

University, is present in Sloane's collection, as well as twenty-seven *exercitationes* on the circulation of the blood, supervised by Johannes Antonides van der Linden (1609–1664), presented between 1659 and 1664.

Furthermore, scurvy, pleurisy, dropsy and dysentery seem to have been preferred subjects, especially during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Dissertations on these themes were frequently supervised by Aelius Everhardus Vorstius (1565–1624).

This is an essential book for medical historians and scholars interested in the history of universities.

**A M Luyendijk-Elshout, Oegstgeest**

**William Pruitt and Roger Bischoff,**  
*Catalogue of the Burmese-Pāli and Burmese manuscripts in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, London, Wellcome Trust, 1998, pp. 187, illus., £20.00 (1-869835-87-5).

For more than sixty years this collection of manuscripts from Burma, purchased by Sir Henry Wellcome, has been housed in the library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, well cared for but not catalogued and hence little known. Now, at last, two scholars have undertaken the laborious task of sorting and identifying the manuscripts, and the Wellcome Trust has generously supported the publication of their work in a handsome volume enhanced by the inclusion of 27 black and white and 31 colour plates.

It is not clear why Sir Henry purchased from Burma so many manuscripts which had no connection with the history of medicine. A few of those written in the Burmese language do include medical recipes; one includes long lists of Burmese flora and fauna which could possibly have been used by indigenous medical practitioners; but of the nearly 150 items in the catalogue, the great majority are Burmese-Pāli manuscripts, that is religious texts in Pāli, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, written in

the Burmese alphabet. Of these, fifty-five are *kammavaca* manuscripts, usually commissioned specially by lay donors and prepared for Buddhist monks to read from when reciting important texts at key moments in their lives.

Patricia Herbert (in *Buddhism: art and faith*, ed. W Zwialf, London, 1985, p. 172) succinctly describes these as ritual texts “used at meetings of the Order for the valid performance of certain ceremonies”. The most important and commonest *kammavaca* text is the one used for higher education. Others are concerned with bestowing of robes, electing elders, dedication of monasteries, settling boundaries for fast-days, and release from monastic vows. The most usual texts are those on ordination, admonitions to the newly ordained monk and bestowal of robes. The ordination section is always included and eight or more other sections are known. The catalogue has a useful index detailing fourteen different texts or sections and in which *kammavaca* manuscript they occur. Today these ornate lacquered and gilded manuscripts are of artistic rather than textual interest; this is well shown by the many illustrations included in the catalogue.

Other manuscripts in Pāli written in Burmese script contain religious texts from the Buddhist scriptures (known as the Pāli canon), commentaries on the canon, post-canonical works, and Pāli grammars. These are all fully indexed in a way that will be most helpful to scholars of Pāli in Burma, as also are the remaining twenty-seven manuscripts written in the Burmese language. The most interesting texts as well as the finest illustrations are to be found among these manuscripts in Burmese. Of these, nos 23, 24, 25 and 26 are noted as being texts on Burmese medicine or as containing “medical recipes”, and no. 23 consists of ninety stanzas of Burmese poetry on medicine. Tantalizingly, that is all we can learn of Burmese medicine from the catalogue.

Thanks to the careful description of each manuscript, including its outward appearance and condition, and also details of provenance and dates of purchase given in the catalogue, it is possible to make a surprising historical link between the Burmese-Pāli text no. 117 and the

painted Burmese manuscript of the 'Life of the Buddha' (no. 22), perhaps the most valuable item in the collection. Six scenes from this are reproduced in colour at the end of the work. Manuscript no. 117 was actually purchased for the Wellcome collection at Stevens' auction house on 29 October 1920. Long before that, in 1833, it had belonged to a Mr Bennet. Its forty or so inscribed palm leaves are held together in a bundle between two wooden boards or covers, on the front one of which is cut "Mr Bennet May 1833". We know that an American Baptist missionary, Mr Cephas Bennet, was in Burma at about that time, as in 1836 he had made a first translation of a popular Burmese prose life of the Buddha (*Ma-la lin-ga-ra wut-htú*), which he published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1851, 3. The fact that he owned, as early as 1833, a Pāli text with Burmese *nissaya* (verbatim translation), and that by 1836 he had begun to translate the life of the Buddha, shows how serious a student of Buddhism this missionary was. And it is the same *Ma-la lin-ga-ra wut-htú* which is the basis for the Burmese manuscript no. 22, an illustrated paper book (*parabaik*) of stiff folded paper containing some 80 paintings of the life of the Buddha.

As Sir Henry could not read Burmese, one must sympathize with the problem he faced in collecting interesting and relevant manuscripts. WMS. Burmese I carries a label dated 1920, saying "Burmese Book of Love Poems". In fact the palm leaves contain the history in prose of the Buddhist religion (*Sasanalankaraca-tam:*) from its beginnings to the date of writing in 1831. The author, Maha-Dhamma Thin-gyan, a high-ranking monk who had reverted to lay life, might have been shocked to learn of this misrepresentation.

The authors, William Pruitt and Roger Bischoff, are to be congratulated on preparing this long-overdue catalogue, and scholars, especially in Burma, will have cause to be most grateful to them.

**Anna Allott,**  
School of Oriental and African Studies,  
University of London

**Dominik Wujastyk,** *A handlist of Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*, vol. 2, London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1998, pp. xiv, 218, £10.00 (1-869835-99-9).

This volume is the second in a planned set of six which will list all the Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts in the Wellcome Institute Library collection, which total around 6,000, and it is arranged on the same basic plan as the first volume, similarly containing just over 1,000 entries. As the title clearly indicates, it is a handlist rather than a full descriptive catalogue, although it does happily provide rather more detail than most handlists. The headings under which the manuscripts are classified cover virtually the whole range of Sanskrit literature from *Alaṅkāra* (poetics) to *Yoga*—in the first volume from *Bhakti* (devotional tracts) to *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar)—and this is no doubt the pattern which will be adopted for subsequent volumes (conditioned, as Dominik Wujastyk indicates, by the way in which the collection is being put in order), which means that scholars interested in one particular field will need to consult all volumes, and which therefore makes a cumulative index in the final volume a real desideratum, pending the appearance of the full descriptive catalogue which is the ultimate goal. However, it is worth noting and commending the helpful indices already included in this volume as an aid to its use.

By contrast with the first volume, in which a quarter of the thousand manuscripts listed were medical manuscripts (nos. 659–909), there is only one further medical item in this volume (no. 1868). However, in both volumes there are a sizeable number of manuscripts in the related fields of astral science and mathematics, *Tantra* and *Yoga* (nos. 1156–1322, 1812–67 and 2003–4 respectively in this volume), all of which have significant medical components, so the medical aspect is well represented. For this reviewer, whose prime interest lies in the Sanskrit Epics and *Purāṇas*, it is fascinating to see the richness of the collection in this field,