

# The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

3910 Los Feliz Blvd. - Los Angeles, Calif. 90027 - 663-2167

MANLY P. HALL  
President - Founder



HENRY L. DRAKE  
Vice-President

## CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN - June 1968

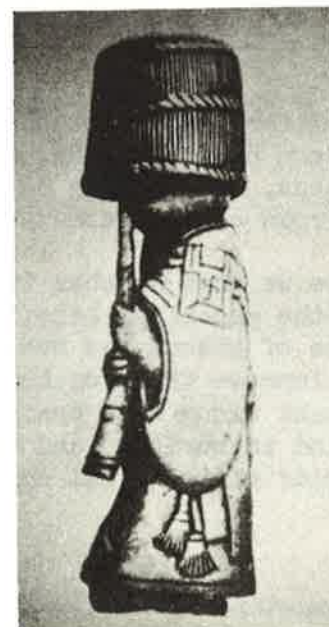
Dear Friend:

First a word about the improvements on our premises. Most of the buildings will be completed by the time you receive this letter. They look very well. The construction is adequate and they are a functional success. While the project for the air conditioning of the new Library unit was in process, it seemed advisable to take advantage of the opportunity to install air conditioning in other parts of our buildings at a time when this could be done most inexpensively.

Shortly after we announced that our Library Exhibit for May would feature a beautiful group of Chinese Embroideries, the Society received a very beautiful gift. A friend who read the announcement decided to contribute two fine examples of Manchu Embroidery. One is a full length robe with an extensive pattern, including flowers worked in the Chinese knot technique. The skirt of the coat is beautifully embroidered with a wave pattern and among the breaking sprays are fortunate Buddhist and Taoist symbols. The beautiful handwork is on a background of heavy black silk, and the coat is in excellent condition. The second example is a shorter jacket-like garment, probably a ladies coat, with heavy applique of woven border designs and embroidery, on a background of figured orange-red brocade. The design in the brocade is also devoted to fortunate symbols, flowers, butterflies and a representation of the Phoenix bird. We are grateful indeed that these splendid garments arrived in time to be included in our Exhibit.

The Recital of Ancient Japanese Music presented by the Society at our Open House on Sunday Afternoon, April 7th, proved to be a most delightful experience. A large and enthusiastic audience expressed pleasure to the Artists after the performance and there were a number of requests for recordings. Mr. Tamada, one of the greatest living exponents of the Shakuhachi or Bamboo Flute, presented several numbers featuring Zen Meditation Music. Later in the program, three other artists were introduced - Mr. Nagatani, who also played the flute, Mrs. Koda, a very famous artist, played the Samisen, and Mrs. Kurose, who is also a distinguished artist, then played the Koto.

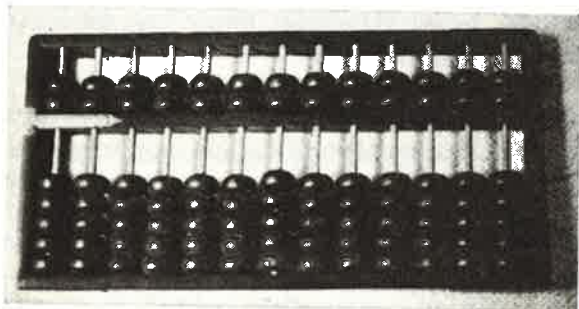
Note: At right is an old Ivory Netsuke of the Komuso, a religious mendicant concealing his identity under a strange headgear resembling an inverted straw wastebasket, and playing the Shakuhachi.



Of unusual interest on this occasion was that Mr. Tamada played two of the bamboo flutes simultaneously, producing a very interesting harmonic effect.

The use of music as a means of intensifying the mood of worship is practiced throughout the world. It is assumed that it makes the listener more receptive to the religious experience, and the Zen Masters who came from China to Japan in the 7th Century made an especially scientific use of the Bamboo flute. It is one evidence of the remarkable virtue and versatility of bamboo and indicates why this plant is considered to be an especially "honorable gentleman" of the plant kingdom. The tone of the bamboo flute is quite elusive and difficult to describe. Occasionally it sounds very much like a stringed instrument, such as a violin or the viola-da gamba. On other occasions, this flute suggests the French horn, or even a small pipe organ. The religious selections are intended to relax the mind and to convey without words the essential mystery of the Zen doctrine. The flute was especially used by the Fuge Zen Sect, which was established as the result of the return of the Buddhist Monk Kakushin from Korea about 1250 A.D.

In recent years, many scholars in Japan have sought to revive the old Ecclesiastical music, much as the Society for Ancient Music has labored in the West. As a result of constant effort and a most sincere dedication, about 130 of the old flute compositions have been restored for the pleasure and improvement of future generations. Mr. Tamada's concert included several of these compositions, which are seldom, if ever, heard in our time and are comparatively unknown to Western musicologists.



Modern Chinese Abacus used in business establishments.

The Abacus is an ancient calculating device which has contributed much to the development of practical mathematics. It may have originated among the Babylonians or Phoenicians, and was known to the Greeks as early as the Fifth Century B.C., and from them was communicated to the Romans, as a convenient and accurate means of working out arithmetical problems.

At the present time, it is widely used in the Orient and middle East. The form of abacus with which we are most familiar developed in China, passed to Korea and Japan. Practically every merchant uses this device and it is a familiar sight, not only in small shops but in the cashier's department of huge modern hotels, banks, and department stores. Every child receives training on the abacus, and testing has indicated that this simple ancient device of beads moving on rods can compete favorably with the adding machine and the cash register.

Here we have another interesting link between East and West and an indication of the practical benefits to be derived by such cultural exchange. A special type of abacus has been developed in the United States to assist blind persons to improve their mathematical ability. The technique of its use is now being taught along with braille. It is assumed that this will greatly assist the blind in business and will help them to compete more favorably in various fields of technical employment.

We had a busy time in San Francisco. In addition to the six lectures of our own program at the Scottish Rite Lecture Hall, we had a number of outside activities. On May 15th we addressed a joint meeting of Masonic Districts in the San Francisco Bay Area. On May 21st we addressed Civic Service Employees (Electric Company) for lunch, and spoke again for the same group on May 23rd. On May 20th we addressed another Masonic group, the El Cerrito Lodge #705. We also gave an afternoon talk to the Theosophical Society. It all added up to eleven lectures in fourteen days. Everything ran smoothly and there is an ever greater interest in programs of self-help and social orientation.

When I returned from San Francisco, it was my pleasure to begin the reorganization of our Library and Art collection. The new space permits the first general inventory of our highly diversified material. We now have space to file and store books, manuscripts, scrolls and artifacts, and can arrange exhibit material so that it is immediately available, not only for the use of institutions, but for scholars who may wish to examine or study it on our premises. It was an adventure and brought to light treasures we had not seen for many years. I hope to enjoy this project through most of the summer months.

Another advantage resulting from the increased space at our disposal would be in the matter of Exhibits. It will now be possible to feature more permanent displays, combining our present program with approved Library-Museum practice. Exhibit space will be nearly doubled and we will also be able to provide better working conditions for those interested in special research projects. It is most gratifying to see the fulfillment of a cherished dream.

We are profoundly grateful to all the good friends who through the years shared in the joys and responsibilities of trying to keep the flame of idealism alight in this materialistic generation. For your wonderful help and co-operation, I am

Always most gratefully yours,

*Manly P. Hall*

Are You Acquainted With:

"THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF MANLY P. HALL

If you do not have this series, we would especially like to call to your attention Volume II, which contains a series of articles on SAGES AND SEERS. The names selected are derived from a list of outstanding persons of recent times.

There is an extensive study of the life and writings of Nostradamus, Seer of France. He was certainly one of the greatest prophetic spirits of all times, and his adventurous and mysterious life is most dramatic reading.

Under the title Francis Bacon, the Concealed Poet, there is special emphasis upon the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, and the purpose behind this strange Fraternity of the Illumined.

There is a special section devoted to the life and teachings of Jacob Boehme, the God-Enlightened shoemaker, including some remarkable illustrations from rare books dealing with Boehme and a special reference to some of his manuscripts.

Johann Amos Comenius has been called the shepherd of children's minds. Comenius is entitled to be recognized as one of the founders of the Public School System, but most important, he was a mystic and set forth a wonderful idealistic way of bringing learning to the young. Many of his methods deserve consideration today.

The Comte de St.-Germain was described by Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, as "The Man who does not die". The "Wonder Man" as he was known, is presented in light of available records and includes material seldom if ever seen, among which may be mentioned a Philosophical Sonnet, by St.-Germain, of which the only known edition was published in Paris in 1795.

The great English mystic, William Blake, is better known for his art than for his contributions in the field of Esoteric Philosophy. This tribute to William Blake presents him as an idealist, to whom the concept of Freedom was the right to be noble, kind and wise.

Thomas Taylor, the English Platonist, struggled against poverty, poor health, and continued criticism throughout his life, but he has left the finest existing translations of the Platonic and Neo-Platonic Philosophers. Working in the British Museum he came nearer to discovering the true content of the great mystery system of the Greeks than any other scholar of the modern world.

The last article is a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, and includes a portrait head of this great Indian leader, modelled by Manly P. Hall.

This is an interesting and useful book, profusely illustrated. 316 Pages, bound in cloth, stamped in gold. Price: \$4.50. 5% Sales Tax in California.

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