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SOUTH ASIAN MANUSCRIPTS in EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Edinburgh University Library has about 650 manuscripts in oriental languages originating from the countries of the Middle East and South Asia. 429 of these are in Arabic or Persian and are listed in the *Descriptive catalogue* of 1925 by Hukk, Ethé and Robertson (1). With the 101 Arabic and Persian MSS from New College Library listed in Serjeant's *Handlist* (2) of 1942, they constitute the great majority of the Library's oriental holdings. They include in particular two of the treasures of the Library, the *World history* of Rashid al-Din and the *Chronology of ancient nations* of Al-Biruni, both MSS written in Arabic at Tabriz in Persia about 1307 A.D., and both illuminated by miniatures which are so well known that we sell transparencies and collect reproduction fees almost every week.

Sanskrit manuscripts

The most remarkable of our Sanskrit MSS, at least to the non-specialist, is a text of the *Mahabharata* written in one continuous roll of silk, about 72 metres [230 feet] long, 13.5cm [5.5 inches] wide, with 77 brightly painted miniatures, the text being written at a density of about 15 lines to the inch. Given to the Library in 1821, it is suspended between two rollers in a glass-topped case 3 feet 4 inches long. It has not been studied from either the textual or art-historical points of view, as far as is known. (Shelfmark OrMS 510.)

J.D.Pearson, in his *Oriental MSS in Europe and North America*, 1971 (3), states that "Edinburgh University Library houses in its muniment room 31 Sanskrit and 11 Pali MSS (in Burmese script, catalogue, unpublished, by K.Whitbread) together with 8 rolls and 8 metal plates with Sanskrit inscriptions". With some transfers from New College and elsewhere, the Sanskrit codices now comprise OrMS 478-502 and OrMS 640-641.

There are in fact 7 charters on 31 copper plates, three of which date back to the 7th century A.D. Two of these charters, dating from 628/9 A.D. and 633/4 A.D. were published in facsimile in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, new series, vol.1, 1865, and again in 1884 in the *Indian Antiquary* (Bombay), vol.13, this time in transliteration. But both editors used imperfect impressions of the original plates, which they had never seen. The originals of these plates, together with others, came into the possession of Dr Julius Eggeling, who was Professor of Sanskrit in this University from 1875 to 1914. He was the author of the main article *Sanskrit* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and was also Curator of this Library from 1900 to 1913. In August 1914 he left for a vacation in his native Germany, and because of the War was sadly unable to return before his death in 1918. The copper plates, and a bundle of notes on other topics, were presented to the Library by his son. We have detailed notes on these charters from 1946-47 written by Dr L.D.Barnett, then Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Hindi and Hindustani manuscripts

Hindi MSS are also present in small numbers, 7 on history, poetry, stories and astrology being listed in Hukk, Ethé and Robertson (OrMS 377-383), and a further 14 (now numbered OrMS 504-507 OrMS 598-605 and OrMS 647-648). Some from New College were given about 1880 by R.M.Binning, an Indian Civil Servant who divided his gifts between the University Library and

New College, which was then a quite separate Free Church institution. What is unclear is the basis of his division, seeing that the erotica went to the Divinity Library!

Manuscripts on palm leaves

The major collection of MSS in South Asian scripts is however our palm leaf books. There are 111 parcels or bundles of leaves, with a further 11 from New College and another recently donated. The latter texts still await identification and cataloguing. Those in the main collection have been described in part by various scholars, whose work is available in ten rather tentative typed lists, and in a manuscript shelf list. They show that the collection is of predominantly Buddhist works in Pali, Tamil, Sinhalese, Tibetan, Burmese and Siamese, dating mainly from the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

List 2 gives detailed identifications of 26 Pali MSS, with reference to published editions of the texts, but without physical description of the actual copies in this collection. This is presumably the list by K. Whitbread referred to by Professor Pearson. There is also List 3, which gives the titles of a further nine Pali texts, mostly with Siamese commentary, contained in bundle 5. (This gives a total of 35 Pali items.)

Manuscripts relating to South Asia

Some notes on MSS relating to India and other South Asian countries may be of interest. The history of India and its various regions is the subject of 51 of the Persian MSS listed in Hukk, Ethé and Robertson (OrMS 76-83 and OrMS 200-238). Examples are OrMS 204, *History of the life and reign of Firuz-Shah, Sultan of Delhi, 1351-1388*, written 1663 A.D., or OrMS 78, *History of the Emperor Akbar the Great*, by Abu al-Fazl, or OrMS 82, *A diary of the siege and conquest of Golkundah, near Haiderabad*, by the Emperor Alamgir in 1695 A.D.

There is also a finely written and finely bound *Koran* (OrMS 148) which belonged to Tipu-Sahib, Sultan of Mysore, 1749-1799 A.D., who was killed in the battle to defend his city, Seringapatam, against the British and the Mahrattas in the 4th Mysore War. It was given by the Directors of the East India Company in 1805. OrMS 456, a volume of civil ordinances in Persian, with translations into two Indic languages, is also said to be from Tipu Sultan's library.

A guide to Western MSS and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia by Wainwright, Matthews and Pearson, 1965 (4) listed 29 items then in the Main Library and 2 in New College. These are mainly items from the huge collection of historical and literary MSS bequeathed in 1878 by David Laing, an Edinburgh bookseller, librarian, editor and antiquary. They include 18th century letters from Scots in India about trade or military affairs - some of them relating to the campaigns against Tipu Sultan.

A recent addition to this material is a collection of about 300 letters from 1776-1796, which are the correspondence of Kenneth Murchison, a Scots surgeon with the East India Company in Calcutta. We acquired these as part of a collection related to his son Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, the geographer and geologist, after whom the geology chair in this University is named. These letters have not yet been catalogued.

A dozen miscellaneous volumes from Carberry Tower, five miles east of Edinburgh, were presented in 1961, when the house was given to the Church of Scotland as a conference centre.

The provenance of these would repay some study, especially OrMS 471, The memoirs of Shah Shujah al Mulk, after his exile from Kabul, presented by the writer to the Rt Hon M. Elphinstone. This was presumably Mountstuart Elphinstone of Afghanistan, who was one of several Elphinstones connected with Carberry Tower.

One final source of modern material that may be relevant are the papers of Arthur Berriedale Keith, who was Professor of Sanskrit here from 1914 to 1944. In fact he also acquired in 1927 the title of Lecturer in the Constitution of the British Empire, preferring these combined posts in his native Edinburgh to accepting chairs of Sanskrit in Harvard or Oxford. It is for his work on colonial history and legal development that he is best known, and he became an authority on constitutional reform in India. The 14 boxes of his papers in the Library were inventoried in 1981 by Ridgway F. Shinn (6), who has subsequently published a biography of Berriedale Keith. The papers include a small quantity of notes on Sanskrit and linguistic matters, in files labelled "Oriental MSS" and "Oriental Papers".

To sum up, there 33 Sanskrit MSS including 7 copper plate charters; 21 Hindi and Hindustani MSS; and 122 MSS on palm leaves, of which 35 are Pali texts. There are over 50 Persian MSS related to Indian history and culture, some 18th century correspondence of Scots in India, and a little material connected with two of our professors of Sanskrit.

These notes are a conflation of catalogue entries with information gleaned from passing scholars, and in no sense represent original work. It will be obvious that the compiler had no knowledge of Asian scripts. It should also be noted that none of this material is included in our general Index of Manuscripts, which covers only Western, non-Mediaeval texts.

JVH

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References

1. *A descriptive catalogue of the Arabic and Persian manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library*. By M.A.Hukk, H.Ethé and E.Robertson. [Edinburgh] for the University of Edinburgh, 1925. 454pp.
2. *A handlist of the Arabic, Persian and Hindustani MSS of New College, Edinburgh*. By R.B. Serjeant. London, Luzac, 1942. 16pp.
3. *Oriental manuscripts in Europe and North America, a survey*. Compiled by J.D.Pearson. Zug, Switzerland, 1971. 515pp. [p.382 refers] This reference is mainly a repetition from p.69 of Pearson's *Oriental manuscript collections in the libraries of Great Britain and Ireland*. London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1954. 90pp.
4. *A guide to Western manuscripts and documents in the British Isles relating to South and South East Asia*. Compiled by M.D.Wainwright and N.Matthews, under the general supervision of J.D.Pearson. London, 1965. 532pp. [pp. 392 + 417-418 refer.]

5. *A guide to MSS in the British Isles relating to South and Southeast Asia*, by J.D.Pearson. Volume 2, 1990. [pp. 199-202 refer.]

6. *Guide to Arthur Berriedale Keith, papers and correspondence, 1896-1941*. *Edinburgh University Library special Collections: Gen. 140-153*. Ridgway F.Shinn, October, 1981. [Typescript, 142pp.]

7. *Oriental manuscripts - a continuation of A descriptive catalogue of the Arabic and Persian manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library, 1925*, by Hukk, Ethé and Robertson [which lists OrMSS 1-429]. (EUL, Special Collections, Handlists of manuscripts, H9, January 1994.) [Lists OrMSS 430-653]

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