

## Letters from Readers

### *A Note on Suriname Plantation Archives at the University of Minnesota*

On a recent visit to the James Ford Bell library at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (in connection with another project)\*, I was shown an interesting collection of Suriname plantation records. As these may not be widely known to Dutch historians, I outline briefly their contents, based on my extremely cursory examination, in the hope that interested Dutch scholars may make use of them.

The archives, originally belonging to the De Mey van Streefkerk family, were acquired by the James Ford Bell Library in 1958. Covering the period 1725 to 1830, the documents comprise over 2000 manuscript pages regarding the family's plantations. Among those plantations frequently mentioned are: Ephrata, Klein Marseille, Groot Marseille, Sou-bourgh, Utrecht, 't Tabbetje and Egtensveen, most of which are in the Cottica-Commewijne areas. The archives include plantation account books, inventories, letters from local managers to the metropole, deeds of sale, insurance records, and so on. They focus, it would seem, upon a limited set of properties over a relatively long period, permitting considerable continuity for historical analysis. It would appear, from my brief examination, that these documents contain material of interest to both economic and social historians - from detailed data on crop rotation to the clothing of slaves.

Perhaps a future issue of *Itinerario* can include a more complete description of these materials made by a scholar who has taken the time to work through them in detail.

Richard Price  
Johns Hopkins University

\*I am in the early stages of editing for publication a new and complete edition of Stedman's *Narrative* (1796), based on Stedman's original manuscript, which differs significantly from the printed version. The 1790 manuscript - to my knowledge the only extant manuscript of the work - was acquired in 1967 by the James Ford Bell Library of the University of Minnesota.

Dear Sir,

Of particular interest to Dutch scholars should be the extensive Indonesian contacts with the aborigines of northern Australia in the 18th and 19th century if not earlier. Though this has been dealt with by Dr. C.C. Macknight of this University (cf. his book *Voyage to Marege*, Melbourne 1976), from my own reading I still think there is a great deal more to say on the subject. For instance Dr. Macknight did not use any Dutch archival material and I am certain that scholars working on various subjects in eastern Indonesia would have stumbled upon references to the voyaging of Macassarese, Buginese, Sumbawanese, Madurese and Badjau to the Australian coasts. Those working on native texts may also have material. We would be most interested in hearing from people concerned with these subjects and in receiving information, articles, source material etc. for consideration of publication.

I enclose a number of forms. I would also be most interested in receiving the names and addresses of people or institutions who might also be interested, if that is possible. Dr. L.Y. Andaya, whose note on Sulawesi you recently published, might also be contacted. You never print the addresses of your contributors which restricts the inter-exchange of information! I look forward to seeing some profitable exchanges from this proposed issue of our journal.

Yours ever

Dr. James Urry

Editors' note: A good suggestion: henceforth we will print the names and addresses of contributors outside our Dutch circle. Dr. Urry's is: Dept. of Prehistory and Anthropology, The Australian National University, Box 4, P.O., Canberra A.C.T. 2600, Australia. Herewith also follows the text of his announcement:

## ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Special Issue

Volume 5 1981

The Editorial Board of *Aboriginal History* plans to devote the 1981 issue of the journal to the theme of Asian contacts with Australian Aborigines, from prehistoric times to the present day. It is hoped that contributors will offer studies of Chinese, Japanese, 'Afghan' and Indonesian peoples who may have influenced Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal perceptions of Asian contacts and Asian descriptions of Aborigines are not well recorded in the published literature, and such accounts (including text material and translations) will be considered.

Annotated translations of published records (for example, Japanese newspaper reports of contacts with Aborigines and Torres Straits Islanders), notes of resources for research, and suggestions for research topics will be welcome. All papers submitted to the journal are subject to the normal refereeing process. Instructions for authors will be sent on request.

Interested individuals and institutions are invited to submit suggestions and contributions to the volume convenor, Dr. James Urry. Correspondence and contributions should be marked 'Asian contacts issue' and addressed to:

The Editors, *Aboriginal History*  
c/o Department of Pacific and South East Asian History  
Australian National University  
P.O. Box 4  
CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600

From I.A.Baxter of the India Office Library and Records we received the following letter:

Dear Sir,

I was most interested to read the article by F.G.P.Jaquet on the Java Orphan Chamber records in 'Itinerario' Vol. 3, no. 1 (1979) pp. 54-55. Mr. Jaquet asks about other Orphan Chamber records. He might be interested to know that we have here at the India Office Records the archives of the Orphan Chamber and Council of Justice at Malacca from c. 1685 to 1835. The bulk of the records date from the period 1770-1825, They are 95 pct. in Dutch even for the period of the British administration (1795-1818). They include Orphan Chamber cash books, journals and ledgers, estate papers, transcripts of civil and criminal trials, wills and testaments and registers of legal acts. They provide a useful source of social history for Malacca in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. My impression is that they are original documents and not duplicated elsewhere, but I should be interested to learn if duplicates do exist either at the Hague or in Malaysia. Perhaps one of your contributors would know about this.

I.A.Baxter