3.3 INDONESIA AND SOUTH

The coconut moved south and west by sea throughout the islands of Indonesia and New Guinea.

The invading Japanese in WWII appreciated the coconut.

Japanese Occupation of Dutch East Indies

The Indonesians' former colonial masters still have an active interest in the coconut through the Royal Institute of the Tropics.
The coconut pays the taxes and carries the mail in Indonesia.

Although the coconut is now common in tropical Australia, the aborigines did not know of the coconut. Tasman and Dampier did not see any...

...nor did the great Captain Cook on their voyages around Australia.

The first small natural stand of coconuts was not discovered until 1848.
From its original home, the coconut migrated quickly to the mainland of southeast Asia...

...where it established itself along the coast and then further inland...

... and where it remains well-established today.

Phuoc Le to Cholon, September 1972
The sender, an ARVN captain (D/U = Del Uy) used the special 10 piastre military rate.
3.4 SOUTHERN ASIA

From southeast Asia, the coconut traveled by land and sea...

to the Indian subcontinent... from modern Bangladesh in the east... to Pakistan in the west...

... and throughout tropical India ...

... especially on the southern coastal regions.
3.4 SOUTHERN ASIA

The coconut is an important part of the landscape and ecology of many islands in the Indian Ocean...

...and especially so on Ceylon (Sri Lanka)...

...where even the lighthouses at Devinuwara and Galle are surrounded by coconut palms...

...and where the coconut is an important food and cash crop.

Note the coconut shell cup used to collect the sap of the rubber tree.
The importance of the coconut cannot be overestimated on the remote islands of the Indian Ocean... like the Maldives or the Seychelles.

Two coconut palms grow on the shoreline here.

The palm in the lower left corner of the indicium is the so-called coco-de mer or double coconut (*Lodoicea maldivica*) which produces the largest seed in all the plant kingdom and is a distant relative of our coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

The coconut palm is found in towns and beaches of these remote islands in the Indian Ocean.
3.5 EAST AFRICA

The coconut came with early Indo-Malaysian settlers to Madagascar and near-by islands and was soon established on the East Coast of Africa.

A thriving coconut trade was established in Zanzibar by 1000 A.D.

The Mozambique coast has been an important source of coconuts for over 1000 years.
3.6 EUROPEAN RE-DISCOVERY

Early Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans to re-discover the coconut ... and to bring seed nuts around the Cape of Good Hope to the West Coast of Africa and the Cape Verde Islands.
3.6 EUROPEAN RE-DISCOVERY

Later European colonizers quickly exploited the economic value of the coconut in their African colonies...

... and established large plantations inland...

... and along the coast.
3.6 EUROPEAN RE-DISCOVERY

Captain Cook and other explorers re-discovered the coconut palm and found it on almost every tropical Pacific island they visited.

But it is Captain Cook with whom we most frequently associate with the coconut.

The coconut was an important part of life in the Cook Islands long before they became the Cook Islands.
However, the coconut palm was NOT in the Atlantic or Caribbean when Columbus discovered the New World. No native coastal palm of the Americas resembles the coconut palm. A few of many design errors are shown:

Columbus is using the not-yet-invented telescope to see the non-existant coconut palms on these stamps and this cancel. (The outrigger canoe is also suspect).

Hernando DeSoto did not see any coconut palms on his expedition to Florida.

Balboa did not see any on the Atlantic or the Pacific beaches...

...none yet grew in Columbus Cove

...and none grew on the Brasilian coast in 1549!
The coconut palm served its new colonial masters well...

... especially on the larger islands like Jamaica, which developed its own special coconut palm cultivar - the Jamaican tall...

... seen on old photos and on more recent meter stamps and cancels...

... and which now provide a scenic backdrop for these visiting tourists.
The European colonizers realized the usefulness of the coconut and were quick to establish it. Spanish galleons brought not only gold but seed coconuts from the Philippines to Mexico.

The coconut thrived for its new colonial masters...

...and continued to grow well despite the changing political fortunes of the lands.
3.7 NEW WORLD

The coconut palm can now be found from coastal Mexico through Central America...

...and on the northern Pacific coast...

...and along the warm Atlantic coast of South America...

...and on through tropical Brasil.

The coconut palms of Rio de Janeiro were a welcome sight to convicts on the First Fleet en route to Australia.
3.7 NEW WORLD

The beaches of the Caribbean would look barren without the ubiquitous coconut palm.

The coconut is now a permanent part of the Caribbean landscape.
4. ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

The coconut palm is of major economic importance throughout the tropics, both for local use and in international commerce.

4.1 PALM OF LIFE

Local people use almost every part of the coconut palm. The lumber and thatch are used for a wide variety of local dwellings and structures. The architecture varies greatly, but all provide adequate shelter.

This couple appear quite content on the porch of their home under the coconut palms.