

At the museum, Nicholas was characteristically generous with his help to all sorts of visitors, collectors, scholars and dealers, and in constant touch with discoveries and developments everywhere in the field of Islamic coinage. To discuss with him a projected line of research in Islamic studies was always fruitful. For some months before the 10th International Numismatic Congress, held again in London during September 1986 after 50 years, friends had been aware that he was unwell. Still he courageously continued his work at the museum, and attended the Congress to greet colleagues and correspondents from all over the world. The suddenness with which news came of his death, only a month later, was particularly sad. At the Society his willingness to help, constant cheerfulness, and kindly sense of humour, no less than his standing in an important area of scholarship, make him keenly missed. The gap he leaves amongst British Islamists is one that will not easily be filled.

A. D. H. BIVAR

J. V. G. MILLS

Four characteristics stood out in the personality of John Vivian Gottlieb Mills (1887–1987): he was by vocation a colonial administrator and judge trying to live by the ideals of the Raj; he was by profession a lawyer; he was a sinologue for the love of it; and he was an Edwardian gentleman from head to toe. Educated at home by a Royal Navy father until it was time to enter Oxford, he differed from the run of his Malayan Civil Service contemporaries by delighting, not in the romance of the jungle and unsophisticated people, but in Southeast Asia's seaways and advanced trading communities. Appointed to the Straits Settlements aged 24, he was selected for the Chinese side of the government and went to Canton for two years; he learnt Cantonese, Fukiense and eventually standard Chinese. Back in Singapore, he read for the Bar (Middle Temple 1919), married, and was posted to Christmas Island for a tour among the Cantonese phosphate workers. He became interested in Chinese seamanship, navigation, and old charts—a hobby that possessed him more and more as time went on. His positions during the second decade and a half of his service were as Solicitor-General for the Straits Settlements, as Attorney-General, and lastly as a judge in Singapore and Johor. He retired in 1940 (aged 53), went to Australia, worked in the Federal Attorney-General's office for a time, and returned to England after the war to take his MA at Oxford in 1945 and lecture at the School for a year in Chinese law. His first wife died, and he settled in Switzerland for the rest of his life. There he found his second wife, who, thanks to her own acquaintance with Chinese art, was able to create for him an elegant penthouse *shu-chai* above Lac Léman and assist in the recording of his reading notes.

Mills was nearly 40 before he joined the Malayan Branch of the R.A.S., but was soon on its council and in 1937 was elected president; he joined in London in 1945. We have no list of his writings, but short notes occur in *JMBRAS*, certainly from 1929 onwards. In Raffles Library he found a printed version of Emanuel Godinho de Eredia's 1613 *Declaração de Malaca e India Meridional com o Cathay* and published notes on it in 1930 and 1931. At the same time he came across the XVIth century sea chart of Mao K'un and the *Wu-pei chih* by Mao's grandson Yüan-i (Eredia's contemporary); this treatise on China's strategic defence contains valuable information about navigation across the southern seas built round the sea chart. From late Ming, Mills was drawn back to sources in early Ming, and thence to the voyages of eunuch Chêng Ho (the Sam-poh Kung patron of Overseas Chinese legend) round Southeast Asia and across the Indian Ocean commissioned by the emperor Yung Lo, in the age of Henry the Navigator. He was now equipped to undertake translation and commentary on the *Ying-yai Shêng-lan*, in which, in 1433, Ma Huan told the story of Chêng Ho's seven voyages, rather as Pigafetta was to record Magellan's. Mills spent fifteen or more years on the task, using the modern text established by Fêng Ch'êng-chün (1935 and 1955) and drawing on the collaboration of half a hundred other scholars to light up dark corners. The book was eventually published in 1970 by the Hakluyt Society (of which Mills had been an Honorary Secretary) as *Overall Survey of the Ocean's*

*Shores* – a title less eye-catching than the fanciful ones by which some better-known scholars refer to it, but one that reflects a practical sense of time, clime, and purpose. It earned Mills his D.Litt. at the age of 83.

*Ying-yai* brought together the cream of Mills's endeavours, but it did not exhaust his research, for he continued to amass addenda to the identifications of place-names in *Overall Survey*. He wanted to produce a concordance of names occurring in early Chinese travels with those of other oriental languages. But, at his painstaking pace, that meant another decade of work and too much for a man in his nineties when he planned it. He has bequeathed the material collected to the Needham Research Institute at Cambridge, with the expressed hope that a younger man may adopt it as his own. The R.A.S. has lost a distinguished *chün-tzu* from its fellowship.

D.J.D.