

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:



On opening, I wish to thank you most sincerely for your kind Christmas greetings and remembrances. Personally, I have always enjoyed Christmas festivities. In this I take after Grandmother, who made the most of any opportunity to celebrate a happy holiday. Her philosophy was simple; namely, that there are so many troubles in the world that no one can afford to overlook a pleasant occasion.

We recently acquired an interesting Japanese *komuso* doll. It probably has some age and could well be an antique. The subject is a strolling musician carrying a bamboo flute called a *shakuhachi*. The most distinguishing feature of the *komuso* was his hat made of plated reeds and resembling an inverted waste basket. The real purpose was to conceal the face of the wearer, and some of the more elaborate examples resemble a space helmet with a small window in the front. Our dollmaker was most ingenious. He fashioned the hat for his figure by attaching reeds to the outside of a blue and white porcelain tea-cup. This procedure has reduced the depth of the hat and allows more of the man's face to show than would have normally been the case.

A *komuso* was originally a member of the *Fuke* Branch of the Zen sect of Buddhism, which was established in 1249 but has gradually faded away. The *Fuke* School has not entirely disappeared, however, or else it has been recently revived, as I saw two of these strolling musicians a few years ago when I was in Tokyo. The costume of the *komuso* combines modified religious garments with symbols of the Samurai cast. A Buddhist alms bag is hanging on the doll's chest, and it carries a sword in a tigerskin sheath. The doll wears a brownish robe and high, wet-weather clogs. The first toe on each foot is raised, a peculiarity especially noticeable in Melanesian and Indonesian dancing.

A side view of the doll shows the most proper and approved way to wear a *netsuke* and *inro*. The *inro* is suspended from the sash on the right side, held in place by a round *netsuke* and closed by an *ojime*. In the case of the doll, the *inro*, though perfect in all details, is only about a half-inch high.

The *komuso* playing on their wailing flutes wandered from house to house, most often at the New Year season, asking for donations for the maintenance of their temples. The virtue of their



solicitations would have been gravely reduced had their identity been known. Like old St. Nicholas, they had to perform their good deed in secrecy--in this case not in the dead of night but under their strange headgear. As time went on, it became obvious that the hat had many other practical possibilities. It enabled military spies hiding under pious appearances to travel about hunting for treason or violations of the very strict code of the Tokugawa period. They could explore the defenses of castles, observe the tax collectors without being recognized, and accept gifts along the way. They may have been the only spies in history to be supported by their own victims. Anonymity also contributed to the avengement of wrong and the numerous vendetta which distinguished the times.

Among those who joined the ranks of the komuso were sinners and criminals who had taken vows to atone for their misdeeds. By degrees these practices mingled with the concept of pilgrimage, and strolling komuso could be seen on village streets, mountain roads, and along Japanese beaches. Some became very proficient on their flutes, and their music was greatly admired by devotees of the Zen doctrine.

One of the most famous of the Japanese feudal lords, Date Masamune, had a faithful retainer named Basho who served his master for many years disguised as a komuso. He not only acted as a spy but he brought faithful reports about the needs and conditions of the people and was responsible for many benefits for the aged and destitute. Masamune so highly valued his faithful informer that he gave the name of Basho-no-tsuji to the central district of the city of Sendai.



The celebration of St. Valentine's Day on February 14th seems to be, in part at least, a comedy of errors. Even so, it is a delightful opportunity for the expression of romantic sentiments. In the hagiology of the Church, two saints (both martyred) are said to have become confused, but nothing in the life of either of them has the slightest bearing upon modern practice. One rather curious belief that gained prominence was that young men should write letters to their sweethearts on St. Valentine's Day. The Church, always solicitous for the good of the human soul, said it would be much better if these letters were addressed to saints, and St. Valentine (which one is not certain) was selected to receive these letters.

It appears more likely that Valentine's Day as we know it was based upon the Roman festival of the Lupercalia, which was generally celebrated about the middle of February. It was an occasion for exchange of greetings and other pleasantries; and with the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, its romantic aspect was emphasized. As might be expected, the original Roman celebration was not exactly genteel and included animal sacrifice and a variety of superstitions. In the fifth century, Pope Gelasius I changed the tone of this holiday markedly by designating it the Feast of Purification.

Although the modern practice of sending printed and ornamented valentines developed in comparatively recent times, important collections of these mementos are highly valued, and rare examples are very expensive. The popularity of Valentine cards spread rapidly; and during the nineteenth century the printing and distributing of these sentimental souvenirs was greater than the demands for cards at other seasons, such as Christmas and Easter. Cupid firing his shaft into a heart-shaped symbol is also traceable to the old

Roman festivals where cherubs were attendant upon the goddess Venus. The arrow as a symbol of love is found in many countries, including Japan and China, and is another symbolic inconsistency being usually a symbol of death. Although it is all a mixed-up occasion, no one really cares, for it is one of those nice opportunities to express affection and admiration.



Some years ago we published a limited reprint of the *Theoretical Arithmetic of the Pythagoreans* by Thomas Taylor. At that time, I added a brief introduction describing the wheel of Pythagoras as it was used for purposes of divination for many centuries in Europe. Our edition has been out of print for a long time, and we recently gave the New York publisher and bookseller, Samuel Weiser, permission to issue a new edition which includes our introduction. This book, which contains about all that is actually known about the Pythagorean philosophy of numbers can be ordered from our Gift Shop.

The Theosophical Press in Amsterdam has recently translated and published our brochure, *The Occult Anatomy of Man*. It is very nicely printed and may be of service to many readers in this country or in Europe who are familiar with Dutch. Included in the brochure is an appendix on Occult Masonry. This little volume may also be ordered directly from us.

In bringing this bulletin to a close, I should mention the number of letters we are receiving from people suffering from problems of adjustment with the age groups to which they belong. As we cannot adequately answer all this correspondence, we would like to call the attention of our friends to a publication which covers most phases of these complex situations. Not long ago, we issued a little publication called *Life Planning*. It consists of three articles which I wrote for our *Journal*. These deal with planning a career, planning a home, and planning for retirement. You may find it helpful in making practical decisions for your own future, and it may also be an inexpensive but useful gift for your friends in the various age groups.

We hope you all will enjoy a very good New Year and find in the months ahead time for self-improvement and the unfoldment of those inner resources which will give you victory over the circumstances which are constantly arising in human society.

Always sincerely and gratefully,

SPECIAL NOTICE FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional works in future issues. These books may be ordered directly from The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. (address on first page). Please add 25¢ for handling on orders of less than \$5.00, and sales tax is to be included by California residents. Note: Prices are subject to change without notice.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Price</u>
Kingdom of the Gods	G. Hodson	\$ 10.75
Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment	Rudolf Steiner (P)	2.25
Kobo and the Wishing Pictures (Children)	Dorothy Boruch	2.95
Kularnava Tantra	Sir John Woodroffe	7.50
The Kabala of Numbers	Sepharial	8.50
Kintaro's Adventures	Florence Sakada	1.75
Krishnamurti and the Experience of the Silent Mind	A.D. Dhopeswarkar	3.00
The Key to Theosophy	H.P. Blavatsky	2.50
Language in Thought and Action	Hayakawa	5.50
Letters of the Scattered Brotherhood	M. Strong	3.00
The Life Divine, Volumes I and II	Sri Aurobindo	9.50
Life Everlasting	Marie Corelli	4.95
The Life of the Buddha	L. Adams Beck	3.00
Light on the Path	Mabel Collins	4.00
Lights on the Tantra	M.P. Pandit	2.00
The Lively Art of Ink Painting	Ogura	4.95
The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden	Intro. by Frank Crane	3.95
A Lost Civilization	Walter Heissig	6.95
Lost Years of Jesus	C. Potter	5.00
Love Against Hate	K. Menninger (P)	2.25
Lore and Lure of Outer Space, Astronomy, Astrology	Lehner	5.00
The Light of Asia	Sir Edward Arnold (P)	1.25
The Ladder of Lights	William G. Gray	6.00
Little One Inch and Other Stories	Florence Sakada	2.00
Letters on Occult Meditation	Alice Bailey	7.00
The Light of the Soul	Alice Bailey	8.00
The Laws of Manu (Sacred Books of the East)	Max Muller (Ed) (P)	4.00
Lost Continents (Atlantis Theme)	L.S. de Camp (P)	2.75
Life Between Death and Rebirth	Rudolf Steiner	7.50
Life Ahead	J. Krishnamurti (P)	1.45

Books by Manly P. Hall:



The Culture of the Mind	\$ 1.00
Four Seasons of the Spirit	1.25
Friendship, Love, and Beauty	1.25
Journey in Truth	5.00
Life Planning	1.00
The Occult Anatomy of Man (Dutch Trans)	1.00
Theoretical Arithmetic of the Pythagoreans	10.00
by Thomas Taylor with introduction by Manly P. Hall	

