Guardian of the Flame Sri Lanka Manuscripts Collection

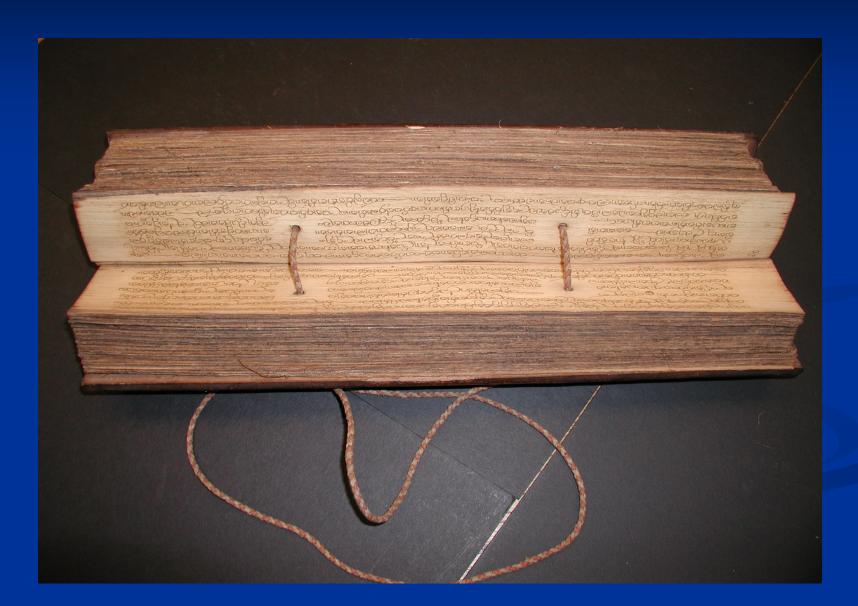


Robert Spindler
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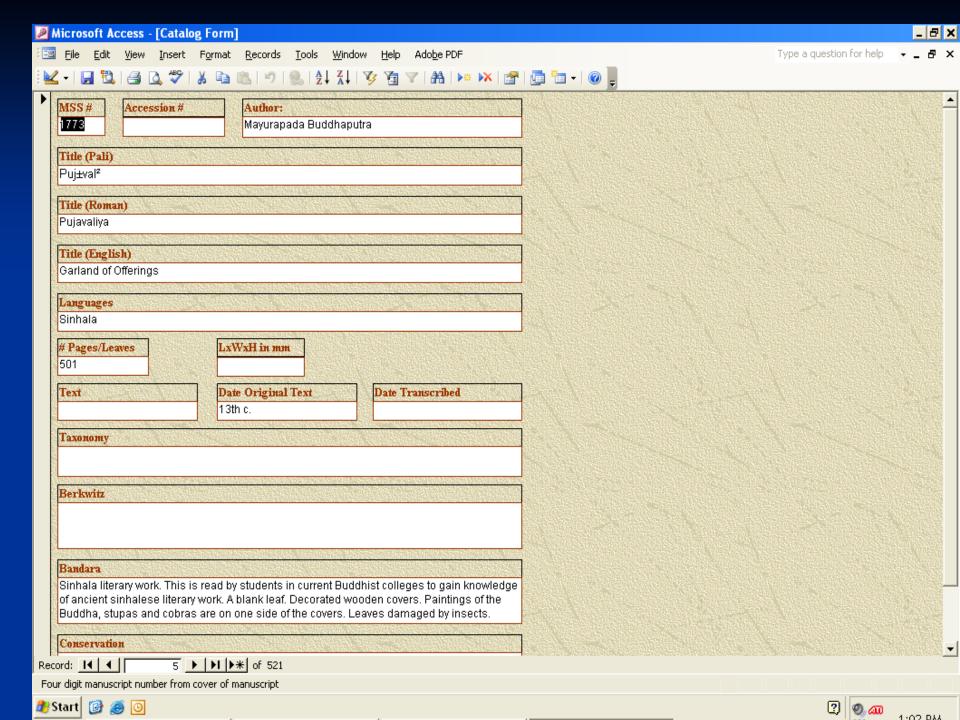


- ASU received 390 manuscripts 2004-2006
 - Largest collection of Sinhalese mss in Western Hemisphere
 - Harvard/Peabody Museum (14)
 - Smithsonian Institution (2)
 - Field Museum (2)
 - British Library holds 4,000
 - Some ASU texts not available in Sri Lanka

- Mostly Theravada Buddhist Texts
 - Texts from as early as 3rd century
 - These copies written 18th-19th centuries
 - Several Languages and Scripts:
 - Sinhalese
 - Sanskrit
 - Pali Traditional language and script of Theravada



- Progress to date:
 Identification, Cataloging and Rehousing
 - November 2004-present (185 hours)
 - Wijitha Bandara, University of Virginia
 - Stephen Berkwitz, SW Missouri State University
 - Translating and recording titles and descriptive information in MS Access database



- Progress to date:
 Identification, Cataloging and Rehousing
 - 355 of 390 mss have some description
 - 191 mss have identifiable titles
 - 53 have identifiable authors of original texts
 - 116 custom-built pH-neutral boxes constructed
 - Preliminary catalog completed

- Progress to Date Events
 - Lecture: "Buddhist Histories and the Power of the Past in Sri Lanka" Prof. Stephen Berkwitz, Southwest Missouri State University April 7, 2005
 - Lecture: "Problems of Heritage Management in South Asia", Prof. Sudharshan Seneviratne, University of Peradeniya, April 24, 2006
 - Scholar's Consultation Buddhist Objects, Knowledge, Ritual and Art, Arizona State University, October 6-7, 2006
 http://www.asu.edu/clas/religious_studies/lanka/collection.htm

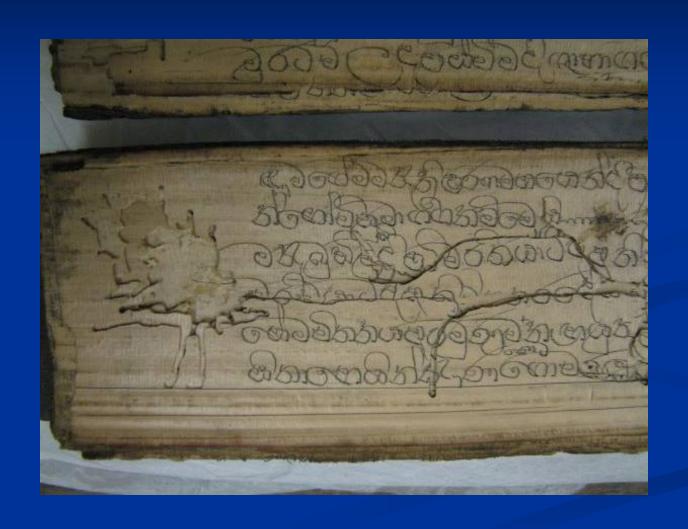
Archival Issues:

- Provenance undocumented:
 - Appears to be "artificial" collection
 - Identity of transcribers and monasteries unknown
 - Dates of transcription mostly established through handwriting
- Order of many manuscripts is disturbed:
 - Chunks of text out of order/placed at random
 - Can or should we attempt to restore order?

Archival Issues: Preservation

- Covers and leaves require different conservators
- Some covers degrading object vs. content





- Library Issues:
 - Relation to other ASU Libraries collections
 - Secondary sources of Sri Lanka, South Asia
 - Secondary and primary sources of SE Asia, e.g.
 Laos
 - Collect other primary sources of South Asia?

- University Issues:
 - Relation to ASU curriculum in several disciplines
 - Opportunity for collaboration with South Asian universities and institutions

Near Term Work Plan

(NEH Preservation and Access Proposal, July 2008)

- Enhance cataloging by visiting scholars
- Conserve and rehouse original manuscripts
- Convert Access database descriptions to EAD/XML finding aid for Web presentation
- Return or exchange digital images w/ major
 Sri Lankan institution

- Longer Term Work Plan
 - Selectively digitize and translate
 - Link from EAD finding aid to digital surrogates and translations

- Thanks to our Partners:
 - Herberger College of Fine Arts
 - Claudia Brown, Professor
 - Sherry Montgomery, Academic Advisor
 - Department of Religious Studies
 - Joel Gereboff, Chair
 - Juliane Schober, Associate Professor
 - University Libraries
 - David Moore and staff, Preservation

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