

REVIEWS

Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, April 1966. Volume 1. International Association of Tamil Research, Kuala Lumpur 1968. Pp. xl, 764. Price not quoted.

This is a handsome volume, for which contributors and readers alike will give credit to the Board of Editors and the editorial assistants, headed by Professor X. S. Thani Nayagam, and to Rajiv Printers of Kuala Lumpur. (The editors might have exercised their authority to improve the English expression in two or three of the papers — though one appreciates their reproduction, unamended, of the discussion of “chatty bobbysoxers” in former Tamil times.)

This first volume of *Proceedings* includes papers dealing with mainly social and historical topics, arranged in two categories: one comprises 19 papers examining south Indian elements in Southeast Asian history and culture, the other 38 papers devoted broadly to Tamil Social History (embracing trade and external contacts, and Ceylon as well as Tamilnad proper). In the first section Professor Filliozat and Mr. Singaravelu provide complementary papers pointing to south Indian carriers of Indian influences to Southeast Asia, even though these influences be north Indian or Sanskritic in origin or form. Professor Glick probes the way Indians identify themselves in Fiji and Malaysia; and in his interesting study of the Natukkottai Chettiars, M. Nadarajan indicates the scope and the need for more detailed investigations of this and other communities. Among other papers, Kernial Singh Sandhu provides a well-documented account of Indian transportation to Malaya; Dr. Ravindra Kumar Jain recounts some of his findings on Tamil agricultural settlement in western Malaya; Dr. Arasaratnam throws light not only on socio-political ferment among Indians in Malaya but also on comparable developments in India; and others discuss Tamil relations with Thailand, Kedah and East Asia.

It is impossible to notice all the papers in this large volume, but of those in the second section on “Social History”, the following demand attention. Professor K. K. Pillay provides a scholarly article on dating the arrival of Aryan influences in south India and Sanskritic-Tamilian cross-fertilisation; Dr. V. Subramaniam a poised analysis of the political philosophy of Thiruvalluvar’s *Kural*; S. V. Krishnaswamy a useful survey of irrigation in Tamilnad, especially the Cauvery system; S. Arasaratnam a small gem of historical research, using Dutch archives to illumine the position and role of south Indian merchants in the 17th and 18th centuries; and Brenda Beck an avowedly “tentative”, but most convincing, analysis of castes in the Coimbatore district. There are two papers on Chinese-south Indian contacts: Su Chung-jen’s assertion that Chinese influence

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which is being established with the support of UNESCO, although strongly oriented toward traditional "Orientalist" studies, notably language and literature, is also concerned to involve "inter-disciplinary . . . co-operation of specialists in . . . history and the social and human sciences" ("Detailed Project for Setting up the International Institute of Tamil Studies", p. 3).

Hopefully the III International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, planned for Paris in 1970, will see the further flowering of interdisciplinary studies of key problems of south Indian social history.

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