

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

3910 Los Feliz Blvd. - Los Angeles 27, Calif. - NOrmandy 3-2167

MANLY P. HALL
President - Founder



HENRY L. DRAKE
Vice-President

CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN -- OCTOBER 1965

Dear Friend:



Soon after my arrival in Tokyo, a Japanese friend officially presented me with a red hat. It is an ancient belief of the country that it is an auspicious event when a person completes his 60th year, for he has come to the end of the major astronomical cycle made up by combining the twelve zodiacal animals with the qualities of the five elements. The completion of this cycle signifies the beginning of a new life. Some, who lack a proper reverence for the occasion, suggest that the red hat signifies the beginning of second childhood. In any event, the Japanese look forward with keen anticipation to receiving this festive headgear. There is a general family gathering, with the decorated newly born member seated in the place of honor. Friends drop in to express their felicitations, and it is assumed that certain honors and benefits of a practical nature accompany the ritual. Once the red hat has been bestowed, the proud possessor thereof can do no wrong. He must be catered to and indulged in every way possible.

The young look upon him with reverence, and the elderly accept him into the number of the living patriarchs. His advice is sought on all important occasions, and it is assumed that he shall be encouraged to gratify all small whims and desires. He can sit in the sun in his garden to his heart's content, experiencing while yet alive some of the ancestor worship that is to be bestowed upon him after death. While I hardly hope that my red hat will elevate me to a state of infallibility, I am reproducing herewith a little snapshot that will indicate the distinctive shibui quality of this headgear.

In making reservations for my trip, I arranged to be in Kyoto for the opening day of the Gion festival. This festival, officially known as the Gion Matsuri, was instituted in the 9th century A.D. by the high priest of the Yasaka Shrine as a petition to the gods for relief from a terrible pestilence that was devastating the region. Immediately after the first procession, the plague abated. The ceremony belongs to the Shinto faith, and extends for more than a week. The most important feature of the Gion Matsuri is a parade through several of the principal streets of Kyoto on the morning of July 17th. For many days, the floats to be used in this parade are in the process of decoration. The floats themselves are preserved from year to year, but the shrine-cars, as they are called, are annually purified by an elaborate ceremony at the Shijo Bridge that spans a river flowing through the center of the city. After they have been duly purified, the floats are decorated most elaborately with rare embroideries, brocades, tassels and banners, and each is large enough to carry from a dozen to twenty persons.



My hotel was located at the corner of Kawaramachi Dori and Oike Dori. It is at this corner that the parade makes a sharp left turn, which presents a considerable engineering problem. From a window in the hotel, I was able to watch the maneuvering of the huge

portable towers featured in the festival. The towers are top-heavy, and it requires a great deal of skill to prevent them from turning over. It was raining, as is customary at the time of this festival, but in spite of this, more than a million persons assembled to watch the most impressive sight.

Although Kyoto is a city of a million and a half people, with heavy traffic congestion and a maze of overhead telephone and electric wires, the procession was so carefully handled that there was scarcely an interruption in the busy life of the city. In any event, the Japanese would never, under any conditions, sacrifice a festival to efficiency. The crowds were orderly and courteous, due perhaps to the religious nature of the occasion. The night before the parade, the entire Gion area was lit with countless taper lanterns. All the small shops, cafes, restaurants, and stalls along the street presented a festive appearance, and music and singing could be heard throughout the night. Even now the Gion Matsuri is believed to protect the city from all those evils that result from neglect of divine concerns.



From October 3rd through November 28th, our library exhibit will feature the works of Mr. Anatole Efimoff. We remember with pleasure his wonderful paintings of the "Forbidden City" of Peking, and now he brings us another fine series, this one made in Tahiti and other islands of the Society Group in 1964. These paintings are outstanding, not only as examples of artistic technique, but in the unusual stories they tell of life in the South Pacific. Mr. Efimoff has a wonderful ability to select things of interest, unusual persons and places, and splendid landscapes that reveal the soul of Tahiti and the surrounding areas.

The December art exhibit (December 5-19), "Bird Themes in Oriental Art," will show birds of many kinds against colorful backgrounds of branches and boughs. In both painting and woodblock technique, there is a depth of feeling for these living creatures that reveals much of the basic psychology of the Japanese people. Buddhism has made them keenly aware of the universal life and the kinship that exists between man and the feathered creatures around him. This is a mood exhibit, to bring peace, pleasure, and insight to the viewer.

Something new at our headquarters this fall is a "Workshop in the Theory and Practice of Philosophical Psychology and Analysis" to be conducted by Dr. Henry L. Drake on November 12th and 13th. There will be three 2½-hour sessions, in which the theory of philosophical psychology and analysis will be explained and its therapeutic practicality demonstrated. This is a new approach to the theory and practice of psychotherapy, directed toward understanding the meaning of man and assisting him in the dynamic expression of his full potential. Interested persons are invited to write or phone our Society for a detailed folder describing the Workshop.

This year it has been decided to have the Fall Festival on the first Sunday in November (Nov. 7th). Many friends look forward to these occasions as opportunities to meet old friends and make new ones, enjoy the delicious luncheon prepared by the Hospitality Committee, browse through the gift shop, with its many unusual treasures and beautiful Christmas cards, visit the library exhibit, and examine the recently acquired prints and pictures. At 2:15, I will give an informal talk in the Auditorium on "Myth and Magic in Modern Japan," in which I will discuss some of the strange beliefs and practices, unusual folklore, and little-known phases of Eastern psychology. Our facilities will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Come in time for the Sunday morning lecture: "Is Futility a Feeling or a Fact?" -- and be prepared for a pleasant day at our headquarters.

Most sincerely yours,

Manly P. Hall

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