

HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM
PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

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The IFS History of Science and Technology in South and Southeast Asia Program begun in July 1988, following earlier discussions by Prof. Cyril Ponnampereuma. The purpose of the program is to develop for South and Southeast Asia a coordinated study and compilation of the region's scientific and technological heritage, such as has been done already for China and other world regions. This study will help to rediscover lost ancient techniques, clarify important questions relating to the study of historical dynamics, pinpoint resources forgotten and no longer exploited, and document the processes of invention and technological transfer between regions. It will also foster the growth of a fuller awareness of the region's scientific and cultural heritage, the enormous time-depth of that heritage and the global significance of its contribution to man's accumulated scientific and technological knowledge. The program will define the field in its broadest sense, and will include such topics as materials science (metallurgy, ceramics, plasters, glass); agricultural and irrigation technologies; engineering, mining and construction technologies; arts and crafts; textiles, weaving and dying, medicine and veterinary sciences; food storage and preservation; ship building, navigation and astronomy; mathematics, even philosophy as related to science.

The IFS program is both organizational and research oriented. The major initial thrust is on the organizational

aspect. It is proposed that the IFS program do the the following :-

1. Develop and maintain a world-wide data base of both historical and scientific researchers dealing with aspects of this topic, together with their research interests and the bibliographic information of all relevant publications.
2. Serve as a clearing house for bibliographic information in response to queries by researchers, especially to provide print-outs of the relevant portions of the data base to researchers and to provide photocopies of any journal article or out-of-print work listed in the data base upon request.
3. Coordinate the publication of a one-to-two volume collection of commissioned papers synthesizing the current state of research knowledge concerning the history of South and Southeast Asian Science and Technology.
4. Hold a series of about a dozen (ca. four per year) one-week intensive seminars by researchers actively working in a specific field, and publish the papers and results of the discussions of these seminars.
5. Encourage the collection of ethnographic information concerning traditional technologies by anthropologists and others dealing with groups in technological transition.

The initial meeting of an international organizing

committee of researchers from within the region and outside will be held from July 24th to 30th, 1989 at IFS, Kandy. This meeting will include interested scientists, anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists. The meeting will discuss the feasibility and modalities of the project, will formulate a working program and will establish a Steering Committee, especially for the publication and seminar programs. Travel support for the regional representatives to this meeting has been solicited from the Third World Academy of Sciences.

The research aspect of the History of Science and Technology Program will involve both historical and linguistic studies of ancient documents, as well as scientific investigations, especially in Archaeology and Materials Science. It is anticipated that the overall program will stimulate research on ancient manuscripts by historians and linguistic scholars. At the same time, the IFS program itself has begun physical research, especially in collaboration with the Earth Sciences, in the fields of ancient ceramics and plasters, in the use of ceramic technology as an indicator of international contacts, in maritime technologies, and in ancient irrigation technology. The purpose of the IFS research program is to stimulate not only archaeological research, but to develop multidisciplinary collaborative research between archaeologists and other scientists to rediscover our scientific heritage.