

ANNE PETERS (comp.)/HEINZ BECHERT (ed.), *Burmese Manuscripts, Part 4: Catalogue Numbers 736–900*. (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, XXIII,4). Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000, XXVII, 274 pages, € 63.00. ISBN 3-515-07363-9

The volume under review continues a catalogue on Burmese manuscripts stored in German archives that was begun more than twenty years ago, and which, in turn, belongs to a mammoth undertaking cataloguing all Oriental manuscripts in Germany in a series of 45 so far. The preceding parts on the Burmese manuscripts were published in 1979, 1985, and 1996, respectively. It is to be welcomed that part 4 was published only four years after part 3, indicating a quickening pace of publication. This is partly due to the fact that the publisher has narrowed the gap between the completion of the manuscript and actual publication. The four parts published so far give prominence to 735 texts contained in 498 codices. Most of these texts are kept in three places, namely, the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin), the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek), and the Lower Saxon State and University Library in Göttingen (Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek), whereas 54 of the 498 codices are spread over another eleven small collections.

Part 4 provides details on 105 codices with 165 different texts from the stock of the Bavarian State Library, the remaining manuscript which will be covered in part 5 yet to be published; the Shan, Mon, and Northern Thai manuscripts stored in Munich, which are catalogued as “Cod.birm” as well, will be covered in a separate series. Although all Burmese Manuscripts are written in Burmese script, only 17 of them are exclusively in the Burmese language, whereas 78 are in Pali and the remaining texts are written in combinations of both languages. The large number of Pali texts is not surprising given the predominance of religious texts, including 46 kammavaca manuscripts alone. Those have come down to us in a large variety of writing materials, including lacquered textile, lacquered palmleaf, lacquerware, lacquered metal, and ivory. Palmleaf, however, dominates. Out of the 101 texts for which dates are available, three-fourths are from the nineteenth century, 39 of them having been written in the late Konbaung period (1853–85). The oldest manuscript dates back to 1738, the most recent to 1941.

Each text is presented with a general description, indicating the writing material, the number of folios, title, author, date, writer, and donor, wherever this information is available. The description is followed by extended quotations from the beginning and the end of the text. Although the compilers announced in part 3 that the descriptions and quotations would become more concise, they are as extended as before. Corrections to obscure or wrong spellings, though, are no longer indicated in the transliterations. Cross-references to other manuscripts or to printed editions of the same texts as well as to texts by the same author are also given as. Several indices at the end help trace manuscripts according to title,

author, year, and shelfmark. Unlike earlier parts, the manuscripts are not ordered thematically (Buddhist texts, grammatical works, etc.), nor is such a breakdown given in the introduction, which would have been useful.

This is an extremely fine piece of thorough scholarship, combining crucial information on the location and contents with some critical evaluation of the texts, with only a few small lapses – such as the location of the Bavarian State Library in Berlin instead of Munich (pp. 102, 181, 249, 252). However, current improvements in word processing, scanning, and printing might have been employed to greater advantage. All Burmese or Pali texts reproduced in this and the previous parts have been transliterated into Roman script. This renders reading more cumbersome since there is not one universally acknowledged system of transliteration, and even within the series of Burmese Manuscripts, the system was changed between parts 2 and 3, without providing a new transliteration table so far. Including text passages in Burmese script might therefore have rendered the extracts more accessible. Publication of the complete catalogue on CD-ROM might enable rectification of the corrigenda, which are so far listed at the end of each volume, consolidation of the system of transliteration and inclusion of larger parts of Burmese script. This would aid interested researchers in their decision as to which library to approach. The completed catalogue should also include a classified index of all manuscripts and a cumulative bibliography.

Jörg Schendel

RUTH MCVEY (ed.), *Money and Power in Provincial Thailand*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), 2000. XVI, 288 pages, 1 map, € 14.99, ISBN 87-87062-70-4 (pb.). £ 40.00, ISBN 87-87062-67-4 (hb.)

This detailed analysis of power and corruption brings provincial Thailand into focus. In the last decade the so-called *chao poh*, the provincial godfathers became politically influential people in Thailand. Nowadays some of them are even elected members of parliament in Bangkok.

In the first chapter, Ruth McVey presents a historical background to the emergence of local power in Thailand's provinces. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker describe the figure of the *chao poh* and explain how it differs from that of the urban godfathers of Chinese descent. Sombat Chantornvong illustrates the history of the godfather in Thai politics. He cites, for instance, the example of the famous Kamnan Poh, the most influential godfather of Chonburi who, by the way, is now being brought to trial. The so called *phu mi itthiphon*, literally 'man with influence', are long established in the hierarchical order of Thai society. During the Vietnam war when the United States supported the military regime in Thailand, a lot of money flowed into the provinces to build up infrastructure projects. This contributed greatly to the rise of the provincial godfathers who are admired and feared at the same time by the local population. James Ockey