THE MAKING OF A COLLECTION:
BURMESE MANUSCRIPTS IN THE
BRITISH LIBRARY

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The Burma manuscripts collection in the British Library by virtue of its size, range of
material, and state of preservation constitutes the most significant collection of
manuscripts to be found outside Burma. It numbers over 1,000 manuscripts, of which
approximately 800 are in Oriental Collections and 350 in the India Office Library. Besides
texts in Burmese, it includes Pali and Pali-Burmese nissaya texts in Burmese script (round
and square script), as well as manuscripts in other languages and scripts of Burma such as
Mon and Shan. Virtually every type of writing material is represented: gold, silver, and
other metal plates, ivory, palm leaf, paper (both local and European), and even cloth
compressed, reputedly, from discarded royal robes. In subject matter a high proportion of
the collection consists of Buddhist canonical works and commentaries thereon, as is to be
expected in a society where monks were the repository of learning, and responsible for its
transmission and preservation through the repeated copying and explication of texts down
the centuries. But other subjects represented in the collection include astrology,
cosmology, language and literature, law, chronicles and inscriptions, and medicine. A
particular strength of the collection is its illustrated manuscripts depicting such subjects
as the life of the Buddha, the Jātaka stories (of the Buddha’s previous lives), and court
ceremonies and entertainments.

Like many other early collections in the British Library, the collection was not put
together systematically. It owes its origins to the British passion for collecting—in the
‘cabinet of curiosities’ tradition—and its growth can be seen as a by-product of Britain’s
relations with Burma which passed from early trading and diplomatic missions in the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to war, territorial annexation and colonial rule in the
nineteenth century. British travellers, envoys, soldiers and administrators acquired
Burmese manuscripts from a variety of motives—for their curiosity value, artistic
qualities, scholarly interest, and so on. This article looks at the background to the
acquisition of the manuscripts and at some of the individuals involved.

Many of the British Museum’s foundation collections (i.e., items in European hands
before 1753) included Oriental manuscripts. Sir Hans Sloane’s collection contained a
single long, pointed Burmese palm leaf (Sloane MS. 4098) which is the earliest dated palm
leaf manuscript from Burma in the collection. It is a permit issued by King Sandawizaya
(reigned 1710–31) of Arakan (an independent kingdom until its conquest by the Burmese
in 1784) to a foreign trader acknowledging his gifts and permitting him to trade in Arakan. The permit is dated Burmese Era 1090 (A.D. 1728) and marked with two faint royal seal impressions. In 1771, a Mrs Mead—of whom unfortunately we have no further particulars—presented three manuscripts from Burma (Add. MSS. 4849 A & B, 4850). Two are incomplete *Kammavacca* (Buddhist ordination texts) with the Pali text written in Burmese square script, and the other is a text of the *Bhikkhupatimokkha* (order of the confession of monks) on silvered palm leaves. Manuscripts with such early provenances are particularly helpful for dating certain types of manuscripts stylistically, particularly ritual manuscripts like *Kammavacca* which never bear a copyist’s date, but vary in ornamentation and script.

Some other early Burmese manuscripts come from the libraries of great collectors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For instance, the collection bequeathed to the British Museum by Thomas Grenville (1755–1846) contains a Pali and Mon text (Grenville MS. LX) of the *Pārājikā* (part of the *Vinayapitaka*) which was presented to Grenville as a ‘Burmese Bible’ with an accompanying note: ‘This was presented to me by Dr Baird—it was described to him by a relative of his who brought it from Ava to be the Holy Bible in Burmese characters.’ The Stowe collection, the nucleus of which was formed by Thomas Astle, author of *The Origin and History of Writing* (London, 1784) and Keeper of Records in the Tower of London, contains four *Kammavacca* manuscripts (Stowe Or. MSS. 25, 26 A & B, 27). Of these, Stowe Or. MS. 27 comes with a note (attached to the binding board) written to Astle in 1781 by William Molleson who describes the manuscript’s acquisition as follows: ‘I send you an Indian code, which belonged to the Temple of the Talapoins [monks] in the Kingdom of Pegu, and it is said to contain their System of Morality. It was given to me in the year 1754 by a Talapoin who thought I had been the means of saving his life. I think it is a curiosity, and therefore request your acceptance of it.’

Among the British Library’s Egerton Manuscripts (those bequeathed in 1829 by Francis Henry Egerton, ninth Earl of Bridgewater, and those purchased subsequently with funds left by Egerton) are several from Burma (Eg. MSS. 735, 736, 852, 1114–1116). Tracing the provenance of just one of these, Eg. MS. 852, provides an interesting glimpse into the world of early nineteenth century collectors. The manuscript is a Burmese horoscope compiled in 1781 which the British Museum purchased from the well-known London bookseller, Thomas Rodd, in 1840, but which was once in the Halliwell library (‘olim Bibl. Halliwell’). Several other, and more important Halliwell manuscripts were purchased around the same time and are now in the Department of Manuscripts. James Orchard Halliwell (1820–89), later known as Halliwell-Phillipps, was a prodigious collector, particularly of Shakespeare quartos, and a brilliant and controversial figure who married, against her father’s will, the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872), the great bibliophile and collector. As a Cambridge undergraduate in the late 1830s, Halliwell had, by the age of nineteen, acquired in somewhat dubious circumstances a collection of 136 early scientific manuscripts, mostly mathematical, astronomical, and alchemical. Running into financial difficulties, he printed in 1839 a
catalogue of his manuscripts offering them for sale, but having failed to sell them privately, consigned them to Sotheby's for auction. The sale catalogue for 27 June 1840 lists lots 156–62 as Burmese manuscripts, and lot 157, described as 'a magical book with incantations and a wand,' accords with Eg. MS. 852. The catalogue provides further information on Halliwell's Burmese manuscripts, stating that he had purchased them from 'the sale of Capt. Coxe's Museum, an officer in the Burmese war.' No record of a Captain Coxe in the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–6 has been traced, and it is tempting to link the manuscripts with Captain Hiram Cox who was British Resident in Burma from October 1796 to April 1798.

It is certain, however, that many members of the British forces engaged in the First Anglo-Burmese War—a war in which the British lost more troops from sunstroke and disease than from enemy combat—brought back manuscripts which found their way into the British Museum's collections. Typical is Add. MS. 6779, a palm leaf manuscript with a text of the Mātikā-akauk (exposition of a section of the Abhidhamma) which bears the following note inside its cover: 'For the British Museum, London. From Admiral Page, of Ipswich, Suffolk:—This writing of the Burmese language found in one of their temples near Prome, was obtained by Mr W. Drake, Secretary to Commodore Grant (who commanded the British Navy there, and lost his valuable life by fatigue). The Admiral gives this present of his friend to Henry Ellis, Esqre. to present as above. May 1826.' Among other such war booty manuscripts are three beautiful Kammavācā texts (Add. MSS. 15289–15291) (fig. 1) and two Pali-Burmese texts (Add. MSS. 15261, 15262) which were acquired by the novelist Frederick Marryat who served as a naval captain with the invading British forces. Marryat—probably by virtue of his popular naval novels like Frank Mildmay, The King's Own and Mr Midshipman Easy the best recruiting officer the Royal Navy ever had—was created a C.B. for his services in Burma and permitted to augment his coat of arms by the representation of a Burmese warboat and the word 'Ava'. He wrote of his experiences in Burma in the 'Diary on the Continent' section of his Olla Podrida (published 1840), and collaborated with Lieutenant Joseph Moore to produce a volume of drawings illustrating the Burma campaign. Marryat was considerably less denigrating than most of his contemporaries in writing about the Burmese. He paid tribute to their bravery and considered that only the superior weapons of the British accounted for the Burmese defeat. Marryat also brought back some Burmese antiquities which he exhibited in the summer of 1827 at the Asiatic Society in London. He presented his Burmese manuscripts to the library of the Duke of Sussex, and they only came to the British Museum in 1844 when, following the Duke's death, his magnificent library was sold at auction by Evans in a sale which lasted more than a month. The sale was attended by the British Museum's Keeper of Manuscripts, Sir Frederick Madden, who bid direct for some lots and acquired others from the bookseller, Rodd, who purchased for the Museum on commission. In his journal Madden describes how he came to buy the Burmese manuscripts: 'there were seven lots of Burmese MSS which I did not care about, but seeing that the first three lots were knocked down to M. Hebeler, the Prussian consul (by direction from Prof. Pertz) to carry off to Berlin, I determined to stop a portion and
therefore purchased three of the finest MSS at £3 each.12 The previous lots had been sold for one guinea each, so Madden had had to compete with the German bidder to get those he did at more than twice the price. His journal also records the sale of the Pali manuscripts as follows: ‘[Lots] 357–363 Pali MSS in the square and round characters on burnished gold palm leaves and ivory. They were purchased for the Royal Library at Berlin with the exception of the three best, 359, 361 and 362 which I bought for the Museum.’13 These were Marryat’s three Kammavacā manuscripts. Madden’s journal also contains comments on the sales practices of the times and shows that the booksellers operated a ring and held a resale after the auction. Thus, Marryat’s Burmese manuscripts entered the collection not through a discerning acquisition policy but through Madden’s competitiveness with Berlin.

Among other acquisitions in the decades following the First Anglo-Burmese War were two collections, that of John Tytler (Add. MSS. 10548–10572) which was donated in 1836, and that of Sir John Murray (Add. MSS. 12237–12260) which was purchased from Rodd in 1842. Unfortunately, the connections of both men with Burma remain unclear. Tytler is most likely the Arabist who collaborated with Sir C. E. Trevelyan and others in a series of papers published in Calcutta periodicals in 1834 on the application of the roman alphabet to the languages of India. The collection consists of palm leaf manuscripts with Buddhist texts and glosses and some parabaik (paper folding book manuscripts) with astrological diagrams and tattooing instructions. Colonel Sir John Murray (1745–1822) was Auditor-General and Commissary General of Bengal in the last three decades of the eighteenth century. His collection is particularly important for its so-called ‘Maghi’ manuscripts (Add. MSS. 12253 A–F, 12254, 12255 A–C, 12256 A–C, 12257 A–D, and 12258 A–F). These are manuscripts from Arakan, written on yellow paper in the format of Indian paper manuscripts, in ink in an Arakanese form of the Burmese script. Many of the manuscripts have wooden cover boards with added titles in Persian. These are the only known surviving manuscripts of this type from Arakan and they bear exceptionally early copying dates, ranging from 1721 to 1784. The collection includes literary, religious, legal and medical texts.

Other manuscripts in the British Library collection were acquired from British figures with more obvious connections with Burma. Two (Add. MS. 12400 A, B) came from John Crawfurd (1783–1868) whose name and career is most closely associated with the Malay archipelago. Crawfurd began his study of Malay in the service of the East India Company in Penang in 1808, and in 1811 accompanied the British forces which conquered and then occupied Java where he served as Resident at Yogyakarta, 1811–14.
Crawfurd formed a collection of Indonesian manuscripts including a valuable Javanese collection of historical texts taken from the Yogyakarta kraton (palace) library. Crawfurd’s connections with Burma date from 1827 when he was sent on a mission to the court of Ava to negotiate a commercial treaty and to report on the feasibility of establishing a permanent British Residency at the Burmese capital. It would seem that Crawfurd’s time in Burma did not, unlike his stay in Java, permit or incline him to collect Burmese manuscripts on any scale. The second of Crawfurd’s Burmese manuscripts (Add. MS. 12400 B) provides a link with the pioneering American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson who came to Burma in 1813, was imprisoned during the First Anglo-Burmese War, and released to act as interpreter and translator in the Burmese negotiations with the British. The manuscript, a black paper parabaik, contains a chronological sketch of Burmese history in English which Crawfurd states, in a cover note, was prepared by Judson. "Crawfurd sold his Indonesian manuscript collection to the British Museum in 1842, along with the two Burmese manuscripts.

Some of the most important additions to the collection have been of manuscripts amassed by British scholar-administrators. Two collections are outstanding in this category: that of Henry Burney, British Resident at the Court of Ava from 1830 to 1837, and that of Sir Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner of British Burma from 1862 to 1867. Burney’s collection is in the India Office Library and comprises over seventy black paper parabaik. The Burney parabaik collection was probably presented to the Library by Burney himself when on furlough in England from 1838 to 1842. The Librarian’s day book for 14 January 1842 records only a presentation by Colonel Burney of twenty-three manuscripts which are listed by title and are Pali-Buddhist works and chronicles. Henry Burney (1792-1845) came from a distinguished family: his grandfather was the musicologist Dr Charles Burney and his aunt was the novelist Fanny d’Arblay. Burney’s career took him to the East where he played a crucial role in British relations with the courts of Siam and Burma in the 1820s and 1830s. The records of Burney’s diplomatic activities are deposited in the East India Company archives in the India Office Records. His Bangkok journals and correspondence were published in 1910-11 on behalf of the Vajiranana National Library, Bangkok, but the English documents relating to his Burma period and his journal of the years 1830-32 have never been published.

Burney’s contribution to Oriental studies is perhaps less well known than his diplomatic career. Before his appointment as Resident at the Court of Ava, Burney had spent three years from 1827 as Deputy Commissioner of Tavoy in the province of Tenasserim which, together with Arakan, became a British possession following the First Anglo-Burmese War. Within two years of his arrival in Ava, Burney’s knowledge of Burmese was well advanced and he was able to read Burmese chronicles and other documents. Burney was in fact the first British scholar to make a systematic study of the Burmese chronicles. He put this knowledge to practical use when he was able to substantiate from Burmese records the Burmese claim to the Kabaw valley (which had been awarded to Manipur in the 1826 Treaty of Yandabo) and to persuade the Government of India to restore it to Burmese ownership. Burney’s pioneering
studies—he published a series of articles on Burmese history in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*—were a source of inspiration to other British administrators. His study of Burmese history was facilitated by the co-operation of the Burmese ministers at Ava who assisted him in the collection of research materials and provided him with copies of official Burmese documents. That Burney was able to establish such good terms with the Burmese officials is a prodigious feat, given the past troubled history of Anglo-Burmese relations. The India Office Library’s Burney *parabaik* collection is the fruit of his good relations with the senior ministers, and consists of copies of all communications and a record of all the meetings that took place between Burney and the Burmese. The documents thus provide unparalleled insights into the Burmese side of affairs and command heightened respect for the negotiating skills of both the Burmese and Burney.  

The task of writing the first history of Burma in English was not accomplished until 1883 when Sir Arthur Phayre (1812–85) published his *History of Burma*. The Phayre collection of Burmese manuscripts which is held in Oriental Collections (Or. MSS. 3403–3480) was acquired in 1886 and constituted the source materials of this prolific scholar, bearing testimony to his wide range of interests. Phayre’s *History* established a framework, nomenclature, chronology and periodization of Burmese history that has, for the most part, remained unmodified by subsequent generations of scholars. The importance of his work was that he studied indigenous sources, in particular, the Burmese chronicles. In 1855 Phayre led a mission to the Court of Ava in Upper Burma to negotiate (unsuccessfully) the formal cession by King Mindon of the Lower Burmese territories annexed by the British at the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852. The official account of the mission describes Phayre’s audience with King Mindon (reigned 1853–78) who presented a set of royal chronicles to Phayre and told him: ‘Read it [the chronicle] carefully and let it enter your heart. The advantage will be twofold. First you will learn of events which have passed and the kings who have succeeded each other; and secondly, as regards futurity, you will gather from thence the instability of human affairs, and the uselessness of strife and anger.’ King Mindon also presented Phayre with a set of the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* and this is now in the India Office Library. These gilded palm leaf manuscripts are, as befits a royal presentation copy, very fine, and it is of some interest that each is wrapped in pieces of cloth cut from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Chinese brocade robes.

Manuscripts from Burma were not only acquired by soldiers and administrators. Some of the earliest contacts with Burma were made by Christian missionaries. The need to provide and disseminate translations of the Bible, catechisms, and the like means that the history of early printing in Burma is inseparable from missionary activity. Missionaries were also in the forefront of producing grammars and dictionaries of the languages of Burma. A Burmese *parabaik* (Or. MS. 5050) in Oriental Collections has rather more unusual missionary connections. It was presented to the British Museum in 1896 by James Alfred Colbeck, a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel who resided in Mandalay from 1878 to 1879. King Mindon was exceptional among Burmese
kings for his attempts to come to terms with the British and to secure for his people the educational and other advantages that Western knowledge and techniques could provide. At his own expense he built in Mandalay a church and mission school to which he sent some of his own sons and royal pages. Colbeck’s letters provide a vivid account of the turbulent and tragic events at the royal capital when, following Mindon’s death in 1878, some eighty members of the royal family were massacred in order to eliminate rivals to one of Mindon’s younger sons, Thibaw, taking the throne. Colbeck was able to save the lives of a senior prince, Prince Nyaung-yan, and several others of the royal family, by smuggling them disguised as servants past the Burmese guards into the British Residency, and from there to British Lower Burma, and on to Calcutta. The memento of these events which Colbeck presented was a manuscript listing ninety-three items in the library of the Nyaung-yan Prince.

The accession of King Thibaw led to a general exodus of British residents from Upper Burma and, ultimately, in 1885 to war with the British, the king’s deposition and the extension of British rule over the whole of Burma. One of the immediate consequences of the fall of the Burmese monarchy and the occupation by British troops of the golden palace at Mandalay was that the famed royal library and the kingdom’s voluminous departmental records were in great danger of loss and destruction. A Burmese scholar, U Tin, who witnessed the British occupation of the palace gave the following description of events: ‘The parapuik were scattered all over the Palace and they were all piled up in heaps and some were burnt as mere rubbish. One could take away any one of them as he fancied. . . . I, with the help of U Lwin, the court servant, undertook to move these parapuik etc., from [Mandalay] Palace and the Hluttaw [Council of Ministers] to the Commissioner’s Office at the Rangoon Secretariat.’ U Tin was able to salvage over forty bullock cart-loads of manuscripts and, later, using material from 21,860 parabaik compiled his monumental study of administration under the Burmese kings.

Much of the royal library was also saved and put under the charge of the S.P.G. missionary James Colbeck who had returned to Mandalay as chaplain to the British forces in 1885. Colbeck wrote: ‘I have charge now of the Royal Library in the Palace, and am set to work cataloguing as soon as possible . . . My dear old teacher, Dr Rost, of the India Library, London, will doubtless be very glad to hear we have saved the palace library. It was being sold bit by bit for Prize Money, but I suggested to General Prendergast that it would be a graceful act on the part of the army to make a present to our Universities at home, instead of making mincemeat of the books. He at once agreed.’ The number of manuscripts in the Mandalay palace library was estimated by the Danish scholar, Professor V. Fausboll, to be about 1,150, of which he wrote in 1896: ‘. . . more than 800 are now missing, having either been looted during the war, or lent out at the time when the Library was moved to the India Office.’ The royal library was in the event divided into three parts: one retained in Rangoon at the Bernard Free Library (and now in the National Library), one presented to the King of Thailand, and the remaining 176 manuscripts deposited in the India Office Library. The Mandalay palace manuscripts preserved in the India Office Library are significant not just for their range of texts, but also for the
information they contain in their colophons about the commissioning of manuscripts and
the pursuit of scholarship by members of the Burmese royal family and government.

The extension of British rule over the whole of Burma following the Third
Anglo-Burmese War of 1885–86 intensified the rate at which Burmese manuscripts (and
books) entered the collection. Some came through official channels as, for instance, the
Maunggun gold plates (Or. MS. 5340) which were presented to the British Museum in
May 1898 by Sir Frederic Fryer, Lieutenant-Governor of Burma. These plates, inscribed
in the ancient Pyu script of the fifth century A.D., are the earliest Buddhist texts discovered
in Burma, and among the earliest proofs of Buddhism in Burma at this period. Also on
gold (in the form of thin gold foil strips), but dating from over thirteen centuries later, are
two sanad, or commissions, issued by the last king of Burma, Thibaw, to a bandit chief
who dispossessed the hereditary ruler of the Shan principality of Mone. These entered the
India Office Library in 1952 and are identified by a label on their reverse written by Lady
Scott, widow of Sir James George Scott (1851–1935), narrating briefly the circumstances
in which Scott acquired them. Scott played a key role after the annexation of Upper
Burma in restoring order in the Shan States of Burma and in securing the allegiance of the
hereditary Shan rulers to the British.

Other benefactors of the collection include Sir Richard Carnac Temple (1850–1913)
who served in Upper Burma in the 1880s and was Chief Commissioner in the Andaman
and Nicobar Islands from 1895 to 1902. He was for many years the editor of the Indian
Antiquary to which he contributed many articles on, among other things, Burmese
coinage and the Burmese royal regalia. Oriental Collections has four historical
manuscripts (Or. MSS. 4794–4797) donated by Temple in 1894, and the India Office
Library has three albums (Bur. MSS. 207–209) presented by Temple of pencil drawings
on European paper which depict the pantheon of nat (spirits) worshipped in Burma,

In 1906 Temple’s definitive study on the subject of the thirty-seven nat was published
in a folio edition with handsome colour plates. In chapter eight of his book Temple
included cosmological scenes and some nat depictions which were reproduced from an
important source book of Burmese art preserved in the India Office Library. This is a
large volume in European binding entitled ‘Burmese Drawings, Inscriptions, etc.,
presented by Lord Wynford in 1849.’ (Bur. MS. 203). William Samuel Best (1798–1869),
the second Baron Wynford, son of William Draper Best, an eminent barrister and
parliamentarian, has no obvious connection with Burma and it is not known how the 110
sheets of paintings, lithographs and vocabularies that make up this volume came into the
family’s possession. All that is known is that it was presented through Sir James Weir
Hogg, who was at various periods Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India
Company. Besides thirty-three illustrations of the nat, the volume contains ten sheets
(some double openings, some long narrow strips) with paintings of Burmese ministers
going in state to the palace, and of war and state boats. The fact that these paintings were
executed on European paper, produced by J. Whatman and bearing watermarks from
1827 to 1832, makes this volume a useful key to dating Burmese art styles. Another
volume of paintings (Bur. MS. 202) (Plate IVb) in the India Office Library is also on European paper bearing the watermark and initials of the East India Company and manufactured by E. Wisp in 1829 and by J. Whatman, also in 1829. Such works, commissioned from Burmese artists by Europeans, are comparatively rare. Another such work in Oriental Collections (Or. MS. 3676) (fig. 2) was acquired in 1889 and contains delicately painted scenes of a popular drama, *Inaung-wut-htu*, and of other stories.

Although important for helping to date art styles, these Burmese paintings on European paper lack the impact of the magnificent illustrated folding book manuscripts where each brightly painted and gilded composition fills the whole page and can extend across several folds, in a continuing sequence of events. These illustrated *parabaik* are the great glory of the British Library's Burma collection. Of the approximately forty illustrated Burmese *parabaik* in the collection the provenance of only a few is known in any detail. The 'Pageant of King Mindon' manuscript (Or. MS. 12013) (fig. 3) is the finest example of Burmese manuscript art before it became influenced by Western artistic conventions and it is also particularly significant because, unusually for an illustrated manuscript, it is dated. It depicts the procession on 16 May 1865 of King Mindon and his court and army to dedicate the Kyauk-daw-gyi Buddha image in Mandalay. In 1925 Charles Duroiselle, the eminent scholar and Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey
Fig. 3. Scene from the ‘Pageant of King Mindon’, mid-nineteenth century. Or. MS. 12013, f. 10
of Burma, published a detailed description of this manuscript accompanied by fourteen black and white plates and one colour plate reproducing each of its folds. At the time of its publication the manuscript was owned by R. C. J. Swinhoe of Mandalay who can be identified with Rodway Swinhoe, the author of a slim volume of humorous verses and sketches of Burmese scenes. The ‘Pageant of King Mindon’ manuscript only entered Oriental Collections in 1951 when it was purchased from a London bookseller for six guineas. Another illustrated manuscript which is also associated with specific events in King Mindon’s reign is Or. MS. 13681 which records and depicts in great detail royal donations to the Buddhist Order made between 1853 and 1857. Also in Oriental Collections is a parabaik (Or. MS. 14220) with six Jātaka illustrations which forms part of a series begun in 1863 illustrating the 550 Jātaka stories.

Many of the beautiful parabaik illustrating scenes from the life of the Buddha (for example, Or. MSS. 4762 and 5757) and of Jātaka stories (Or. MS. 4542 A, B) were acquired in the nineteenth century. But even in the last two decades a number of interesting illustrated manuscripts have been added to the collection, many of which have come from descendants of British participants in the Third Anglo-Burmese War. In this category are Or. MS. 14004 depicting Buddhist cosmology with scenes of the heavens and hells (Plate III), Or. MS. 14005 illustrating royal barges and boats, Or. MS. 14006 on military horsemanship, and also Or. MS. 14405 depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha. Finally, it seems especially fitting that some 150 years after Henry Burney was British Resident in Burma, and 140 years after his parabaik collection entered the India Office Library, two handsome illustrated manuscripts of the life of the Buddha (Or. MSS. 14297, 14298) (Plate IVa) were recently acquired by Oriental Collections from members of the Burney family. Stylistically, these two manuscripts can be dated to the late eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century, and are of particular importance in the study of the evolution of Burmese manuscript painting.

2 Astle's library was purchased at his death in 1803 by the Marquess of Buckingham who housed it at Stowe, hence the collection's name. On the subsequent chequered history of the collection which only entered the British Museum in 1889, see Arundell Esdaile, The British Museum: a Short History and Survey (London, 1946), pp. 257-9.
3 Text of letter attached to binding board. See also Sotheby sale catalogue of 1849, Catalogue of the Important Collection of Manuscripts from Stowe, p. 76 (description of lot 333).
6 Cox died in Chittagong in 1799 while supervising relief measures for Arakanese refugees. His Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire was published posthumously (London, 1821).
7 Sir Henry Ellis (1777–1869) was Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, 1812–28, and Principal Librarian, 1828–56.
8 Joseph Moore and Frederick Marryat, Views at or near Rangoon (London, 1826).
9 The exhibits are described and sketched in the journal of Rev. John Skinner, entry for 1 June 1827 (Add. MS. 33697, ff. 162–85).
11 Madden's annotated copy of the 1844 Evans sale catalogue of the Sussex library is in the Department of Manuscripts (Sales Cat. P.R.4. B.30). The Burmese and Pali lots are listed on pp. 12 and 32.
12 Facsimile (BL, Facs. *1012/19) of Sir Frederick Madden's journal, entry for 31 July 1844.
13 Ibid., entry for 2 August 1844.
14 John Crawfurd published this chronology as Appendix 8 of his Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava in the Year 1827 (London, 1829), pp. 31–5.
15 Burney's career has, however, been researched and documented from these records by D. G. E. Hall, Henry Burney, a Political Biography (London, 1974), and has also been described in W. S. Desai, The History of the British Residency in Burma 1826–1840 (Rangoon, 1939; reprinted Farnham, 1972).
18 Henry Yule, Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855 (London, 1968; originally published 1858), p. 111.
19 The Tripitaka manuscripts are described in Hermann Oldenberg, Catalogue of Pali Manuscripts in the India Office Library (London, 1882; published as Appendix to Journal of the Pali Text Society), pp. 1–29.
20 James Alfred Colbeck, Letters from Mandalay (Knresborough, 1892), pp. 4–9, 23–7.
22 U Tin, Myan-ma Min Ok-chok-pon Sa-dan (Rangoon, 1931–3), 5 vols.
24 V. Fausboll, Catalogue of the Mandalay MSS. in the India Office (formerly the King's Library at Mandalay) (Woking, 1897), p. 1. In 1910 the Government of Burma published a Catalogue of Pali and Burmese Books and Manuscripts Belonging to the Library of the Late King of Burma and Found in the Palace at Mandalay in 1886 which listed the manuscripts sent to the India Office, those sent to Thailand and those left in Rangoon.
25 The Maunggun gold plates are illustrated and translated by Tun Nyein in Epigraphia Indica (Calcutta, 1898–9), vol. v, article 9, pp. 1–6.
26 Scott's Burma journals are in the India Office Library (MSS Eur C 102–14). For details of his activities in the Shan states see also G. E. Mitton, Scott of the Shan Hills (London, 1936). Scott's best known work, published under the pseudonym of Shway Yoe, was The Burman: His Life and Notions (London, 1882).
28 Charles Duroiselle, The Pageant of King Mindon Leaving his Palace, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, no. 27 (Calcutta, 1925).
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