Theos Bernard Collection

East Asian and Bancroft Libraries

This collection is a rich resource for the study of all aspects of Tibetan culture that were documented by American explorer and scholar Theos Bernard at a time when the Tibetan government maintained a strong isolationist policy. In 1937, Bernard spent several months in Tibet, where he was granted unprecedented access to monastic practices in temples. He took thousands of photos and shot 20,000 ft. of 16 mm film, recording Tibetan civilization at the height of its development and before the Chinese invasion of 1949 and subsequent Cultural Revolution had destroyed it. As well as the pictorial material and personal archives, the Bernard collection includes extraordinary museum pieces—bronze statues, paintings, mandalas, prints on cloth, traditional clothing, implements and other items. The collection is housed in several libraries and museums around campus.

Contrary to the myth of a “closed” country, the Bernard collection sheds new light on the nature of Tibetan society and its selective openness, in certain circles, to interaction with the outside world. As with many records of cross-cultural interactions, Bernard's written and visual record of his life and experiences tells us just as much, if not more, about America in the 1930s as it does about India and Tibet at that moment in time.

--Paul G. Hackett, Special Projects Archivist at the Bancroft Library

---

The Library Associates

Join more than 6,000 other friends, book lovers, alumni, and faculty who recognize that the influence of a great research library reaches beyond the university it serves to the many communities of which it is a part.

Library Associates receive complimentary copies of the quarterly newsletter Bene Legere, as well as

Tibetan thangka portraying Hayagriva, and Shakyamuni Buddha, in copper, gold, bronze (both 19th-20th century).
invitations to special occasions at the Library. For more information on the Library Associates program, please write or telephone: The Library Development Office, Room 131 Doe Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000; telephone (510) 642-9377. Or, check our website.

From the Theos Bernard Collection, Berkeley Art Museum. Photos: Benjamin Blackwell.

[top] [prev] [next]