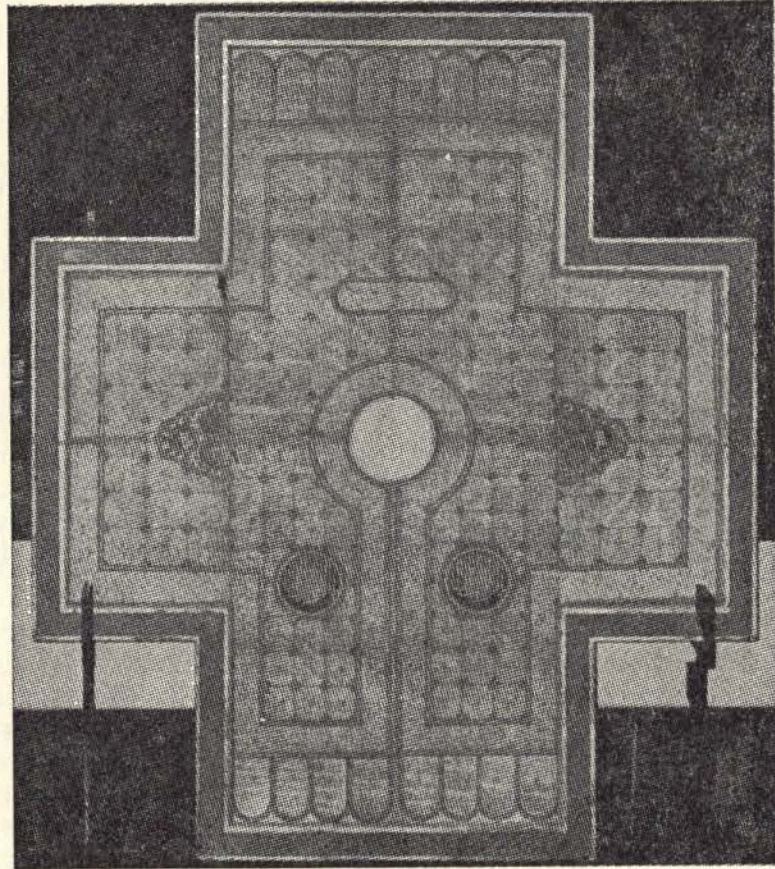
man regeneration which has many points of similarity with the mysticism of the Brahmans. Dervish philosophy may be summarized as the Oriental doctrine of realization. By renouncing human consciousness, and rising above all limitations of the sense perceptions and the intellect, the Dervish attains to a level of transcendent understanding in which he feels himself absorbed into the nature of the Universal Being. The Dervish neophyte advances along "paths." These paths, or degrees, are four in number, and each is governed by a personification of a divine attribute. In the first degree, the novice seeks absorption in the Sheik, or Master, of the path. In the second degree, the disciple aspires to identification with the illustrious sage who founded the discipline, or path. In the third degree, the initiate attempts to accomplish absorption into the Prophet Mohammed; and in the fourth degree, the Adept seeks complete universalization in Deity.

John P. Brown, whose text *The Dervishes* is still one of the principal reference works on the subject, derives the word *Dervish* from two Persian syllables, the first meaning *a door*, and the second, *to beg*. It is questionable, however, if the term actually means *to beg from door to door*. More likely it signifies those who ask alms at the door of truth. Originally, the Islamic mystics were small groups of disciples who accepted without question the spiritual leadership of some enlightened saint or distinguished teacher. Mystics have never been conformists, and have always depended upon direct extrasensory experience for inspiration and guidance. Like the philosophical schools which flourished in the Golden Age of Greek learning, the size and distinction of a sect depended largely upon the fame and accomplishments of the leader. A few outstanding teachers, like Pythagoras and Plato, left behind them such strongly integrated associations that these survived and became enduring organizations. Leadership passed to elder disciples who, in turn, selected their successors, thus establishing a lasting pattern of descent.

This is in essence the story of the Dervish Orders, and, because their mysticism was associated with the traditions, rites, and ceremonies of the Moslems, they belong with this religion. Actually, however, their mysticism transcends all sectarian limitation, and their illuminations confer upon them a universal citizenship. Although the Dervishes are regarded as the principal monastic order of the Islamic world, they differ from Christian monastic groups in one particular: They give no allegiance to the orthodox faith and receive no benefits therefrom. They survive entirely by their own efforts, and enjoy the privilege of administering their affairs as they see fit. The Dervishes receive considerable public support, and it is considered injudicious to deny them any reasonable request. Although critics insist that these Orders survive upon the gullibility of the ignorant, this is not strictly true. We may as well say that all religions depend for their existence upon the generosity of the faithful. The Dervish influence is so widespread that in some areas every Mussulman is to some degree associated with one of the several Orders. There are instances in which tradesmen and merchants constitute Dervish guilds.

Many authors refer to the similarities between the Dervishes and European Freemasons. For example, Brown notes that ". . . the Dervishes of the Bektashee Order consider themselves quite the same as the Freemasons, and are disposed to fraternize with them."* Probably the analogies are due to parallels of doctrine and ritual. As early European Freemasonry was strongly influenced by Near Eastern sects, and its roots were deep in the symbolism of old Orders which flourished in Syria and Arabia, there are vestiges of Oriental mysticism in Western Masonry. Today, however, the Dervish remains essentially a mystical philosopher, and as such, will have conflict with the prevailing tendency to ignore the esoteric content of rituals and symbols.

* *The Dervishes.*



A cope in the shape of a Cross. A religious cape with large sections of the Koran on its panels—painted—in pinkish red color and worn by some pious Pilgrim on his journey to Mecca.

On a few occasions, the Dervishes have been involved in the political ambitions of Islamic leaders. Such pressures have affected adversely most religious groups, but should not be regarded as representative of the real convictions of monastic orders. After all, the Dervish Orders have become so diffused throughout the life of the Islamic people that the conduct of individual members or even groups does not indicate the temper of the more enlightened mystic. Fanaticism is present in all religious communities and has brought discredit upon many worthy and commendable organizations. By his own creed and doctrine, the Dervish is a man of peace, dedicated to charitable works and the attainment of internal tranquility. All to the contrary results from abuse or misunderstanding of principles.

Wherever men feel that they have received Divine insight, the prophetic spirit produces various forms of divination. Some Dervishes have become famous for reading human destiny in sand, by the stars, or by gazing upon magical objects. There is wide belief in omens and portents, and, while some of these soothsayers are of doubtful ability, the majority are obviously sincere, if not entirely proficient. Certain Dervishes have made remarkable prophecies which have been fully justified by subsequent facts. The Dervish Orders are especially interesting because they form an impressive unit within the world concept of mysticism. They supply further evidence of the existence of an esoteric tradition concerning the possibility of the human being advancing his internal life by meditative disciplines.

Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the Great Dervish Adept

In his introduction to the *Mesnevi* of Jalal-ud-din, James W. Redhouse states that about A.D. 1260, Jalal-ud-din was urged by Hasan Husam al-din to compose the *Mesnevi*. Scholars in the field are inclined to consider this work,

which is divided into six books, as the greatest mystical poem ever written. The Preface opens with the following statement: "This is the book of the Rhymed Couplets (Mathnawi, Mesnevi). It contains the roots of the roots of the roots of the (one true) Religion (of Islam); and treats of the discovery of the mysteries of reunion and sure knowledge. It is the Grand Jurisprudence of God, the most glorious Law of the Deity, the most manifest Evidence of the Divine Being. The refulgence thereof 'is like that of a lantern in which is a lamp' that scatters beams more bright than the morn. It is the paradise of the heart, with springs and foliage." The inner quote in this passage is from the Koran. In presenting this work to the English reader, Redhouse, by way of introduction, gives selected anecdotes from Menaqibu 'L 'Arifin, *The Acts of the Adepts*, by Shemsu-'D-Din Ahmed, El Eflaki. This work is concerned with accounts of the miraculous lives of Moslem saints and sages, and includes a section devoted to incidents in the career of Jalal-ud-din Rumi. It is from this section that the following episodes relating to Jalal-ud-din are derived.

Jalal-ud-din, the great Dervish Adept, was born on the 29th of September, A.D. 1207. When only five years old, this remarkable man became strangely and profoundly agitated by a series of extraordinary occurrences. "The cause of these perturbations was that spiritual forms and shapes of the absent (invisible world) would arise before his sight, that is, angelic messengers, righteous genii, and saintly men—the concealed ones of the bowers of the True One (spiritual spouses of God), used to appear to him in bodily shape, exactly as the cherubim and seraphim used to show themselves to the holy apostle of God, Muhammed, in the earlier days, before his call to the prophetic office; as Gabriel appeared to Mary, and as the four angels were seen by Abraham and Lot; as well as others to other prophets."

When Jalal-ud-din was about six years old, he received a further mystical experience. While frolicking with several

other children, he suddenly disappeared from among his playmates, causing them great consternation. Later he explained that while he had been speaking with his friends, "a company of visible forms, clad in green raiment, had led him away from them, and had conducted him about the various concentric orbs of the spheres, and through the signs of the Zodiac, showing him the wonders of the world of spirits, and bringing him back to them as soon as their cries had reached his ears."

Two years after the death of his father, Jalal-ud-din having reached his 23rd year, journeyed to Aleppo to advance his learning. While in this city, he excited the jealousy and suspicion of some of his fellow students, who complained to the governor that this extraordinary young man left his cell at midnight each night for some mysterious purpose which they suspected might be immoral. The governor, possessed by typical Oriental curiosity, decided to discover the truth for himself. He therefore hid where he could watch Jalal-ud-din from a safe distance. Exactly at low twelve, the locked gate of the college opened of itself, and Jalal-ud-din came forth. He then passed through the great gate of the city which also opened without human hands. The governor, attempting to follow, felt himself moving at incredible speed for a considerable distance. The trip ended at the tomb of Abraham at Hebron, nearly three hundred and fifty miles from Aleppo. The governor then beheld a domed edifice, wherein was congregated a large company of mysterious beings wearing green robes, who came forth to meet Jalal-ud-din. They embraced him with affection and then conducted him into the building. The governor became so frightened that he fainted. When he awoke, the domed building was gone, and the bewildered magistrate was hopelessly lost in the desert. Two days later he was found and brought home in an exhausted condition. Naturally, he decided not to pursue the subject any further.

Eastern literature abounds with remarkable accounts of miraculous occurrences involving Jalal-ud-din. During his

last illness, a friend was seated by him. Suddenly a most handsome youth appeared at the door of the room. Jalal-ud-din immediately arose, and advanced to receive the stranger, who said, "I am 'Azra'il the angel of departure and separation. I come, by the Divine command to inquire what commission the Master may have to entrust to me." The Dervish Adept replied, "Come in, come in, thou messenger of my King. Do that which thou art bidden; and, God willing, thou shalt find me one of the patient."

Perhaps the most significant story about the mysterious hierarchy of Adepts was told by the widow of Jalal-ud-din, who was regarded as a model of virtue. She related what she had seen through a chink in the door, where her husband and one of his associates were closeted in spiritual communion. Suddenly the wall of the room opened and six men of majestic mien entered through the cleft. These strangers, who were of the occult saints, saluted, bowed, and laid a nosegay of bright flowers at the feet of Jalal-ud-din, although it was then in the depth of the midwinter season. They remained until the hour of sunrise worship. When the service was over, the six strangers took leave, departing through the same cleft in the wall, which closed behind them. Jalal-ud-din gave the nosegay to his wife, saying that strangers had brought it as an offering to her. The flowers were so remarkable that she sent her servant with the bouquet to the perfumers' mart of the city to ask the kind of flowers. The merchants were all astonished, never having seen such leaves. At length, however, a spice merchant from India recognized them to be the petals of a flower that grows in the south of India in Ceylon. Jalal-ud-din then told her to take the greatest care of the nosegay, as it had been sent to her by the florist of the lost earthly paradise, through Indian saints, as a special tribute.

The Sufis, the Mystics of Persia

The teachings of the Sufis appear to have originated with the Prophet Mohammed himself. He was not only a brilliant moralist, religious leader, and statesman, but was also, by temperament, a mystic and ascetic. Throughout his life, he cultivated detachment from worldly honors and material possessions. The responsibilities of his high calling impelled him to set an example of moderate conduct, piety, and self-sacrifice. His numerous duties also demanded a well-organized life, in which concern for his faith and his people took precedent over his personal interests. We know that he was given to visions, practiced vigils, and was distinguished for humility and gentle resignation to the Will of God. Like most religious founders, he was quite different in character from those who later extended the temporal dominion of his faith.

After the death of the Prophet, Islam passed through a difficult and disputatious period. Almost immediately, the regions which had received the doctrine were involved in civil wars and came under the influence of ambitious despots and tyrants. The success of Islam produced new aristocracies which became obsessed by wealth, luxury, and power. The lines of orthodoxy were so clearly drawn as to leave the more thoughtful and sincere without any religious instruction suitable to their needs. As the faith increased in temporal wealth and honor, it catered to the selfishness and arrogance of privileged classes, and departed dramatically from the simple example and code of the prophet. There is an almost exact parallel between the rise of Moslem and Christian mysticism. Many of the austere practices of both faiths resulted from a revulsion against the corruption in the social systems of the times. The Orders of Flagellants which developed in Italy, and spread over the greater part of Europe during the Medieval period, revealed the operations of the collective conscience of society.

The Sufis belonged originally to that system of religious mysticism which is called *Quietism*. The Quietist seeks

escape from the exigencies of living by retiring into himself, detaching his mind and emotions from all worldly entanglements, and directing the forces of his consciousness toward a participation in the Divine love and understanding. Many Quietist groups have excellent reputations for good works and have made practical contributions to the advancement of society. They are in the world but not of it. They usually choose noncompetitive trades and professions, and decline to cooperate with destructive policies. Their attitudes, being contrary to the approved policies of their time, are frequently misunderstood by their neighbors. The members, therefore, must endure afflictions and humiliations, and demonstrate their integrity by accepting patiently and kindly the indignities that are heaped upon them. The world has not yet learned that it takes a truly strong person to practice patience and humility. Quietists may form themselves into groups or sects, or they may remain members of prevailing religious Orders. In most cases, they can derive authority from the lives of great prophets and saints, whose examples are admired but not practiced by the orthodox.

The Sufis originally sought to find the spiritual consolation which they believed to be the essence of the Moslem doctrine. They were distinguished merely by the steadfastness with which they held to the spirit of the revelation. They declined to become involved in the luxuriousness of their contemporaries, and were ridiculed for their failure to share in the prosperous but unethical policies of their neighbors. Quietism, however, leads almost inevitably to religious experiences beyond mere piety and patience. The mind compensates the Quietist by opening to him an internal life that impels toward mysticism. Although, in the beginning, the search is primarily for peace, tranquility itself brings inevitable refinement of the psychic organism.

Those who have shared in mystical exaltations naturally desire to instruct others. The circumstances which lead the mystic to the enlargement of his inner vision soon become

the disciplines of his followers. Quietism is often associated with repentance. Those least sinful are most burdened by their vices. The hearty sinner seldom repents. Mystical revelations usually burden the soul with the memories of earlier guilt. The years which preceded the awakening become a heavy burden on the conscience until, like good St. Augustine, the convert feels himself required to spend his remaining years expiating the delinquencies of his youth. It requires more illumination than even most mystics attain to rise above the guilt mechanisms of the mind. Even the recognition of the eternal love and understanding of God is not strong enough to prevent the repentant sinner from striving desperately for a salvation which seems almost inaccessible even to the penitent.

To the Sufis, their mystical convictions are timeless and ageless and entirely outside the limitations of history. They do not regard themselves as descending from a particular prophet or teacher, but rather as the preservers and unfolders of eternal truth. Several streams of mystical convictions mingled in the descent of Sufistic metaphysics. The sect was strongly influenced by Christian hermits, who retired from the busy cosmopolitan communities to cultivate their spiritual convictions in remote places. Mohammed himself contacted such recluses, and received from them a favorable impression of the original teachings of Jesus. This impression became an integral part of Moslem mysticism. The Sufis were also affected by an influx of Buddhism from Central Asia.* The serenity and internal richness of the Buddhist life-way appealed strongly to these separatists, and was in dramatic contrast to the arrogance and worldliness of the Caliphate.

A third and no less significant source of inspiration was Alexandrian Neoplatonism, which was introduced along with other elements of classical thinking when the Moslem world became immersed in Greek philosophy.† It might not

* See J. G. R. Forlong, *Faiths of Man, A Cyclopaedia of Religions*.

† See *The Mystics of Islam* by Reynold A. Nicholson.

be amiss to suggest that Sufism is in many respects Islamic Neoplatonism. From the Alexandrian mystics, the Sufis inherited the consciousness of religious unity, and the advancement of human consciousness, by degrees or stages, from complete materialism to absolute idealism. It is believed that the Sufis contributed a powerful spiritual incentive to the Dervish Orders, greatly refining and beautifying these sects.

Albert Mackey contemplates the possible connection between Sufi mysticism and European Freemasonry: ". . . We may well be surprised at the coincidences existing between the customs and the dogmas of the Sofis [*sic*], and we would naturally be curious to investigate the causes of the close communication which existed at various times during the Crusades between the Mohammedan sect of philosophers and the Christian Order of Templars." He strengthens his argument by quoting *The Gnostics and Their Remains* by C. W. King, *Anacalypsis* by Godfrey Higgins, and the work of Sir William Jones in his *Asiatic Researches*.*

Gradually, the Sufis developed a kind of symbolical language with which they clothed their principal tenets. They bestowed new and subtle meanings, known only to themselves, upon common and familiar terms, in order that they might share their spiritual experiences with others of similar convictions. Like the Troubadours, they composed songs and poems apparently amorous and even sensual, and conveyed the impression to the uninitiated that they were devoted to the gratification of the passions and appetites. According to C. W. King, "Arabian influence brightly manifests itself in the poetry of the Troubadours, half-amatory, half-mystical like its model, of a spirit differing as widely from the materialism of classic elegiacs, as does the pointed 'Saracenic' architecture, with all its forms suggested by the tent-pole and curtain, from the massive Romanesque which it so rapidly displaced."†

* See *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.

† *The Gnostics and Their Remains*.

The *Quatrains of Omar Khayyam* seem to suggest that the celebrated tentmaker was a disillusioned man who found his greater comfort in "a jug of wine, a book of verse, and thou." The "vocabulary of love and wine," as it has been called, was adopted for the same protective reasons that produced the fantastic terminology of the alchemists. The Sufis were drifting further and further from the orthodoxy of Islam, or it might be better to say that Islam was drifting away from the simple and devout example of its founder. The position of the Sufis was hazarded by the enlargement of their own vision. No longer bound by the strict orthodoxy of the Moslem world, the Sufis found it expedient to appear to be dedicated to nothing more significant than pleasure slightly shadowed by the realization of inevitable dissolution.

Some derive the word *Sufi* from a root meaning wool; others think it to be identical with *sophia*, or *wisdom*.* As in the case of minstrels and trouveres, the fair and pure "beloved" was no mortal woman, but truth itself, which these mystics longed after with all the ardor of love-sick swains. Like the dark maiden of Solomon's Song, who was indeed the Black Virgin of Ephesus, and Beatrice, the beloved of Dante, the unattainable mistress of the Sufis was divine wisdom—the Virgin of the World. The Sufis' cup of wine was the chalice of ecstasy, the wine of life, the very power of God which intoxicated the soul, depriving the mind of reason, and delivering the enraptured saint from the burden of worldliness. The fatalism of the Sufis was a statement of complete emancipation from materialism and all its consequences. Life ends in silence; ambitions end in darkness; possessions rot away; and that which remains is reality, that inevitable fact of union with a Divine reality which is beyond knowing or definition.

Those who accepted literally the concept of mystical nihilism, considered the doctrines as the ultimate form of philosophical pessimism. To borrow a term from the desert,

* See *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

"it was all thunder without rain." The empty cup was broken at the well. Man came forth as a flower and was cut down, and poets chanted sadly the futility of existence. Even today, the *Rubaiyat* creates a nostalgic mood, catering to the human instinct to lament over everything in general and nothing in particular. We are most happy when a little sad, and we are most comfortable when we comfort ourselves. To the orthodox, the Sufi is gentle, but a little mad. He rejects heaven and hell and the earthly region which lies between. He lives in space, nourished by his love and wine.

Sufism divides the initiated teachers of mankind into three groups or classes, and accepts them as the illumined guardians and guides of human destiny. These heaven-sent ones are Masters, Prophets, and Saints. All aspiring mortals verge toward inclusion in one of these groups, and as they advance along the stations of the Sufistic Mysteries, they receive appropriate internal inspiration, which they manifest through works of godliness.* The Masters are those who are called the warlike teachers. They are the army of the enlightened, which must struggle against the forces of darkness. They fight the good fight, overcoming evil with the sharp, bright sword of truth. It is their destiny to become the spiritual governors and leaders of the race, and from them is chosen the governing body of the future. The Saints are the consolers, the peacemakers, the gentle ones who bring the message of love. They strive only by the example of humility. They are the servants of Allah, and they travel as the heart dictates. They bring the medicine which heals the sickness of souls, and they sing the song of the Beloved. They are the eternal priesthood, and the love of God flows through them as living waters changed by a miracle into wine.

Between the Master and the Saint stands the Prophet, the keeper of the middle road. In him the extremes find

*For an analysis of the "stations" in Sufi theory, see A. J. Arberry's *Sufism*.

common ground. He is the teacher; he reveals the doctrine; he is the messenger of the Divine Will. Through him the purposes of God are revealed. The Prophet is the enlightened educator, and he teaches through both wisdom and experience. The Prophets point the way to the perfection of arts and sciences. They protect the program for universal enlightenment, and in the end they form the Eternal University, the College of the Works. They reveal that all knowledge is truth in part, and that the ways of learning end in the internal understanding which is the apperception of the fullness of the Divine mind. The three Orders are, therefore, the warriors, the priests, and the teachers of righteousness, and each human being, according to the instincts of his own soul finds one of these paths opening within himself, and selects that which is the fulfillment of his own innermost resolution.

The modern trend in Sufi mysticism is away from all formalization of devotional practices. Theirs is a part of rest after labor. There is no place in their doctrine for a conflict of creeds or clash of opinions. They never argue about their beliefs or try to convert or influence those of other religious convictions. They seek rather to reveal Sufism as a quality of devotion which may be practiced by all who love God and seek to serve their fellow men. They have no special message for the intellectual except to relax and experience the love of God. They feel that this experience of the omnipresence of the Divine is the solution to the dissensions of mankind. Nothing can be proved by disputation; nothing can be solved by conversion. Truth can neither be defended nor assailed. Those who experience the presence of God require no other demonstration of the wonder of life. Sufism opens the door for those who are weary and heavy-laden, and therefore holds a peculiar fascination for that minority of troubled mortals which has found no consolation in material accomplishment.

The sect practices, in a modified form, those Eastern disciplines which strengthen the contemplative life. The Sufis

do not recommend a solitary existence, but rather the practice of internal peace without neglect of natural responsibilities. They have formed monastic houses and places of retreat, but these are symbolical and are reserved for those inclined by their own internal requirements to seek solitude. Recently, some Sufistic groups have gained considerable distinction for their studies in comparative religion and for their industrious efforts to unite Near Eastern sects in the communion of spiritual brotherhood. They are not aggressive, and are dominated by a sincere belief that those who have reached the degree of understanding which requires a larger internal life will be drawn naturally to the mystical life of illumination, under one name or another.