

Online Burma Library

The Online Burma Library (OBL), an online database with classified and annotated links to thousands of full-text documents on Burma, is now, at last, up and running.

What It is

OBL is an evolving project designed to make full texts of Burma documents accessible online to researchers, academics, educators, students, journalists, officials, diplomats, activists, military et al. It functions as a linked and annotated catalogue to much of the Burma material already on the Internet and will eventually house a number of archives (in addition to the Burma Press Summary which is already on the site) and directories such as the Burma Action Database (formerly Burma Action Directory). As they become available, more links to documents in Burmese and other languages will be included (there is already a fair number of documents in French in the Multilingual section and some links to Burmese-language sites). OBL is text-based and frame-free for speed.

Help Welcomed

OBL is still at an early stage of development and, in terms of concept, content, structure, use, ease of navigation etc. is open to improvement. Some people have specialised

knowledge of one or more of the 40 or so main areas that the Library is divided into. The Librarian invites users for on-going consultation and assistance in helping the collection grow in quality and quantity.

Adding To The Library

If people know of useful Burma documents in electronic form which are not in the Library, please let us know. As well as unaccessed material on the Internet, these could be conference papers, university dissertations, reports and articles of all kinds. Some may be sitting idly on your computer or on a floppy disk. Many hard-copy books, reports, and papers have been produced over the past years by individuals, organisations, and publishers who still have the electronic versions of these texts. The Library could enhance their public exposure and reputation, and contribute to increasing our understanding of Burma if they were to put online. One way would be to put them on a local website and send us the URL (website address) or else email them to OBL.

If any librarians digitising their collections for public online access place Burma documents online, please let us know. If there are important Burma texts which do not exist in

electronic form, they will be scanned in.

Technically

The database is MySQL, used in combination with PHP. Use the Advanced Search in combination with browsing and the alphabetical list. In the coming months the documents will be further indexed and more keywords placed in the summaries. At the moment, many documents are only a title and an URL.

Burma Press Summary

The most important single document on OBL is The Burma Press Summary – the searchable 17MB archive of Hugh MacDougall's excellent summary of "The Working People's Daily" and "The New Light of Myanmar" from 1987 to 1996 -- containing many full texts of major SLORC/SPDC speeches, decrees, laws etc. It is on Greenstone, a free, open source software designed for digital libraries. You can do full-text searches of the whole archive.

David Arnott, The Librarian

Online Burma Library at:
www.burmalibrary.org
(soon also to be accessible on www.myanmarlibrary.org)

Email darnott@iprolink.ch

Please put a link to OBL on your site, and ask others to do the same.

Burma Archives Newsletter
irregular newsletter of the
Burma Archives Project
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Interview

Interview with Aung Zaw (Editor, Irrawaddy News Magazine) on the 8-8-88 archive project

Q: In a recent issue of Irrawaddy, you announced the 8-8-88 archive project. I would like to hear from you what this project is about?

A: It has been 12 years after the uprising, the killings, and shootings in the streets of Rangoon, as well as in the rest of Burma. Twelve years later, we have never done any systematic kind of documenting. How many people have been killed? How many people disappeared? Who are they? Where did they stay? We can vaguely say that in Rangoon or in the Sagaing area, 10 or 20 people got killed, my friends got killed, his mother or her brother got killed. But there are no details.

We came to realise that we have to do something about it - to put it into paper and to document everything that happened in '88. So we got this idea and started asking around if people had information such as lists of those who got killed in Burma. But none of them had anything. People continued with their political activities and they forgot. Luckily a friend of mine, Bertil Lintner, had a hospital list - an authentic old paper - handwritten by the physician who took care of the gunshot victims. He wrote all these details down and smuggled the list out of Burma. He gave the list to me and then we started to ask around again. In Rangoon, a lot of people got killed. The foreign newspapers said 10,000 or 20,000 people got killed. Next year, they will say 500 people got killed. No one knows the real figures.

Q: Have there ever been any other groups such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch Asia who have done research on this.?

A: I did not see any of these organisations. I am sure they want to but they still could not. Amnesty did a prisoner list but it is not comprehensive. Surely, they could not do that.

Q: A prisoner list is still something different.

A: That is why we are doing this 8-8-88 archive. There are two spots where the killings took place. First is the whole of Rangoon although we still have to find the exact places where and how many people got killed. Second are areas beyond Rangoon like in Sahgaing Division where 300 people got killed in one day. People who were demonstrating in front of the police station were gunned down by policemen from inside the station. There are a lot of major areas we still need to cover. We need the cooperation of people inside of Burma. It is, of course, very difficult to get in contact with people inside of Burma - to get a clearer picture and a more detailed information about those who died, missing or disappeared.

Q: How are you going to collect these information?

It just started so we still have to wait and see. We have small scale collaboration with some Burmese. Since we only had small scale announcements, we still have to let more people know that we are doing this. We should announce it in our own language. I would also like to broadcast it on radio stations but so far none have approached me yet. I don't know why but I think they should do it and pick this up. The BBC, DVB, or RFA should let the Burmese know that there is this group that has started collecting. We have just started. I think in the future we will get more cooperation. We will also get more information from inside Burma.

Even if people know we are doing this, it will still be very difficult to send information. We have to find some mechanism or safe channel to get the information out of Burma. For instance, in my township, three people got killed in one day. I knew them but I could not recall their names. Their friends and relatives would know. But how to contact them? How to get the names of those people who got killed that day? That takes time. You can not write or phone them. You have to set up informal networks.

Q: Apart from the data you collect on people who got killed or were wounded, do you also collect other kinds of information such as eyewitness reports or diaries?

Yes, we do. Actually this 8-8-88 project was informally started last year when we decided to do a cover story on the 8-8-88 uprising. We interviewed people about what they saw and we got eyewitness accounts from different locations. We also asked people to write it down for us. In last year's publication we had some of these detailed information. In the second part of the publication this year, we also have some interviews. It is interesting that we had an interview with an army officer who defected. He was posted in Rangoon during the uprising, and shot and killed people. He could not stand it - he defected and changed sides. I interviewed him so we also have some interesting inside information from the army - orders to shoot and kill. In the future, when we get more information, we will do regular stories and interviews on the occasion of the 8-8-88 uprising.

Q: What would be the final goal of this project apart from archiving these data and stories?

A: You know it is not only the '88 killings. Our country is under a military dictatorship. We do not have a systematic documenting practice. We do not have it anymore. Any data in Burma are unreliable. The data on the economy, health, education are all unreliable. So I think it is a kind of practice that we need to re-establish. That is also part of this project. In the future, we definitely are going to have the government we chose - an elected government - but we don't know when, maybe next year, maybe in 20 or 30 yrs. At that time, we have to talk about the 8-8-88 and all the other human right abuses.

In Thailand, they erected a monument this year, recorded the experiences and the bitterness on the 1973 and 1976 massacre. I think it is very healthy. Sure, those who were in power who ordered to kill will not like it. But we have to do it. We can not forget. That is a main objective why we want to do it. Keep the authentic documents, official and professional, so that future generations can use these documents as evidence once we have a tribunal like the South Africa Truth Commission. Even in a reconciliation process, we still need to talk about it. We can not forget the past. Do not tell us to forget the past. We can not. At least we

need to document what happened. They are re-writing history. If you look at the last 12 years, they are re-writing history and putting the things upside down. It is a whitewash. They call it disturbances. It is not a disturbance ... it is a massacre! For all of us, it is a graveyard - totally inhuman. It is disgraceful for our history. It happened in our country. It can not be erased easily. We have to have a place for these people who got killed - at least a museum. We will carry on anyway. No one can deter us.

Chiangmai, November 21st 2000

Drum Publications

The Drum Publication Group
Kanchanaburi, Thailand

The Drum Publication Group was founded in May 1998. As an independent group, its goal is to promote the education of children and young adults through the production of Karen and Burmese language materials.

The Drum Group's focus is on:

- Writing and printing high-quality educational books
- Producing teaching aids and extra-curricula materials for school
- Translation of texts to / from both Karen and Burmese languages especially those that are relevant to education
- Establishing a library and documentation centre to preserve valuable books and documents

The Group has established contact with as many other groups and individuals as possible who are involved in literature and education. We also assist NGOs who are involved in education work by translating and typesetting. We also participate in workshops to discuss the use of the teaching aids produced.

The Group promotes, through its own practises, transparency and accountability. It is not affiliated with any political organization. The publications are distributed to schools and centres of learning amongst the Thai-Burma border refugee population as well as in communities inside Burma.

Materials produced include:

A. Political books

We produced Political Terms books (1) and (2) for students and adults interested in further education. The books contain simple definitions of commonly used political terms e.g. democracy, constitution etc..

B. Agricultural books

These are basic agricultural books for the grassroots people, written in both Karen and Burmese language, describing how to make compost and how to raise poultry etc.

C. Health Education books

We have produced health education books for primary schools. They are written in story form with illustrations on each page. Topics dealt with include preparation of ORS, sanitation, and coughs and colds.

D. Dictionaries

As a long-term activity, we have produced school-level dictionaries in Sgaw Karen language. The English/Karen dictionary has recently been revised in a new edition. A Pwo Karen picture dictionary has also been made.

E. Teaching aids and reading books

We also have produced school teaching aids such as posters and children's reading books illustrated in full colour.

Copies of all books are deposited at the IISH where these are available to the general public.

We can be contacted at the following address:

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Archive TBC

We received the archives of the Burma Campaign UK last April.

The Burma Campaign UK (TBC), formerly the Burma Action Group UK, was founded in 1991. During the past ten years, TBC built a solid reputation as a source of reliable information and as a potent campaigning and lobbying organisation working for a democratic Burma.

TBC succeeded in influencing both the private and public sector in the UK towards the economic isolation of Burma's dictatorship. Pressure from the TBC led companies such as Burton, River Island, British Home Stores and a number of tour operators to withdraw from Burma. TBC also lobbied hard for a tough UK government position on Burma. This has resulted in government pressure on Premier Oil, a major business partner of the regime, to dis-invest. TBC's lobbying has contributed to the strong UK and EU positions on issues such as the freezing of assets held by officials of the regime and the EU's statement on the inappropriateness of tourism to Burma. In a legal case against the UK government in 1999, the TBC established that there was no legal obstacle under EU law for EU member states to impose unilateral investment sanctions on Burma.

TBC's patrons are: Sinead Cussack, Clive James, Miriam Karlin OBE, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Glenys Kinnock MEP, Sue Lloyd-Roberts, Sir John Mortimer, Dr. Jose Ramos-Horta and Rt Hon Sir David Steel.

The main reason for the Burma Campaign to deposit their archives at IISH in Amsterdam is, in the words of it's Director John Jackson: “ (...) but basically we thought that one day when the universities of Burma are flourishing, when it's academics, writers and journalists are able to express themselves freely, that all possible information on the country's recent history should be available to them to help make up for the lost years of internal silence”.

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BSG Conference

Burma-Myanmar(r) Research and its Future. Implications for Scholars and Policymakers, 6-8 September 2002
(tentative dates, venue tba)

First International Conference of the Burma Studies Group in collaboration with others (first announcement, July 2001). No academic subjects are in principle beyond consideration, provided that they deal with: (a) Burma-Myanmar, even if only indirectly, and (b) include at least a reflection, however brief, on how the quality of research on the topic addressed can be raised in future, and what needs to be put in place to help achieve this.

Panels under consideration

The conference organizers are open to proposals, but the following panels are currently under consideration (some of these may be turned into discussion panels):

- (1) Diplomacy: the Nature of Dialogue and Reconciliation
- (2) Research, Education and Human Resource Management
- (3) Ethnic Diversity
- (4) Environment, Resource Management and Development
- (5) Burma-Myanmar in the World: Refugees, migrants and the Diaspora
- (6) The Economy
- (7) Law and the Constitution
- (8) State and Society
- (9) Language and Linguistics
- (10) Literatures, Oral History and Popular

- Culture
(11) Media Representations
(12) Art, Archaeology and the Tourism Industry
(13) Gender and Identity
(14) Health and HIV
(15) Religions and Religious Experience
(16) History

Background

The best-known repeat conferences are the annual Yangon University Historical Research Centre conference and the biennial conference organised by the Burma Studies Foundation (which meets annually at the American Association of Asian Studies) and the Burma Studies Group, hitherto held at the Burma Studies Centre at Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, every even year. Outside these, the last major one-off open international academic conference took place in Berlin in April 1993 at which 17 papers were given.

These conferences, and the publications that arose from them, are extremely valuable. However, they do not substitute for an event that brings together the increasing number of specialist scholars addressing the breadth of scholarship on Burma the way, for example, the Thai Studies Conference does every three years. Given the increased volume in academic studies over the last two decades, it is an opportune moment to start thinking about pooling academic expertise internationally and bring fresh academic perspectives into the public domain. This particular conference proposal started off as an attempt to secure greater international participation into the biennial Burma Studies Group conference. Since considerable interest has been expressed by academics outside the USA, the Burma Studies Foundation Trustees have kindly agreed to open up the 2002 conference so that it can become an international collaborative event. It is an opportunity to demonstrate the breadth of current scholarship across all fields of study internationally.

Aims

There has been little or no outlet for new scholarship since the country opened up in 1988 after a long period of closure. There has therefore been little opportunity for a new generation of young scholars to present their findings. Also, scholarship by Burmese-Myanmar(r) nationals has been under represented

internationally. The conference aims in particular to:

- (i) bring on-stream scholarship that are not in the public eye before, and in particular of Burmese-Myanmar(r) scholars and of young academics;
- (ii) foster wherever possible constructive dialogue between scholars from Burma-Myanmar and from the international community;
- (iii) avoid myopia in Burma studies, by encouraging fresh comparative perspectives with other countries in transition, including ASEAN and Eastern Europe;
- (iv) strive to publish the proceedings from the conference.

Though first and foremost an academic conference, proposals are also entertained for creating opportunities:

- (i) to present policy papers;
- (ii) so that funding agencies and NGOs can meet suitably qualified academics;
- (iii) to establish a more enduring international structure that permits co-ordination of regular international academic exchanges on Burma-Myanmar, including the production of a database, an international directory of contacts, the organization of international conferences and the international co-ordination of publishing ventures.

Venue and dates

Currently the venue and dates are open. Initial expressions of interest have been received from: Amsterdam, Gothenburg and Illinois (Champaign) and we invite further expressions of interest. Cheap or subsidized accommodation and accessibility from a major international airport are major considerations in choice of venue.

Deadlines

Deadline for submission of abstracts (200 words): **1 March 2002**. However, if you wish to propose a panel or are in need of a transport subsidy, we require your abstract in by **15 January 2002**, together with an estimate of the lowest-cost fare.

Contacts

Pre-register your interest by returning this form (<http://www.therai.org.uk/anthcal/myanmarburmapreregister.html>)

To propose papers for individual panels, a venue for hosting and/or funding, please contact:

Gustaaf Houtman
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 50 Fitzroy Street, London W1T 5BT
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 email: gustaafhoutman@uk2.net
 telephone +44-(0)20-7394 6927
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 Participants from the Nordic countries are
 advised to also take up contact with Per
 Lundberg at per.lundberg@sant.gu.se.

Conference website:
<http://www.therai.org.uk/anthcal/myanmarburma2002.html>

Conference Organizing Committee:

Gustaaf Houtman (Chair)
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New Books

A short list of books recently published
 on Burma, mainly in the fields of
 politics/history/economy

Asian Development Plan, *Myanmar 2001-2003*, Manila : Asian Development Bank, 2000

Ball, Desmond/Lang, Hazel, *Factionalism and the ethnic insurgent organisations*, Canberra : ANU/SDSC, 2001, 38 pp.

Dell, Elizabeth (ed.)(with contributions by John Falconer, David Odo and Mandy Sadan), *Burma. Frontier Photographs, 1918-1935*, London : Merrell Publ (in association with The Green Centre for Non-Western Art, Brighton), 2000, 192 pp., ISBN 1-85894-103-2

Fink, Christina, *Living Silence. Burma under military rule*, London : Zed Press, 2000, 304 pp., ISBN 1-85649-926-X

Maung Maung, *The 1988 Uprising in Burma*, New Haven : Yale University, 1999
 The original typescript of this contested book and some other papers of Dr. Maung Maung can be found in the IISH Collections. See: <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/gias/m/10847288.html>

From two BAP members:
 Okell, John/Allott, Anna, *Burmese/Myanmar Dictionary of Grammatical Forms*, London : Curzon Press, 2000, 312 p., ISBN 0700715304
 Unlike many dictionaries this one provides numerous idiomatic translations of different styles of language and subject matter. For anyone learning the language it is interesting just to read through the rich selection of examples without worrying about the 'grammar'!

Naw, Angeline, *Aung San and the struggle for Burmese independence*, Chiangmai : Silkworm Books, 2001, 286 pp., ISBN 974-7551-54-3

Taylor, Robert H. (ed.), *Burma: political economy under military rule*, London : Hurst & Co., 2001, 224 pp., ISBN 1-85065-547-2

Thant Myint-U, *The making of modern Burma*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001, 291 p., ISBN 0-521-79914-7

Tucker, Shelby, *Among insurgents. Walking through Burma*, London : Flamingo/Harper Collins, 2001, XXX, 386 pp., ISBN 00 7127057

The International Institute of Social History (IISH) was founded in 1935. It is one of the world's largest documentary and research institutions in the field of social history in general and the history of the labour movement in particular. Most of the collections are open to the public.

Collections

The IISH holds close to 2,000 archival collections, some one million printed volumes and about as many audio-visual items. The available collections are accessible through an online catalogue and inventories. The IISH is also home to a number of other documentary institutions, most notably the Netherlands Economic History Archive (NEHA) and the Netherlands Press Museum (NPM). Both offer supplementary collections and services. Their material is included in the IISH catalogue. Visitors can consult the collections for reference and research in the reading room.

Research and Publications

The IISH carries out and stimulates scholarly research. It is a respected meeting place for researchers from all over the world and organizes conferences, symposia and international research projects. The Institute publishes research results through international academic publishers and its own inhouse publishing unit. The International Review of Social History is published for the Institute by Cambridge University Press and appears three times a year, plus one supplement.

Burma Collections

The IISH has a growing interest in Burmese material. It collects documents, letters, diaries, minutes of meetings, pamphlets, posters, cartoons, newspaper clippings, audio-visual material, microfilms and other materials on Burmese social history as well as current affairs. IISH is also building up a library of publications in any language on Burma and is keen to take subscriptions to journals, magazines and newspapers. Our idea is to rescue material which may otherwise get lost or damaged. We plan ultimately to make such material also available in Burma itself, in a future Burmese archive of social history. If you

have any material or publications which could enrich our holdings and make it possible for researchers worldwide to study Burmese social history, please contact us at the address below.

Donating or depositing collections at IISH

If you consider donating material to IISH, you could do so in the form of a gift, a deposit or a sale. Attached you will find examples of the conditions. The last page contains some special conditions which are relevant in some cases. Material is accepted from individuals as well as organisations. It is also possible to retain the originals and give IISH microfilm copies, or the other way around.

Short description of material to be collected

1a. Personal papers of political & cultural figures. These can be either 'leaders' or common people. The papers should include correspondence, diaries, photographs, personal paraphernalia like membership cards, documents referring to the person's involvement in political and/or social movements, associations, parties etc., or any other papers which place the person against the background of the social history of his/her time. Period can be extended as far back as possible, but contemporary material is equally valuable. In order to be useful for researchers in the future, such material should be ordered roughly. A list of broad categories of material would be very helpful. Such lists could be in Burmese or English.

1b. Organisational papers. These are the archives of political parties, labour unions, student organisations, progressive culture organisations, professional groups, ethnic associations, etc.

(Information on the background of this material would be very helpful)

2. Any printed material to do with (oppositional) politics: pamphlets, (proscribed) books, notices, flyers. It would be very helpful if these are accompanied with lists giving background information (year, organisation, place of publication).

3. Posters, cartoons, drawings (preferably with lists) IISH has a special interest in oppositional politics but government propaganda is also collected.

4. Political buttons, shields, statues, decorations, banners. (See remark under 3)

5. Old press photographs of demonstrations, political activity, 'social events', important personalities, etc. These could be either prints or negatives (year, place, photographer's name, scene depicted - these are very important here).

6. Audio cassettes with political songs, speeches, etc. (again with background information on date, place, occasion, speaker/singer).

7. Anything about labour relations.

8. We could also think of making a photographic record of current propaganda (billboards, slogans, etc.) and demonstrations.

September 1997

Burma Acquisitions

Acquisitions, 1999-2001

Apart from the regular material we received through the friendly support of different organisations, we were also able to get hold of copies of older magazines, statements, press-releases and rare documents (a.o. SNPLO, KNPLF). Herefore, we have to thank: Burma Centre Netherlands, Drum Publications, Shan Human Rights Foundation, Images Asia, Hugh McDougall, Patricia Herbert, Vicky Bowmann, Harn Yawngwe (Euro-Burma Office), Anna Allott, Holly Fisher, Shwe Zin Oo (Burma Project), Abhijit DasGupta, ABSDF, DPNS and The Burma Campaign UK. Some of these materials have been added to our regular collections, for pamphlets and other 'irregular' materials a documentation collection has been set up under the name of 'Burma political and social movements Collection'.

Some of the acquisitions that deserve to be mentioned separately are:

- 21 film rolls containing colour photos from Manerplaw (meetings, seminars, daily life etc.) in 1992
- material from the National United Party of Arakan (NUPA) and Arakanese Army (AA) on Operation Leech in the Andaman Islands (Feb. 1998)
- two Burmese language accounts by Thein Lwin (political refugee and NLD activist)
- the organizational archive of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)
- the organizational archive of the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS)
- archive of The Burma Campaign UK

Access to the last three archive collections is restricted.