

IN MEMORIAM ROBERT HEINE-GELDERN

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On May 25th, 1968, Professor Dr. Robert Freiherr von Heine-Geldern's long life and arduous work came to a sudden end. He suffered a stroke and passed away on that day. He was then in his 83rd year. Three years earlier, in one of his letters to me, he had written:

During these months I have been burdened with more work than I could cope with and my health was not always the best. Above all, I am feeling my age [80]. Everything takes twice as much time as before. As a result I was simply forced to neglect my correspondence. The mound of unanswered letters on my desk is growing and growing. I am trying desperately to finish a paper on the tribal art of Southeast Asia which I should have delivered months ago. When I am through with it I am still forced to write a rather lengthy paper on the religions of Further India which I was imprudent enough to promise years ago. But after this I shall not accept any further commitments, since I want to finish at last the book on pre-Columbian trans-Pacific relations which I began to write in New York in 1949. Time is getting short.

His life was running out, he sensed, but there was still so much he wanted to do. He could have added to the above his continuing preoccupation with the series of *Bulletins of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research*, the ninth issue of which appeared early in 1968. In January of this year he was planning No. 10, personally writing to prospective contributors and offering suggestions. At the same time he was hard at work on a treatise concerning "Kingship and Its Institutions in Old Iran and the Far East: Comparisons and Problems" which reportedly he completed one day before his death.

To his numerous friends in the United States and to the international community of scholars the famous aristocrat-professor of the University of Vienna was known simply as Robert Heine-Geldern, an unassuming man, keenly alive and tirelessly at work on his research and publications. And whether they agreed with his views or not--he represented the controversial diffusionist school of thought--ethnologists, anthropologists, and historians of Asian art of the last four decades have all had to reckon with his work.

I knew Heine-Geldern during one of the darkest periods of his life, when I shared his office at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where he had found refuge during the years of World War II. He was a most considerate and generous man, ever ready to help those who sought his advice or cooperation even when he himself was suffering hardship. He would never mention, let alone complain about the financial and other worries besetting him, though they were great, especially when a catastrophic accident incapacitated his young daughter Maria who lived with him. At a time when he wanted to engross himself in new material, he never shunned chores helpful to the larger community--the compilation of bibliographies, surveys, encyclopaedic articles, or a catalogue for an exhibition.

While in the United States, he was co-founder in 1941 of the East Indies Institute of America (later known as the South-east Asia Institute) together with Margaret Mead, the late Ralph Linton, the late Adriaan J. Barnouw, and myself. That society, later absorbed into the Association for Asian Studies, first brought together students of Southeast Asia in the United States and sought to promote cultural and scholarly exchange with the countries of that region. At home in Austria he was honored and decorated as an outstanding citizen of Vienna, and for courage while in military service during World War I; he was an active member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Abroad, he was a valued member of the Royal Asiatic Society, of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and of the École Française d'Extrême Orient. The Viking Fund awarded him a medal.

Heine-Geldern opened the field of Southeast Asian anthropology in 1923 with his pioneering chapter "Südostasien" in G. Buschan's *Illustrierte Völkerkunde*. His essay on "Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," written in 1942, has become a classic. Evidently he had returned to that theme during his last years, for his final, unpublished treatise on kingship in Old Iran and the Far East indicates that he was now setting it on a larger canvas, exploring its ramifications in two ancient cultures that reach deeper into antiquity than historical Southeast Asia. It is to be hoped that a posthumous publication of this work will appear before too long.

To a scholar interested in the spread of cultures either through the actual migration of peoples in prehistoric times or through trade routes and other contacts later on, the fascinating central question is always "What was the source?" Heine-Geldern's detective work in cultural diffusion led him in the last years of his life to roam from the Caspian Sea to China, and from China across the Pacific to Mexico and Peru or down to the Maori in New Zealand. But in spite of their great geographic spread, most of Heine-Geldern's studies are directly or indirectly of interest to students of Indonesian cultural history and art. His excellent early work *Weltbild und Bauform in Südostasien* made a lasting impression on the scholars who later dealt with the

sacred structures of Southeast Asian and especially Indonesian antiquity. His numerous articles on the area bear witness that he was one of those rare scholars able to handle both grand themes and minutiae. We find in them valuable data on old Javanese bronzes; a discussion of scenes from the Sutasoma Jataka on Indonesian and other Southeast Asian sword handles; studies of the old and new stone ages in Southeast Asia; of megalithic cultures; of archaeology and art in Sumatra and Nias; of the survivals of ancient Buddhist motifs in Nias; and so on.

With Robert Heine-Geldern a vast store of accumulated knowledge and of still budding ideas has vanished. It is for the next generation of scholars and their successors, absorbing and re-interpreting his legacy, to replace this loss in their own way. But to those who have enjoyed his personal warm friendship the loss is irreplaceable. Only gratitude remains that it was granted to him to live fully for so many productive years.

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