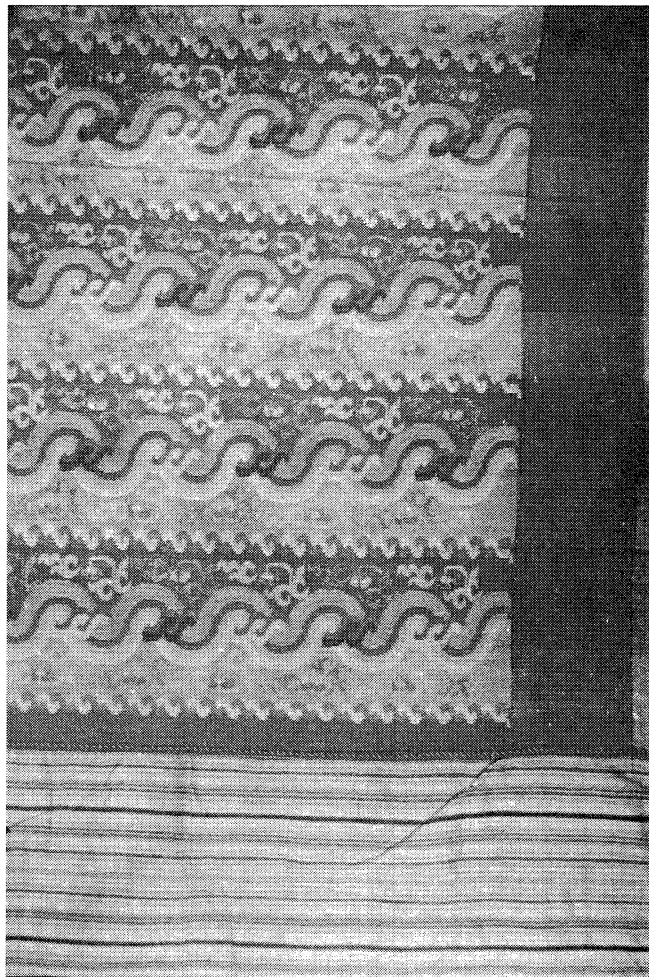

***BULLETIN OF THE
BURMA
STUDIES GROUP***



Burmese Textile

Number 59

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**THE HELEN HUNT COLLECTION OF
BURMESE TEXTILES
DENISON UNIVERSITY**
Cynthia Cunningham Cort
Granville, Ohio

On a recent winter morning, Terry Bailey and I met in the Denison Art Gallery to review material for this article and to select some items to feature in it. It was good to see her and to hear her stories of building the collection and going to Burma to research it. It was good, too, to see again the wonderful textiles in the Burmese collection.

As pointed out in the last newsletter, most of the items in the Denison Burmese collection were acquired and donated by American Baptist missionaries who had served in Burma before World War II. The textile collection in particular was assembled by Helen Hunt at the end of the 1960s by contacting her many old Burma friends and asking what they had in their attics. This was the beginning of the Denison Burmese collection, much of which was then catalogued by Terry Bailey. Terry made research trips to the U.K. and Burma and built an archive of photographs of items in other collections for comparison. She also developed *A Syllabus for a Course in Burmese Art*, published in May 1968 by the U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare through Denison University. In an early newsletter (*Burmese Art Newsletter* Vol I, #4, June 1969 published by the Department of Visual Arts, at Denison University) then gallery director James W. Grimes

wrote an article on some of the outstanding silks in the collection. Two pages of that article were devoted to a list of the donors and where and when they were stationed in Burma, an interesting list of early twentieth century contacts.

There are about 550 Burmese textiles and costume items in the Denison collection. In Jim Grimes' words:

The Helen K. Hunt textile collection at Denison University has two primary categories. These are:

A. The Burmese textiles in two divisions: (1) the court silks worn only by the royalty and aristocracy and (2) the cotton and sometimes silk materials worn by artisans and farmers of the towns and cities of the river valleys of Central and South Burma.

B. The ethnic textiles of the tribal groups that constitute the Union of Burma - the Kachin, Shan, Karen, Chin, and their many tribal divisions that live in the hills, mountains and isolated areas of Burma.

In the first category, there are several wonderful silk, tapestry-woven (*acheik*) women's *hta-mein* or wrapped garments. The patterning of these consists of a repeated series of wavy stripes running in the warp direction, which is horizontal when worn. In this form of tapestry weaving, the discontinuous weft threads are twined together when two colors of weft meet at the junctions of the stripes. The number of times a color change happens equals the number of spools used across the weft. Therefore these fabrics are often referred to as "100 spool cloths"

(*lun-taya*), whether or not they actually have exactly 100 color changes across the width of the fabric. (Usually it is between 100 and 200.) The more spools there are across the weft the more time it will take to weave.

Two *hta-mein* at Denison are noteworthy for the early documented dates of their collection. One was collected by Rev. Thomas Allen in Burma between 1853 and 1859 and donated by his granddaughter Jessica Price. The other was donated by Mrs. David Tin Hla (see illustration on cover) and belonged to her grandmother. It was a family heirloom and was said to have been made about 1844. Most of the other *acheik hta-mein* were made in the early twentieth century.

Other Burman textiles include a number of silk striped, plaid or ikat *lon-gyi* (wrapped lower body garment), cotton *lon-gyi*, several cotton *ein-gyi* (jacket or shirt), and two turban-like hats which consist of silk wrapped around a woven reed base. In addition there are several *kalaga*, the sequined hangings embroidered on velvet. One of these, showing Jataka motifs, was discussed in the *Burmese Art Newsletter* Vol II, #1, May 1970.

Among the tribal textiles there are several entire costumes and over one hundred shoulder bags. An interesting aspect of the collection is that because it was collected by missionaries in the early twentieth century, it gives insight into items made for use by the makers as well as items made under the direction of the missionaries for export to the U.S., using local weaving techniques for non-indigenous forms such as tablecloths and napkins. A survey of the catalogue cards reveals the following places and groups represented:

Akha

Bassein
Chin
Chin Hills
Haka, Chin Hills
Matu, Chin Hills
Tiddem, Chin Hills
Homalin
Imbawkhon
Kachin
Kettha
Khun
Lahu
Mon
Moulmein
Naga
Bwe Karen
Paku Karen
Sgaw Karen
Shan
Shan Hills
Toungoo
Wa

The largest numbers of objects come from the Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Shan tribes, and include, in addition to the shoulder bags, a number of Karen blouses (for both married women and girls), Karen *lon-gyi*, Kachin leggings, skirts and velvet jackets, and a variety of Chin clothing items and blankets. The Shan are mostly represented by bags and flat woven pieces. Missionary wear is mostly made by the Mon people.

For more information regarding textile production techniques and styles of costume worn in Burma, I highly recommend Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Handwoven Textiles of South-east Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988) and *Burmese Crafts, Past and Present* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1994). For further information on the Denison University Art Gallery, contact the Art

Department, Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 43023; (614) 587-6596.

**A BUDDHIST BUILDING BOOM:
WORKS OF MERIT SPONSORED BY
THE STATE LAW AND ORDER
RESTORATION COUNCIL (SLORC)**

Sylvia Fraser-Lu

Since 1990 the government of Burma has been allocating large amounts of money to preserve ancient monuments and former royal edifices and to build new pagodas in order to:

- i. Revive and strengthen patriotism
- ii. Maintain and protect national sovereignty
- iii. Encourage national culture

Three types of edifices have been undergoing restoration.

1. Pagodas and Temples

Examples include:

* The Shwedagon, Rangoon. The entrance ways facing the cardinal directions are in the process of being extensively refurbished and numerous new *zayat* (resthouses) have been constructed in the vicinity with donations from various government departments.

* Kaba Aye pagoda, Rangoon has been given a new facade.

* Mahawizayazedi, Rangoon a new pagoda begun in the 1980s is virtually complete.

* Lay-kyun-yan-aung temple, Bassein, (formerly the Hpaung-Daw-U) has been renovated in the style of the Ananda temple in Pagan.

* Mahamuni pagoda, Mandalay. The surrounding area has been completely

refurbished with a museum, gardens and ponds.

2. Monasteries

A UN report (BUR/78/023) by Jacques Dumacay written in 1978 described the perilous state of a number of wooden monasteries. During the 1980s the Department of Archaeology with limited resources at its disposal was only able to cope with the most urgent of repairs. In 1990 more money was allocated for the restoration of old wooden monasteries to:

- i. Promote patriotism
- ii. Showcase the Bama's cultural heritage
- iii. Revive the traditional art of wood-carving

To date a number of monasteries have been restored to their former glory. They include:

* The Shwe-gyin and Shwe-nan-daw monasteries of Mandalay and the Atumashi monastery which has been given a new super-structure very different from the original of stucco and wood.

* Bagaya monastery at Amarapura which is of stucco and wood and houses a large collection of religious manuscripts and Buddha images

* Taung-bi monastery, Pagan

* Yok-son monastery Sale, 50 miles south of Pagan is also a museum.

3. Former Royal Palaces

Using plans found in old *parabaik*, contemporary descriptions in both Burmese and other languages, and old photographs it has been the aim of the government to rebuild the former Kon-baung palaces of Mandalay and Shwebo and the palace of Bayinnaung at Pegu as a replica of the originals. Because there are no longer sufficient teak logs of suitable size available, the basic pillar and beam

structures have been made of reinforced concrete painted yellow and red to resemble the original gilt and lacquer pillars. To date, two of the palaces have been reconstructed. Both have on-site museums.

* Mya-nan-san-kyaw at Mandalay. The main buildings have been erected to appear as they were during the reign of King Thibaw (1878-85)

* Kanbawza-Thadi at Pegu. The main Audience Hall and the Settawhsaung, one of the main rooms of the palace have been built.

NEWS FROM U.S.

THE ANNUAL ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN STUDIES MEETING, SHERATON CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, MARCH 13-16, 1997.

Meetings:

March 15, Friday 7-9 p.m., Huron Room
Burma Studies Foundation, Board of Trustees

March 15, Friday 9-11 p.m. Huron Room
Burma Studies Group

Papers on Myanmar:

March 15, Friday 9-11 a.m. Ontario Room
"Suzerain and Vassal, or Elder and Younger Brothers: The Nature of the Sino-Burmese Historical Relationship," Laichen Sun, University of Michigan

March 16, Saturday 9-11 a.m. Colorado Room

5 / March 1997

"Globalism and Identity in Myanmar,"
Juliane Schober, Arizona State University

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BURMA STUDIES GROUP COLLOQUIUM

Hosted by the Center for Burma Studies at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois from October 25-27, 1996. The following papers were presented:

1. Video Presentation-"Kyanzitha Buddha: A Unique Burmese Iconographic Type" discussion with filmmakers, Richard Cooler, Laura Vazquez, Lori Liggett
2. Takeshi Kohno, Moderator, Ohio State Univ.-"Institutional Accommodation and the Collapse of Parliamentary Democracy in Burma and Indonesia"
3. Tun Myint, Indiana Univ.- "A Comparison of Burmese and the Chinese Student Movements (1988 and 1989)"
4. Donald Seekins, Meio University, Nago, Japan- "Relations between Burma and Japan"
6. Christina Fink, Burma Project, OSI, Thailand- "Report from Rangoon and

Bulletin of the Burma Studies Group

- Beyond"
7. Kei Nemoto, Univ. of Foreign Studies, Tokyo- "Aung San Suu Kyi: Her Position in the Present and Future Burma"
 8. Charlotte Reith, Moderator, Alexandria, Virginia- "Pottery in the Chin Hills"
 9. Sun Laichen, Moderator, Univ. of Michigan- "Suzerain and Vassal, or Elder and Younger Brothers: The Nature of Sino-Burmese Historical Relationship"
 10. Ryuji Okudaira, Univ. of Foreign Studies, Tokyo, Japan- "A Study on 'Institutionalization' of Myanmar Kingship under King Badon with Special Reference to the Convening of the 'Religious Council' in 1788"
 11. Michael J. Charney, Univ. of Michigan- "Guns, Boats and Shipbuilding: Continuity and Change in Myanmar Ship Structure and River Warfare in the Early Modern Era"
 12. F. K. Lehman, Univ. of Illinois- "Kyanzitha's Dhammarajika Invention and the Founders' Cult: Why Burma was More Centralized State than was Siam"
 13. Roger Strait, New York, NY- "The World of the Chins"
 14. Ronald Bernier, Banquet Speaker, Univ. of Colorado- "Wooden Temple Arts of Burma Origin in Bangladesh"
 15. Anna J. Allott, Moderator, SOAS, Univ. of London- "Censorship & the Government Media"
 16. Gustaaf Houtman, Royal Anthropological Institute, London- "Manu's State of Mind: Samadhi and the Transformation of Legal Identity"
 17. K. Venkateswaran, Univ. of Ulster at Jordanstown, N. Ireland- "Burma: Beyond the Law"
 18. Julian K. Wheatley & San San Hnin

Tun, Cornell Univ.- "Travels in Burma: A Supplement to Okell's Burmese Language Course"

NEWS ABROAD

Seminar on Myanmar-Thai Studies was held at University of Yangon on December 2-4, 1996. Twelve papers were presented at the Seminar.

1. "King Bayinnaung as Historical Hero in Myanmar's Perspective," Professor U Kyaw Win, Department of History, University of Yangon
2. "King Bayinnaung as Historical in Thai Perspective," Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond
3. "Popular Literature on King Bayinnaung in Myanmar," U Mya Han, Senior Research Officer, Universities Historical Research Centre
4. "Popular Literature on King Bayinnaung in Thailand," Professor Dr. Kusuma Raksamani, Faculty of Archeology Silpakorn Univ. ASEAN Studies Sanskrit Litt.
5. "Hantharwadi Empires in Myanmar Historical Records," U Thein Hlaing, Deputy Director, Universities Historical Research Centre
6. "Lanna and Relations with Myanmar," Professor Aroonrut Wichienkeo
7. "Function of History in Myanmar's Society," Dr. Khin Hla Han, Senior Research Officer, Universities Historical Research Centre
8. "Function of History in Thai's Society," Associate Professor Dr. Withaya Sucharithanarugse

9. "Problems in Myanmar Historiography," Dr. Myo Myint, Lecturer, Department of History, Mandalay University
10. "Problems in Thai's Historiography," Professor Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri
11. "Research on Myanmar-Thai Historical Relations," U San Nyein, Deputy Director, Universities Historical Research Centre
12. "Research on Thai-Myanmar Historical Relations," Professor Acharn Chalong Soontravanich

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**THE BRITAIN-BURMA
SOCIETY NEWS**

Contributed by Anna J. Allott

Burma Revisited

John Okell

February 6, 1997

John Okell has been studying Burma - and teaching Burmese - for most of his life, and among non-Burmese, there can be no more perceptive and sympathetic observer than he. His latest visit (for 25 busy days at the end of last year and the beginning of this) gave him an opportunity to update his knowledge of the country; to assess how much things have changed and how much they remain the same. His talk is illustrated with slides.

The archives of the Burmah Oil Company

Vanna Skelley

December 6, 1996

The Burmah Oil Company (now Burmah Castrol plc) is one of the oldest companies of its kind in the world, having been founded in 1886. As such it has had a fascinating history as it grew from its modest beginnings at Yenang-gyaung to a huge exploration company with interests throughout Burma and India. Today its activities spread around the world, as an international manufacturer and marketer of specialist lubricants.

Vanna Skelley is the Archivist of the Burmah Castrol Group at Burmah Castrol House, Piper's Way, in Swindon. Anyone who has visited the building will remember well the two large chintzes who guard the entrance. She has in her care many hundreds of photographs of the Burmese oilfields and of the day-to-day life of the expatriate families. There are also the

accounts of the men and women who were trapped in the oilfields by the Japanese invasion in 1942, telling of their heroic walk over the mountains into India. The archives also contain company papers, geological surveys, advertising, films and company magazines.

**The Royal Pagoda at Mingun;
'extraordinary folly' of Genius?**

Dr. Donald Stadtner

November 5, 1996

No monument in all of Burma has provoked such antagonism as King Bodawpaya's unfinished pagoda at Mingun, begun before the turn of the eighteenth century. Believing that this mammoth building was abandoned incomplete without its tower, Henry Yule dubbed the pagoda an "extraordinary folly" in 1855. Since then this vast pile of brick has become a symbol for Bodawpaya's failure as a monarch and for a failed society in general. Even Burmese nationalist historians accepted this interpretation. An examination of new sources suggests that the answer to this question is more equivocal than was once thought. Dr. Stadtner first visited Burma in 1985 to study the Pyu, and also King Dhammaceti's pagodas at Pegu. His research on Mingun began last year and was first presented in September in Leiden at a conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists. He has recently contributed a chapter on Burmese art to *L'art de L'Asie du Sud-est* (Paris: Mazenod, 1993) which will appear in an English edition in 1997. At present he is editing a special volume on Burmese art for *Margmagazine* (Bombay).

BOOK NEWS:

It can hardly have escaped members'

notice that November brings the beginning of Burma's year of tourism. I urge anyone who is planning a visit soon to try to get hold of a new book called *On the Road to Mandalay: Tales of Ordinary People*, by Mya Than Tint, just published in Bangkok. From it you will learn more about life in Burma than from any guidebook. The portraits first appeared in Burmese in *Kalya* monthly magazine from 1987 to 1991 and were much enjoyed by local readers. They have been excellently translated by Ohnmar Khin, the pen-name of an English person and Sein Kyaw Hlaing and amusingly translated by Win Pe. Thirty-five different people tell their life story - usually hard, sometimes tragic, often surprising - to the author who meets them as he travels up and down the country giving literary talks. Mya Than Tint's brief account of his own life is a fitting start to this fascinating book (284pp.).

Among the items preserved in the archives of the Burmah Oil Company are the accounts by people who escaped from Burma in 1942 by walking out over the mountains between India and Burma. The government in India gathered as much information as possible from all these evacuees and in 1943 published, in two large volumes, a *Register of Evacuees from Burma*, listing in *part 1 European, Anglo-Burman, Anglo-Indian* and other Non-Indian evacuees; and in *part 2 Indian evacuees*, with their home addresses in Burma. The register also includes the names and last known addresses of people who did not make it to India - such as the Nurse Helen Rodriguez - and the names of those known to have died on the way. If anyone is interested to find out if names of relatives and family friends are included in the register, they may contact Nicholas

Greenwood (Tel/fax 0171 223 8987) who will send them details. He recently purchased copies of these two volumes from Bangalore, India.

"OUR BURMESE DAYS"

Director: Lindsey Merrison, Germany, 90 mins, 35mm

Production: Lindsey Merrison Film Production with WDR Cologne

Sally Merrison, who so deeply renounced her background that she used to tell her children she came from Wales, returns to her native Burma as the subject of daughter Lindsey Merrison's documentary "Our Burmese Days". After making a life for themselves in England, Sally and her brother Bill revisit their homeland for the first time since childhood, and their antithetical views of memory, identity and their Eurasian heritage form an unresolvable dialogue which reflects on both personal and political history.

An examination of biculturalism wrapped in an extraordinary personal odyssey, "Our Burmese Days" is also a fascinating de facto glimpse of a country that's rarely covered in the media today. This record of a daughter's attempts to understand her mother's denial of her roots will fit snugly into TV and cable docu slots, as well as festivals friendly to Asian matters. Derek Elley, *Variety*, New York/Los Angeles

Of the documentaries, the real find has been Lindsey Merrison's "Our Burmese Days"... an usually compassionate and perceptive piece of work, as unsparing on its maker as it was on the woman who was ostensibly its subject.

Shane Danielson, *Sydney Morning Herald*
Set against the almost psychedelic

Burmese landscape, Merrison offers a double-edge look at the power of culture and the force of assimilation. And what we see is that while identity is now always a matter of choice, for better or worse, it is sometimes a matter of will.

Andrew Horn, *Moving Pictures Berlinale*

A subtle and affecting exploration of the film-maker's family history (...) reminding us that some of the strangest and most unfathomable things we encounter are often those that lie closest home.

Steven Bode, London

A marvellous tale of remembrance in a country hell-bent on forgetting.

Michael Althen, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Munich

Merrison's mother is a figure straight off the pages of Orwell's book: with her quirks, her sense of humour and her stubbornness she triumphantly embodies both sides of the colonial heritage.

Dorothee Wenner, *Die Tageszeitung*, Berlin
World sales: Lindsey Merrison Film, Bissingzeile 11, D-10785 Berlin, Germany
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e-mail Merrison@AOL.com

BIBLIOGRAPHY: BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON BURMA

Compiled by May Kyi Win

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, the third in no. 50, Summer 1993 and so on. This is the seventh 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 onto a disk from the CD-ROM Humanities, Business 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; "Kambawza Win" would be under Win, Kambawza, Maung Lu Zaw, under Lu Zaw; 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. Tel: (815) 753-1809 or through e-mail: mwin@niu.edu

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