

BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP

Association for Asian Studies

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#30

The Burma Studies Group met twice (March 22 and 24) during the AAS meeting at Philadelphia's Franklin Plaza. The following were present on March 22: S. Bekker, T. Gibson, D. Steinberg, J. Musgrave, J. Broomfield, L. Lefferts, M. Rhum, D. Hytha, R. Cooler, D. Guyot, P. Young, J. Wright, J. Guyot, J. Silverstein, H. MacDougall, P. Bennett, W. Jones, J. Ferguson, C. Compton, S. Go, A. Somboon, E. Martin, N. Kammerer, W. Keeler, L. Hanks, J. Hanks, C. Keyes, F. Colley, B. Musgrave, J. Wiant, M. Aung-Thwin, N. Bacthi, W. Yoon, M. Nichols, C. Ferguson.

The Group decided not to meet officially at Michigan this summer for a colloquium; however, a dozen or so stalwarts from the Burma Studies Group will attend the SEASSI meetings in August but not to present papers. The hope was expressed that when we are ready for our next colloquium, it could be held wherever the proposed Burma Studies Center is located.

At the March 22 meeting the Group was given two presentations concerning a possible Burma Studies Center. The first was an expression of interest by Dr. John Broomfield, speaking for the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco. Dr. Broomfield explained how the Institute was founded in the 1960's and is an accredited institution with graduate students in Asian studies who often stress East-West linkages discoverable in psychology and Buddhist meditation. For example some students have traveled to India and Burma with a faculty member who has been a nun in Burma.

The Institute plans to move to larger quarters, where there would be room for the Bekker collection. An art and design program would also insure interest in not only Burmese art but also Indian works. Plans exist also to establish language training, and Burmese would be one of the major languages taught.

Questions from the floor dealt with the scope of academic activities beyond the artistic and philosophic use of the Bekker collection -- that is, the BSG Center's role as an academic entity.

The second expression of interest in the proposed Burma Studies Center was by Dr. Richard Cooler, speaking for the University of Northern Illinois, DeKalb, Illinois. The University, through the efforts of Dr. Cooler, has put together a proposal including the following: half-time release from the Art Dept. for R. Cooler to curate the art collection and act as BSG Center director; the promise of funds (\$5-6000) to move the Bekker collection from Switzerland to the U.S.; permanent space in the Swen Parson Gallery Annex (17' x 18.5') to house the collection; temporary exhibits in the N.I.U. downtown Chicago gallery and/or Swen Parson; additional space in anthropology museum and musicology museum; an interest in publishing a Burma Art Newsletter, much as Denison once did; publishing through Art Dept. a catalog of Bekker collection; interest in support of an assistantship for a Burmese student to help catalog library materials; shelving materials together in library and mailing accessions lists to keep Burma Studies Group informed; mailing out Bulletin of Burma Studies Group and colloquium proceedings of BSG by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, if such is desired; cooperative arrangement with University of Illinois to promote the study of Burmese language; the convenience of Northern Illinois as host for SEASSI as Michigan has been; a policy of the University of Northern Illinois not to concentrate in the future

upon China and Japan, thus freeing more resources to concentrate upon Southeast Asia; and rooming accommodations arranged at nearby Holmes Student Center for BSG members during a colloquium. A letter from Anne C. Kaplan, Assistant Provost to J.P. Ferguson strongly indicated the interest and commitment of the administration of the University to the project.

Questions from the floor dealt with how much time the Burma Studies Group had to make a decision and how such decisions were to be made. Sarah Bekker certainly hopes a decision can be made fairly soon (clarified after the meeting to be before the end of 1985), and the group nominated a group to deal with the matter (see below).

On March 24, the Burma Studies Group met again to hear a presentation from Russell Panczenko, Director of the Elvehjem Museum of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Those present were T. Gibson, R. Cooler, M. Aung-Thwin, J. & C. Ferguson, W. Jones, S. Bekker, F. Colley, P. Young, H. MacDougall, J. Wiant, L. Lefferts, J. Bennett, J. Musgrave, K. Lehman, and L. Cort. Joining us later was J. Raducha.

Mr. Panczenko proposed exhibiting the Burma Studies Group art collection on the 4th floor of the Elvehjem in an Asian Art Gallery (35' x 35' or 35' x 45'). Storage space is ample. Hopefully hired would be a curator knowledgeable about Burma, who would be a part-time faculty member and a member of the Southeast Asia Center. (Also interested in working with the BSG is the South Asian Studies Dept.) Art-related library items would be housed in the Museum's own large art library; non-art items would go to the nearby graduate library. Meeting space is available in the Museum's auditoriums and several seminar rooms. Burmese articles and announcements could be printed in the Museum's publications. Funding would come mainly from the Museum, with also possible help from the Wisconsin Foundation.

Questions from the floor elicited Mr. Panczenko's belief that a museum curatorial position would produce more scholarly endeavor than the administration-oriented activity of a Burma Studies Center Director. In terms of funding, Mr. Panczenko believed that the presence in Madison of the collection would inspire the funding (for curator, etc.) but that the museum itself would be able to pay for shipment of the Bekker collection from Switzerland (\$5-6000). Other issues involved a plan of an advisory board of BSG versus a plan of trustees of the BSG with legal responsibilities to insure BSG materials are properly handled.

BSG Hlutdaw

The BSG at the Friday meeting nominated a group (let us call them the "BSG Hlutdaw") to decide how to proceed. Those appointed were Sarah Bekker, Michael Aung-Thwin, Jerry Bennett, John Musgrave, John Ferguson, and Kris Lehman. Those present indicated that a Burma Studies Center should be pursued, most certainly.

How to Proceed?

True to the traditions of the culture we study, we seem to avoid democratic votes, and we obfuscate committees. Instead we relish and seek consensus, although we are collectively seldom quiet long enough in one place to sense it.

Since your editor-secretary is in a position to hear your opinion quietly now, perhaps it is time for all interested to have a say if they have not already done so. After a reasonable length of waiting time (3 weeks?), editor-secretary could then send to our Hlutdaw any and all reactions, thus enabling them to reach a "consensus."

already done so. After a reasonable length of waiting time (3 weeks?), editor-secretary could then send to our Hlutdaw any and all reactions, thus enabling them to reach a "consensus."

Would you please send your opinion regarding the following:

- I. Where is the BSG Center to be located?
 - A. California
 - B. No. Illinois
 - C. Wisconsin

- II. Any additions to the BSG Hlutdaw?
 - A. See list above
 - B. Dave Steinberg (nominated by editor-secretary)*
 - C. Hugh MacDougall (nominated by J. Wiant)*

* = none of our "nominations" traditionally have seconds or are voted upon. These two were suggested at dinner or later after "Lower" and "Upper" Burma reunited.

After Your Replies:

We could vote for all or certain members of the Hlutdaw to become trustees of a non-profit Burma Studies Group Foundation. These trustees would then be authorized to enter into a legal relationship with the host institution and potential donors.

At the conclusion of all this, if there is mass dissatisfaction, then editor-secretary promises to fly off on his zawgyi staff to the Himawuntha forest and bother you no longer with millennial schemes. If there is mass delight, then treasures should flow appropriately toward the Center, bringing the Emerald Queen and dancing in the streets.

Please, then, send your comments to editor-secretary in order that we may approach consensus soon.

Bagshawe Translation

BSG funds (\$300-\$400) were approved to publish Bagshawe's translation, but a request from Leader for Life wisely asked for the Burmese text also. Secretary for Life will look into availability and cost of publishing Burmese version concurrently.

Other News:

Mrs. E. H. Moore, 45 Chelsea Square, London SM3 6LH, England, has published an inventory of the Williams-Hunt collection of post WWII photographs, including Burma. WARD KEELER has Fullbright approval to study puppetry in Burma but awaits a visa. MYO MYINT returns to U.S. from reading documents on King Mindon in England. White Orchid Books, 487/42 Soi Wattana Slip, Bangkok, Thailand is planning to publish a guide on Burma and Temple's 37 Nats. KHIN MYO CHIT's A Wonderland of Burmese Legends has been published by the Tamarind Press, GPO Box 1996, Bangkok 10501. SARAH BEKKER presented her paper, "Transformation of the Nats: The Humanization Process in the Depiction of the Thirty-Seven Lords of Burma" at the 2nd International Conference of South Asian Religious Art Studies at Lucknow, India, Sept. 17-21, 1984. Proceedings will be published in England as "Pantheons

of Power." Sarah will be an Southeast Asian art archivist for ARAS (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism), and she will begin with Burma. While browsing about at the AAS meeting, your editor noted DAVID STEINBERG's "Constitutional and Political Bases of Minority Insurrections in Burma" in Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia, ed. by L. Joo-Jock and S. Vani, Inst. of SEA Studies, Singapore, 1984; LUCIEN M. HANKS and Constance M. Wilson's The Burma-Thailand Frontier Over Sixteen Decades: Three Descriptive Documents, Ohio U., Athens, Ohio, 1985; CHARLES B. SMITH The Burmese Communist Party in the 1980's, Inst. of SEA Studies, Singapore, 1984; MICHAEL AUNG THWIN's "Prophecies, Omens, and Dialogue: Tools of the Trade in Burmese Historiography," in Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought, Yale U. SEA Studies, New Haven, 1982, and I found his "Kingship, the Sangha and Society in Pagan" in Explorations in Early SEA History: The Origins of SEA Statecraft, ed. by K. R. Hall and J. K. Whitmore, U. of Mich., Ann Arbor. Mike will publish Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma in the U. of Hawaii Press this September. Also noted JOHN F. CADY's Contact with Burma, 1935-49: A Personal Account, Ohio U., Athens, 1983.

The Asia Society is planning a Washington Burma Night. Contact them for details. Tower Records in N.Y.C. has put out a three-record set of Burmese music. Details next Bulletin. We would appreciate your sending any information on existing video tapes on Burma - any subject. We could then publish the data for everyone's benefit.

Please send any details about anyone's going to study in Burma or coming here. There was much talk at Philadelphia, but your secretary is unsure of the details.

David Hytha was at our meeting, but we must not have his proper address. Can anyone help with a correct one?

Editor's Note: My thanks to all who prepared such carefully thought-out proposals for a possible Burma Studies Center. Such interest in matters Burmese is certainly most exciting.

J. P. Ferguson
Editor-Secretary