

A Preliminary Survey of Burmese Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland

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It does not take much imagination to assume that Great Britain has a rich collection of Burmese manuscripts, given that her rule over the country lasted more than a century. However, the cataloguing of these manuscripts is still in its infancy, especially when compared to Germany where the "Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland" (VOHD), a large project sponsored by the German Research Council, aims to compile basic data for all oriental manuscripts in German public collections and archives. So far, no less than four volumes have been published on the Burmese manuscripts alone.¹ The only English reference guides that can bear comparison are the volumes listing the holdings of the Wellcome Institute and the List of the Burney Parabaiks in the former India Office Library. The following compilation is a first attempt to list the existing catalogues for the Burmese manuscripts in Great Britain and, as Dublin is included, Ireland. The list is mainly bibliographical, but it is hoped that it will nevertheless help to and perhaps even lead to a more systematic survey of the manuscripts than was possible here. In this respect, it does not claim to be complete. The publisher of the Bulletin will however be delighted to update this list whenever new catalogues or bibliographic references are brought to his knowledge.

Cambridge

Ref: Andrew Dalby, "A Dictionary of Oriental Collections in Cambridge University", in *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 9 (3), 1988, p. 248-280.

According to Dalby, the Cambridge collection was never catalogued, although the number of Burmese manuscripts is obviously significant. The main contributor was J. G. Scott who had lived in Burma and the Shan States for several years.² All that we have is a short hand-list:

G. E. Marrison, *The Scott Collection. A Preliminary Survey*, Cambridge (ms.) 1972

Another donor to the library was Walter Sibbald Adie, ICS, whose bequest (in 1943) contained four manuscripts in Burmese and Sanskrit (MS Or 1371-1374).

Ref: T. W. Rhys Davids, 'Pali Manuscripts at Cambridge', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 2, 1883, p. 145-171

¹ Heinz Bechert (ed. in chief), *Burmese Manuscripts*, vol. 1, comp. by Heinz Bechert, Daw Khin Khin Su and Daw Tin Tin Myint, Stuttgart 1979; vol. 2, comp. by Heinz Braun and Daw Tin Tin Myint, Stuttgart 1985; vol. 3, comp. by Heinz Braun, Stuttgart 1996; vol. 4, comp. by Anne Peters, Stuttgart 2002 (= Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland 23.1-4).

² Scott was the author of two major works, a record of his experiences in Burma (Shwe Yoe, *The Burman. His Life and Notions*, London 1905), and the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States, 2 vols, London 1898. The latter, though still considered as an important source of information, has severe deficiencies and well deserves a critical examination.

Rhys Davids' list contains 10 manuscripts in Burmese script, viz.

Abhidhammattha-sangaha (Add. Mss. 1257)
 3 Kammavacas (1260, 293-4, 340-41)
 Patimokkha (129)
 Bhesajja-manjusa (1252)
 ? Mahavagga (225)
 Mahavamsa (296)
 Salayatanavagga (200)
 Sumangala-pasadana (294)

Dublin/Trinity College

Ref.: T. K. Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of the Trinity College, Dublin*, Dublin/London 1900.

The Trinity College holds five Pali manuscripts in Burmese script:

Visuddhimagga
 Bhuridatta Jataka
 Candakumara Jataka
 Kammavaca
 Buddhavamsa

Dublin/Chester Beatty Library

Ref.: H. L. Shorto, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of Burmese Manuscripts*, typescript, no date

I have yet to get hold of this hand list.

Edinburgh

Ref.: National Library of Scotland, *Catalogue of Manuscripts acquired since 1925*, vol. 2 (nos. 1801-4000), Edinburgh 1966.

No. 1898: "a magico-religious work in the Shan language with references to the Vessantara Jataka"

Ref: H 9.8 - *Burmese Manuscripts*, anonymous undated typescript³ and H 9.2 - *Mon Mss. from Edinburgh*, anonymous undated typescript

According to these two hand lists, there are fourteen Burmese and three Mon manuscripts in the University Library of Edinburgh, most of them commentaries on texts from the Pali Canon. The first hand list was obviously prepared by a scholar of Pali and Burmese, as it contains dates of the mss., references to printed versions of the texts and translations of the dedicatory inscriptions. The following manuscripts are mentioned (numbering presumably refers to the collection of oriental manuscripts):

no. 61: Atthasalini-nissaya, undated

³ I would like to thank the staff of Edinburgh University Library for making the hand list available to me.

- no. 62: Mahosadha-Jataka-nissaya (1836 C.E.)
- no. 63: Sarattha-sangaha (1786 C.E.)
- no. 64: Nyasa-nissaya and Nyasa-pali-taw (1741 C.E.)
- no. 65: Mulasikha-anak (1771 C.E) .and Mulasikha-nissaya (1753 C.E.)
- no. 66: Tika-kyaw-nissaya and Tika-pah-taw (1843 C.E.)
- no. 67: Burmese calendar for the year 1773 C.E.
- no. 68: Kammavaca
- no. 69: Uddesa on Shan paper (presumably 1808 C.E.)
- no. 70: Culava-pali-taw-nissaya (undated)
- no. 71: Abhidhamma-sangaha-nissaya (1846 C.E.),
Vinaya-sangaha-nissaya (1778 C.E.),
Apadana-atthakatha-pali-taw,
Dhammayamaka-nissaya (1775 C.E.) and
Vimalacara (1782 C.E.)
- no. 72: Namaka-nissaya and Sandhi-nissaya (1782 C.E.)
- no. 73: unidentified
- no. 74: Burmese Charm Mss. (Khandaparitta)

The three Mon manuscripts are Tray Samantaprasat and Tray Atthakatha-parajikan, Nam Atthakatha-parajikan (fragment with various commentaries).

Liverpool

Ref.: Patricia Herbert, "The Burmese Manuscripts", in Margaret Gibson and Susan M. Wright (eds.), *Joseph Mayer of Liverpool, 1803-1886*, London 1988, p. 152-157.

Joseph Mayer was a rich merchant of Liverpool, who collected (among other things) Chinese ceramics and oriental manuscripts. After he had made over his collection to the Municipality of Liverpool, it formed the basis of the Liverpool Museum. The following eight manuscripts are in the collection:

- 1 ms on silver leaf (a Kammavaca, I suspect)
- 1 ms on palm leaf, unidentified
- 1 Kammavaca on ivory
- 1 ms on palm leaf, Shwe-pyi-win-pyo
- 1 ms on palm leaf, Mahosadha Jataka
- 1 ms on palm leaf, unidentified
- 1 Kammavaca on copper sheets
- 1 Paramatthamedani-kyam

London/British Library

Ref: V. Fausboell, *Catalogue of the Mandalay Manuscripts in the India Office Library*, Woking and London 1897 (originally published in the *Journal of the Pali Text Society*)

Fausboell's Catalogue lists 176 items, arranged in 6 categories: texts from the three pitakas plus doctrinal writing (i.e. commentaries), histories and a rag-bag category for grammar, rhetoric and the like. The collection, now located in the British Library, is easily accessible by the electronic catalogue of the BL.

Ref: U Pe Maung Tin, "Burma Manuscripts in the British Museum", in *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 14, 1924, p. 221-246.

U Pe Maung Tin's list contains approx. 350 manuscripts on various topics, though again Buddhist religious texts form the majority. Accession also by way of the OPAC. It should be noted that the BL holds further Burmese manuscripts (in addition to the two collections referred to here), for which the hand-written find book of the Library has to be consulted.

Ref: Thaung Blackmore, *Catalogue of the Burney Parabeiks in the India Office Library*, London 1985.

Besides Pruitt's work on the Wellcome Institute (see below), this seems to be the only collection of Burmese manuscripts in GB which is properly listed and described.

In addition to the catalogues listed above, selected manuscripts from the collection held by the British Library have been published and described. These include:

Joseph Schwartzberg, "Cosmography in Southeast Asia", in J. B. Harley and David Woodward (eds.), *The History of Cartography*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (*Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*), Chicago 1994, p. 701-740.

Schwartzberg deals with cosmographic conceptions and representations, making use of numerous manuscripts in the British Library. His article includes several illustrations from them.

Patricia Herbert, "Burmese Cosmological Manuscripts", in Alexandra Green and T. Richard Blurton (eds.), *Burma. Art and Archaeology*, London 2002, p. 77-97.

This article is related to the one mentioned before. Patricia has chosen illustrated manuscripts depicting the world and the cosmos, both from the BL and private collections. The manuscripts are described in an appendix.

Patricia Herbert, "Burmese Court Manuscripts", in Donald Stadtner (ed.). *The Art of Burma*, Mumbai 1999, p. 87-103.

This article concentrates on paintings or picture books, mainly from the Konbaung period.

Patricia Herbert, *The Life of Buddha*, London 1993.

This is an edition and translation.

Additional information can be found in Hermann Oldenberg, 'List of Pali Manuscripts in the India Office Library', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1, 1882, p. 59-128

Dr. Hoeming, 'Pali Manuscripts in the British Museum Library', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 2, 1883, p. 133-144

Dr. Hoeming, 'Supplementary Catalogue of Pali Manuscripts in the British Museum Library', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 7, 1888, p. 108-111

London/SOAS

Though no hand-list exists for the collection held by the SOAS, the Burmese manuscripts are listed in a separate card index which can be used inside the library. Copies of the cards are also included in the microfiche catalogue of the library. The

collection consists of some 70 items (mostly palm leaf with few parabaiks), the majority of which are texts and commentaries of the Buddhist scriptures.

London/Wellcome Institute

Ref: William Pruitt and Roger Bischoff (comp.), *Catalogue of the Burmese-Pali and Burmese Manuscripts in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, London 1998

We may regard this as a standard catalogue. As may be expected in an institution focusing on the history of medicine, manuscripts on Burmese medicine and astrology account for a large part of the collection, though the collection is definitely dominated by Kammavaca manuscripts of which it contains no less than 54. This catalogue replaces the earlier list of Jacqueline Filliozat, 'A Survey of the Burmese and Siamese Pali Manuscripts Collection in the Wellcome Institute', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21, 1993, p. 1-42. She lists altogether 93 manuscripts in Burmese script.

Manchester

Ref.: N. A. Jayawickrama, "Pali Manuscripts in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 55, 1972-73, p. 146-176; Tilman Frasch, "A Supplementary Catalogue of the Manuscripts in Burmese Script in the John Rylands Library, Manchester", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* (forthcoming).

N. A. Jayawickrama, a professor of Pali from Sri Lanka, included in his catalogue manuscripts written in Sinhala and Burmese scripts, with the Burmese ones forming about one third of the altogether 83 items. The new catalogue improves his descriptions of the Burmese texts where necessary and adds a number of manuscripts not listed so far.

Oxford

Ref.: U Pe Maung Tin, "Burma Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford", in *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15, 1925, p. 145-147

The collection at Oxford consists of the following 24 items:

- 2 sets of altogether 4 letters
- 1 Patimokkhapadattha-anuvannana-nissaya (a paraphrase of a Patimokkha commentary)
- 1 Nemijataka
- 1 set of water colour drawings
- 2 parabaiks with court scenes
- 2 texts on Shan paper, one of them being the Mahasatipatthana Sutta
- 1 set of three texts with Buddhist stories
- 1 fragmentary Buddhist Sutta
- 1 parabaik with scenes from the life of the Buddha
- 1 Dasanipata Jataka in Burmese
- 1 Parajikan Nissaya (paraphrase of the first part of the Vinaya)
- 1 parabaik on daily affairs
- 1 parabaik depicting elephants

- 1 parabaik on the positions of the Buddha
- 1 set of manuscripts with Kaccayana's grammar, the Cariyapitaka comm., and its paraphrase
- 1 Burmese passport with Portuguese translation⁴
- 1 parabaik with miscell. writings
- 1 coll. of Burmese letters
- 1 Rajaniti in Burmese and English (incomplete)
- 1 palm leaf on astrology and fortune telling
- 1 silver leaf with quotations from the pitakas

Additional catalogues for Oxford are:

Otto Frankfurter and Robert Childers, *Classified List of Pali Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, Oxford (ms.) 1880.

Catalogue of Several 100 Manuscript Works in Various Oriental Languages collected by Sir William Ouseley, London 1831

Otto Frankfurter, 'List of Pali Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1, 1882, p. 30-31

This list has only 8 manuscripts:

- Vessantara-Jataka-nissaya (Wilson 25a)
- Nemi-jataka-nissaya (Pali 15)
- Mahosadha-Jataka-nissaya (Pali 16)
- Buddhavamsa (Wilson 55b)
- Dhammasanghinipparakara and nissaya (Wilson 56a-b)
- 2 Samantapasadika-nissaya (Ouseley 145 and Pali 11)
- a Pali-Burmese manuscript (Wilson 51)

The latest list has been compiled by Jacqueline Filliozat, 'A Survey of the Pali Manuscript Collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 24, 1998, p. 1-80. Her article also has an index with the titles of the works. According to this catalogue, the collection, among other items, consists of

- 34 Kammavaca
- Nemi-jataka, Kaccayana and Cariyapitaka
- a parabaik with paritta
- Dighanikaya
- Suttavibhanga-parajika
- Sandhi-nissaya
- Vithi-lak-rui
- Sadda-nye-sum-con

⁴ It has been published in *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 12 (3), 1923, p. 127-129.