

BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP
Association for Asian Studies
May, 1990
#44

The Chicago Meeting

Present at the meeting of the Burma Studies Group on Friday, April 6, 1990, at the Palmer House were the following: David Steinberg, Maureen Aung-Thwin, Louis Jacobs, Jack Ringer, Hugh and Eleanor Mac Dougall, John Little, Won Yoon, Nicola Tannenbaum, Nancy Eberhardt, Leif Jonsson, Constance Wilson, John and Catherine Ferguson, Mary Callahan, Richard O'Connor, Jim and Dorothy Guyot, John Musgrave, Gene Smith, Daniel Guyot, Jongkolnee Wontog, John Nides, Vernon Jensen, Larry Ashmun, Steve Marquardt, Michael Aung-Thwin, Herman Ruether, John Davis, Kris Lehman, Than Than Win, Josef Silverstein, John Badgley, Audrey Spiro, Sarah Bekker, Patricia Young, Jane Hanks, and Marta Nicholas.

Sad farewells were tendered to note the passing of Daw Mi Mi Khaing, Paul J. Bennett, and William D. Hackett. More extensive attention to their contributions to Burma Studies will be given at the forthcoming Burma Studies Colloquium at DeKalb on Sept. 28-30, 1990.

The new membership rules (See p.2, last Bulletin, #43) were discussed. Elected chairman was F. K. Lehman; elected secretary was J.P. Ferguson. The new committee was elected: S.Bekker, H. MacDougall, and Than Than Win.

Brief comments were heard from those who had returned from Burma recently and from graduate students studying Burma. Noted with pleasure was the first communication between a Russian scholar, V.F. Vasilyev, and the Burma Studies Group.

Many good suggestions were made for panels and papers at the forthcoming Colloquium at the Center for Burma Studies: architecture, natural language processing, regional areas vs. the center, invitation to U.S. State Dept., Vatican archives, perspective on U Thant, Burmese harp, merit making through stained glass, elections analysis, student reports, and other individual presentations. Chair and secretary will contact people, and other suggestions from members are welcome.

The annual dinner was held at the River Kwai Restaurant, with the warmth and laughter BSG usually generates. The usual number were lost trying to get there.

Colloquium on Burma Studies

The Colloquium on Burma Studies will be held on the weekend of September 28 through the 30th, 1990, at Burma Studies Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

Colloquium cont.

The Colloquium offers all interested in Burma an opportunity to meet in an informal and friendly setting. These weekends were initiated some years ago to enable the Burma Studies Group to gather and concentrate upon what our members are doing. The programs will be as varied as the quests of the individuals involved.

Sometimes we have formal papers; we also have informal presentations. Not everyone is in academia. Dance or videos or roundtables or slides or tirades -- all have been part of past Colloquiums. We create a schedule that allows time for personal conversations.

As you know, the Center for Burma Studies brings together in one place a fine art collection and library. New and old additions to both will be on hand for your inspection. Of interest might be the 19th century paintings loaned by William Wise, the Bekker art collection, and the library of Paul Bixler, plus many other items donated by friends of Burma.

Most importantly, members and welcome guests have an opportunity to learn about the Center for Burma Studies, to meet with Director Richard Cooler and his staff, and to talk with the elected trustees of the Burma Studies Foundation, who will be there. By the fall, the Center's art gallery should be in its new quarters for your wonder.

Your chairman and secretary are putting the program together now. If you wish to make a presentation of any kind and have not contacted either of us yet, please do so. Please disregard the "Call for Papers" that was mailed to you recently by the Center by mistake.

If you have the protection of a nat or weikza, please consider bringing him or her to the Colloquium for a visit so that auspicious consequences for the Center may be encouraged. The last such gathering of powerful nats and weikzas in the U.S. was in 1980 at Denison University at the Third Biennial Colloquium.

Details on the Colloquium, such as housing, transportation, costs, etc. will be forthcoming. For now, please let us know if you are going to make a presentation, give a paper, dance, show slides, teach meditation, sing, put on a drama, or cook good food.

Foundation News

The Burma Studies Foundation had its annual meeting on April 8, 1990, at DeKalb, Illinois. Welcomed were two new

elected trustees, John Badgley and Hugh MacDougall.

The last will and testament of Jerry Bennett left his Burma art and library and part of his residual estate to the Foundation. The executor has not made a final decision on the art and library items set aside by the Foundation's Secretary-Treasurer, but these items will be shipped to NIU for processing as soon as possible. The Bennett materials represent a major donation for Burma Studies.

More details on the Bennett bequest will be given at the Colloquium this September.

The trustees made final plans for the publication of a brochure to inform the public about the Foundation and the noble goals it seeks to achieve.

Newsletters cont.

Omitted quite inadvertantly from our list in the last issue was CBS News (the Center for Burma Studies News) published by the Center for Burma Studies, Northern Illinois University, 140 Carroll Avenue, DeKalb, IL 60115. In addition to news about the Center, CBS News also publishes the helpful "Shelf List" of holdings on Burma at the NIU Founders Memorial Library. Subscription is included in the \$15 publications fee that brings you this bulletin, the Pagan Newsletter, and Maureen's Burma Newsletter. One of our readers called our omission "Snavelly." We editors count on your continued mercy.

News

Michael Aung-Thwin gave a paper at AAS, "Pledged Labor in Pre-Colonial Burma," and Kris Lehman was discussant. Kris also spent 26 days in Mizoram NE India earlier this year studying how Mizo (Lushai) kinship relates to the Chin asymmetrical alliance system.... Josef Silverstein presented at AAS "Aung San Suu Kyi: Is She Burma's Woman of Destiny?"...Sarah Bekker offered at AAS "For the Sake of the Spirits: Spirit Festivals and Nat Pwes in Traditional Burma." Sarah also reported on a recent tour through Burma at the BSG meeting....David Steinberg has published The Future of Burma: Crisis & Choice in Myanmar, U. Press of America, and Crisis in Burma: Stasis and Change in a Political Economy in Turmoil, Chulalongkorn U....Juliane Schober is an assistant professor at Arizona State U.; she and husband Mark Woodward teach in the SEA Program there....Cornell SEA Program showed a video, "The Inextinguishable Flame" about the Communist party in Burma; the video was in conjunction with a talk by Bertil Lintner....Edith Piness gave a talk on Burma to the West Coast Asia Society....The Cultural Survival Quarterly (13,4), 1989, has a number of articles on Burma, including ones by J. Silverstein, Sao Ying Sita, Bertil Lintner, and Edith

News cont.

Mirante, who sent a copy of her "The victim zone: recent accounts of Burmese military human rights abuse in the Shan State," Crises 13:209-226, 1989....Notice received of a book on Baptist work in Burma, Thra Mooler Theh: (Teacher & Evangelist) Events in His Life, translated from Karen by BaSaw Khin, 1860 Camino Claveles, Tuscon, AZ (5.95 postpaid)....By Bertil Lintner are Land Of Jade: A Journey Through Insurgent Burma, Edinburgh: Kiscadale, and Outrage: Burma's Struggle for Demrocacy, London: White Lotus, both 1990....By Alister Macrae is Scots in Burma, Edinburgh: Kiscadale, 7/90....Due in 1991 from Kiscadale is Patricia Herbert's The Art of the Painted Book in Burma....By Benedicte Brac de la Perriere is Les Rituels de Possession en Birmanie: du Culte D'Etat aux Ceremonies Privees, Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, A.D.P.F., 1989 (color photographs at end of book on nat ceremonies - JPF).

From MacDougall's Bookstore Under the Umbrella

Dorothy Gilman, Incident at Badamya. New York: Doubleday, 1989. 204 pp. \$16.95.

Gen Ferris, 16-year old daughter of an American Missionary, has been born and brought up in Burma. Now it is 1950, her father is dead, and she is trying to get back to Rangoon, to sail for America and an aunt she has never met. Instead, she is captured by Red Flag Communists near Kyaikkasan on the Irrawaddy, and held for ransom in a deserted pagoda with a strnage mixture of other travelers, including a notorious murderess, the widow of an English peer, an Armenian car salesman, and a Burmese puppet master. As they plan their escape, the travellers gradually reveal their real characters. Incident at Badamya is both a thriller and a novel of philosophy and ideas; it works well on both levels. The Burmese atmosphere feels authentic and not just a background to the plot; this is a novel about Burma as much as a novel about expatriates in Burma. My only cavil, and it is a minor one, is at the unfamiliar transliteration (to me at least) of numerous Burmese words and phrases. Author Dorothy Gilman is best known as a writer of detective novels featuring Mrs. Pollifax in an oriental setting; it to be hoped that she will continue to write about Burma.

Aparna Mukherjee, British Colonial Policy in Burma: An Aspect of Colonialism in South East Asia 1840-1885. Riverdale, MD: The Riverdale Co., (1989) (orig. published New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1988). 559 pp. \$17.50 (plus \$2.00 postage) from South Asia Books, P.O. Box 502, Columbia, MO 65205.

Ms. Mukherjee has written a detailed account of the critical period in Burmese history which culminated in the final conquest of the Burman Empire. Based on extensive research in English

documents preserved in the National Archives' in India, and on Burmese documents in the U.S. National Archives, as well as on published sources, it provides a readable and convincing chronicle of the mixture of misunderstanding, accident, and escalation which led the British to acquire a possession they really did not want. If only the Myowun of Rangoon had not chosen to take a nap on January 6, 1852, the course of Burmese history might (perhaps) have been different! Given her sources, Ms. Mukherjee must often speculate about Burmese intentions (as did the British themselves) but her exploration of the British records seem meticulous. Expanded from a doctoral thesis prepared for Calcutta University, British Colonial Policy in Burma is essential reading for those concerned with this period.

Stan Sesser, "A Rich Country Gone Wrong," in The New Yorker, Oct. 9, 1989, pp.55-95.

Combining thoroughness with style in the New Yorker manner, Mr. Sesser describes in detail the rise and fall of the Burmese democracy movement of 1988, and places it in the context of Burmese history since 1948. This article is an excellent introduction to the Burmese situation, of interest to Burma wallahs as well as to laymen. I think that Mr. Sesser may overestimate the extent to which major Burmese decisions were based on numerological considerations, but I certainly can't prove him wrong. Alas, however, he can see only a bleak future for Burma in the near future, suggesting that the alternatives may be between a new uprising and continued "repression as Burma falls apart...."

Wendy Law-Yone, "Burma: Life in the Hills," in The Atlantic, December 1989m, pp.24-36.

This is indeed a report from the hills, where Burmese students fleeing Government repression of the 1988 democracy movement have joined up with Karen and Kachin ethnic insurgents. Ms. Law-Yone paints a stark picture of life among the rebels, but expresses the hope that the influx of student refugees may for the first time forge some real understanding between Burma's Burman majority and its restless minorities. Whether the process will have a chance to work seems problematical, since many of the places visited by Ms. Law-Yone have subsequently been captured by the Burma Army.

Edith T. Mirante, ed., "Burma in Search of Peace," in Cultural Survival Quarterly, Vo.13, No.4, 1989, pp.2-42. \$3.00.
Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138.

Ms. Mirante, the founder of Project Maje, which seeks to raise American awareness of the Burmese ethnic situation, has assembled 15 articles on Burma, focussing on the background and current plight of Burma's ethnic minorities, especially those

involved in insurgencies against the central government. Among the Burmese and expatriate contributors are Josef Silverstein and Bertil Lintner. Not surprisingly, the articles contain advocacy as well as exposition, but they include much current and useful information not available elsewhere.

The Burma Review, a publication of Burmese living in the United States noted in an earlier issue, has announced a new address: P.O. Box 1573, New York, NY 10011.

Distributed by The Shoe String Press, Inc., PO Box 4327, 925 Sherman Ave., Hamden, CT 06514: (orders should include \$2.50 postage for first book; \$.50 for each additional).

Harry Seaman, The Battle at Sangshak. London: Leo Cooper, 1989. 224 pp., cloth. \$29.50. Account of the Indian Army Parachute Brigade during the World War II Burma campaign.

Alfred Draper, Dawns Like Thunder: The Retreat from Burma. London: Leo Cooper, 1987. 289 pp., cloth. \$36.00. Account of the 1942 British retreat, compiled from interviews with and documents by many participants, high and low.

Robert Hammond, The Flame of Freedom: Corporal R.A.S. Pagani's Escape from the Railway of Death. London: Leo Cooper, 1988. 183 p., cloth \$26.00. Personal account of an escape from the Burma-Siam Railway into the Karen Hills, and participation on Major Seagrim's guerillas.

James Leasor, The Marine from Mandalay. London: Leo Cooper, 1988. 232 pp., cloth. \$22.00. Personal account of British Marine William Doyle during the 1942 British retreat from Burma.

From University of California Press:

James A. Matisoff, The Dictionary of Lahu. Berkeley: Univ. of California Publications in Linguistics, 1989. 1576 pp., paper. \$100.00. "One of the most exhaustive and sophisticated dictionaries yet produced for a Southeast Asian language."

H.M.

New Members

John Whitehead, The Coach House, Muslow, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 9ET, England

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New Members cont.

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Lost Members

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M/M C. Myint Oung, 10634 Waverly St, Montreal, Quebec H3L 2W6
Michael S. Miles, Human Systems Associate, 41 Costable St, Nepean, Ontario
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Change of Address (in our records, anyway)

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SEND US YOUR NEWS

Yours under the worn bazaar umbrellas,

Hugh MacDougall and John Ferguson, Co-editors

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