

THE SHOP SIGNS OF PEKING

ILLUSTRATIONS HAND PAINTED

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CHINESE PAINTING ASSOCIATION OF PEKING

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PREFACE

The shop signs of different parts of China vary according to the customs of the people; therefore, the signs of an article in Peiping oftentimes differ from this in Canton, also is this true of other cities; but as a rule, these signs have the designs or the pictures of the articles for sale and, in general, they are artistically executed and harmoniously coloured. But in some cases the articles for sale cannot be represented by pictures, then, they take these signs which have been used from time immemorial; for exemple, the signs for such a restaurant, where wines can be had, bear or has the same sign as it did centuries ago and poets have used the term in their verses, particularly in the composition of Li Tai-pai, the famous poet of the Tang Dynasty. He often used this expression in his favourite productions. This wine flag (or 洒旗) can be recognized from a great distance, when one wants to satisfy his thirst, he will not have to strain his optic nerves to get what he wants; they are as conspicuous as the barber poles in the Western Countries. The only explanation that I can give for the existence of these pictorial signs is that in the former times the percentage of iliteracy among the people was very low. I am sure with the establishment of the new public school system that most of the Chinese people can read the written language of the country. Therefore it is plain to see that these signs will gradually disappear as they are no longer necessary. Eventually they will become nothing but relics of the ancient Chinese Customs. So it is very advisable for those who are interested in things Chinese to add a copy of this album to their collection in Orientalia.

By H. K. Fung, Ph. D.

October first 1931

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