



## NEWSLETTER

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### CIRCLE OF INNER ASIAN ART

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### EXPEDITION REPORT: NEPAL AND TIBET

by Amy Heller, associate member of the URA team 1229 CNRS, directed by Anne-Marie Blondeau. Duration: one month, autumn, 1995.

As agreed beforehand with the Ministry, the expedition to Tibet was preceded by a period spent in the Kathmandu Valley, in order to study those Licchavi sites containing sculptures whose aesthetic and technique exerted an important influence on Tibetan art. Specifically, inside Kathmandu, the sites of Cha Bahal, Itum Bahal, Tukan Bahal, Kva Bahal and the Kasthamandap temple; around the capital, the villages of Chang Narayan, Budhanilakantha and Banepa, the latter situated near Panauti, a town in which several temples have benefited from a programme of conservation and restoration work. We were welcomed by friends from the Tibetan community of Kathmandu and by foreign researchers, some of whom collaborated with the programme of team 1229. Though rapid, this examination enabled us to document several narrative motifs of non-Buddhist character, found in the decoration of these temples, as well as some styles of jewellery and dress belonging to Nepalese Licchavi art.

Following our arrival in Tibet, we were taken in charge by the Lhasa Academy of Social Sciences, in accord with the agreement signed last summer. The President, Phuntsog Tsering, had encouraged our research project when we met in Austria during the Congress of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, at which our participation was supported by a subvention from the CNRS. In Lhasa, he placed at our disposal a guest room in the Academy's compound, in order to facilitate contact with Tibetan researchers who lodge there. We were also supported by Pa sangs dbang 'dus, a historian in the Academy who is closely following our research into rock inscriptions and those on early statues, and also by the Tibetan archaeologist bSod nams dbang 'dus.

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Our project in Lhasa was to undertake the systematic examination of the lintels in the principal temple, the Lhasa gTsug lag khang, which, up till now, have been little studied or photographed. We made our first visit accompanied by Tshe ring rgyal po, a historian in the Academy, and it was agreed with the monk caretaker that several further visits would be necessary. Permission to photograph was agreed without any difficulty. Over two and a half weeks in Lhasa, a dozen visits enabled us to make a fairly complete survey of the early lintels. These will be published in due course.

Owing to the fact that several early Tibetan statues are sculpted directly in the rock wall of a temple, we wanted to try to see a cave site containing statues attributed to the Dynastic period (end of the eighth-beginning of the ninth century), which was recently the subject of a preliminary study by He Qiang in a Chinese publication, Southern Ethnology and Archaeology, special issue on Tibetan archaeology (Sichuan University, Chengdu, 1991, pp. 179-186). As this cave is little known, the Academy proposed a project in collaboration with one of their researchers, which suited us well. The location of the site in a military zone somewhat complicated our proposal, but the Academy was able to negotiate the necessary authorisation, in return for a payment of RMB 1,500 for permission to photograph, with the Cultural Relics Bureau in Lhasa. This body delegated an official (Hapi Bu) to accompany us. Tshe ring rgyal po was appointed researcher for this expedition. The Academy also organised the hiring of a car and a driver. Our journey was spread over four days, but we spent only a few hours in the caves, so as to photograph them and to note any inscriptions there might be. On arrival, it became obvious that the chronology proposed by He Qiang was too early, and that the caves had, moreover, suffered considerable damage during the Cultural Revolution. The iconography and workmanship of the stucco statues, containing an admixture of vegetable fibre, suggest a date around the eleventh-twelfth century, perhaps even a little later. There were no inscriptions. We agreed to collaborate with Tshe ring rgyal po on an article describing this expedition for the Journal of the Lhasa Academy of Social Sciences (summer, 1996).

The last section of our expedition was the restoration project at Grva-thang, an eleventh-century monastery containing remarkable wall-paintings. The roof is currently being repaired. This project is financed by the Shalu Association, headed by Heather Stoddard, a researcher in our team, who joined us in Lhasa. We visited Grva-thang accompanied by bSod nams dbang 'dus, archaeologist, and the local representative of the Bureau of Cultural Relics, Thub btsan nam mkha'. The latter is also working for the opening of the first archaeological museum in Tibet, due to open in December 1995. Accompanied by the mayor, local officials and some workmen, we spent several hours inspecting the roofs and drainage system, restored with traditional materials using local methods. An earlier restoration with concrete had resulted in considerable damage: it was necessary to remove this concrete when repairing the roof in order to keep the latter waterproof. This initial project is well-advanced, and it is now necessary to reinforce a supporting wall in the same building. We photographed the roofs and exterior walls, and, inside, embarked upon an iconographical analysis and a photographic record which will be continued in the future. A further project under discussion is the writing of a book, in collaboration with our Tibetan colleagues, on the monastery, its history, iconography and architectural restoration, but it would be necessary to return there with a professional photographer, since the task is particularly difficult. When we made a second visit to Grva-thang, we were welcomed by the Chinese regional administrator, who displayed great interest in the restoration work.

Five other sites are also undergoing restoration with the support of bSod nams dbang 'dus and the Shalu Association. We visited these sites (Rithang, rNam sras gling, Evam, Gongkar chos sde, Shalu) to inspect the works, which are progressing well. Another monastery near Rithang was visited for reasons of comparison. Shalu monastery contains important wall-paintings in different chapels, dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. During a meeting with the monk administrators and the official responsible for regional cultural affairs, Zla ba rdo rje, the construction of a new chapel was agreed. This would allow the earliest paintings to be preserved from the smoke of incense and butter lamps which will otherwise envelope them on a daily basis. This project needs a modest budget - US\$4,000 - and construction is about to begin. Once the

architectural consolidation has been completed, it will be necessary to study the paintings and to bring in conservation specialists who will be able to train some Tibetans in this field. Visiting each of the sites undergoing repair allows for a better appreciation of our project in Grva-thang, and opens the door to other sites, though, ideally, future expeditions should be longer.

*(translation by Arabella Friesen, SOAS)*

## RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK AT MERV

The old city of Merv is one of the largest, most important and archaeologically accessible sites in Central Asia. It has been explored by Russian, Soviet and American archaeologists for a century but many of these results remain poorly known in the West, despite recent articles in East and West (ostraca), Mesopotamia (coins) and VDI (Buddhist remains). A new programme of Anglo-Turkmen fieldwork, known as the International Merv Project (IMP), began in 1992 under the joint directorship of Dr Georgina Hermann (Institute of Archaeology UCL) and Dr Kakamurad Kurbansakhatov (Ashgabat). The IMP has completed four field seasons and plans a fifth season for autumn 1996.

The primary aim of the IMP is a thorough archaeological and historical re-assessment of this major ancient city. One important part of this work has been collecting and editing unpublished information on earlier work by the Jutake (South Turkmenistan Multidisciplinary Archaeological Expedition) and, more recently, the local Merv Archaeological Park. These results will be published as part of the IMP. The Project has also been conducting a series of integrated topographic, archaeological and architectural surveys inside and around the city-side; the mapping programme is the responsibility of Mr Glynn Barratt (UCL). Finally, the IMP has been conducting excavations in different parts of the site which are focused on different periods: this work is in the charge of Dr St John Simpson (British Museum, Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities).

Founded during the Achaemenid period, the city of Merv flourished during the subsequent Seleucid, Parthian and Sassanian periods prior to the murder of the last Sassanian king, Yazdgard III (632-51), in the oasis and the subsequent Arab Conquest. The earliest periods of occupation are buried under later deposits. However, two IMP excavations in the early citadel of Erk Kala and lower city of Gyaur Kala are revealing new information about fifth-seventh century Sassanian domestic architecture, changes in material culture and the first reliable archaeo-botanical evidence for Sassanian agriculture. Finds include large numbers of copper coins, mostly from the local mint but Merv is the first place where these lower-denomination Sassanian examples have been studied.

Other discoveries include ostraca written in Parthian, Middle Persian, Sogdian and Bactrian (the first evidence for Bactrian at the site), a mould for casting Christian pendants, imported Sassanian glassware and a rich assemblage of local ceramic plainwares - many of which are strongly influenced by metalwares. Another exciting discovery has been the recognition that cotton was cultivated on a large scale as early as the fifth century AD, hence providing a lengthy pre-Islamic development for the cotton textiles that were famous during the ninth century.

During the Early Islamic period, occupation began to shift westwards from the old city in Gyaur Kala to a new site beneath the medieval city of Sultan Kala. The old urban core was then invaded by smelly industrial activities: the IMP surveys have found substantial evidence for metal-working here in addition to the previously-known pottery industries. Excavations in one area have revealed part of a late ninth/early tenth century metal workshop associated with the production of crucible steel, matching contemporary Islamic written sources for the first time.

Finally, a newly opened trench in the citadel of Sultan Kala promises exciting new evidence concerning the late Seljuk - post Mongol periods at Merv, i.e. before and after the catastrophic Mongol sack of the city in 1221.

The IMP has been very generously supported by a wide number of sponsors, particularly the British Academy, British Museum, British Institute of Persian Studies, National Geographic Society, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, and University College London/Institute of Archaeology. Further support has been kindly awarded by the Society of Antiquaries (London), Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund, The Royal Society, Oxford University (Craven Committee), Ancient India and Iran Trust and Lukonin Fund.

Three preliminary reports have been published in Iran (vols 31-33), and a fourth is in press. Other accounts have been published in the British Museum Magazine (spring 1996), Oxford Journal of Archaeology (1995) and Institute for Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies Newsletter (June 1995).

*(Dr St John Simpson, British Museum, Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities)*

## **RECENT INFORMATION ON SELECTED SITES IN THE TARIM BASIN**

The opening-up of Xinjiang in recent years makes it now possible to obtain official permission to visit quite a few ancient sites.

Starting on the Northern Silk Road in September/October 1995, my journey initially took me to Sorchuk, which has been well documented and surveyed as recently as 1989. The site is in bad condition, affected by rain which is slowly destroying the structures. However, there are still traces of plaster and pigment in the vaults and on side walls of some of the shrines. From Sorchuk I went westwards to Kucha, visiting the cave temples of Kizikalahan and Kumtura as well as the site of Subashi, all of which are easily accessible from the town. The Simsims caves, opened to tourists in 1990, are more difficult to get to. The eighteen caves that may be visited include the statue, pillar and lantern ceiling types. Here one can see numerous depictions of animals, far more than at any other site in the Kucha region. The nearby Kirish caves contain a meditation room with the front room and dome still intact.

The Kizil caves, a day trip from Kucha, have both a restaurant and a small guest house. Contacting the Director in advance will enable visitors to see more than the usually-permitted twenty caves. In the last few years, a new policy regarding the cave sites in the Kucha area means that anyone arriving at the site without permission cannot enter the caves. The Research Institute must be informed in advance. Photography in all the cave sites is prohibited.

From Kucha, I continued my journey westwards to the ancient city of Tumchuk. The site was, at the time, very difficult to reach, as a result of road construction in the area. Sadly, the northern section, Toqquz Sarai, is being destroyed by the new road, which passes right through it. The southern section of the site, known as Tumchuk, is in much better condition and did not seem to be in danger from the construction.

From Tumchuk I went south to Khotan to visit the ancient sites excavated by Aurel Stein. These are extremely difficult to locate, as most of them are now under cultivated land. Perhaps the only rewarding site is the Rawak stupa, fifty kilometres outside the town. The Khotan Museum will shortly be relocated in a new building with more displays from the region.

Further east of Khotan, I was able to visit the site of Endere, located between Qiemo (Cherchen) and Minfeng (Niya), up the Endere River. This is a five-day return trip from Minfeng involving travel by jeep and camel. The site itself is rather spread-out. The ancient stupa and pottery kilns are some distance away from the Tang fort, temples and dwellings. Due to the extreme dryness of the climate, the wooden posts and beams of buildings sticking out of the sand are in perfect condition.

During this visit I had the opportunity to travel on the new "Desert Road" which cuts right through the Taklamakan, providing quick and easy access between the north and south. This road cuts out several days from the time it takes to make the journey round the Tarim Basin. As the oil industry makes inroads into the desert, support facilities are mushrooming in what used to be small oasis towns. One is left wondering how long the formerly remote Buddhist sites will be able to survive.

(*Deniz Cole, SOAS.*)

## NEWS BULLETIN

### **The Unesco Silk Roads Project**

This project, launched in 1988 in the framework of the World Decade for Cultural Development, is studying the many cultural exchanges which took place along these routes. This study is serving to stimulate research in the related fields and is also creating an awareness of the need to renew the intercultural dialogue which enriched peoples and civilisations in both the east and the west.

The operational activities of the Project illustrate its innovative approach to international co-operation. This is the first time an international organisation has taken multi-disciplinary teams of specialists to study sites, monuments, museums, living arts and traditions *in situ*, and to meet and exchange knowledge with local scholars. Since 1990, four international expeditions have taken place: the Desert Route in China, the Steppe Route across Central Asia, the Maritime Route linking Venice with Osaka, and the Nomads Route in Mongolia. The first section of the Buddhist Route has just been completed in Nepal, where two international seminars were held, one in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, the other in Kathmandu.

The expeditions have set in train a wide range of activities such as international research programmes, with some thirty seminars, and the recent launching of a joint programme with the World Tourism Organisation for cultural tourism along the Silk Roads in Central Asia. A network of scholars and institutions now in place includes three new centres set up following recommendations made by the expedition teams: the Buddhist Research and Information Centre in Colombo, the China Maritime Silk Route Studies Centre in Fuzhou and the International Institute for Central-Asian Studies in Samarkand. A Research Institute for Nomadic Cultures is also being set up in Ulan Bator.

The Project has generated numerous publications, some academic and some for the general public and young people, such as the series of four books on the Silk Roads co-published by UNESCO and Belitha Press, which will appear in fourteen languages. The Project has been widely publicised by media coverage in the world press, magazines, radio programmes and documentary films. Some four hundred hours of film footage taken during the expeditions are being used for documentaries to promote cultural tourism.

Thanks to the generosity of the Japanese artist, Prof. Ikuo Hirayama, a fellowships programme offers ten fellowships a year to young scholars for research in Silk Road studies. The strong support of the many countries which have hosted expeditions, meetings and seminars, as well as financial contributions from the media, have ensured the successful implementation of the Project to date.

(*We are grateful to Margaret Benisty, Silk Roads Project, UNESCO, for the above information*)

### **New Excavation in Pakistan**

In March 1996 archaeologists from Britain and Pakistan intend to begin excavations at the ancient city site of Akra in Bannu District of the North West Frontier Province, Pakistan. This group consists of Mr Robert Knox, Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, British Museum and Dr Ken D. Thomas, Institute of Archaeology, London who will collaborate with the directors of the newly-formed Pakistan Heritage Society, Professor Farid Khan and Professor Abdur Rehman, both recently retired from the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. Akra is one of the last great ancient cities in the Indo-Pakistan and work there is expected to last for a number of years.

(*We are grateful to Robert Knox for the above information*)

### **The Sino-Japanese excavation programme in Niya**

Important new information which will be helpful in unravelling the mysteries of this early site has come to light on the southern silk road in the Talamakan Desert. The discoveries include many arrowheads, together with everyday items which seem to have been left in a rush, pointing to a hurried departure from the site. Sealed official Kharoshti documents are being studied and the hair of mummies, showing European features, is undergoing DNA testing. The excavation programme has generated such interest that it will most probably continue next season and beyond.

(DC)

### **Excavations in Old Nisa, Turkmenistan**

The archaeological expedition of the Centro Scavi di Torio per il Medio Oriente e l'Asia and the University of Ashgabat in Old Nisa carried out the 4th season of excavations in the southern complex of Old Nisa in July-August 1995. The aim of the excavations was to investigate the Round Hall and the structures of which this outstanding room is a part. In the Round Hall the remains of the decorative clay sculptures are being rescued. The third entrance to the hall from NW was fully excavated and the investigation down to virgin soil of the areas to the west and north of the hall was started. The excavations resulted in substantial corrections of the plan published by the Jutake.

(We are grateful to Antonio Invernizzi for the above information)

## **NEW PUBLICATIONS**

### **In the Land of the Gryphons. Papers on Central Asian archaeology in antiquity**

The papers concern the new results of the research in Old Nisa, the Margiana survey, monuments in Merv, Pre-Hellenistic Bactria, Takht-i Sangin, the nomadism in Central Asia, relations Parthia-Bactria, relations of Central Asia with the Roman world and India, Buddhism in Central Asia, sealings from Bactria, Kushan ideology. The contributors are A. Invernizzi, V. Pulipko, A. Bader, Kh. Usupov, V. Gaibov, G. Koshelevko, G. Pugachenkova, Z. Usmanova, J.-V. Gardin, B. Litvinskij, I. Pichikian, K. Abdullaev, E. Rtveladze, B. Staviskij, K. Tanabe, G. Bogomolov, Ju. Burjakov, C. LoMuzio, C. Silvi Antonini, D. Huff, C. Rapin, P. Callieri. Edited by Antonio Invernizzi, *Monografie di Mesopotamia*, V, Firenze, Ed. Le Lettere, 1995, this volume appeared in September.

(AI)

### **Dunhuang and Turfan - Contents and Conservation of Ancient Documents from Central Asia**

A collection of nineteen authoritative papers from leading conservators and curators given at *The Preservation of Material from Cave 17* conference in October 1993 are reproduced in this first volume in a series from the British Library entitled *Studies in Conservation Science*. The aim of the series is to present the latest developments in this field giving a unique insight into conservation practice, methods and theory. The material collected by Sir Marc Aurel Stein during his three expeditions to Chinese Central Asia between 1900 and 1916 are held in four major institutions. The British Library Stein collection totals over 28,000 manuscripts in many forms but, because of the lack of catalogues, most of this collection has not been readily available to scholars. Following the discussions resulting from the papers presented at the conference, the International Dunhuang Project was established with the aim of aiding conservation and scholarship by making the documents available in digitised form and providing an international resource for all curatorial and conservatorial activity in this field. Edited by Susan Whitfield and Frances Wood, published in February 1996, at a price of £28.00. For information or orders contact: Turpin Distribution Services Ltd, Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts, SG6 1HN. Tel: 01462 672555, Fax: 01462 480947.

### **Pre-Kushana Coins in Pakistan**

Pre-Kushana coins in the private collection of Aman ur Rahman, supplemented by selected coins from the Peshawar Museum and the private collection of Khurshid Ahmad Khan, by Osmund Bopearachchi and Aman ur Rahman. Published by Iftikaar Rasul, IRM Associates Ltd., Karachi, July 1995. US\$160 (includes air postage and packing).

## **IGNCA FELLOWSHIPS**

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), established in memory of Shrimati Indira Gandhi, has instituted a scheme of Memorial Fellowships open to scholars and creative artists in any discipline who will undertake research work of an inter-disciplinary or cross-cultural nature or devote themselves to their creativity. The candidates must have a proven record of creative or critical work which does not confine itself to a narrow field or specialisation. Preference will be given to the following broad areas: 1. Indian and Asian arts and their mutual influence, 2. Any facet of the study of tribal art, culture and life-style, 3. Art in its socio-cultural context, 4. History of arts, aesthetics and culture, incl. studies in any aspect of music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture, architecture, preferably of an inter-disciplinary nature; and 5. Comparative literature. The Fellowships will carry a monthly stipend of Rs 12,000, plus Rs 2,500 per month for secretarial assistance and Rs 25,000 per annum towards contingent and travel expenses, for a period of two years. It will be obligatory on the part of a Fellow to produce and submit a monograph/work ready for publication during the course of the Fellowship. IGNCA will have the first right of publication. If interested send CV, description of experience in the field of specialisation, original work and a project proposal in not more than a thousand words, recent passport-sized photo to the *Academic Director, IGNCA, Central Vista Mess Building, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 not later than 16 April 1996*. IGNCA Tel: 3383895 Fax: 91-11-3381139

## **EXHIBITIONS AND LECTURES**

### **Incense and Silk - Old Cultures on the Silk Road**

**An exhibition of the Kunsthistorisches Museum at the Palais Harrach in Vienna**

On January 21st 1996 the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna opened a major exhibition on the cultures along the two most important trade routes of the ancient world, the Silk and Incense Roads. The exhibition comprises about 250 objects and approximately 500 coins from many of the world's finest museums, including the State Hermitage, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Sackler Gallery, the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Louvre and the Musée Guimet as well as the Museen für Indische, Vorderasiatische und Islamische Kunst in Berlin. An important part of the collection of South Arabian antiquities (former Glaser collection) from the Egyptian-Oriental Department of the Kunsthistorisches Museum is shown for the first time. The exhibition will end April 14th, 1996. A comprehensive catalogue is available. A Symposium will take place at the Palais Harrach from April 10-14th, 1996. Participants include P Bernard, C Bhattacharya-Haesner, O Bopearachchi, P Callieri, P Cambon, J Cribb, R Gyselen, P O Harper, J Kröger, S Kuwayama, J Lerner, E Lubo-Lesnichenko, V Livshits, R M MacDowall, B Marshak, D Mazzeo, A Nikitin, V Raspopova, St John Simpson, N Sims-Williams, C Sylvi-Antonini, M Taddei, F Thierry, F Tissot, H Tsuchiya, G Verardi and E Zeymal. *For further information contact Dr Michael Alram at the KM (01-52177-381, Fax: 01-52177-501.*

*(We would like to thank Dr Christian Hözl of the KM for this information)*

### **The 1996 Albert Reckitt Archaeological Lecture**

This lecture will be delivered by Dr. Georgina Herrmann of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, on "Early and medieval Merv: a tale of three cities". It will take place on Tuesday 21 May at 5.30 p.m. at the British Academy, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London, NW1. *Contact Miss Rosemary Lambeth on 0171-487-5966 for details.*

### **Vladimir G. Lukonin Memorial Lecture**

This lecture will be given by Prof. Boris Marshak of the State Hermitage, St. Petersburg, on "Images of the universe in the early medieval art of Iranian peoples". It will take place in Tuesday 16 July at 6 p.m. in the British Museum Lecture Theatre. Admission is by ticket only. *Contact Mrs. Heaney, British Museum Western Asiatic Antiquities, Tel: 0171-323-8315.*

## CIAA LECTURES AT SOAS

Wednesday, 24 April  
B 202, 6pm **Helen Wang (British Museum)**  
"Stein's 'Recording Angel' Miss Lorimer"

Wednesday, 15 May  
B 202, 6 pm **Professor Nicholas Sims-Williams (SOAS) and  
Mr Joe Cribb (BM)**  
"A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great"

*Lectures are held in the Brunei Gallery, opposite the main SOAS building*

All are welcome to our lectures - we will be delighted to make personal contact with anybody interested in this field. If you would like to give a lecture on a relevant topic please do not hesitate to contact us.

## OBITUARY

### Professor Sir Harold Bailey

Professor Sir Harold Bailey, FBA, whose death at the age of 96 was reported at Cambridge on 11th January 1996, was the dominant international figure in Indo-European philology for over 60 years. A linguistic prodigy from his boyhood, he was brought up in Australia. Coming to Oxford he studied Sanskrit with F.W. Thomas. He was Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge from 1936 to 1967, but equally proficient in Iranian and other Indo-European Languages, fostering a revival in Iranian Studies in the UK during the post-war years. He was interested too in Ossetic, Armenian, Georgian and other languages of the Caucasus, but his life-work was the elucidation of the manuscripts in Khotanese (Saka) discovered in Central Asia. Receiving many academic honours, he continued to work tirelessly during his long retirement, producing amongst innumerable other publications his monumental *Dictionary of Khotanese Saka* in 1979. A sympathetic host to visiting scholars young and old, he was one of the founders of the Ancient India and Iran Trust at Cambridge, where his tradition of scholarship will no doubt be perpetuated.

*Professor A. D. H. Bivar*

The apsaras on the title page is from Cave 249 in Dunhuang. Reproduced from *Zhongguo Shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku*, Beijing - Tokyo, 1989-90, vol 1, p. 183

Edited by  
Arabella Friesen and Lilla B Russell-Smith.

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We would appreciate your comments and would be very grateful for relevant information and short articles - please write to us at the address given on page 1. We thank all who contributed to this issue with articles or information.

