

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert B. Fox, "The Calatagan Excavations. Two 15th Century Burial Sites in Batangas, Philippines," *Philippine Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, August 1959, pp. 321-390.

This lengthy article, with 167 plates, 17 figures, and two maps, is a preliminary report on the results of the Calatagan excavations conducted by a field team of the National Museum of the Philippines under Dr. Fox. The Calatagan burial sites are on the coast of a small peninsula facing the South China Sea in the Province of Batangas, about one hundred kilometres south of Manila. The graves belong to the 15th century and thus afford some invaluable evidence of the islands' pre-Spanish cultural-commercial relations. In the early Ming Period thousands of pieces of ceramic ware were brought to Calatagan by Chinese traders from the kilns of South China, Annam and Siam to be exchanged for the hardwoods, cotton, indigo, pearls and special foodstuffs of the Philippines. Great quantities of these ceramic trade goods have fortunately been preserved at the Calatagan burial sites as grave furniture.

The existence in the Philippines of large quantities of Chinese porcelains and stoneware and the stonewares of Annam and Siam was previously revealed by the discoveries of Professor Otley Beyer. The finds of Dr. Fox at Calatagan are a substantial addition to the materials already accumulated and they shed further light not only on the types of the wares brought to the Philippines but on the ceramic trade of the 14th and 15th centuries.

Our interest is attracted principally to the Thai wares which were unearthed at Calatagan, and Dr. Fox's preliminary report happily devotes considerable space to this subject with 28 excellent plates illustrating 39 unusual Sawankalok (including Chaliang) pieces. Thai wares constituted 13 percent of the finds at the Pulung Bakaw site and 22 percent at the Kay Tomas site. The great majority of the pieces, 85 and 75 percent, respectively, were of Chinese provenance, with only a very few Annamese and unidentified pieces. In the sites excavated by Professor Beyer in the Visayan Islands Thai wares amounted to as much as from 20 to 40 percent.

The Thai yields at the two Calatagan sites represent a variety of bowls, dishes, cover dishes and jars, and a surprisingly large number of those small bottle-shaped vessels with two ears on the short neck, which are partially covered with a dark brown glaze. A similar type of bottle but of a double-gourd shape and a longer neck was also found in some quantity. These pieces with their dark brown glazes belong to a type of Sawankalok generally known as Chaliang ware after the name of an early Thai community on the left bank of the Yom River near the old city of Sawankalok. The same forms were also made with a full glaze in the characteristic celadon-like Sawankalok green, but probably at a later date.

On the basis of his finds at Calatagan, Dr. Fox concludes that these bottle- and double-gourd-shaped pieces with ears were "one of the most common types of Sawankalok trade potteries." This view is in part supported by the large numbers of these vessels which have been found in Indonesia. It is curious, however, that these particular types of simple Chaliang vessels with their nondescript dark brown glaze crudely applied should have enjoyed such popularity in the ceramic trade of these islands. One might be led to conclude that their popularity was due to their usefulness as receptacles for holding or serving sauce and condiments or rice wine, and, being extraordinarily durable and having ears to which a cord could be attached, because they could also be conveniently carried about. Nevertheless, Dr. Fox has advanced another conclusion which tends to minimize the importance we might attach today to the strictly utilitarian value of these pieces in attempting to account for their apparent popularity as trade potteries. On the basis of his careful examination of the graves and the ceramic objects therein, Dr. Fox is of the opinion that these wares were used largely if not wholly for ritual and/or festival purposes, and that one of their primary functions was to serve as grave furniture.

Many of the Thai pieces found at Calatagan also possess that glassy-green glaze so commonly associated with the Sawankalok kilns. Presumably the Sawankalok potters were attempting, with the initial assistance of Chinese potters, to duplicate the incomparable green of Lung-ch'üan celadon, but for technical reasons

they were unable to match its supernal qualities of colour and feel. What the Sawankalok potters did achieve, however, was a highly glossy, transparent glaze which often seems to bring the incised or moulded underglaze designs into sharper focus. It would appear that this glass-like transparency in the Sawankalok glaze was one of the features which especially commended Sawankalok celadon to the particular tastes of these island peoples. It is of real interest, therefore, that among Dr. Fox's discoveries at Calatagan were several types of bowls of undeniable Chinese provenance which have this same glassy, light green glaze. They were typical 15th century products of some of the South China provincial kilns, and Professor Beyer has made the intriguing suggestion that these pieces may represent attempts by the Chinese to copy the glass-like quality of the Sawankalok green glaze in order to meet the success which these Siamese wares were apparently enjoying in the ceramic trade of the islands.

The presence of Chinese and other Asian wares in what Dr. Fox calls pottery complexes in the Calatagan graves provides a method for establishing dates on the basis of *associations* where pieces of Chinese and Siamese wares are found together as grave furniture in pre-Spanish burial sites. Thus in the pottery complexes at Calatagan, the Sawankalok pieces recovered were found in association with such Chinese wares as 14th century monochromes (late Yüan or early Ming) and types of blue-and-white with sharp beveled foot-rims which belong to the early 15th century. On the basis of such associations, Dr. Fox concludes that the Sawankalok pieces for the most part apparently reached Calatagan during the latter part of the 14th century or the early part of the 15th century. Sawankalok pieces are far less common in late 15th century or early 16th century sites, and virtually disappear altogether in early post-Spanish burial sites. The evidence from Calatagan and Professor Beyer's excavations thus supports the view that production at the Sawankalok kilns had virtually ceased sometime during the latter half of the 15th century.

In this connection it is of further interest to note that Dr. Fox did not find a single piece of Sukhothai stoneware at Calatagan, suggesting that this ware was not used as a trade pottery. Nevertheless, considerable quantities of this heavy decorated stoneware have been found in Indonesia, including such unusual items as *singha* and other building fixtures used to ornament Thai temples and palaces but which would scarcely appear appropriate as trade articles. Aside from the possible differences in the tastes of the ceramic customers in the Philippines and Indonesia, the absence of Sukhothai wares at Calatagan suggests two possible explanations. It would appear that Sukhothai ware (with the possible exception of the manufacture of building ornaments) was produced for only a brief period at the beginning of the 14th century and ended shortly after large-scale production of technically superior types of ware got under way at Sawankalok. Consequently, it is possible that the importation of Thai ceramics into the Philippines did not begin until after the Sukhothai kilns had ceased production, while Sukhothai ware was exported to Indonesia during the period the Sukhothai kilns were in operation. Another, but less likely, explanation may lie in the possibility that Sukhothai wares were the monopoly of traders who dealt exclusively with Indonesia. The former explanation, however, is more in accordance with the evidence at Calatagan which led to Dr. Fox's conclusion that Sawankalok pottery for the most part was not shipped to the Philippines until the latter part of the 14th century, which was long after the Sukhothai kilns had gone out of business as producers of trade potteries.

The excavations at Calatagan open up several new vistas for the study of Thai ceramics and all who are interested in this unique facet of Siam's cultural history will look forward to the appearance of Dr. Fox's final report on his unusual discoveries at these burial sites.

Charles Nelson Spinks

Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mohmud Ahmad, *The Life of Muhammad*.
Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Mission's Office, Pakistan.

A life as full and as luminous as that of the Prophet Muhammad raises certain problems for a biographer. One whose life, works and teachings have become so well-known as a part of our universal heritage is a tempting subject who is often given a biographical treatment that ignores the necessary research. In such a treatment sequential description of major events tends to be viewed against the greatness of the events rather than in the light of the literary merit of the prose. It is a difficult task to write with distinction or originality about a well-known life. The author runs the risk of misplaced emphasis. The task of the critic of such a work is made much more problematical. Not only must he check the correctness of facts. He must also take into account the general tenor, literary finesse, style, accent, understanding, sympathy, reverence and critical understanding which the author has brought to the subject. But if these conditions are fulfilled, as they are in this biography, the critic has nothing to do but sit back and talk of generalities and truisms.

The author, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, is the leader of a new sect which developed amongst the Muslims of the Indian Sub-Continent around the turn of this century. The chief aim of this cult was to introduce a missionary zeal into the propagation of Islam. And the method it used was to revive, as it were, the institution of the Caliphate. This cult generated and still generates controversy in the Sub-Continent and many a theological debate has taken place between its upholders and its critics. It failed to attract a large number of Muslims, but the attention paid to it has been out of all proportion to its quantitative strength. Notwithstanding the religious beliefs of the sect, the individuals belonging to it have come

to be known for their learning and thoroughness, in holy scriptures as well as in modern subjects. Some of the most distinguished Muslims of the Indian Sub-Continent belonged to this sect.

The book under review is a handsomely printed, compact treatise on the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The basic material has been chosen with great care. Standard commentaries have been frequently cited, even for commonly-known episodes. The events, persons and places are dealt with in a respectful and accurate way, though not necessarily with distinction. The portion of the book which deals with the life of Muhammad is only a reiteration of the well-known facts which have become a part of our universal heritage. But in the interpretation and commentary the author comes to grips with certain controversial matters and emerges with merit.

One example is the author's treatment of the belief in some sections of the general public, chiefly fostered by the prejudiced way in which most Western Christian historians have tended to deal with Islam, that Islam puts religious sanction upon war as an essential instrument of propagation. The author has forcefully refuted this claim. War is enjoined upon the faithful only when political and other pressures make the practice of the Faith impossible. War has not been an essential instrument in the state of Islam. Islamic statecraft is essentially composed of three elements—ethical and religious righteousness, peace with justice, and tolerance without insistence on conformity. A perusal of history should show that wars during the time of the Holy Prophet or latter were fought either as an instrument of defence against blatant and proven aggression or for the purpose of countering potential threats. To say that war is not precluded as an instrument of self-defence is not the same thing as pro-

claiming it the chief agency of propagation. Whereas the former is an article of preserving self-respect, the latter admits of weakness of Faith itself. We remember the instance when Muhammad lead his followers from Medina to Mecca in the performance of the pilgrimage and was met by disbelievers on the outskirts. With them the Prophet worked out a truce known as the Truce of Hudaibiya, which is a perfect example of compromise and accommodation and a willingness to avoid bloodshed. The author has done a great service to have brought out this point. Historians as well as general readers would do well to ponder on this for a while. Very often political wars waged by the Muslim rulers have been confused with religious wars, thereby creating the impression that Islam permits war at any and all times.

So much for the strong points. It would be unfair to the author if a few omissions of a minor nature were not pointed out. First of all an index is necessary. It is an absolute must in spite of a fairly comprehensive list of contents. Secondly, a bibliography of standard literature appended towards the end would have helped the reader to pursue the interest aroused by the book. It need not be comprehensive, but the standard and authentic works should be included. Finally, a more careful proofreading would have eliminated the few typographical errors which crept into the text.

Hazrat Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad's service to his religion could hardly have been performed in a better way. Besides complimenting him on the book, its form, style and contents, one is bound to be impressed by the zest, zeal and sincerity of his faith.

Saad M. Alhashmi

John Blofeld, *The Wheel of Life: The Autobiography of a Western Buddhist*. Rider & Company, London, 1959. 263 pages.

All autobiography is only partial truth. To tell the essential truth about the objectively perceived is difficult enough; the subjective is harder still, for neither the eye nor the I can perceive itself. The difficulties are compounded in a spiritual autobiography, for the encounters are intangible and, to a high degree, private; mystic experience is virtually impossible to communicate directly, as the great religious leaders attest in their resort to parable, allegory, and metaphor—devices liable to distortion and misinterpretation by even the most devoted disciples. (The wheel of life is an example of such metaphor, and so is the cross, under which thousands have been slain.) When a foreigner born and educated in one culture undertakes the search for such an experience in an entirely different culture, with its disparities of language, training, and modes of thought, the possibility of error is raised to the highest power. He cannot afford to falter in drive or direction towards the central insight that brings all other experience into focus and perspective, and, until that is achieved, he risks the peril of failing to communicate anything of coherent importance. Only when the magnitude and intensity of the spiritual insight attained is great enough are sufficient light and heat transmitted through the recalcitrant medium of words (*e. g.*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*) to convey something of the nature of the event, though never exactly and fully.

Mr. Blofeld has bravely taken on these arduous tasks. As a child in England, he felt the magnetism of the East; a reflective boy, he pondered certain problems—is the dream real, or life itself a dream? does an unperceived object exist?—to which he later found answers in Asian thought. (He seems unaware that the reflections he mentions are common among thoughtful children everywhere, and that the problems have been dealt with in Western philosophies). Unhappy at school, at odds with his

father, he set forth for China immediately upon coming down from Cambridge, to begin the search that, except for a few interruptions, has kept him in Asia ever since.

This early rejection of the West he attributes to his Karmic propensities. Throughout the book it is apparent that the harshness of much of Western culture repelled him: athletic competition at school, academic punishments, the rigidity of Protestant ritual, the Christian doctrines of Hell and original sin. A romantic who yearns for the remote and the past, for panoply and splendor, will not find the rough-and-tumble, the stern, nor the prim congenial. China's beauty and urbanity pleased him; the number of Asians who ignored the language barrier to offer help and friendship is notable; and when he was initiated into Mahayana Buddhism in Hong Kong, the event was the opening passage of his search for the center of the Wheel of Life.

Taoism and Zen Buddhism were tried and discarded. With the advent of war in Europe, he joined the British Army and worked as an intelligence expert in Far East Affairs in the War Office. Later he went to Chungking as cultural attaché, but the conflict between the worldly and the religious made a bureaucratic career distasteful. He returned to Peking as a research scholar after the war, and married a Chinese girl. The Communist takeover of Peking forced them to flee to Hong Kong, where the darkness of war and suffering threw his spirit into eclipse.

When a university post in Thailand was offered to him, he accepted, although he knew intuitively, he writes, that the spiritual revival he longed for would not occur there. After a few years, the BBC sent him to India, where he visited the sites of the Buddha's life and received an intimation that his own turning-point would come in the Himalayan borders of Tibet.

He set forth for Sikkim and, once there, journeyed amid great hardship to a monastery in Tashiding, where the Lama initiated him into the Vajrayana rites. Afterwards, he studied the chosen path at Kalimpong, and the conclusions he has reached

as a result of these studies are stated briefly in the Epilogue. They bear a striking resemblance to Platonism.

Mr. Blofeld's account of his wanderings is modest. Some chains of events are slurred over or referred to glancingly, and the crises of spirit, however searing or exalted they may have been to him, never seem of more than ordinary intensity to the reader; nor do the insights recounted seem remarkable—one wonders why he had to go so far and wait so long for them. He humbly admits that, though he has had intimations of the highest order of religious experience, he has not yet attained it; he is still on his way to the center of the wheel. Western readers unacquainted with Buddhism will find that this report of a Western-educated man trying to reach that center illuminates some of the methods, objectives, and obstacles. Adventure, suspense, and instruction are here, clad in well-bred prose; profundity and radiance are not, but their presence is always improbable.

Mary Sanford

RECENT SIAMESE PUBLICATIONS

253. *Literary Heritage*. Rujrūyadharm Press, Bangkok, 2502, p. 1-2.

Sponsors of the cremation of the late Mme Sri Añat of the Pānikabut family applied in June 1959 to the National Library for material for publication in dedication to the above-named deceased. The Library selected good literary pieces for the purpose. In the reviewer's opinion the choice has been judicious, for no admirer of Siamese verse would think otherwise. Space being limited, many other gems of Siamese poetry have had, one presumes, to be left out.

The pieces chosen are: The *Wailings of Sri Prājñā*, an elegant poetic romance with a well-written note on the mediaeval poet based on the late P̄rayā Pariyat's biography published some decades back; Čaofā Dharmādhibes' *Boat Song*, which was written towards the end of the Ayudhyā period in the XVIII century remains familiar to the public and is still sung by boatmen in the royal progresses on the river; the *Romantic Tragedy of Kākī* by Čaoprayā P̄raklay (Hon), famous for its beautiful rhetoric; a short selection from the dance-drama *Golden Conch* by King Rāma II; Sunton Bhū's erotic *nirās P̄hukhao Tōy* better known for its pathos than its eroticism; Nai Narind's *nirās* which has won its fame through erotics and descriptions of nature and topography; Prince Paramānujit's heroic epic of *Taleŋp̄ai*, still on the lips of all lovers of Siamese poetry in spite its century-old existence; P̄ra Mahāmontri's satire of an unpopular bully at the court of Rāma III; the end being brought up by King Chulalongkorn's Sakai romance, *Ngö P̄ā*, a drama commended by the Royal Academy of Literature, and King Rāma VI's similarly commended poem *P̄ra Nol* on the theme of the famous Mahābhārata episode of *Nala and Damayanti*.

These selections are presented in chronological order, each preceded respectively by a short note on its author.

254. Rāma VI: *Maṅgala Sutta in verse; Compendium of Sayings*: and the classical dance-drama of *Orajun and Ūosakanth*. Retail Sale cooperation Press, Bangkok, 2502, ill. 260 pages.

This was published in dedication to the late Ārayā Rājasāsana Sobhon in early December 1959. The deceased served under the royal author as his personal secretary with duties that were chiefly connected with the King's voluminous writings.

The first named piece is an elegant translation of a widely known *sutra* forming part of every benedictory service. It is an enumeration of the auspices, or *maṅgala*, according to the Buddhist code of ethics. The next piece, spreading over 242 of the volume's 260 pages, consists of sayings culled from various writings of His late Majesty. It is well indexed in the table of contents. The third piece is one of the short dance-dramas which, late in his reign, the King wrote from an English translation of the Sanskrit Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, of which it forms the final section (Uttarakāṇḍha). The subject is an adventure of Ūosakanth (Rāvana) in his unbridled youth that resulted in his being vanquished, bound and exposed publicly in disgrace. Orajun (Arjuna), King of Mahishmati, the victor, having no former grudge against the young demon, forgave him in compliance with a request from the seer Paulastya. The episode was included in the Siamese *Rāmākien* of the first reign with different localisations, for the scene there was placed at world's end—cakravāl.

255. Khemayodhin, N.: *A General's Life*. Aksorasamṅandh Press, Bangkok, B.E. 2499, 360 pages ill.

An entertaining biography without the egoism that accompanies such biographies. It traces from memory the author's schooldays in the Cadet School in the sixth reign; his military career as a junior officer; his days in the Ecole de Guerre in France; his return to take part in the war with French Indochina when he began to be entrusted with the responsibilities of a maturer officer; his part in the negotiations for peace when he came to realise that Siam, far from being the important nation

which he had imagined it to be, was but a pawn in the game, receiving slices of territory from the French only to lose them afterwards, the real gainer being our great and good ally of the Rising Sun which mediated on our behalf. The author goes on to describe Siam's life under the Japanese yoke during the second world war and the enthusiasm of our politicians over the nation's attainment to the status of a world power; then the underground campaign against the Japanese carried on by Pridi and Pibul independently of one another in which the author took a leading part, as he says, on the latter's side, and how it came to a sudden end when Pibul ceased to be a political power in the land. The end is brought up by an epilogue containing a memoir written by Marshal Pibul during his imprisonment, in which he justified his successive actions, ending up with the sentence "... I resigned in order to preserve the sanctity of democracy and uphold the constitution as the highest law of the land...."

The author points out that even though he is still alive his general's life has ended.

It cannot be denied that the case has been ably presented. When the book was written Marshal Pibul was supreme. The general is still in the forefront of public life. One cannot help wondering what the big query in the minds of readers will be.

D.

