BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP

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Juliane Schober, Editor

Burma Studies Group Business at AAS in Washington, D.C.:
The business meeting of the Burma Studies Groups will be held Friday,
April 7, 9:00 - 11:00 pm in the Edison Room, Terrace level, of the Washington
Hilton.

Burma Studies Foundation:
The trustees of the Burma Studies Foundation meet in conjunction with
the AAS on Friday, April 7, from 6:30 - 8:30 pm in the Edison Room, Terrace
Level, of the convention hotel.

Bi-Annual Burma Studies Colloquium:
The Burma Studies Group Colloquium was held October 7-9, 1994 at the
Center for Burma Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois. The
event was highly successful as measured both by the quality of papers
presented, the large number of international participants, and by the broad
range of disciplines represented. Our appreciation goes to the organizers,
including Maureen Aung Thwin, Richard Cooler, and Michael Aung Thwin and to
our hosts at Northern Illinois who made this a productive and enjoyable event.
The Burma Studies Group would also like to express its appreciation to the
Henry Luce Foundation for the financial support it extended to NIU in support
of this conference. The presentations included:

Michael Aung Thwin, Northern Illinois University, "The Myth of the 'Three Shan
Brothers'"; Emmanuel Guillon, Paris, France, "Some Hesitations Between Myth
and Historiography in Pagan History"; Laichen Sun, University of Michigan,
"Yongli's Refuge in Burma and Its Implications for Burmese History"; Sunait
Chutintaranond, Chulalongkorn University, "The Image of the Burmese Enemy
through History: Thai Perspectives"; Hugh MacDougall, Burma Studies Group,
"The Myawun's Nap: An Incident in 1852 and the Fall of the Burmese Empire";
Bruce Matthews, Acadia University, "Religious Minorities in Burma: Hints of
the Shadow"; L.E. Bagshaw, Burma Studies Group, "Bodaw Hpaya's Foreign
Policy"; Gustaaf Houtman, London, UK, "Between Ruler & Yogi: The Politics of
Mental Culture in Colonial & Postcolonial Burma"; Richard M. Cooler, Northern
Illinois University, "Temples and Rainfall in Ancient Pagan"; April Tin Tin
Aye, Simon's Rock College, "Restoring Pagan Frescoes"; Nai Pan Hla, Meio
University, "Old Terracotta Votive Tablets and New Theories on the History of
Old Burma"; Virginia di Crocco, Siam Society, "Yet Another Dating for the
Earthenware Ceramics Excavated at Beikthano"; Charlotte Raith, Alexandria,
Virginia, "Indigenous Pottery in Shan State"; Oliver Pollak, Pollak & Hicks,
"Robert Talbot Kelly and Picturesque Burma"; Anna Allott, SOAS, "60 Years of
Publishing in Mandalay: Ludu U Hla & Daw Amar"; U Win Pe, International
Writing Program, University of Iowa, "Modern Burmese Film"; Julian Wheatley &
San San Hnin Tun, Cornell University, "Vivid Description in Burmese"; Andrew
Huxley, SOAS, "The Burmese Dhammathats and Their Importance in Burmese
Literature"; Ryuji Okudaira, Tokyo University, "A Study on a Mythology of
Kingship Described in the Manugye Dhammathat"; Mary Callahan, Moderator,
Cornell University, "Rethinking Burmese Military Politics: The 1950's"; Kei
Nemoto, Tokyo Univ./SOAS, "Burmese Nationalism: Concepts of 'Our Burma
(Dobama)' and 'Their Burma (Thudo-bama)';" Aung Tun Thet, UNICEF, "Nawata's

In addition to these papers presented, the conference also include to discussion panels: Maureen Aung Thwin (Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation) moderated BURMA & AMERICA: A Conversation with Burmese Students currently enrolled in American universities.

THE BURMESE LANGUAGE WORD PROCESSOR: PLANNING & REQUIREMENTS was the topic of a Roundtable discussion on the state of the art in Burmese language teaching and processing moderated by F.K. Lehman, Moderator, University of Illinois. Participants included John Okell, SOAS, U Saw Tun, Northern Illinois University, Lloyd C. Anderson, Ecological Linguistics, Chit Swe, University of Illinois, and Liam UK, University of Illinois.

Exhibits of Burmese Art:

The BURMA GALLERY at the ART MUSEUM of Northern Illinois University reports several new acquisitions. An exhibition of 21 illustrations by the late Paw Oo Thet to accompany the text for The Lord Spirit is Worse than the Tiger: A Collection of Burmese Nat-Spirit Tales was on display during the Burma Colloquium. The collection was donated to the Burma Studies center by Barbara Cohen. Eleanor and Hugh MacDougall donated to the Center four (of 12) 20th century egomise paintings of Burmese nat figures. An important image of the Buddha in Bhumisparsha Mudra while holding two myrobalan fruits in the iconographic style of Baishajaguru--a new Burmese type, bronze, 17th century was a gift by Sarah Bekker.

Also featured during the conference were a new video by Charlotte Reith on Shan Ceramic Techniques and A Video Catalogue of the Konrad and Sarah Bekker Collection of Burmese and Thai Art in The Burma Collection, N.I.U. Art Museum. The latter was produced by the Center for Burmese Studies at NIU and copies may be obtained from the center for a purchase price of $20.

KALAGA: TEXTILE ART OF BURMA (MYANMAR) is the title of an exhibit presently on display on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. John Badgley, Curator of the John M. Echols Collection at Cornell University Libraries has been instrumental in bringing to the public this collection of more than a dozen contemporary pieces. Having experienced a cultural and artistic revival over the past decade, kalaga textile art is now quickly becoming a popular item in Burma's growing tourist trade. The themes portrayed in these kalaga, have, however, retained a largely traditional focus on Burmese religion and culture.

Research Notes and Membership News:

Stephen C. Berkowitz (Dept. of Religious Studies, UC-Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA 93106) sent the following up-date on his dissertation research:

"I am developing a dissertation topic on the practice of history-writing in Theravada Buddhism, with the intention of looking at various Pali, Sinhala, and Mon chronicles. I have been studying Pali and Sinhala, but have not yet started work in Burmese and Mon.

While it may still be a bit early for me to give you a comprehensive summary of my comparative interests in the vamsa's of Sri Lanka and Burma, I anticipate that my work will move in the direction of examining how the chronicles construct an authoritative vision of Theravada Buddhism through the medium of history-writing. I would imagine that the Sri Lankan and Burmese chronicles may have many similarities in this regard, but I wonder if there might not be some differences as well. For example, in a recent seminar paper, I compared the account of Mahinda's visit to Lanka in the Mahavamsa and the Sasanavamsa and argued that the slight differences in the later Burmese
account may have reflected a reluctance on the part of Pannasami to link the Burmese Sangha in a relation of complete dependence on the Sinhalese Sangha, which in the 19th century was in a rather bad state. Of course, this work is a preliminary exercise intended for a graduate seminar, but it does reflect my current interests.

My project is thus less an attempt to reconstruct an historical account of Theravada in the medieval period (although I will consider these issues in the conclusions to my analysis) than an attempt to study how Theravada Buddhists represented themselves and their patrons in the chronicles."

(Editor's comments: Stephen Berkowitz has been in contact with several of you concerning his research. When I last spoke with him, he inquired about Mon history texts that may shed light on the questions he has posed. If you have suggestions you would like to share with him, please e-mail or write to him directly. You may also feel free to send in your response as a contribution to the next Bulletin.)

News from the Britain-Burma Society:

contributed by Anna Allott

The Life of a Burmese Nun is a recent video film by Hiroko Kawanami. It was viewed last June by the Britain-Burma Society in London. This documentary film is an intimate journey into the lives and the faith of Burmese people, explored and presented through the eyes of Burmese Buddhist nuns. The are called "thila-shin" (keepers of the Buddhist Precepts), and they devote their lives to Buddhist studies and meditation. The film shows how they participate in religious functions, how they serve the monks and keep in close touch with their lay donors on whom they are materially dependent. It also attempts to convey an understanding of what it means to become a nun, and why they have chosen to live a life of such spiritual austerity. The footage was filmed in the Sagaing Hills—home to a remarkable Buddhist community of 10,000 monks and nuns—during the period of "khahtein" (robe offering ceremony) in 1989 and 1992.

Hiroko (Koko) Kawanami, a Japanese anthropologist, has done extensive research since 1986 in Upper Burma (Myanmar). During this time she became a Buddhist nun for 15 months, and later, in 1989, she began to film the Buddhist ceremonies and the rich religious activity which takes place in the Sagaing Hills. She has completed her PhD in Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and will shortly take up a lectureship in the department of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster.

Those interested in contacting Dr. Hiroko Kawanami may write to her at 134 Lordship Road, London N16 OQL (Tel. 081-809-7217; Fax 081-802-0628).

The BSG Bulletin's Review Section:

In lieu of reviews of recent publications, your editor would like to bring to your attention the following, somewhat arbitrarily selected titles. If you are interested in reviewing any of these or other publications for publication in the Bulletin, please contact Leedom Jefferts, the Bulletin's Review Editor.

John Okell's most impressive series of publications for Burmese language instruction is now available from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL. The collections includes audiotapes and comprises instructional materials for beginning through advanced levels of language competence. They are: Introduction to the Spoken Language, Book 1 and Book 2; Burmese: An Introduction to the Script; and Burmese: An Introduction to the Literary Style.

Religion, Culture and Political Economy in Burma (Research Monograph No. 3, 1993, Institute of Asian Research, Asian Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z2) includes contributions by Bruce Matthews as well as "The Politics of Forest Management in Colonial Burma" by Raymond
Bryant (SOAS); "The Politics and the Informal Economy of the Opium-Heroin Trade: Impact and Implications for the Shan State" by Chao-tzang Yawngwe (UBC); and "Inequality and Education in Burmese Society" by Zar Ni (Wis.). The monograph was the result of the 1993 meeting of the Northwest Regional Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies at U.B.C.

Sylvia Fraser-Lu's Burmese Crafts Past and Present recently appeared from Oxford University Press Pte. Ltd., Unit 221, Ubi Avenue 4, Intrepid Warehouse Complex, Singapore 1440, tel: 02-7431066.


E-Mail Directory of BSG Members, Continued:

E-mail addresses of BSG members listed here include new e-mail extensions listed below, in addition to those previously published.

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Contributions to the BSG Bulletin:

Anna Allott, Daw May Gyi Win, Stephen Berkowitz, and John Badgley 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 85287-3104 or via e-mail to IFJSS@ASUVM.INRE.ASU.EDU

Materials, Media, and Book Reviews:

Lee Dom Lefferts is the Materials/Book/Media Review editor for the Bulletin. Readers who would like to serve as reviewers or 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.

Subscriptions to the Burma Studies Bulletin:
Subscriptions to the BSG Bulletin or inquiries concerning your subscription should be directed to The Center for Burma Studies, c/o BSG Subscriptions, Adams Hall 410, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb IL 60115.

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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