

Letters from Corresponding Editors

Eleventh Conference of Caribbean Historians, Curaçao, 5-10 April 1979

Between April 5 and 10, the Eleventh Conference of Caribbean Historians was held in Curaçao. The conference was sponsored by the University of the Netherlands Antilles, who also acted as host, and the Association of Caribbean Historians.

With the registration of 85 participants and 12 observers, the attendance was more numerous than during any of the previous ten conferences of Caribbean historians. The participants also represented a wider geographical basis, namely twenty territories: Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, England, Guyana, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, the Netherlands, Puerto Rico, St. Eustatius, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, Surinam, Trinidad, the United States and Venezuela. Remarkable was the relatively ample attendance by historians from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean; two Cuban historians, who also indicated their interest and offered a paper, could not arrange for the necessary visa in time.

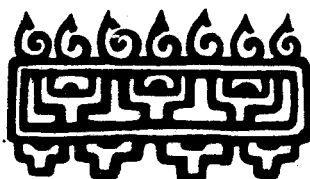
The academic programme of the conference, as determined by the ACH Executive Committee, included only three papers from Spanish speaking territories, a.o. because the interest in several of those had been aroused at a later stage. Of the five papers definitely pledged from or on the French Caribbean, four did not materialize, without notice to the organising committee. From or on the Dutch-speaking Caribbean three papers were offered, and a fourth paper from the Netherlands was tabled. The remaining 16 of the 27 papers included in the final programme came from English-speaking territories in (13) or outside (3) the Caribbean.

The papers related to six themes, each of which was discussed during a three-hour session. The panels were on:

1. Ex-slaves as wage labourers: their attachment to the estates.
2. The free coloured in the Caribbean: civil rights and politics before and after emancipation.
3. Sources of Caribbean history.
4. East Indians in the Caribbean.
5. The French and Dutch Caribbean.
6. Caribbean labour movements in the early twentieth century.

Apart from the panel sessions, the programme included a presentation of the TV docudrama 'Freedom Is', starring Woodville Marshall in search of the first free village of Barbados. For a wider local public there was a well-attended open session on the colonial town in the Caribbean, with short introductions by Frank Moya Pons (Santo Domingo), David Buisseret (Port Royal), Maria de los Angeles Castro (San Juan), and Ernest Voges (Willemstad). The printed programme of the conference formed part of a booklet that was a nice memento to all and a useful aid to many, containing an index to all papers presented at the previous ten conferences of Caribbean historians.

Jaap van Soest



A Report from India

Over the last six months, two seminars were held in India in the broad area of interest to the readers of the *Itinerario*. The first was the International seminar on Indo-Portuguese History organised by the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Bombay, at Goa in November 1978. The seminar was attended by a number of scholars, both Indian and foreign, the latter category including C.R.Boxer. The establishment of an Institute of Historical Research at Goa is being contemplated where facilities for learning Portuguese would be available.

In March 1979, the School of Historical Studies, Visva-Pharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal and the Delhi School of Economics jointly organised an 'Indian Maritime History Seminar 1500-1800' at Santiniketan with the support of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. The seminar was attended by more than 20 scholars and papers were presented on a wide range of issues. The discussion ranged from the definition and scope of maritime history to the problems associated with the use of European sources in writing this history. The seminar decided to start a newsletter which will be brought out from Santiniketan. It was also decided to hold similar seminars in future.

Om Prakash

A Report from Japan to 'Itinerario'

The carefully collated compilation of the *Oranda Fusetsugaki Shusei* (the World News) which the Dutchmen provided the Japanese government for more than two centuries is now under way: the first of the two volumes was published in December 1976, whereas the second will come into being by early 1979. This is the accomplishment of Dr. Seiichi Iwao and his research group of the Hosei Rangaku Kenkyukai (Association for the Netherlands Studies in Hosei University) in Tokyo. The *Oranda Fusetsugaki* means a collection of the world news annually provided by the Dutch captain of the Deshima Factory in Nagasaki from 1641 to 1857. The late Professor Takeo Itazawa who had pioneered the study of this documents published his *Oranda Fusetsugaki no Kenkyu* in 1937. Magnificent as it was, this work covered only the earlier half period from 1644 to 1745, while the latter half till 1857 was left unfinished by his sudden death in July, 1962. Five of his former students and Dr. Iwao who had become his successor at the said university decided in the following year to organize a research team for carrying out the compilation project. Their activity included, among other things, the exhaustive search for its manuscripts in as many as sixty-nine versions located in the public and private institutions throughout the country, the collation and editing of all these texts, and the comparison of these with their Dutch originals, if available at all, which are preserved at the General National Archives, the Netherlands. Although the initial interest of the Shogunate was limited to the activity of the Portuguese and the Spaniards in the fear of their propaganda of Christianity, the content of the news gradually expanded to Europe, South and Southeast Asia and China. Most of the news was transmitted within one year, and fairly accurate according to the standard of the day. Although the main body of this publication is written in Japanese, it may well be a relief for non-Japanese readers that its second volume will be furnished with an English explanation of documents and the sixty original texts in Dutch. Further information will be obtained at its publisher, the *Nichiran Gakkai* (the Japan Netherlands Institute), 3-28-1, Yushima, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113, Japan.

The twentieth meeting of the *Japan Society for Southeast Asian History* was held on December 2-3, 1978 at Tenri University, Tenri City, Nara, attended by approximately eighty members from all over the country. Established in 1967 the society holds 240 members as of March 1979. The papers presented at the meeting were:

Saturday, December 2, 1978

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| Toshikatsu Ito | <i>The Economic Policy Adopted by King Mindon of Burma and Its Significance</i> |
| Jun Kitahara | <i>The Formation of 'Export Economy' and the Land Tenure System in Thailand</i> |
| Yoshiko Nagano | <i>The Philipino Sugar Industry in the Latter Half of the 19th Century - The Origin of the 'Dependent Development'</i> |

Sunday, December 3, 1978

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| Akira Oki | <i>The Impact of the Cultivation System in West Sumatra</i> |
| Takashi Shiraishi | <i>The Formation of the Colonial Bureaucracy in Java</i> |
| Hiroyoshi Kano | <i>A View on the Javanese Rural Economic History - On Clifford Geertz's 'Agricultural Involution' Theory and the Criticism on It</i> |

Since the papers featured the common theme, 'the colonial rule and the economic and social transformation of Southeast Asia during the 19th century', the scope of discussion was confined to more specific reactions on the part of each local area rather than the history of European expansion in general. The papers on the first day emphasized the economic changes in the three Southeast Asian countries, whereas the speakers of the second day were more interested in the social aspect of West Sumatra and Java. The theories of Clifford Geertz and Benedict Anderson were very much discussed. Although some of the arguments still sounded premature, it looked all the more promising because all of the speakers were in their late twenties or early thirties. The society holds a meeting bi-annually: a one-day session for individual (in most cases, volunteer) papers in early summer and a two-day session in late fall often on such specific themes as 'the nature of a state in Southeast Asian history', 'the kingdom of Srivijaya', 'the history of rice cultivation and the natural environment in Southeast Asia', etc. The society publishes annually *Tonan Ajia: Rekishi to Bunka* (Southeast Asia: History and Culture) since 1971. Most articles are written in Japanese but furnished with short English summaries. While the first few volumes are already out of print, the later ones including the forthcoming eighth volume are available through its publisher, Heibonsha Ltd., 4 Yonbancho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100, Japan.

The Japanese Ministry of Education has been sponsoring the three-year project on *the Study of Cultural Conflict in East and Southeast Asia* since 1977 with the participation of 134 scholars out of various Japanese institutions. Their disciplines range from history, political science, economics, sociology to anthropology; their interested areas span from Southeast Asia, China, Korea and Japan. Each participant belongs to one of the seventeen research groups according to their discipline and research area. While most of the themes seem irrelevant to 'history of European expansion', some of the research topics will be of interest:

1. The Impact of the Colonial Rule upon Southeast Asian Countries
2. The Southeast Asian Students in the West and the Middle East and Their Contribution to the Modernization of Their Societies
3. The Japanese Southward Expansion before and during World War II
4. The Chinese Community in Southeast Asia and in Japan

All these teams carry out their research on an historical method, whereas some other teams use a more practical approach to such problems as the Japanese economic commitment in Southeast Asia, the communication gaps between Japan and Korea, etc. at present. The second symposium held on December 15-17, 1978 in Oiso to the west of Tokyo was well attended, and the discussions exchanged in its five panels were fruitful in most cases. On the other hand, however, one may wonder whether these group-oriented studies peculiar to the Japanese scholarship did not hamper the continuation of more brilliant individual studies.

On the whole, it seems that the Japanese specialists are more interested in the societies and cultures of their research areas than the history of European expansion as such. There could be various reasons for this. As far as the Southeast Asianists in Japan are concerned, however, one of the stronger reasons will be found in the emphasis on the 'autonomous history' of the area instead of the process of infiltration by an outside power. In addition to the works of B.Schrieke and J.C. van Leur, John Smail's article, 'An Autonomous History of Southeast Asia' in the *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. II, No. 2 (July 1961) gave and still gives a great stimulus to the young Japanese students of the related field. In the meantime, however, these people also have become increasingly more aware of the rich heritage of the Western countries in the study of their previous colonies. The increasing number of the Japanese Southeast Asianists are now visiting those countries for their further study of the area. It goes without saying that there should be as many approaches as possible in the field of humanities and social sciences, and that the history of European expansion will shed a new light on the age-old problems.

Akira Nagazumi

A report from New Zealand

The Third New Zealand Conference on Asian Studies was held at the University of Auckland, 13-16 May 1979. It was organised on behalf of the New Zealand Asian Studies Society (NZASIA) by a committee, chaired by your correspondent, with Dr. Richard Phillips as secretary. In keeping with the practice adopted for previous conferences, the programme included not only academic papers, grouped according to area in concurrent sessions, but also a number of seminars and general lectures. The last were designed in particular to appeal to non-academic people, interested enough to enrol for the conference. In fact they also helped to draw together academics otherwise separated by area or discipline.

Many of the papers and lectures given were of course not in the field of the history of European expansion. Some of the lectures, however, would be of especial interest to readers of *Itinerario*, such as the lectures by A.J.S.Reid (ANU) on the origins of Southeast Asian poverty, by Albert Moore (Otago University) on Hegel and Western attitudes to Southeast Asia, and Khoo Kay Kim (University of Malaya) on the western scholar and the study of Asia. There were also papers by P.Robb (Victoria University) on British rule and 'improvement' in late-nineteenth-century Bihar and Adam Ahmat (Universiti Kebangsaan) on the vernacular press and the emergence of national consciousness in Indonesia.

A feature of the conference was the presentation of two noh-plays, *Birds of Enlightenment* and *Release from Hell*, with music by a New Zealand-based composer, Bryony Phillips.

Readers of *Itinerario* should be aware of the *Commonwealth and Colonial History Newsletter*. This is a listing of recent publications and current research in the field, classified by author. The editor is Dr. Luke Trainor, Department of History, University of Canterbury, Private Bag, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Nicholas Tarling

A short letter from the U.S. to Itinerario

I visited the People's Republic of China in June of 1979 as a member of a delegation of American scholars in Ming and Ch'ing history. It seems that studies of maritime China, early Sino-Western relations, and the overseas Chinese are alive and doing reasonably well at a number of research centres, of which the largest is at Amoy. I will report in more detail on this, and others will report on archives, libraries, the organization of historical research, and so on, in the delegation's published report; I'll send further word on publication plans for this when they are settled.

Jack Wills