

Ordinary General meeting, 17th July, 1913.

An ordinary general meeting of members of the Society took place at the Bangkok United Club, on Thursday, 17th July, 1913, to hear a paper by Mr. R. Halliday on the "Immigration of the Mons into Siam." The President, Dr. O. Frankfurter, was in the chair.

Introducing the lecturer, the President said that during a stay of many years both in Burma and Siam Mr. Halliday had made a special study of that interesting people the Mons, and their manners, customs and history. He had been intrusted by the British-Burma Government with the duty of writing a monograph on the people, which would soon be published and which would materially assist in the understanding of a people in which Siam was also highly interested. They knew from history that from very olden times a constant intercourse took place between Siam and Pegu, and also of a warlike nature.

Mr. Halliday then read his paper.

In opening a brief discussion, Mr. Beckett remarked that the paper had been very interesting, especially as very few had any extensive knowledge of the subject. He considered the most interesting point brought out by Mr. Halliday was that there were three distinct immigrations of Mons into Siam, and that these gave rise to three distinct classes of Mons. He did not quite follow Mr. Halliday's remarks with regard to the Mons and the Burmese. He had always understood that the Burmese wished to drive out the Mons, but from what Mr. Halliday said it seemed that there was rather a friendly feeling between them. One thing Mr. Halliday had not touched upon was the origin of Mon writing. Perhaps it was rather too abstruse a subject, but he would be glad to hear something of the origin of the writing and its general characteristics. He also did not quite follow why the Mons should have followed the route to the Three Pagodas on coming from Burma into Siam, and why they should go so far north. Those present were very grateful to Mr. Halliday for his paper. He proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Halliday for his most interesting paper, and to him and Mrs. Halliday for their presence.

In reply to the points raised by Mr. Beckett, Mr. Halliday first said that the Mon language was classed with Cambodian. The alphabet was believed by certain scholars to be of Southern Indian origin. As to the route by which the Mons came, it seemed to have been a direction generally followed, and some of the Burmese invasions were by that route. As to the attitude of the Burmese towards the Mons, the latter were never driven out, and when they went the Burmese followed to bring them back. At the same time, of course, they wanted to rule the Mons. When the Siamese went over from this side the Mons usually favoured the Siamese.

In reply to Mr. Sewell, Mr. Halliday said it was true that Captain Burney wished the Siamese to co-operate with the British Army in a certain way against the Burmese. After the British were in occupation of that part of Burma, the Siamese went over and brought about a thousand prisoners from Moulmein. Captain Burney, as representing the British Government, asked that they be sent back, and eventually this was done.

Mr. Lefèvre-Pontalis asked whether the people in the Menam Valley were not Mon before the Siamese came from the North.

Mr. Halliday said this was not so. The people who inhabited this country in bygone days were at any rate linguistically similar to the Mons, but there was a great difference between the Cambodian language and the present day Mon language. The Mons he had been speaking of came over from Burma, a long time after the Siamese had come into this part of the country. Two of these immigrations took place after Bangkok had become the capital.

The Chairman conveyed the thanks of the Society to Mr. Halliday, and the proceedings terminated.

The Journal.

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