

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS**‘The mirror cracked’: The colonial history-making project and its legacy in Burma, 1900 to the present**

Ph.D. dissertation, Monash University, January 2003

ALYSSA PHILLIPS

This thesis examines the ways in which the Burmese past has been investigated, described and exhibited during the twentieth century. Of particular interest are the careers and published work of the British colonial scholars who initiated the western study of Burmese history in the early twentieth century. It is argued that during this period the British introduced new genres and institutional structures for the writing, conservation and exhibition of Burma’s past, which, in the long term, precipitated a significant rupture in Burmese conceptions of the past. This research goes beyond an analysis of orientalism in British colonial historiography. By exploring the themes, styles and literary forms which British scholars used to think about the Burmese past this thesis traces the development of key colonial ideas and approaches. The continuing use and adaptation of these colonial approaches to the Burmese past is also investigated and is related, in turn, to the writing and exhibiting of Burmese history in the nationalist and contemporary periods. Clearly the British did not manufacture everything that is known about Burmese history today, yet it is important to emphasise that current conceptions of the Burmese past are to a large degree filtered through the literary genres and historical institutions established by the British in Burma.

The study analyses various modes and forms of constructing the past, including colonial archives, museums, archaeological research and the writing of prominent British and Burmese scholars. The investigation of these diverse sources enables the thesis to draw parallels between history-making during the colonial period and current debates about Burma’s history. In Burma today the past is a highly contested and politically sensitive arena. The current military regime in Burma employs the past to authorise its rule by sponsoring the establishment of museums, pagodas, tourist sites and new histories. By probing the sources of these colonial, nationalist and contemporary images this research sheds light on the process of history-making in Burma during the twentieth century.

The Structure of Nominalization in Burmese

Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Arlington, 2003

Paulette M. Hopple

(Supervising Professor: Jerold A. Edmondson)

Nominalized sentential elements have long been observed in Tibeto-Burman languages, but the role and extent of nominalized patterns have not been explored as a base of formative structuring. This dissertation examines nominalization patterns in Burmese from the word to text level and posits a complex information packaging role of postposition particles in erecting a structure of predictable and iteratively patterned nominals which function to reduce information overload and facilitate online parsing. Burmese has been characterized as a predominantly verbal language (U Pe Maung Tin 1956). A complementary view is presented in which ontological objects created via a grammatical system of nominalization function to establish a sturdy skeletal framework for verbal and particle expression. Together the role of nominal and relational elements engender a balance realized structurally as ontological nominal objects whose juxtaposition iteratively creates larger nominals.

The claim is made here that an underlying ontological level of organization supports grammatical categorization. This organization is structurally simple and patterned. Only two word categories are posited —noun and verb. A third basic category of postposition particle functions abstractly as a type of grammatical verb. The role of the particle is expanded as an abstract nominalizing element that constructs and organizes the ontological structure of Burmese sentences and orders higher level units of discourse. Sentences are regarded as nominalized units based upon the unique and diverse functions of **onf**sany as nominalizer. This key particle unlocks the role of nominalization in Burmese grammatical structure — as deictic specifier, as personalizer 'affix', as general nominal complementizer, as relativizer, and as sentence final particle of realis mood. The prototypical functions of **onf**sany are realized as a vast 'conspiracy' of nominalization underlying the organization of Burmese grammatical constructions from simple noun phrase to paragraph to the discourse as a whole.

SEMINARS

The Burma Campaign Society

The Burma Campaign Society was established in March 2002 to promote understanding of Britain and Japan's encounter during the Second World War.

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BCS Seminars and Meetings, May 2002-March 2003

May 9th, 2002

Was the Pacific War Inevitable?

Dr. Keiichiro Komatsu

17th August 2002

Annual Memorial Service for those who died in Burma during the Second World War, followed by a ceremony to pray for reconciliation and world peace.

18th August 2002

Service of Reconciliation which will be held as part of the Evensong Service at Coventry Cathedral.

15th October 2002

The Battle of Kohima

Gordon Graham, Masao Hirakubo, Maurice Franses and Philip Malins

12th March 2003

Britain's Grand Strategy for War Against Japan

Dr Saki Dockrill of the Department of War Studies, King's College, London

Britain-Burma Society

Regular meetings are held at:

The Medical Society of London,
11 Chandos Street,
LONDON W.1.
United Kingdom

Please note: **Meetings are confined to members and their guests - and are subject to reporting restrictions.**

For more information on the BBS seminars, see:

<http://www.shwepla.net/ibex.mv?which+France+/Calendar/Calendar.mv>

BBS Seminars, February 2002-March 2003

Thursday 7th February 2002

Life in the Southern Chin Hills by Helga So-Hartmann

Our speaker has been based in Burma since 1975, studying the various dialects of the Southern Chin Hills. She married a Chin and most of the people she knows are also Chin. With the help of a wealth of photographs she talked of the nature and lives of these little-known peoples, whose territory is still largely off limits to foreigners.

Tuesday 19th March 2002

Forbidden Tracts by Shelby Tucker

Our speaker went to Burma in 1989 to fulfil a pledge made to himself three decades earlier while hitchhiking along the Thai-Burmese border. His illicit journey across the Yunnan border into Burma in 1989 had been preceded by many other equally daring journeys, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. But if his little trip across Burma via insurgent-infested hills started as a dare, it turned into something much more interesting as Shelby Tucker spent weeks among the various ethnic peoples and rebel armies along Burma's northern border area - Kachins, Shans and Communist Party of Burma. He was particularly fascinated by the Kachins, and has been ever since.

Tuesday 7th May 2002

Kelly's Burma Campaign by Desmond Kelly MD, FRCP, FRPsych

Desmond Kelly left Burma precipitately in 1942, at the age of seven. But his father Norman Kelly stayed on to fight after the retreat of the main force of the British Army, organizing the Chin Levies from among local people where he lived in the Chin Hills. They were supported by the 17th Indian Division, whose members were to win more Victoria Crosses than any other division of the British Army. Desmond, who grew up in

the Shan States, is now completing a book about the perils Norman Kelly and his brave companions faced in holding up the Japanese advance into India. The book - also to be called *Kelly's Burma Campaign* - will be on sale towards the end of 2002.

Wednesday 12th June 2002

**The Art of Tattoo
by Will Womack**

Tattooing may be newly fashionable in the west, but in Burma its use is deeply rooted in tradition and history. Writing 100 years ago, Sir George Scott said "there is not a single up-country man who is not decorated with the dark blue tracery." Tattooing - mostly with the figures of animals - gives the wearer three advantages: decoration, magic charms and a proof of courage - since there is a great deal of pain involved in accepting these designs.

Wednesday, 2nd October 2002

The October Reception

Our year started off on a high note with a glass of wine, despite a complete London Underground strike, which meant that all who arrived for the meeting did so after walking an average of a mile from their rail terminus. We toasted Vicky Bowman, who was to start her duties as HM Ambassador in Rangoon in December, and she replied with a short and amusing speech.

Thursday, 7th November 2002

**A Dawn Like Thunder
by Norma Joseph FRGS FRSGS**

This was a definitive portrait of the Irrawaddy, brought to life by the stunning photography of Norma and Maurice Joseph, who had spent five months travelling up and down the 1300 miles from the confluence of the Nmai Hka and Mali Hka rivers south to the sea. They travelled in a variety of craft, and the photographs depicted historic towns and picturesque villages along the way.

Thursday, 12th December 2002

**Magic Places, Magic Times
by Sir Nicholas Fenn and Lady Fenn**

In the 1960s, Burma and the Fenns had the joint good fortune to meet each other for the first time: a particularly appreciative young diplomatic couple in one of the world's least-known, individual and fascinating lands. Two years after their arrival, General Ne Win took power - and his project of a truly Burmese Burma was still under way when the Fenns returned as ambassador and wife in 1982.

Nick and Sue love telling stories, and Sue had photographic skills to capture the many faces of Burma in those days, in addition to coping with more than her share of adventures as a diplomatic wife and mother.

Monday, 3rd February 2003

Burma 1999 - 2002
by Victoria Billing

Victoria has just completed a tour of duty as Second Secretary in the British embassy in Rangoon. She gave a general survey of the situation in Burma, and showed photographs of the many parts of it that she has visited.

Tuesday 11th March 2003

Pre-Colonial Burmese Boats
by Dr Michael Charney

Mike Charney is Lecturer in South-East Asian History at SOAS but Burmese boats are his fascination. They have taken him upriver on the Kaladan and Irrawaddy; he has admired them on temple walls in Pagan, Mrauk-U and Pegu, and dug them out from palm-leaf manuscripts, in archives and libraries in Burma, India, Europe and North America. Mike Charney showed us photographs of temple murals, river navigation and old Burmese drawings to give us a feel for life afloat in precolonial days.

Conferences

Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia

The Conference "Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia" is organized in cooperation with the SEAMEO Regional Centre for History and Tradition and will be held in Yangon from December 17 - 19, 2003 with the International Business Centre, Pyay Road, as the Conference venue. The Universities Historical Research annually organizes a Conference on Southeast Asian history and culture. The Conference provides a wonderful opportunity for participating in a discussion of current scholarship on aspects of Southeast Asian history and culture with a special emphasis on Myanmar and for meeting Myanmar and international scholars in an atmosphere of warm hospitality. The deadline for conference registration is November 21, 2003. The registration fee is US \$150 (FEC), with a special rate of US \$75 (FEC) for students payable after arrival in Myanmar. The fee provides for lunch and snacks but not for conference papers, which are separately available at a normal rate. Participants are met at the airport on arrival if they provide details of their flight.

For more information contact:

Traditions of Knowledge Conference
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Amara Hall, Yangon University Campus
Yangon 11041,
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Fax: 95-1-534121
Email: uhrc@uhrc-edu.gov.mm

BURMA STUDIES CONFERENCE (U.S.)

Center for Burma Studies
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois, USA

October 22-24, 2004

A CALL FOR PAPERS

SUBMIT ABSTRACT BY 1 MARCH, 2004

Individual paper proposals are invited for the forthcoming Burma Studies conference at the Center for Burma Studies, Northern Illinois University. All disciplines and topics related to Burma studies are welcome. Please provide your name and affiliation, your address, a title for your paper, an abstract of about 150 words, a list of equipment that you need for your presentation, and an email address. Send this information to:

Alexandra Green, Program Chair
Art Department
Denison University
Granville, OH 43023 USA

or via email:

greenar@denison.edu

Information will be listed on the Northern Illinois website:

<http://www.grad.niu.edu/Burma/>