

From the Editor

Welcome to the fourth issue of the *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, completing our second volume. The letter below includes some comments on the present issue and on those to come.

Current Issue Theme: Early Italians in Burma

Readers may note that in the previous issue (1.2, Autumn 2003), the *SBBR* published the account of the Gaspero Balbi, an early Italian traveller to Burma/Myanmar. Given the early importance of such Italian accounts, we have reproduced here five other early Italian accounts, along with a substantial editorial introduction to the De' Conti account by Kennon Breazeale (East-West Center). This is by no means an exhaustive compilation. Italian accounts continue until the end of the precolonial period, including Tarsillo Barberis' *Five Years in Burma*, providing an inside look at the kingdom before the fall of Thibaw's court at the hands of British forces in 1885. Thus, there may be another special issue devoted to this subject in the future. In any event, the *SBBR* will continue to concentrate on certain themes, such as the emphasis on English accounts of Burma in the next issue. Unlike most special issues, however, material in each issue will not be limited to such themes. Thus, in this issue, for example, the Italian accounts are followed by those of Portuguese, French, and other travellers.

Changes

Over the past two years we have experimented with a number of different formats and features. The present format will serve as our standard model for later editions. If you have looked at the cover on-screen or downloaded it from our website (<http://web.soas.ac.uk/burma/index.htm>), you will note a more 'traditional' journal cover, while still incorporating a photograph of Burmese/Myanmar life. Certainly, any comments on the new cover style would be appreciated (burmaresearch@soas.ac.uk).

Another change that will take place in the following issue is that while we will continue to republish old documents and early publications, we will also include a substantial portion of first-run material, in the form of articles and a continuation of our healthy run of book reviews. Along these lines it might be useful to mention that while the *SBBR* is devoted to research on Burma/Myanmar,

it is also clear that scholars of Burma/Myanmar benefit from research on neighbouring areas which have comparative value or direct relevance to developments in Burma, both in the past and in the present. Thus, we are gradually including more material from the central mainland (Laos and Thailand) and soon, hopefully, Kampuchea, Vietnam, and the Malay Peninsula. It should be stressed, however, that, wherever possible, connectivities with and relevance to Burma/Myanmar should always be stressed or at least noted.

Perhaps the most significant change will come in issue 3.2 (Autumn 2005). With this issue, and after, we will make a determined effort to include material in the Burmese (and minority) languages, both primary source material and secondary work, in the Burmese (and other) script(s). We are currently working out the details, but such materials should be accompanied by an English summary and a Romanized title for bibliographic and other purposes. While we would encourage those writing in non-Burma/Myanmar languages to translate (or have translated) their work into English, if this is not possible, then every reasonable attempt will be made to accommodate non-Western scripts. The present issue includes a primary document in French and later issues will include documents and accounts in Portuguese and other Western languages, but Chinese and Japanese, for example, would also be welcome.

A related change is that the *SBBR* will begin to solicit reviews of current Burmese-language publications. While work outside of Burma/Myanmar receives significant attention among international scholars, research by Burmese within Burma/Myanmar does not. Certainly, the study of the Konbaung period has benefitted from numerous recent publications in Burma. Reviews of such materials will hopefully make the Burma/Myanmar research community abroad better aware of such work. On a related matter, the *SBBR* will sometimes solicit multiple reviews of the same work. We are experimenting with this in the next issue with Mary Callahan's new book, *Making Enemies*. Such reviews will hopefully be published together in the same issue to increase their comparative value and indicate, at least in part, the diversity of opinions on the same work.

We would also like to encourage readers to direct students working on Burma to the *SBBR*. Given its free and easy access on the web, the *SBBR* would be very useful to students (especially in upper level undergraduate courses and graduate courses) involved in research projects and papers on Burma. Further, if you are supervising a dissertation or an M.A. thesis, or know of someone who is, please suggest posting their abstract with us. This would be an effective and fast way of circulating information on the student's doctoral product among an interested audience.

Finally, a word of thanks to all those who have contributed in one way or another to the success of the *SBBR*, by serving on the editorial board, the advisory board, offering advice and opinions, suggesting corrections, and above all, by

submitting material in the form of articles, edited accounts, book reviews, and information for the “News and Notes” and related sections.

Sincerely,

Mike Charney
General Editor, *SBBR*