

features and, we hope, have kept the relaxed style that it has always had, we have been including a slow trickle of articles that resemble more closely those in traditional academic journals. This is something which we hope to expand in the future. It is thus a good time to lay out the qualities that we hope these articles have because we do not intend *Itinerario* to become indistinguishable from other historical journals.

As we see it, any piece in *Itinerario* must be of interest not just to a small group of specialists, but to a wide spectrum of our heterogenous readership. This is the basic criterion for publication of any piece in *Itinerario*. This does not mean that an article cannot be specialized in itself, only that, in the view of the editors, it has to have a relevance beyond its immediate subject. This could be, for instance, because of its exemplary nature, because it describes and analyses phenomena which can be compared with similar ones in other parts of the world or because it presents recent trends in a particular historiography which may be valuable to those scholars working in other fields but which may have escaped their notice. Certainly we do not wish to develop a particular line, but rather will strive to remain eclectic in outlook. If you have any ideas in these, or other equivalent directions, do get in touch with us, either by sending us a piece or, at the least, by giving us an idea of what you intend to write, so that an article can develop out of the dialogue between author and editors.

This is a good moment to bring these matters to your attention, and not only because we need your cooperation in the establishment of our aims.

Editors and
Robert Ross.

LETTERS FROM CORRESPONDING EDITORS

DUTCH PERIOD MUSEUM - COLOMBO

Sri Lanka is fortunate to have established its first Dutch Period Museum in a typical colonial Dutch building in

the heart of the city of Colombo. It was ceremonially opened by His Excellency The President of Sri Lanka on 10th July, 1982.

The idea for a "Dutch House" for Ceylon originated at the beginning of the second half of the 19th Century. After a series of births and deaths, the idea had ultimately become a reality. It is most fitting that the links of the Dutch Period in Sri Lanka. (1640-1796) should be kept alive for posterity to appreciate.

The Museum building itself is a remarkable monument of the Dutch-Period. Its very fine and imposing row of front columns gives the building a gigantic look. Besides the reason for which it was built, the building has been used for many purposes during its long history. Originally from about 1708, the building housed the Dutch Seminary with an orphanage "*Weeskamer*" attached to it. The inscription above the entrance indicates the year 1780. Although the inscription gives this date, the date of the establishment of the Colombo Seminary cannot be ascertained. Historians are of opinion that the location of the Colombo Seminary never had changed between 1708 and 1780.

It is said that the building had once been the residence of Count Carl van Ranzow. Later, it was converted to a hospital for the enormous number of casualties of the Kandyan military campaign of the British in 1803. About 1881, it accommodated the headquarters and armoury of the Ceylon Volunteer Corps, subsequently, it was a Police Training School and finally a Post and Telegraph Office until damage in a rain storm made it uninhabitable in January, 1973.

As a result of this damage, the enthusiasts who were looking for a "Dutch House" paved the way to form a Restoration Committee. After laborious restoration work carried out for four years the building turned out to be a museum of Dutch heritage in Sri Lanka, with the generous assistance of different organizations in the Netherlands, particularly, the Netherlands-Sri Lanka Foundation in The Hague. Financial assistance was channelled through the Netherlands Alumni Association of Lanka which is an organized body of past students of the universities and high schools in the Netherlands.

The museum consists of eight exhibition rooms. A visitor

first enters the lobby which gives an introduction of the arrival of the Dutch to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) then steps into the passage where he will first see the original painting of a VOC fleet of ships loaded with merchandise, which was donated to this museum at its opening ceremony by the Director of the Amsterdam Historical Museum. Then the typical Dutch brass chandelier with eighteen light points hanging in the passage. The next room gives the details of the socio-economic and cultural background of the Kandyan Kingdom during the Dutch Period. Then the "Dutch Room" full of important objects belonging to the period of the Dutch East India Company Administration. Further there is a model living room, a bed room and a dining room with exquisite antique Dutch furniture. The Archives room gives the history of the Dutch period in Sri Lanka with a number of photographic reproductions of documents. Religious artifacts are exhibited in the room before the last, the last being, appropriately enough, the "Hall of Death", exhibiting the Dutch tombstones and inscriptions.

The museum located in the busiest part of the city (95, Prince Street, Pettah) and therefore one would find it difficult to approach the building by vehicle during peak-hours of the day, 7.30-5.30 p.m. It is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except on Fridays, Saturdays and Public holidays. Entrance fee is Rs. 20/= per head. Visitors could get more information from the Netherlands Alumni Association office which is also located in the same building.

K.D. Paranavitana,
Sri Lanka.

LETTERS FROM READERS

A LETTER FROM THE U.S.A.

August 26, 1982.

I enclose our present statement defining the tropical forest history project. Would you want to print that? It might be one way of identifying others who are working on