

PREFACE

For further development of the Asian Crystallographic Association



The fourth Conference of the Asian Crystallographic Association (AsCA) will be held in Bangalore, India from 18 to 21, November this year. AsCA was established, following the preparation meeting held during the 13th Conference of the International Union of Crystallography (IUCr) in Hamburg in 1984, at the establishment meeting during the next 14th Conference on August 14, 1987 held in Perth, Australia by the support of delegates from the 11 countries that participated.

At the establishment of the Association, Professor Hall of Australia, Professor Mitra of India, and Professor Harada of Japan, who worked devotedly to organize the Association, were designated as President, Vice-President, and Financial Director, respectively. The office of President has since been assumed by Professor Nobutami Kasai (Osaka University; 2nd), Professor Robinson (New Zealand; 3rd), and Professor Zhang (China, 4th) for a term of 3 years each, and I have succeeded as the fifth president since the Glasgow Conference of IUCr in August, 1999.

The greatest problem that AsCA has faced since its establishment was the definition of Asia. Geographically, Asia naturally does not include Oceania but encompasses an immense stretch of area from the Ural Mountains through Turkey to the Suez Canal to the west and to Siberia to the north. However, the Association is an organization for spontaneous exchanges among crystallographers rather than a political organization, and it is required to be a practical organization for exchanges among crystallographers. Therefore, we defined the area encircled by Japan, Korea, China, Pakistan, India, Australia, and New Zealand as the area of our coverage. AsCA is one of the 3 regional organizations, together with the European Crystallographic Association (ECA; academic meetings organized by ECA are called ECM) and the American Crystallographic Association (ACA), those constitute IUCr. As a result of an increase in the countries that sought for the membership, it is currently participated in by 17 countries or regions, namely Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Australia, Philippines, New Zealand, Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

We have already had 3 conferences as opportunities for research exchanges. The first conference was held in Singapore in 1992, the second in Bangkok in 1995, and the third in Bangi, Malaysia in 1998. There have been 250-320 participants at each conference. Although the number of participants tends to increase at every conference, it is still less than half the number of participants at ACA or ECM, which is 800-1,000. While the area that AsCA covers holds about half the world population, the percentage of crystallographers living in this area falls far below. More latent crystallographers are estimated to exist in India and China, but Japanese researchers have always accounted for two-thirds of the participants at AsCA. American participants also occupy more than half the participants at ACA, but the United States is a large country located near the center of the American Continent so that the situation is widely different from the large participation at AsCA from Japan, a small country in the periphery of gigantic Asia. Also, while ACA and ECM have a considerable number of participants also from outside their member countries, participants in AsCA from outside Asia and Oceania are very few.

How meaningful is such a research conference that can attract a relatively small number of participants, a majority of whom are from a single country, has been controversial among Japanese crystallographers from the onset of AsCA. Concerning this question, many Japanese crystallographers think that countries belonging to AsCA hold nearly half the world population, and that the number of researchers will increase drastically with development of the productivity of the region in the near future so that accumulation of experience in research exchanges at this stage is important to ensure active collaboration for such times.

However, such a vision alone is not sufficient to keep motivating the crystallographers, and sustained and concrete exchanges on occasions other than AsCA meetings are considered indispensable. Periodic contacts of researchers and students are also considered necessary. Bilateral conferences such as the Japan-Taiwan Crystallographic Seminars held between Japanese and Taiwanese crystallographers appear absolutely necessary, and the Asian Forum on Synchrotron Radiation held at Hiroshima University under the initiative of SPring-8 in January this year was a very successful research assembly concentrating on a particular theme. More continuous projects may become possible by organically linking programs with invited Asian researchers conducted in various forms today.

Presently, experiments are carried out periodically by Australian investigators at the Tsukuba Photon Factory and by Taiwanese researchers at SPring-8. Opening the doors of these large-scale research facilities to Asian researchers is also considered to be an absolute necessity. Transmission of new information from Asia is considered to become possible through such pioneer research activities. Whether Asia can present novel information or not is a key factor in attracting more participants at AsCA from outside countries.

I, as current President, consider the following as future policies of AsCA. First, the interval of AsCA conferences, which is currently every 3 years, appears much too insufficient in consideration of the facts that ACA conferences are held every year and that ECM assembles twice in 3 years, i.e. in the years when IUCr is not convened. We would like to confer twice in 3 years similarly to ECM, but this idea is difficult to realize because of the financial standing of the association as well as the difficulty of participants to secure travel expenses, and it would result in a marked decrease in attendance. As an alternative, I would like to propose to redesign every other annual Japan-Australia meetings as a new AsCA meeting and to interpose it in the present 3-year interval of AsCA conferences. Thus, every 6th annual meeting becomes a remodeled AsCA meeting for us Japanese, and, there, we are expected to manage the meeting and make presentations in English. To compensate for this inconvenience, I expect no major change in the current attendance of about 400. On the Australian side, on the other hand, the scale of every 6th annual meeting must be markedly expanded to accommodate the large number of Japanese participants. Presently, this idea is evaluated by the

Japanese and Australian Crystallographic Societies, and I would very much like to see this realized for the future development of Asian crystallography.

Secondly, the time of the year when the conference is held must be changed. We schedule AsCA conferences in November in consideration of summer heat, class schedules during the semester, and the conference schedules of other associations, but July or August during summer vacation may be a feasible alternative. Some researchers may find it easier to participate this way. Another idea is to allow a choice between summer vacation and November.

Thirdly, we must improve our homepage. The homepage of AsCA is currently produced and managed under the supervision of Vice-President Professor Simpson of New Zealand, but its contents are considered to need improvements. It must carry news from various countries as

much as possible, and homepages of crystallographic Societies in various countries must be linked to one another. Exchange and sharing of information among crystallographers belonging to AsCA are considered to be a matter of first priority.

Fourthly, the time of reelection of the association officials must be changed. They are currently reelected at the IUCr conference held every 3 years, but it appears more legitimate that reelection be held at the AsCA conference. While the IUCr conference may be more convenient to attend for some officials, it is preferable that the management of AsCA be discussed at the AsCA conference.

I hope that crystallography in the Asia and Oceania region be advanced further through these concrete modifications in the management of the Association. Crystallography is the basis of materials sciences. I believe that progresses in crystallography are sure to contribute to advances in materials sciences.



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