OXFORD PROGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHY

SENIOR SERIES BOOK 3

ASIA

CHONG SECK-CHIM

OXFORD PROGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHY

SENIOR SERIES: General Editor, Jasper H. Stembridge

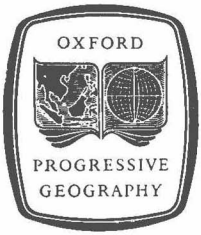
BOOK THREE

ASIA

by

CHONG SECK-CHIM

Malayan Education Service



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PREFACE

THE Senior Series of the *Oxford Progressive Geographies* is intended to provide a graded Course for pupils in secondary schools, who are preparing for the School Certificate. The first three books of the Course take the pupil up to Lower Certificate of Education standard while Book Four provides the basis for later work required by the School Certificate.

In recent years the study of geography in our schools has become more purposeful. A livelier interest is being shown in local topics and events, an interest by no means restricted to geography alone, which imposes fresh demands on the teacher as well as on the text-book writer. This interest reflects partly the general advance in scholastic standards, partly the change in emphasis from foreign to local sources for inspiration in classroom teaching.

Hence a new series of geographies, prepared strictly from a local viewpoint, becomes desirable. *The Oxford Progressive Geographies* have two aims: first, to convey to the pupil an idea of the world and its 2,900 million peoples, and to show how their lives are affected by their natural environment, and second to furnish him with sufficient geographical knowledge to enable him to follow contemporary affairs intelligently, as a preparation for a deeper understanding of the world's problems in later life.

The arrangement of chapters in this series of books conforms with the syllabus. The regional treatment is followed in most cases by countries, except where it is more convenient (as, for example, in the case of Kalimantan which is described with British Borneo for the whole island) to group them together for discussion. Less familiar topics are discussed in greater detail than more familiar ones, and indeed some teachers may be dismayed by their fulsome treatment. But experience has shown that anything less complete will merely result in the teacher having to prepare, and the pupils to copy, supplementary notes at the expense of teaching time, or by default must result in a plethora of misleading and generalized statements tendered in good faith by the unfortunate pupils in the examination room.

The pupil must be regarded as the active agent in his own education, and the numerous and varied exercises have been designed so that he will be able to accomplish most of them without assistance from the

teacher. The pictures have been chosen to interest and to illustrate significant aspects of the lives of the people in the different regions, and the maps and diagrams to aid the pupil to a fuller understanding of the written text. The use of a good atlas is fundamental to the study of geography, and pupils should be encouraged to 'build up' their own sketch-maps based on the atlas map as soon as possible in the secondary school course. A few exercises in this book have therefore been directed to this end.

I wish to express my thanks to the numerous friends and colleagues who have read the book in draft and made suggestions for improvement; in particular, my thanks are due to Che Hamzah Sendut of the University of Malaya, and to Mr. Soong Min Kong, Director of Fisheries, Federation of Malaya, who edited the section on Malayan Fisheries in the book.

NOTE TO PUPIL: Keep this book for reference in the School Certificate Class.

Kuala Lumpur C. S.-C.
1960

CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

NOTE: The following maps and diagrams were designed by Jasper H. Stembridge: Figures 3, 23, 29, 44, 46, 47, 54, 57, 58, 61, and 66.

CHAPTER ONE

A FIRST LOOK AT ASIA

THE 'Old World' as known to the Greeks and the Romans and their contemporaries in Asia included only the northern half of the eastern hemisphere, i.e. Europe, Northern Africa, and Asia. In other words, this part of our world has had the longest human history, and the oldest civilizations were located here, in the great river valleys of the Nile, the Tigris–Euphrates, the Indus, and the Hwang Ho. Asia may thus be regarded as the cradle of human civilization, and from it ideas and goods, and sometimes peoples also, were distributed, mostly by trade, often by conquest as well. The first invasion was indeed from Europe, in 327 B.C. when Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Emperor, Darius, and crossed the Indus; but after this, for a long time, expansion came mainly from the east.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, the Mohammedan Arabs expanded their empire as far west as Spain, and introduced new drugs and mathematical science to Europe. Later in the thirteenth century, the Mongol hordes of Genghiz Khan overran the Danube, and most of Asia and part of Europe came briefly under one rule. More and more European travellers could now undertake the long and hazardous journey to the East, free from interference from their Muslim enemies. These traders brought with them precious metals in exchange for the silk, porcelain, and spices of the East. The most famous of the travellers was Marco Polo, who spent seventeen years in China, from 1275 to 1292; some of these years were spent under the service of the Khan. The overland routes to Asia were again disrupted by the growth of Turkish power, which blocked the 'land bridge' in the Middle East between Europe and Asia. Not until Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 was a clear and safe way again open to the East, more particularly to South and South-East Asia. In 1509, Alfonso D'Albuquerque captured Goa and Malacca; in 1571, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi founded Manila and secured the Philippines for Spain; in 1619, the Dutch founded Batavia; finally, in 1696, the British established Fort William at the site of Calcutta. These dates and events are highlights of the European colonial history in Asia which ended only after the Second World War.

The former colonies and dependent territories of Asia are now independent nations but still lag far behind the modern countries of the West in economic development. Indeed, most of the Asian countries are regarded as 'underdeveloped' and receive aid in one form or another from the advanced nations under such international co-operative schemes as the Colombo Plan. The countries of Asia suffer from the twin ills of overpopulation and underproduction, and reading about their geography in this book will help you to understand better the reasons for this.

A CONTINENT OF CONTRASTS

Asia is not only the largest of continents but also the one with the most variety—of relief, climate, and people. It is not easy to imagine what 17 million square miles, which is the area of Asia, or what 6,000 miles, its breadth, mean in terms of size. When Marco Polo travelled from Venice to China in 1271, he took more than four years to complete the journey. Today, even with modern transport, a railway journey from Vladivostok to Leningrad by the Trans-Siberian Railway would take ten whole days.

Asia extends through 165° of longitude, i.e. nearly half way round the earth. This means a big difference in local time from one end of the continent to the other. One half of the round earth at any time is in the light of the sun, i.e. in the day, and the other half in the night. As the earth rotates from west to east, places on the east get their morning sun

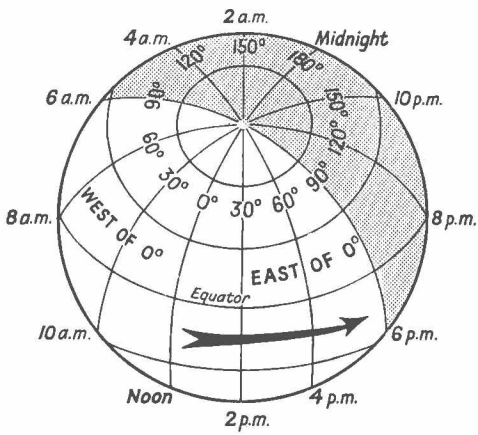

FIG. 1. LONGITUDE AND TIME

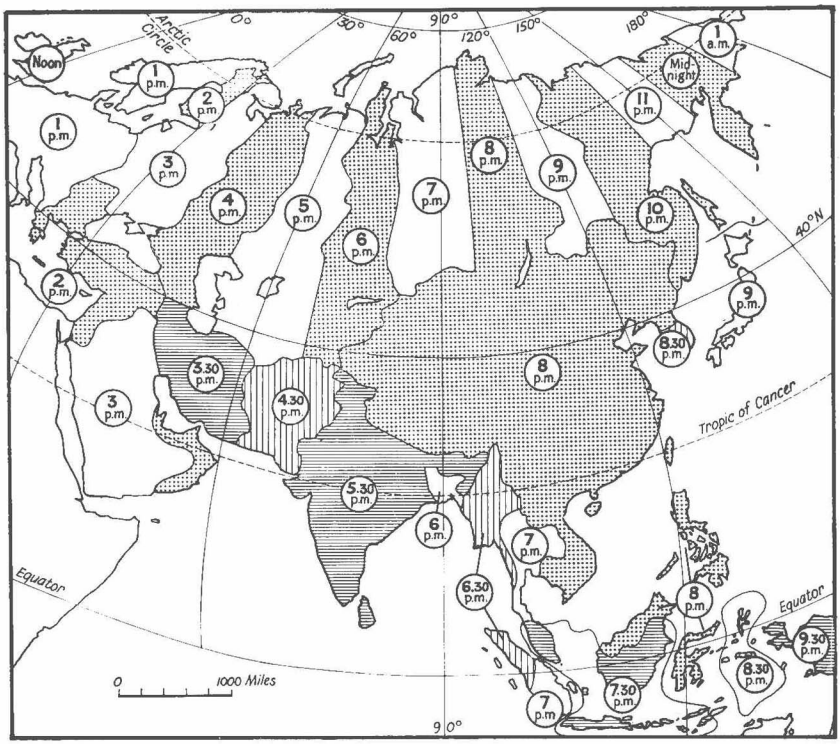

FIG. 2. LOCAL STANDARD TIMES IN ASIA WHEN IT IS 7.30 P.M. IN MALAYA

The surface of the earth is divided into 24 time zones. Each zone represents 15° of longitude or one hour of time. The irregularities in the zones shown here are due to political and economic factors. The ruled areas show fractional deviations from the standard times in their respective zones for the same reasons.

earlier than those in the west. The earth makes one complete rotation in 24 hours; therefore every $\frac{360^\circ}{24}$ or 15° of movement means a difference of an hour in time. When the Japanese are going to bed, say, at 9 p.m. Malayans are just about to dine at 7.30 p.m.; the Ceylonese, another 2 hours back, are going home from the office at 5.30 p.m. while the Turks in the west are just finishing their midday lunch. Hence Asia is divided into eleven time zones with a difference of 11 hours in local time between its eastern frontier in Kamchatka and its western in Turkey.

The variety of relief and climatic conditions in Asia is clearly illustrated in the list of outstanding features given below:

Highest mountain in the world	Mount Everest, 29,028 ft.
Lowest part of the earth's land surface	Shores of Dead Sea, 1,292 ft. below sea level.
Greatest ocean depth	Mindanao Deep, −35,412 ft.
Largest lake in the world	Caspian Sea, 169,383 square miles.
Deepest lake in the world	Lake Baikal, −5,771 ft.
Largest continental shelf	Sunda Platform.
Highest temperature (in Asia)	Jacobabad, India, 126° F. (World record at Azizia, Libya, 136° F.)
Lowest temperature in the world	Verkhoyansk, Siberia, −94° F.
Highest annual rainfall (in Asia)	Cherrapunji,[1] Assam, 451·6 ins.

It is believed that prehistoric human beings began in Central Asia and spread outwards, through centuries in time, to evolve into the different races as we know them today. In Asia, the Mongolian race is the most numerous and includes the straight-haired peoples of North, Central, and East Asia. Then comes the Caucasian race of wavy-haired peoples of South-Western Asia extending to India in the Punjab. Finally there is the Malay race of curly-haired peoples inhabitating South-East Asia and the Archipelago. The variety of languages, cultures, and creeds of these races is well represented in the mixed population of the Malay Peninsula, which lies between the two ancient civilizations of India and China, as well as in the midst of a busy sea thoroughfare between Asia and Europe.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

Asia may be divided into four main physical divisions: the Northern Lowlands, the Mountain Core, the Plateaus and Plains south and east of the Core, and the Island Festoons of the Pacific coast.

The Northern Lowlands lie in Soviet Asia and are a bleak, cold, and scantily populated region. This is the land of the *taiga* or the great coniferous forests which merge northwards into the *tundra* of the Arctic zone and southwards to the grasslands of the *steppes*.

The Mountain Core occupies about a third of the continent extending from Asia Minor to the Bering Strait. This vast area is uniformly high, ranging from 3,000 feet and over for the most part, to 12,000 feet and

[1] Cressey in his *Asia's Lands and Peoples* claims Mount Waialeale in Hawaii holds the world record, with 460·2 inches for the 20-year period ending 1938. For sheer concentrated wetness, however, Cherrapunji must take first place, as almost all its rain falls during the summer season of the year.

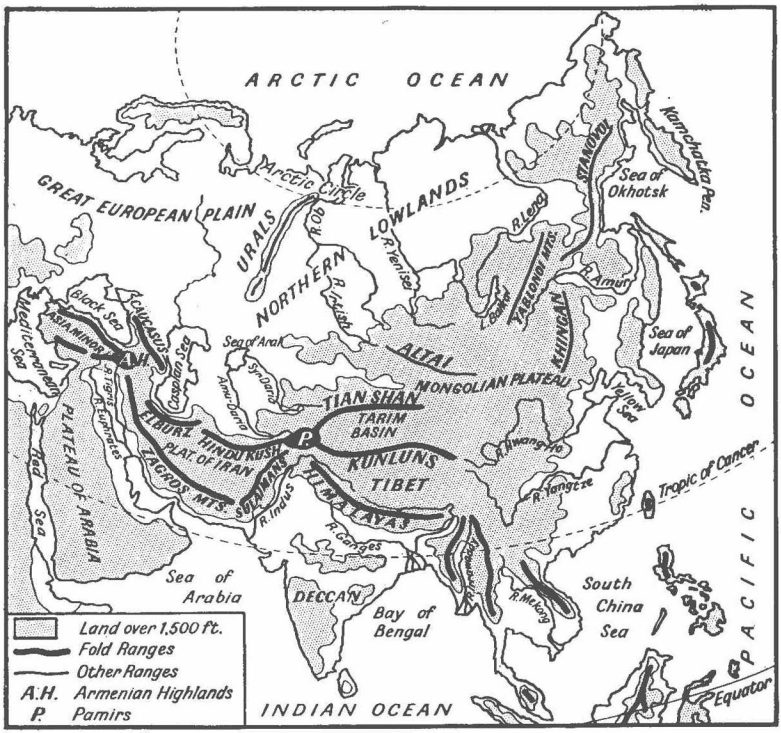

FIG. 3. ASIA: PHYSICAL MAP (SIMPLIFIED)

above for the Tibetan Plateau. When you remember that the temperature drops about 1° F. for every 300 feet of ascent, and that these areas are found in temperate regions where even the sea-level temperatures are fairly low, you will understand why these interior plateaus of Asia are so bitterly cold, and why they are also very sparsely populated.

The Plateaus and Plains lie south and east of the Mountain Core. These plateaus are much lower and less extensive, being separated from each other by large, fertile plains on which live most of the peoples of Asia. The single exception is the plain of south-eastern Arabia, which is a sandy desert.

The Island Festoons run in a chain of loops from the Kamchatka Peninsula round the Pacific coast of Asia to the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Shallow seas lie between these islands and the continent; but on the seaward side the sea-floor descends to great depths. This sudden change of height weakens the earth's crust, giving rise to frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, both of which are due to the

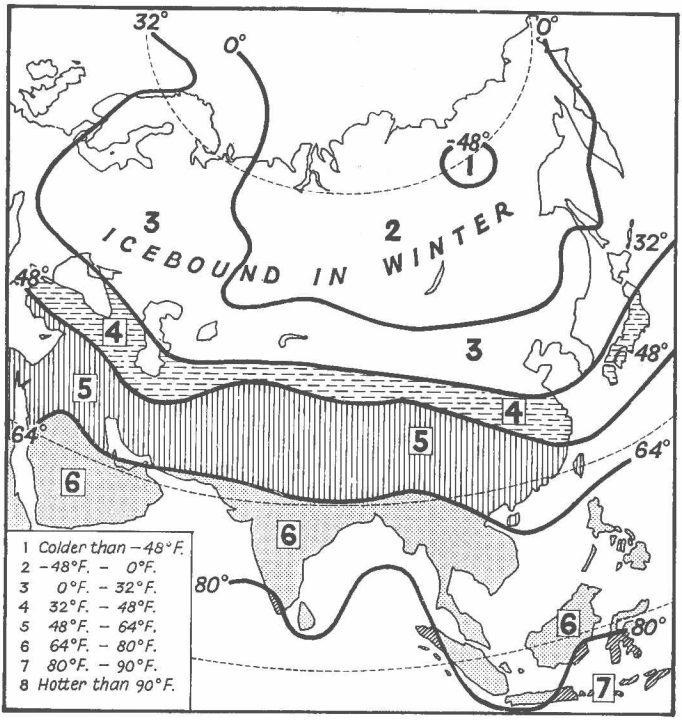

FIG. 4. ASIA: WINTER (JANUARY) ISOTHERMS

Isotherms are lines drawn on a map joining places having the same temperature, *reduced to sea level*, for a given period. Thus, the actual winter temperatures on the Tibetan Plateau (average height, 12,000 feet) is about 40° colder than here shown because temperature is lowered about 1° F. for every 300 feet of ascent.

pent-up forces of heat and gases deep down inside the earth seeking a way of escape through the weaker parts of the crust. These islands form half of the Fiery Ring of the Pacific, a chain of extinct and active volcanic islands surrounding the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

CLIMATE

The climates of Asia are the result of three main factors: the huge and compact size of the continent; the great height and extent of its mountain core; and the seasonal changes of the prevailing winds.

Owing to its size, most parts of the interior of Asia are very far away from the sea, and the absence of deep bays intruding far inland tends to emphasize this isolation. In this respect Asia is no different from the

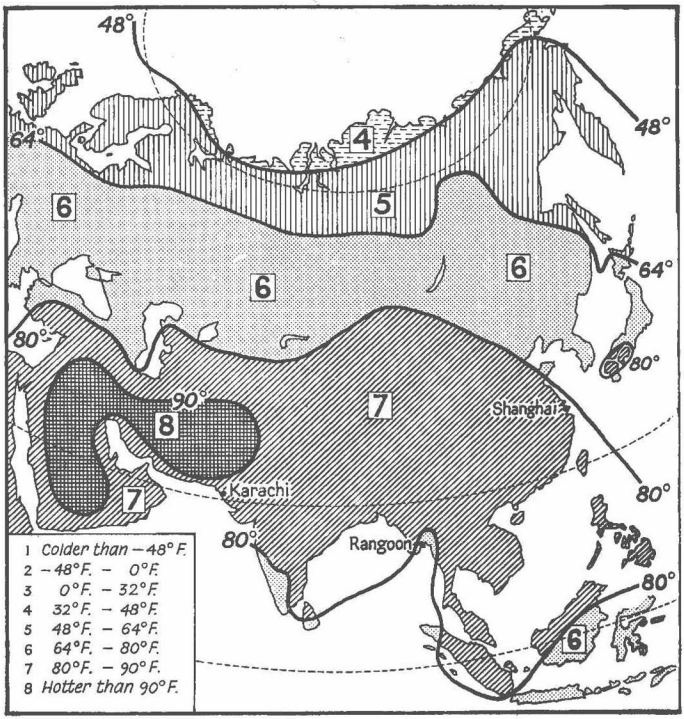

FIG. 5. ASIA: SUMMER (JULY) ISOTHERMS

Can you estimate what the average temperature in July is for these places shown on the map: Shanghai, Rangoon, Karachi?

other continents, whose central areas have what is known as a '*continental*' type of climate, i.e. a climate with a wide range of temperature between the warmest and coolest times of the year. But Central Asia is very mountainous, and the intermont plateaus, especially, are shut off from the winds of the sea so that these regions suffer severely from an extreme form of continental climate.

In Asia the *prevailing winds* (i.e. the winds which have been found by experience to blow fairly regularly from a certain direction during certain seasons of the year) in summer blow from the sea to the land; in winter, from the land to the sea. This explains why, for most of Asia, the highest rainfall occurs in the summer months.

Monsoons. In summer, the continental land mass of Asia gets heated up more than the ocean waters and so the air over the hot land expands,

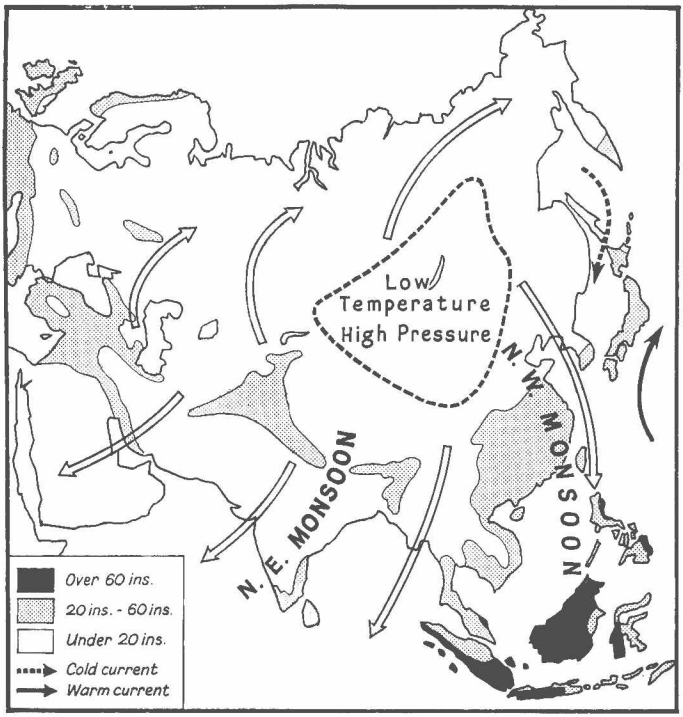

FIG. 6. ASIA: WINDS, PRESSURE, AND RAINFALL IN WINTER

becoming lighter and rises; or, in other words, its air pressure becomes lower than that over the sea, so air from the oceans moves into the land mass, blowing in as the summer monsoon. In winter, the opposite action takes place, as the land this time becomes cooler than the sea, and the winter monsoon therefore flows out from Central Asia to the sea.

These monsoon winds take a curved path in their movements owing to the rotation of the earth, which swings them to the right of their original paths. The winter monsoon, for instance, blows from the north-east in India and Malaya, but from the north-west in China and Japan.

The Asian monsoons are strongest in the south-east where two continents, Asia and Australia, meet two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific, and the south and east of Asia have therefore come to be known as the Monsoon Lands. The special significance of the monsoons is that they bring rain during the growing season in summer, so that in most of the

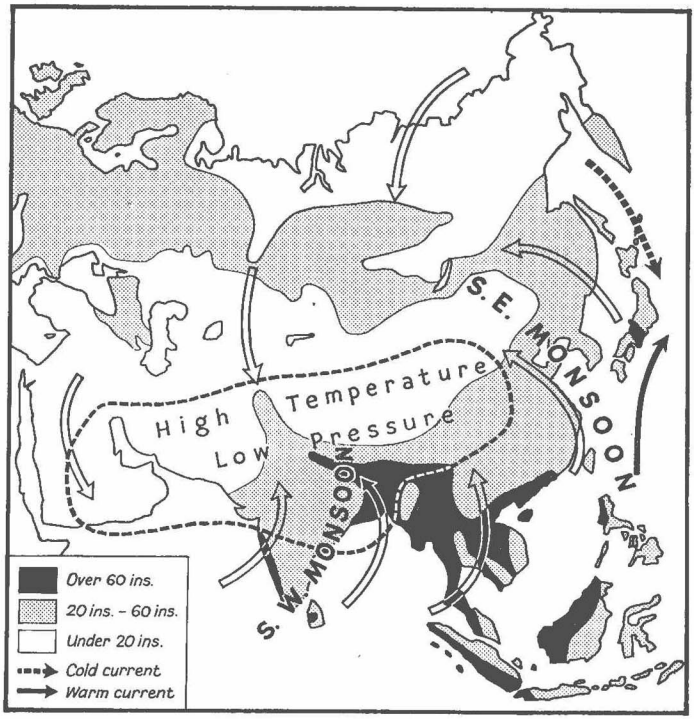

FIG. 7. ASIA: WINDS, PRESSURE, AND RAINFALL IN SUMMER

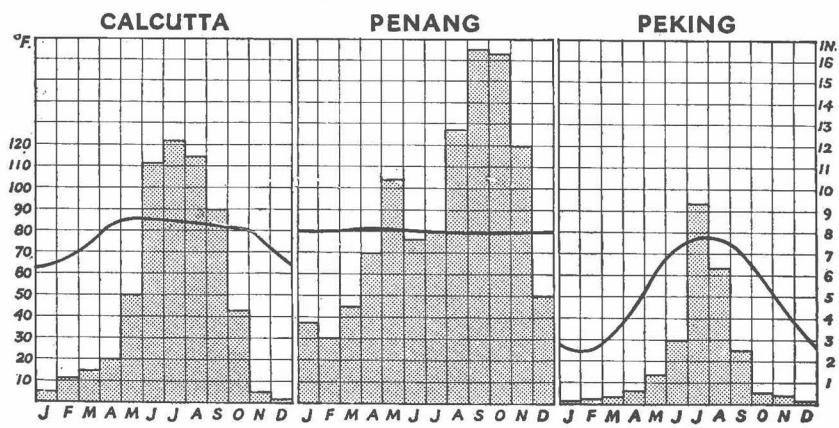

FIG. 8. RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE AT CALCUTTA, PENANG, AND PEKING