

Unknown source-materials of the times of
Classical antiquity and of the middle ages
concerning the country and inhabitants of
B U R M A

Written in Sugamo Prison
April 4. and following day.
Dedicated to Dr. B a M a w .

Countless are the news about trips and travels to unknown countries of this globe since the very remote times. Of course, the news begin to reach us from the moment only written testimonies and reports can be found and explained. The oldest expedition with a clear tendency of discovery goes back to the year 1493 B.D.

dealing with the maritime expedition of the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut to Punt (today Somaliland) This narrative is based upon the inscriptions of the temple of Der-el-Sahri in Egypt. The aim of this expedition which is largely described, was to obtain incense for the service of the Egyptian Gods. The next big expedition was made under the Egyptian King Ramesses the Great (1482 B.C.), when the goldland of the Nubian desert was discovered. Far Eastern explorers appear for the first time in human history, when the Chinese Emperor Muwang made an expedition to the desert Arabia and to the territory of Kuchener in 984-965 B.C. Then follows the first of the numerous Greek discoveries, inaugurated by Nearchus about 325 B.C. who dared to go very far in the Ocean. It is noteworthy that I found out that Siberia was for the first time mentioned in a report of a trip made by a Greek called Aristaeus in the same 6. century

B.C. But the exploration of Asia begins in a regular and astonishing way since 518 B.C. when the captain Scylax made a trip on the Indian Ocean by order of the Persian King Darius to find out the nature and topography of Indian borders. The famous expedition of Alexander the Great to Hindukush, Syr Daria and Pendjab (330-325 B.C.) was one of the greatest discoveries in history. Fortunately we are in possession of many original reports of Greek sources which give us a wonderful picture of that great man who wished to create a new world culture by uniting Orient and Occident! His admiral Nearchus left an exhaustive report of his expedition from the river Indus to the Tigris. For the early history of Burma is very important the eldest testimony we probably have of the year 300 B.C., an Indian mentioning of silk coming from Southern China to the Ganges river. You must know that in the scientific world there is a big and hitherto unsettled disputation about the origin and first appearing of the name of China. The European geographers of the Middle Ages believed that already in the Old Testament China was mentioned by the prophet Jesaja (cf. Jesajas 49, 12 "Sinia"), but that is incredible. Anyhow it can be concluded that all the reports speaking of connections between India and China are of special interest for the early knowledge of Burma, because it goes without saying that there were surely commercial connections. After Alexander the Great we have rather many fragments of trips speaking of the territories belonging to the present day Burma which ought to be collected and edited with the help of the Burma State as a wonderful and valuable document of a culture at a time Europe was still covered by the darkness of history and America entirely unknown.

One can see from the reports of ambassador Megasthenes, f.i. (300 B.C.) how astonishingly big the interest and the gift of observation of things Indian was. A highly precious report on Burma I found in the long report of the Chinese explorer T s c h a n g - K i e n who is the first known Chinese who made a trip to Western part of Central Asia and especially to Burma (138-115 B.C.) He speaks clearly of the farmers and their customs in Burma, he gives the names of many places. The king of the territory called today Burma possesses thousands of horses. It's perhaps of interest for you that I discovered the first news about the existence of seven islands situated in an endless Ocean (Pacific) in a Greek source of the 1. C. B.C., a report of a famous oriental merchant called Jambulos who seems to have been in Japan. I shall publish again my discovery after my release in the "Nippon Times" or in the "Stars and Stripes". The first Indian colonies in China were reported for the year 72 A.D. Java was colonized by Indian in 78 A.D. ^{according to} a famous inscription of the temple of Borobudur in Java. Here is much to say about Birma of that time. Then follows a first-class document for Birma in the preserved Greek "Book for navigators on the Indian Ocean" of the year 89 A.D. written by a man who made the trip along the Indian coast many times from Alexandria and described every port and every city. In 100 A.D. a Roman travelled for the first time by land to China. Many Chinese sources together with the Greek and Latin reports help us to give a rather good picture of Birma of that time. Delegations from Java to China which passed Burma followed

During the Middle ages Christian monks contributed much to the gathering of first-hand knowledge of Burma. The works of these monks are partly edited, partly only known by manuscripts. If f.i. the Government of Burma would be interested in a complete collection of all the hitherto unknown and unpublished news of the country, it would be necessary to make a study in the libraries of Rome, because many of the manuscripts are only available within the Vatican. A high interest for practical geography was prevailing in the oriental people of the A r a b i a n s. They appear only in the 7. Century A.D. The victorious spreading of I s l a m compelled the Mohammedans to gather as many news as possible of the new countries, and geography became a science helpful to religion. We possess of these times wonderful and absolutely accurate descriptions of all parts of the world, especially of Central Asia and India. News on B u r m a we find in the descriptions of M a s s u d i (+ 957 A.D.) entitled "Golden meadows and jewel mines" He was in Burma. In the beginning of the 12. Century was living A l b i r u n i who left a description of India. Another famous Arabian geographer was E d r i s i (1110-1164) whose books we still possess. Then follows I b n W a r d i and finally the greatest explorer of the Arabian world, I b n B a t u t a (1300-1377) He has spent many years of his life in travelling and describing, and his books contain many very valuable news about Burma which I should like to publish in an edition with all the other news concerned.

The collection of interesting reports on trips and news of Burma goes on until the end of the middle ages..All together we get a rich survey of the conditions since the remotest times of Burmese history.

Unfortunately the historiographers of Geography did not understand Greek ,Latin,Arahian etc. or did not know exactly the materials.This is the reason the knowledge of the early history of these countries is rather unknown.The peoples of Burma,of the Philippines etc. could be very proud,if they would know their early history better as it is the case hitherte.Therefore I suggest that one of the future task^s of the Burma Government ought to be the establishment of a professorship of Early history of East Asia or of the history of Geography in general,and secondly the preparation of the rich and abundant source-materials of Burma contained and preserved in the above mentioned authors and in many others.As I am well known to the British Mission in Tekyo(Mr. Redman),I am sure that,if you speak after your return with competent circles,a possibility would be given to start the work.Of course, I don't know anything about your connections,but I am sure you have friends among the Burmese and the British there who would be interested to render this long neglected service to the young and prosperous people of Burma to know better their history.I would be more than satisfied to think that my captivity in this Sugamo Prison let me know a man who even in the darkness of his cell thought only of the future of his people, and one of the ways will be to know the past!

Yours sincerely,

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