

BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP

**Association for Asian Studies
Southeast Asia Council
January 1994
No. 51**

Juliane Schober, Editor

Burma Studies Group Business at AAS in Boston:

The business meeting of the Burma Studies Groups will be held Friday, March 25, 6:30 - 8:30 pm in the Tufts Room of the convention hotel. The business meeting is open to all members of the BSG and we hope you will join us there.

Burma Studies Foundation:

The trustees of the Burma Studies Foundation will meet in conjunction with the AAS in Boston immediately following the BSG business meeting on Friday, March 25, from 9 - 11 pm. in the Tufts Room. We hope that all trustees of the Foundation plan to attend.

Burma Studies Roundtable at the AAS:

Panel #12 at the 1994 annual meetings of the Association for Asian Studies is entitled **Burma after SLORC**. The panel is organized by Maureen Aung Thwin and will feature, among other speakers, Martin Smith. It will start at 7pm. on Thursday, March 24. Please check your program for the location.

Bi-Annual Burma Studies Colloquium:

The bi-annual colloquium of the Burma Studies Group will come up again in the fall of 1994. Ideas for topics and speakers are likely to be solicited at the BSG business meeting in Boston and we look forward to your input.

Research Notes and Membership News:

Inked Over, Ripped Out--Burmese Storytellers and the Censors (pp. 85) is the title of a recent publication by **Anna Allott**. The report features stories by seven Burmese authors translated by Anna Allott and **Vicky Bowman**, together with notes and a background discussion of censorship in Burma. Copies are available from PEN American Centre, 568 Broadway (401), New York, NY 10012.

Anna Allott also just completed a translation of the Burmese kon-baungzet chronicle dealing with the 1824-26 Anglo-Burmese war and the Treaty of Yaddabo. It is a teaching text intended for aiding those who want to learn to read chronicle Burmese. The manuscript of 60 pp. may be published soon and Anna is willing to provide interested individuals with a copy. It contains the Burmese text and English translation on facing pages, beautifully printed in Okell's Burmese font. Anna Allott also reported that the new Burmese-English dictionary produced by the Burmese Language Commission was finally published in Rangoon in August.

Sandra Dudley, currently at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, recently completed her M. Phil. in Ethnology and Museum Ethnography at the University of Oxford. The culmination of two years' work at Oxford, the thesis is entitled "Interactions: Approaches to Burmese Buddhism and the Nat-cultus".

Michael Aung-Thwin's review of *The Burmese Polity, 1752-1819: Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the Early Kon-baung Period* by **William J. Koenig** (Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, no. 34. Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 1990. Pp. xix + 332) recently appeared in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (654-56).

Bruce Matthews recently published two articles on contemporary developments in Burma. They are *Buddhism Under a Military Regime: The Iron Heel in Burma* which appeared in the *Asian Survey*, vol. XXXIII, No. 4, April 1993 (pp. 408-423) and *Myanmar's Agony: The Struggle for Democracy*, published in *The Round Table*, vol. 325, 1993 (pp. 37-49).

News from the Britain-Burma Society:

contributed by Anna Allott

The Britain-Burma Society regularly sponsors public lectures and meetings about Burma. It also publishes a newsletter from which the following schedule of presentations has been taken:

a talk with slides on **Paw Oo Thet--The Artist--his life, his work and his paintings--**by Dr. Sun Myint on 2nd December 1993.

The media in Myanmar Naingngan--what the Burmese can See, Read, and Hear--by Vicky Bowman--2nd November, 1993.

Vicky Bowman has recently returned from three years in the British Embassy in Rangoon. Despite censorship, Burma is gradually becoming part of the "global village". She discussed the sorts of magazines and books and the types of programs that the Burmese can--and want to--read and watch, and how their contents have been affected by censorship.

Tourism in Burma Today--getting off the beaten track--by Nicholas Greenwood, 16 June 1993.

On Monday, 7 June 1993, four senior advisors to the government of the Union of Myanmar lead a panel discussion. The members of the panel included **U Set Maung**, B.Sc., B.L., presently the legal adviser to the State Law and Order Restoration Council, with special experience of customs and taxation law and petroleum contracts; **U Win Pe**, B.A. (Hons.), MPA (Harvard), formerly Director General, Cultural Institute, and of the National Archive; **U Ba Thwin** (B.Sc., B.L., M.A. (Dev. Econ.), Williamstown, USA, and Director General, International Organisations and Economics dept., Min. of Foreign Affairs; and **Dr. Than Nyun**, B.A. (Hons.), M. Sc. (Econ), London, Ph.D. (Cambridge), currently Rector of the Institute of Economics, Yangon.

The Oil Business in Myanmar--in particular the years 1989-93--by Alan Davies, 11th May, 1993.

In the newsletter of the Britain-Burma Society, Anna Allott also publishes brief commentaries on recent publications concerning Burma. A selection is reprinted here.

Martin Smith's invaluable book, *Burma--Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, (1991, pp. 492) is available from the Textbook Manager, Zed Books Ltd, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF (price £18.95 plus £1.50 p&p).

Burmah--a Photographic Journey, 1855-1925 by Noel Singer is a most beautifully produced book. The work not only describes the growth of photography and famous photographic studios in Burma, but reminds us of how Burma appeared to the travellers of the late-Victorian and Edwardian era. It shows us buildings and places which have long since been destroyed, such as the Royal Palace at Mandalay or King Tharawaddy's great elephant stockade at Amarapura, and at the same time reveals how many traditional aspects of life in Burma are still essentially unchanged today. This hard-back book is available from Kiscadale Publications, Gartmore, Stirling, FK8 3RJ for £35.00 (post free). Fax 08772 778.

V.C. Scott O'Connor's *The Silken East*, first published in 1904, with nearly 200 black and white photos. Available as above from Kiscadale for £35.00 (post free).

Who Killed Aung San, by **Kim Oung** is available directly from White Lotus Co. Ltd, GPO Box 1141, Bangkok 10501, Thailand, Fax (662) 213-1175 for £8.50 (plus postage).

On May 19, 1993, the Eighth *Joyce Pearce Memorial Lecture*, delivered at Oxford, was done by **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi** and read at the University of Oxford by her husband, **Michael Aris**. "It is a moving and lucid account of Suu's present views on what it is to be a refugee in the world today, and, through a combination of Buddhist and Western liberal philosophy, a plea for understanding and reconciliation between peoples in order that a true refuge can be found for all mankind." The lecture has been published in English and Burmese, with an introduction by **Sir Claus Moser** and a response by **Dr. Peter Carey**. The booklet (price £3.00 incl. p&p) is available from the office of the Burma Action Group, Collins' Studios, Collins' Yard, Islington Green, London N1 2XH.

Guide to Burma (288 pp.) by **Nicholas Greenwood**, is to be published by Bradt Publications.

The BSG Bulletin's Review Section:

Hasson, Haskia

1993 **The Asian Arts: Ancient Buddhist Art from Burma**. 104 pp., color illus., 210 x 280 mm, pb, \$30. ISBN: 974-8495-79-5. Singapore, Tasei Gallery. Distributed by White Lotus, Co., Ltd, GPO Box 1141, Bangkok 10501, THAILAND.

reviewed by **Sarah Bekker**
Arlington, Virginia

This remarkable collection of Buddhist sculpture was shown in exhibition in Spring 1993 by the Tasei Gallery in Singapore. All of the eighty-four pieces -- bronze and stone Buddha images, gold repousse votive plaques, terracotta votive plaques, and glazed Jataka tiles -- are said to have been found in Burma. This includes some pieces originally from Sri Lanka, India, Cambodia, and Thailand.

The exhibition raises many questions. How the many ancient objects arrived on the world market is a nagging worry. Some of the attributions are puzzling. For instance, items 1 and 2, labelled "Pyu", are described as such because of over-large hands with webbed fingers. Yet this is a characteristic of Mon-Dvaravati images in Thailand. Also, a troubling number of images are identified as Arakan influenced by Shan, a difficult concept. The descriptions of mudras show a Thai bias; the double abhaya mudra is referred to as "restraining the waters", a uniquely Thai interpretation.

Nevertheless, the collection is of outstanding interest and many of the images and objects are staggeringly beautiful. Probably the single most beautiful piece is No. 63, a late Pagan period gold repousse plaque of a seated Earth-touching Buddha with two monk attendants and two flying celestials. (This piece was offered earlier in a Tasei Gallery auction in New York in 1992.) Of special interest is another gold repousse plaque, eighth-century Pyu, of the Buddha seated in meditation (No. 41). Both of these pieces are in near-perfect condition. Such gold repousse plaques have come into the market during the last eight or nine years and seem to represent Pyu, Mon, and Khmer types. Shown in the exhibition catalogue are 22 examples.

The bronze images range from "provincial" to classical. An Arakanese "Yung-Lo" style image is most impressive -- crowned and jewelled with two

attendants, he is nevertheless a serene presence (No. 27). Another bronze, which appears to be a classic early Pagan-type standing image, looks remarkably fine (No. 39). However, it is described as 150-200 years old according to test results. This is impossible - it must be either eleventh century or a contemporary copy.

The terracotta votive tablets, 13 examples, appear to be rather worn, but this may well be a photographic problem rather than the actual condition of the objects. Two Pagan votive plaques are outstanding: No. 77 showing the Buddha seated in "European style" surrounded by stupas and with Nagari script below; and No. 77, showing the Earth-touching Buddha with standing Buddhas on either side. The three stone pieces are fine examples, although No. 67, a sensitive depiction, is probably misidentified; it is called "late Pagan", but looks Mon in both its proportions and facial type.

Though we are left aching to know the provenance of each of these interesting pieces, we must praise Tasei Gallery for providing this catalogue with so many examples of Buddhist art found in Burma. It is a contribution toward our knowledge in this all-too-unexplored field.

Patricia M. Herbert

1993 **The Life of the Buddha**, San Francisco: Pomegranate Art Books in association with the British Library; hardcover, ISBN 1-56640-602-1, 95 pp.; 62 full-color reproductions; 16 black and white illustrations; \$25.00.

reviewed by Juliane Schober
Arizona State University

In this attractive publication, Patricia Herbert introduces a general readership to the art of Burmese painted manuscripts. The volume was compiled and published in conjunction with an exhibit of Henry Burney's collection of painted manuscripts acquired from Burney's descendants by the British Library in 1985. However, this impressive book conveys more to its readers than catalogues of exhibits usually do.

The main sections of the volume reproduce most of the panels of two brilliantly colored white painted parabaiks (OR. 14297 and OR. 14298) that depicts thematically condensed scenes taken primarily from the last life of Gautama Buddha as Prince Siddhartha and also later ones during his ministry that followed his enlightenment. These artistic representations are in the Mandalay style of the late 19th century and are accompanied by English translations of the condensed Burmese text that refers to and explains the scenes depicted. Particularly noteworthy is the quality in which the originals have been preserved as well as the quality of their reproduction in the printed format which is large enough to show the drawings in considerable detail.

These two manuscripts are part of a larger collection collected by the British diplomat Henry Burney (1792-1845) who served from 1830 to 1837 as British Resident to the Court of Ava. Scholars of Burma may be particularly interested in learning that the provenance of the painted manuscript is independently confirmed by some 30 pages of notes in Burney's handwriting also preserved in the British Library which comment primarily on the life of the Buddha as portrayed in these painted parabaiks. Herbert has added a useful introduction to these reproductions in which she takes the general reader through significant themes in the last life of the Buddha and briefly discusses Buddhist history, lists some of the major Theravāda texts, and defines central concepts of Buddhist belief. She then focuses Buddhist art and Burmese manuscripts and gives a short summary of the context of Burney's

residence at Ava. In the Appendix (pp.81-93), she provides further brief identification and summaries of the scenes depicted in the concertina style format of the manuscripts. The Glossary contains explication of Pāli names, and where appropriate, their Burmese equivalents.

As a scholar of Burmese Buddhism, I would have liked to see more discussion of the religious biography in Burmese Buddhism and a bibliography of relevant works on the subject. However, the purpose of this publication was to feature the arts, religion, and manuscripts of Burma. In this regard, the book is a laudable effort to bring greater prominence and increased public awareness to both.

Rodrigues, Yves

1992 **Nat-Pwe: Burma's Supernatural Sub-Culture**, translated by Roser Flotats. Photographs by Yves Rodrigues and Paul Strachan. Appendix: "Paintings of the 'Thirty-Seven' Nats" by Noel F. Singer, 37 pp. Illus., glossary, bibliography. pb., pp 80+, pounds 12.99, ISBN: 1-870838-11-4. Kiscadale Publications, Gartmore, Stirlingshire FK8 3RJ, Scotland, United Kingdom. Enclose pounds 10 extra for postage.

Table of contents: Introduction (1-3), Mythical Universe of the Burmese (4-7), The Burmese Supernatural (8-17), The Cult of the Nats (18-23), The Thirty-Seven Nats (24-41), The Outside Nats Festivals (66-74), Glossaries (75-78), Bibliography (79-80), & appendix. 18 pages of color photographs by the author and Paul Strachan.

reviewed by **John P. Ferguson**
Warnerville, New York

Curiosity about nats has motivated non-Burmese for centuries. This book by a French ambassador joins a rather small group of works in English on nats. Originally written in French, the book was translated into English by Roser Flotats.

Profusely embellished with superb large color photographs and rather-too-small black and whites, this short work seems to have been written as a by-product of the author's dedication to making films of nat festivals, which he, unlike many Westerners, had the diplomatic opportunity to travel to see and record. The emphasis, then, upon nat stories, natkadaws, and rituals is not surprising from a film-maker author.

A nod or two is given to those who have come before, such as Temple, Htin Aung, and Spiro, but this is not a scholarly book. There are no footnotes, although there is a small bibliography that includes a few Burmese works. Many standard references are missing, such as Mendelson's articles. Inclusion of footnotes would have made clear where (other than in The Glass Palace Chronicle) the author found the nat stories that clearly fascinate him.

The part of the book most interesting to the reviewer was the section on the festivals as they are found in modern Burma. An expansion of that material would have been most welcome, as would have been more details on the individuals the author became familiar with as natkadaws. In other words, this reader feels the author knows much more ethnographic detail than the book reveals. Historical changes are mentioned in nat popularity and festivals, all very interesting, but the treatment is rather meager. The pan-Burma scope of the book is admirable and gives the work importance.

The author employs a nice, non-judgmental way of presenting his material, but the Burmese supernatural is a complex problem in cross-cultural understanding that cannot be handled properly with just a few sentences on Melford Spiro. However, the book does not set out to be theoretical. Its value is found in its exuberant photographs and in the first-hand observations of the author. Most Burma Studies Group members will probably want this modest volume in their library.

Burma News on Electronic Nets:

The SEASIA-L and SEANET-L (though less active in recent months) are networks covering news and scholarly discussion about all of Southeast Asia. They include sporadically news about Burma from different media sources in Burma and foreign newspapers or wire services. If your institutions offers you a link to electronic mail, you may use it to subscribe (at no cost to the user) to either of these nets.

To subscribe to SEANET-L, for instance, one would send a message addressed to LISTSERV@NUSVM and the content of the message should be SUB SEANET-L Forename Surname. Messages posted to SEANET-L@NUSVM will be distributed to all subscribers. To subscribe to SEASIA-L, the message should be addressed to LISTSERV@MSUVM and the content of the message should be SUB SEASIA-L Forename Surname.

Manuscripts on Burma Solicited:

Kiscadale Asia Research Series, Kiscadale Publications, founded by Paul Strachan in 1988, has in the last five years published eighteen books on aspects of South and South-East Asian Studies with a concentration of titles on Burma. In late 1993 *Kiscadale will launch the Kiscadale Asia Research Series (KARS)*. The series is intended to publish scholarly works that, by their nature, are for a more limited, academic market. This may include dissertations, monographs and collected papers (from conferences, etc.). Authors must submit all materials in an electronic form compatible with the Macintosh or MsDos (IBM) operating systems and take full editorial responsibility to ensure that the work is fully copy edited and proof read. Editorial and technical notes will be provided by the appointed Series Editor on application. Proposals are invited from scholars of all disciplines working on any aspects of Asian Studies provided that they present original and stimulating contributions to their particular field. Proposals should contain a short abstract, a table of contents and one or two seminal chapters. Proposals should be submitted on a clear print out and not on disk.

Interested individuals should contact: Kiscadale Publications, Gartmore, Stirlingshire, FK8 3RJ, Scotland; Tel. (44) 08772 776; Fax. (44) 08772 778

E-Mail Directory of BSG Members, Continued:

For the time being, e-mail addresses of BSG members will continue to appear in the Bulletin. The list below includes new e-mail extensions, in addition to those that appeared in earlier issues. If you want your e-mail extension to be added, kindly send me a note via IFJSS@ASUACAD.BITNET.

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Contributions to the BSG Bulletin:

Anna Allott, Leedom Lefferts, Paul Kratoska, Sarah Bekker, John Ferguson, Maureen Aung Thwin, Daw Mae Kyi Win, Michael Aung Thwin, Jim Guyot, Bruce Matthews, Philip Htoon, and Kris Lehman have contributed materials for publication in this issue of the Bulletin. Please accept my thanks and appreciation for your contributions in this format in lieu of individual letters.

The publication of the BSG Bulletin is the voice of its readership. All members of the Burma Studies Group are invited to send contributions to the editor. Of interest is information about scholarship on Burma in the U.S. and abroad; conferences and public lectures; submissions on research notes; reports on recent developments in Burma or about Burmese communities abroad; and brief substantive articles on special topics or points of interest explored in your research. Please send your contributions, preferably on disk in Word Perfect 5.1 format, to the BSG Bulletin editor, Juliane Schober, Department of Religious Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-0402 or via e-mail to IFJSS@ASUACAD.Bitnet.

Materials, Media, and Book Reviews:

Leedom Lefferts is the Materials/Book/Media Review editor for the Bulletin. Readers who would like to serve as reviewers and authors or publications editors should contact him at the Department of Anthropology, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey 07940, U.S.A.

Lefferts encourages non-traditional participants in the review process. Reviewers will be expected to submit reviews of no more than 500 words in one paper copy and computer disc, using Word-Perfect 5.1 or better, within one month of receipt of the material for review. Discs will be returned to review authors. The Review Editor also encourages authors and publishers of ephemeral material, such as pamphlets, mimeographed works, and computerized material to send items to him for possible review in the BSG Bulletin.

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Bibliography - Books and Articles on Burma:

Compiled by Daw May Kyi Win
Southeast Asia Curator, NIU

This bibliography is an attempt to bring together all current articles and books on Burma in English and other European languages. The first installment of this bibliography appeared in Bulletin of Burma Studies Group no. 48, August 15, 1992, the second in no. 49, January 1993 and the third in no. 50, Summer 1993. This is the fourth installment in the series. Future installments will be numbered consecutively.

The following procedure is being used to compile this bibliography. Articles on Burma are downloaded on to a disk from the H.W. Wilson CD-Rom Humanities and Social Sciences indices, which are updated monthly. Then, articles from journals published in Southeast Asian countries which are not included in the above databases are added to the bibliography. Monograph lists are taken from the NIU Southeast Asia Collection development (acquisition) files. The arrangement of entries is alphabetical by author (usually last name) or title (in absence of an author). Burmese and Thai names are alphabetized in direct written order. For example, the Burmese names "Mya Than" and "Aung San Suu Kyi" would be listed under "Mya" and "Aung," respectively; the Thai name, "Sulak Sivaraksa" under "Sulak."

If you have any questions concerning the bibliography, please contact me at the Southeast Asia Collection, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115. Ph (815) 753-1809 or through e-mail: C60MKW1@NIU.BITNET.

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