

BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP
ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN STUDIES
SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNCIL

#/2

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Call For Papers

Plans have been made to publish a group of essays on Burma as part of the Contributions to Asian Studies series published by E. J. Brill. About seven or perhaps nine papers will compose the volume, and authors are requested to send publishable essays to John P. Ferguson, who will act as editor. Those who read papers at the last colloquium at Denison are urged to submit their work for possible inclusion in the volume. Those preparing papers for the forthcoming colloquium at Chicago may well wish to submit their work for consideration also. It is hoped that the volume on Burma will demonstrate the vitality and range of current scholarship on Burma that the report below certainly suggests.

Report on Current Burma Research

Your editor mailed out 36 letters to selected people in our Burma Studies Group with a request for news on their recent research and activities. Half of those letters produced replies. The information received should be of great interest to all and I am most pleased with the responses. Others who can report on their work are certainly encouraged to write to John Ferguson directly.

MARGARET AUNG THWIN is considering doing an "Oral History" project with Burmese she knows who are now in the United States. She has been doing similar work with Miccosukee Indians in Florida. MAUREEN AUNG THWIN reports a conversation with Vivian Ba at the Burmese Embassy in Paris. Vivian Ba has been particularly active in documenting Burmese contacts with Europe in the 19th century. Maureen noted also a reception in September at the Asia Society for Maurice D. Bean, the new U.S. ambassador to Burma. MICHAEL AUNG THWIN is working with a SSRC post-doctoral grant on the nature of state and kingship in pre-modern Burma, hoping to get over to Burma with his sister Maureen this winter to do some more work there. Mike is in charge of the Burma section of the NEH bibliography project run by Shiro Saito from Hawaii. Mike would welcome data on any obscure reference works on Burma that are not well known here or elsewhere. Please send your suggestions to Mike at 1356 McIntyre Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48105. Mike notes that PAT HERBERT's thesis on the Saya San Rebellion is coming along well. Mike reported also on the visit of MI MI KHAING and SAW SAIMONG to Burma in June for their daughter's wedding to U Ne Win's son. Mi Mi Khaing, I've been told, has recovered well from her eye operation and is teaching a course in Women's Studies at the U. of Michigan. Saw Saimong has completed his translation of the Kentung Khün Chronicle, which will be published in the Michigan Papers series. L. E. BAGSHAW continues to work on his research into the origins of the pwe-gyaung. He is developing a paper on possible Chinese Mahayanist influences upon Burmese paramats. His tentative title is "Looking into the origins and nature of some 18th century unorthodox movements." TERRY BAILEY has published her "Some Burmese Paintings of the Seventeenth Century and Later," Part I, in Artibus Asiae 38,4:267-286 (1976). Parts II and III should be forthcoming soon. She continues to work on seeking a chronology of painted books, and invited MYO LWIN for a while to Denison to work on translating micro films of illustrated parabaik. New gifts to the Burmese Art Collection at Denison include a votive plaque from Moulmein (late 17th-early 18th), a watercolor of Taungoo (1865), and some 19th c. lacquer ware. Terry also reports that DR. OTTO KAROW of Frankfurt East Asian Institute is planning a trip to Burma in February to gather

material for a book on Burmese culture. SARAH and KONRAD BEKKER have been busy with many projects: sound filmstrips ("Burma: The Golden Land." Current Affairs, Wilton, CT, 1974); lectures on the nat pwe at Cornell, the Asia Society, and Drew; reworking Sarah's doctoral thesis for George Washington U. ("The Burmese Concept of Anada: Its Function and Meaning in Interpersonal Relations"); and applying for funding to complete a color film in Switzerland, "Spirit Ceremonies in Burma: The Natpwe" and to publish a book on the same subject. Sarah will also be giving a paper on nats at the AAA meeting in the spring. RICHARD COOLER has completed a catalogue for the October exhibition, "British Romantic Views of the First Anglo-Burmese War, 1824-1826" at the Midwest Conf. on Asian Affairs (cat. available from Dept. of Art, Northern Illinois U., DeKalb, IL 60115). JOHN CADY, since his U.S. and Burma, has published The Southeast Asian World (Forum Press, St. Louis, 1977), containing references to Burma. His major project continues to be finishing up the writing of his Burmese experiences from the Judson College assignment in 1935 up to his return to academia in 1949. He is reviewing his own letters and diaries, O.S.S. experience, Burma desk and consular assignments, and records at the State Dept. and data from For. Relations of the U.S. (FRUS). DOROTHY GUYOT has contributed a chapter to the forthcoming book of essays honoring the memory of H. J. Benda (Yale U. Press). Her essay is entitled "Communal Conflict in the Burma Delta," dealing with a Burmese-Karen clash in 1942. Last summer U KHIN had to postpone new research because he was recovering from a cataract operation on his right eye. He is thinking of retirement in "a couple of years." MAUNG MAUNG GYI read a paper entitled "The Patterns of Authoritarian Rule in Burma" for the Mid-West Conf. on Asian Affairs in 1976. He also reviewed Keeton's King Thebaw and the Ecological Rape of Burma in the spring issue of Human Ecology. DAVID PFANNER has been Deputy Representative of the Ford Foundation's Southeast Asia Regional Office in Bangkok for the past six years. He reports that the Burmese Director of Fine Arts attended a UNESCO sponsored seminar earlier this year on bronze age culture. Some Burmese, he said, are being trained at the International Rice Research Institute at Los Banos. David has managed to revisit three times since 1960 the Burmese village 12 miles north of Pegu where he did his field work, and he kindly wrote up a brief report for the Bulletin which was so interesting that your editor has reproduced it word-for-word as a supplement. HAIGH ROOP reported on many encouraging developments in cooperative efforts with the Burmese at Honolulu. In the fall of 1976 U Myint Aung, Deputy Minister of Ed., and Prof. William Paw, Rector of the Inst. of Economics, came to Honolulu, and from that visit have developed a number of subsequent contacts. Haigh's report of the activities is so encouraging and important that it also is attached as a supplement.

JOE SILVERSTEIN last summer was finishing up the galleys for his book, Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation (Princeton U. Press) and has another book, Burma and the Problems of National Unity at the Time of Independence, under consideration for publication by a university press. He also was working on an article tentatively entitled, "Whither Burmese Socialism." Joe also continues to arrange an ongoing series of programs on Burma for the Burma Council of the Asia Society. WILHELM SOLHEIM wrote in the fall to say that JEAN KENNEDY has just completed her doctoral thesis at the U. of Hawaii at Manoa. It involves the prehistory and early history of both Burma and Thailand. She planned to go into the field in the fall, after returning to Australia. MELFORD SPIRO reported that his book Kinship and Marriage in Burma would be published in the fall by the U. of California Press. Mel described it as "a cultural and a psychological analysis of these two domains." He also contemplates a fourth volume on Burma some time in the future. WON YOON has had an article accepted for the Journal of Southeast Asian Studies entitled "Military Expediency - A Determining Factor in the Japanese Policy With Respect to

Burmese Independence (1943)." Won had read that paper at our last Burma Studies Colloquium. He is currently doing research on the Japanese military administration in Burma in 1942-3, hoping to pursue this topic on sabbatical (1978-9) at the Center for S.E. Asian Studies at Kyoto U. and the Institute of S.E. Asian Studies at the U. of Singapore.

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Your editor regrets the delay in getting this material to you but trusts that you will find it as interesting to read as he did! Somehow it is really encouraging to see so much research being done, and it is devoutly to be hoped that others will send me their news for the next issue.

John P. Ferguson
Editor

P.S. A late item, kindness of Maureen Aung Thwin: Princeton U. Press has launched a new series, "The Princeton Library of Asian Translations." The Southeast Asian advisory committee are Professors E. Dimock, B. S. Miller, A. K. Ramanujan, and R. Russell. Interested translators should contact the committee if they have an important Burmese work they feel should be translated.

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Report of David E. Pfanner
written 7/21/77

I spent eighteen months in a Burmese village in 1959-60 about 12 miles north-east of Pegu. Since that time, I have revisited the village three times, the last time being in March and your readers might be interested in a brief report on this trip in which I tried to compare the situation now with that of previous years.

Judging from a visit to this rural community 60 miles northeast of Rangoon, farm families have suffered marginally less than urban workers from the inflationary squeeze. Housing has improved, but villagers are also suffering from high prices and the unavailability of goods to which they were formerly accustomed. Roofing material is unavailable and the price of a piece of material for a longyi (or Burmese sarong) has risen from Kyats 9 to Kyats 30 or more in the last few years. The price farmers are receiving for their paddy has been raised, but they must sell it all to the government at controlled prices. Their dry season crop of groundnuts had also been sold at controlled prices but groundnuts have recently been decontrolled and offer some hope for increasing their cash income, along with vegetable crops which are also not controlled. The high cost of inputs such as fertilizer, credit and labor offer little incentive to increase production, and only a small proportion of the crop is in high yielding varieties. The government effort to encourage the use of tractors has been a failure -- of the two tractors made available to the village, one has broken down and is idle due to lack of spare parts. The farmers say tractors are not suited to Burmese conditions.

A government credit scheme to make advances on the paddy crop is insufficient to meet the need and farmers continue to pay extremely high rates of interest on loans secured with gold. (Kyats 3.50 per month per Kyats 100 borrowed or 42% per year) or cattle (Kyats 6 per month per Kyats 100 borrowed or 72% per year).

The energy crisis has priced kerosene out of the market and farmers must travel to the forests to obtain wood for fuel. The trip now takes three times longer than in the past since farmers must travel farther and farther as the edge of the forest recedes under the pressure.

The village size and population has increased little, due apparently to an out-migration of people seeking work in nearby towns -- a phenomenon almost unknown in former days. Aside from a visiting practical nurse, few government officials come to the village. Health care in the region has improved with increased numbers of medical and paramedical personnel in the township two miles away and the district town ten miles away. Formerly babies were all born in the village but now they are delivered in one of these two towns. Medicines are in short supply throughout the country although black-market drugs (often out-dated) are on sale, including birth control pills.

Education at the village level is in the same sorry state as fifteen years ago, with about the same number of children enrolled in the primary school as in 1960. Although a few more children are being educated beyond the fourth standard, the general view is that sending children outside the village to the district school is not worthwhile since further education is not necessary to farming and the people prefer to be farmers. Economic considerations are probably also a factor.

One significant institution that continues to have a strong influence on the village is the Buddhist Sangha or brotherhood of monks. The two temples with their associated "monasteries" and religious schools are in better physical condition than ever, and the number of monks has increased at one of them, including six novices from the Shan States who are under religious instruction. After visiting these temples, one comes away with the conviction that the dominant value orientations of the villagers are still those of Buddhism, that the role of the monk continues as a pivotal one in maintaining these values and the social stability that their continued expression supports.

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Report of Burmese Activities at the University of Hawaii

In Honolulu during the past year Burmese-related activity has picked up markedly. While we had seen several Burmese passing through over the past three years, the visit here last fall of Deputy Minister of Education U Myint Aung and Professor William Paw, Rector of the Institute of Economics, has led to the arrival of a number of Burmese scholars at the University of Hawaii as well as at the East-West Center located on the University's main campus.

The Burmese Government is currently developing a system of Regional Colleges to be located throughout the 14 Divisions and States of the Union. These Colleges will replace the first two years of college education, providing an initial year of general education followed by a second year concentrating on technical skills (e.g. motor mechanics, farming technology, cloth weaving, air conditioning mechanics, etc.) in order to reduce the number of college graduates who are presently finding it difficult to gain employment as well as to provide a pool of qualified technicians to aid in the modernization of the country. A select group of Regional College graduates will be permitted to move on to university studies, principally at Rangoon Arts and Sciences University. Other graduates of the Colleges will either move directly into the job market or will have an option of taking a third year of on-the-job training supervised by the College.

Since the University of Hawaii system includes a number of Community Colleges with just such a professional/technical emphasis, the primary purpose of the trip by Deputy Minister U Myint Aung and Professor Paw was to consult with Community College and College of Education faculty and administrators to determine whether Hawaii's experience could be helpful to the Burmese in establishing their new colleges. At the same time, however, U Myint Aung and Hsaya Paw discussed with the East-West Center the possibility of sending Burmese scholars here for study in the Center's various "problem-solving" institutes in such areas as culture preservation, communication, and population studies.

As a result of this visit, two faculty members of the University of Hawaii College of Education went to Burma at Government invitation in December of last year to survey the proposed Regional College system and to make recommendations for its implementation. Dr. Lawrence Zane and Mr. John Rantala spent five weeks visiting a wide variety of existing institutions and sites of proposed new ones, including such remote areas as Myitchina and Taunggyi, following which they wrote an extensive report making detailed recommendations on such areas of the College system as curriculum development, teacher training, industry involvement in College development, and many others.

This trip by Dr. Zane and Mr. Rantala proved so successful that shortly after their return the first group of Burmese came to the College of Education for a brief orientation on the Community College system in Hawaii. Dr. Tin Aung, Professor of Physics, Rangoon Arts and Sciences University, U Than Myint, Director of the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education, and U Khin Aung Kyi, Professor of Chemical Engineering, Rangoon Institute of Technology, spent three weeks consulting with Community College administrators and studying the system established here.

Towards the end of May a second group arrived for a three-month period of study. Dr. Khin Maung Kywe, Lecturer at the Rangoon Institute of Economics and Planning Officer with the Ministry of Education, researched administrative structures of the Community College system; Dr. Than Htaik, Lecturer in Chemical Engineering, Chemistry Department, Rangoon Arts and Sciences University, explored various possibilities for organizing the third or OJT year of Regional College instruction; U Hla Myint, Lecturer in the Technical Teacher Training Unit, Government Technical Institute, developed a proposal for a training program for Regional College faculty; and U Kyin Soe, Lecturer in the Mechanical Engineering Department, Rangoon Institute of Technology, studied procedures for curriculum development.

It is hoped that further groups will be coming to Honolulu to continue work with the College of Education, and Dr. Zane is also hopeful that it may be possible to develop a program under which American scholars would be sent to Burma to provide teacher training for Regional College faculty.

Simultaneously with this activity in connection with the Regional Colleges, Burmese began arriving at the East-West Center to receive advanced training in a variety of fields. The first of the arrivals were U Kyaw Win of the Cultural Institute, Ministry of Culture, studying the preservation of cultural values, U Maung Maung Thaike of the Burma Historical Research Department, Ministry of Culture, studying archiving techniques and the preservation of historical records, U Aung Chein of the population and Manpower section of the Census Department, studying demography at the Center's Population Institute, and Sao Khai Hpa, Editor of the Working People's Daily, who was a Jefferson Fellow in Journalism at the Center.

Two teachers of English as a second language have attended programs in the Culture Learning Institute: U Thi Ha, Head of the English Language Centre in Rangoon, attended a seven-month program in TESOL, while U Han Tin of the English Department, Institute of Education, attended a three-month program in language planning. These two scholars, both of whom have received training in linguistics in England, were also able to attend the Linguistic Society of America's summer Linguistics Institute which was held in Hawaii this year.

Drs. Ko Gyi and Lay Maung of the Ministry of Health were at the Center for a brief time attending a population seminar as part of a longer trip studying population problems in the United States and Korea, while Dr. Mi Mi Khin of the Virology Research Division, Department of Medical Research, has spent eight months doing virology research at Leahi Hospital in Honolulu, with particular emphasis on dengue fever.

All of this has naturally meant a much increased level of Burmese-connected activity for the small local Burmese community and those of us with a special interest in Burma. But for me personally, the sequence of events has culminated in the granting of permission to spend ten months in Burma studying the language of the inscriptions. I am, of course, particularly pleased and honored to be allowed to do this; let us hope that this may signal, at least in some degree, a reopening of the country to American scholars.

D. Haigh Roop -
University of Hawaii
October 18, 1977

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Please send all items for future Bulletins to that address.

An important questionnaire has been enclosed. Please fill it out and return to Shiro Saito (mailing address side on last sheet) as soon as possible. Your cooperation will benefit Burmese studies.