

Bulletin of the Burma Studies Group  
Association for Asian Studies  
Southeast Asia Council

#14

May, 1978

Burma Studies Group Colloquium at Denison

Plans are being made for a Colloquium at Denison University on the weekend of October 13-15. Please reserve that date, and we will send out final notification as soon as Terry Bailey has completed her arrangements. She is hoping to schedule a fall Asian art show that would coincide with our coming to Denison.

Our last Colloquium there was a great success, and we encourage all of you to plan to attend the forthcoming one. Denison provides a congenial atmosphere for the intellectual and social exchange that is so helpful for such a widely scattered group of scholars.

Notes on Annual Meeting of the Burma Studies Group at Chicago

The annual meeting of the Burma Studies Group took place at the Palmer House on Saturday evening, April 1, with a fine informal dinner at an Indian restaurant preceding the meeting. At the meeting the membership re-affirmed its desire to entrust its destiny once again to our fearless president Dr. F. K. Lehman. Swept along with the tide was your secretary and editor.

Discussion on finances revealed that there were funds in various accounts which can be used by our group, and Marta Nichols promised to give an accounting of such funds to Kris Lehman. It is hoped that these monies can help to finance the forthcoming Colloquium.

After considerable discussion it was decided not to have the Colloquium as part of the Los Angeles AAS meetings but instead to accept the standing invitation from Terry Bailey to return to Denison. The president and editor will contact specific individuals so that the major categories of Burmese scholarship are represented at the Colloquium. It is hoped that some of the papers read at the Colloquium will also find their way into the forthcoming book of essays on Burma to be edited by John Ferguson for Brill.

The major part of the meeting was given over to firsthand reports from several of our members who had recently returned from Burma.

The first speaker was JON WIANI who visited Burma in January as a member of the State Department delegation which observed progress the Burmese were making in stemming the flow of illicit narcotics from the Golden Triangle. He visited Pagan and was very impressed with the restoration work being done there since the earthquake of 1975. He had the opportunity to travel to Loikaw, through the southern Shan State, to Taunggyi and Inle Lake, and on to Mandalay, Sagaing and Maymyo. Jon commented on the difficulties that the Burmese transportation systems are undergoing, particularly in terms of the airlines. Much of the value of Jon's report was enhanced by the opportunity that members had to talk with him personally and informally after the meeting.

MAUREEN and MICHAEL AUNG THWIN talked of their recent visits to Rangoon, Pagan, and Mandalay. They visited U BO KAY at Pagan and reported on the restoration work being done there. Some 4 million Kyats were donated by UNESCO for the repair of Pagan temples, with 1 million given by the Burmese Government. "Unskilled" masons were hired to do the rough work, after which under the supervision of one of the employees from the Archeology Department the skilled masons come and put on the finishing touches. Mike compared his pictures of the restoration work with slides he had taken in the 1950's and found that the repair work followed very precisely the old and traditional forms, even though the brick is not of the same quality, since in Pagan days mud for the brick was ground by hand until the head mason was satisfied and then baked. U Bo Kay at the new museum is working on the ancient inscriptions of Pagan. Vol. 1 is out and Vol. 2 is coming out. There are seven volumes to be completed if U Bo Kay can get the needed help. Mike suggested that visitors to U Bo Kay could bring him difficult to obtain staples, self-sticking labels, typing paper, etc., things that we take for granted in the States.

The Burma Historical Commission has been renamed the Historical Research Department and is under the administration of the Ministry of Union Culture. They publish their journal in Burmese through Sarpay Beithman which is somewhat slow in getting the issues out. Dr. YI YI continues to be very active in scholarship, recently completing two books, one on the period from the end of the Ava Dynasty to the rise of Alaungpaya, and the other work, a dictionary of historical terms. DAW KYAN has written a book on the 15th and 16th century that is in press. Both Dr. Yi Yi and Daw Kyan have been working on the 6000 gold and copper plaques discovered during a recent earthquake. Dated 1869 the plaques bear names and other information about their donors and life in the mid-1800's. The information from the plaques, other stones, bells, and building inscriptions will be presented in a special volume to be published by the Burma Historical Commission.

Also visited by Maureen and Mike was U LU PE WIN who is working on translating ten volumes of an important Pali text into English for the Pali Text Society in London. U THAN HTUT, Director of the National Museum, continues on his own to write novels and is working on a short general introduction to Buddhist art in Burmese.

The Central Universities' Library, headed by U THAW KAUNG, is currently exchanging books with the Library of Congress and will welcome other institutions who would like to trade, as long as they follow the formal policy established by the Ministry of Information. The latter is also photographing parabaiks and publishing them through Sarpay Beithman. The Library has cataloged about 3000 manuscripts now. Mike pointed out that between his personal collection of inscriptions and those obtained by JOHN MUSGRAVE for Michigan's library, there is a good deal of primary source material now available at Ann Arbor covering the entire collection of inscriptions found in Burma up to 1973. The Regional Colleges system is in operation, with a compulsory pre-college year for studying general subjects and the second year for practical training. By the third year students are allowed to enter regular universities.

Government publishing is on a modest scale, and those who seek to obtain lists of abstracts of recent papers or certain publications are advised to work through our Library of Congress.

Maureen and Mike stressed the importance of care in wording invitations to Burmese scholars to leave Burma. Government to government is still the best way

to approach such matters, being careful to send letters of invitation through the appropriate ministry, describing the person you want in considerable detail without mentioning the person's name. A number of Burmese scholars are eager to be invited.

(Your editor is grateful to Jon, Maureen, and Mike for sending written notes from which the above information was abstracted.)

SUZAN LAPAI gave a brief reading of some of her poetic translations of

SARAH and KONRAD BEKKER presented a fine program on the Burmese natpwe, complete with slides and tapes of actual performances. Stressed in their presentation was the highly personal relationship between the dancer and the nat whose spirit is being represented in the dance. At the general AAS Conference Sarah also presented her paper, entitled "Burma: The Nat Kadaw." Others giving papers at the Conference were JOHN F. CADY on "Some Effects of British Rule in Burma," JON WIANT on "Thai-Burmese Relations," RICHARD COOLER on "Field Research in Burma," and JOHN FERGUSON on "Master of the Buddhist Occult: The Burmese Weikzas."

#### Other News Items

KRIS LEHMAN chaired a meeting of the Asia Development Conference on May 5 under the auspices of the Asia Society. Also attending were Jon Wiant and DAVID STEINBERG. The Conference stressed economic and social developments in rural Burma. HAIGH ROOP from the University of Hawaii is reading inscriptions in Rangoon with a tutor at the University and is staying with DAW KHIN THI. ROBERT TAYLOR, now an Australian citizen, is enrolled as a student of Burmese at the Foreign Language Institute for nine months.

A conference entitled, "Perspectives on Burma," was arranged by the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Michigan on April 14 and 15. LIONEL LANDRY chaired the panel on Perspectives on the Burmese in Southeast Asia, with papers given by U KYAW THET on "Burmese Relations with Other Southeast Asian Nations," Michael Aung Thwin on "The Burmese Role in Southeast Asia During the Pagan Period," EDWIN W. MARTIN on "Burmese Relations with China, Past and Present," and JOHN K. WHITMORE on "The Establishment of the Burma-China Border, 1400-1600." John Musgrave chaired the panel on Burmese Society in Perspective, with papers given by Konrad and Sarah Bekker on "The Individual and the Supernatural in Burmese Society," DAW MI MI KHAING on "The Individual and Society in Burma," and DAW MYA SEIN on "Burmese Society in Historical Perspective." SAO SAIMONG also read his paper on "Translation of Shan Chronicles."

#### Call for Papers

A reminder to Burmese scholars who would like to submit essays for the forthcoming book on Burma to submit their ideas to your editor as soon as possible.

John P. Ferguson  
Editor  
Bulletin of the Burma Studies Group  
SUNY Agricultural & Technical College  
Cobleskill, N. Y. 12043

Addendum from the chairman

I have recently had confirmation from Jane Terry Bailey, that we are actually scheduled for our Colloquium at Denison University, Granville, Ohio. Their administration have agreed and put us on their Calendar. The Colloquium is to take place on 13th - 15th October. It will have to get under way about NOON on the 13th, a Friday, because rooms at the local hotel cannot be made available on the evening of the 12th, so we cannot start arriving at Granville until the morning of the 13th. I think, however, that will give us quite as much time as we shall need. Meanwhile, as plans mature, I shall be sending out additional information about the details of the programme and about Granville, Ohio, how to get there, where to put up and so on.

At the present time the following persons seem ready to offer papers: F. K. Lehman will offer a paper summarising and assessing recent anthropological and culture-historical work on Burma, notably the highly important theses of Aung Thwin and Ferguson. John Musgrave, Michigan, will either do a paper on matters of Burmese literature or organise a panel on this topic. Konrad Bekker, New York, will do something on Burmese economics and, on the same topic, U Tun Thin of the International Monetary Fund or one of his staff have agreed to make a presentation. Daw Mya Sein, Washington, has spoken with John Ferguson about the possibility of something on marriage traditions and she has spoken with me on the possibility of a paper on the rather important matter of Burmese writing in English and its influence upon Burmese literature. I think this topic merits our interest very much. I hope we shall be able to get either Terry Bailey or Richard Cooler, Northern Illinois, to do a general paper on art and art history. And it is my intention to try and persuade U Law Yone to attend and present a talk on his recollections of Upper Burma and so on in his youth -- we most of us know what a mine of information he is on these things and how delightful his talk always is. Please remember that, on the whole, papers ought to be of two sorts: critiques and summaries of recent work in the various fields of Burmese scholarship and the effect of this recent work, here and back in Burma, and of recent conditions upon the current state of Burma scholarship and knowledge.

Maureen Aung Thwin tells me she has some notions about an archaeologist and a geologist for the Colloquium, and I herewith ask her to get in touch with me in clarification. I am also asking those of you mentioned in the preceding paragraph to get in touch with me as soon as you can to confirm -- as I hope you will -- the subject of your papers. Beyond that, John Ferguson and/ or I shall be in touch with others of you whom we shall ask to offer papers.

**FIRST CLASS**

F. K. Lehman  
Department of Anthropology  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, Illinois 61801

John P. Ferguson  
SUNY Agriculture & Tech.  
College  
Cobleskill, NY 12043