

Australia on 30th October. Staying alone in the house of his orchard, he devoted the remaining years of his life for translating and editing the Pali canon. He had no modern facilities like electricity, telephone etc. He had only a kerosene oil lamp to work at night. Almost all his editions and the translations of the Pali canon were done at Tasmania. He led a life of a hermit. He died at Beacons Field Hospital Launceston on 27th May 1952 at the age of 81. His books had been willed to the Universities of Ceylon, Hobart and Cambridge. See PLATES XLIX-L.

Bibliography

1. F.L. Woodward, *Out of his Life and thought*, Colombo (1973)
2. *Woodward of Mahinda: Cultural and Religious Themes in the Life of Frank Lee Woodward*. Michael Powell, Sarvodaya Visvalekha Publication 2001 (Ph.D. Thesis 1999)
3. *Century of Memories*. An Anthology celebrating the centenary of Mahinda College 1892- 1992 Lowes Printers Garren, Australia, Second edition 1997.

K. Arunasiri

References

1. D.H. Pandita Gunawardena "F.L. Woodward , *Out of his life and thought*" Colombo p. 10
2. Olcott Hall 120 x 40 ft. was the biggest school assembly hall in the island, when it was opened in 1912, as accepted by John Harward, the Director of Public Instruction (Dept. of Education) who declared the hall open on 18th Aug. 1912.
3. Though it is difficult to assess his total financial contribution to the building Project, Michael Powell has calculated with whatever the available figures in the region of Rs. 20,000-25,000 , a colossal amount at the time.
1. Woodward formally became a Buddhist, taking "Pancasila" (Five Precepts) from Most venerable Depegoda Silakkhanda Thera the second Mahanayaka thera of the R a m a n n a Nikaya of nearby Malwatta temple, when the site for the Olcott Hall was being prepared (Michael Powell *ibid.* p. 202)
2. Sir Ponnambalam Arunacalam, one of the pioneer local civil servants says that he was saddened to

see in the witness box , Buddhists pretending to be Christians and taking their oaths on the Bible, when he was the Police Magistrate Kalutara. Powell p.258 -259

3. But Pandita Gunawardena does not agree with Michael Powell. He says the first fascicle (of the concordance) "A" up to letter "O" was published in 1956 posthumously.(D.H. Pandita Gunawardana p. 65.

WRITING does not appear to have been in general use at the time of the Buddha. An important indication in this respect is that the *Vinaya* does not refer in any way to writing instruments. If writing and manuscripts had been in use, then "the whole industry connected with them must have played an important part in the daily life of the members of the Buddhist Order". Yet, "nowhere do we find the least trace of any reference to books or manuscripts", or to writing tools etc.¹ One interpretation of this would be to assume that, even though writing was known, the early Buddhists did not make use of it for the purpose of transmitting their sacred texts, for which they referred to employ oral transmission.²

Yet, Megasthenes reports from his visit to India in the fourth century that Indians did not know writing at all and relied entirely on their memory.³ According to modern scholarship, "the best evidence today is that no script was used or even known in India before 300 B.C., except in the extreme Northwest that was under Persian dominion".⁴

Since several Pāli canonical passages seem to refer to letters, to writing and even to books, in what follows these passages will be surveyed in order to see what degree they reflect the existence of writing. This survey will be followed by briefly assessing the impact of writing on the development of Buddhist literature.

In a description of various games, the *Brahmajāla Sutta* refers to *akkharika*, guessing letters (*D.I*, 7). The commentary explains that the letters to be guesses will be written in the air or on one's back (*DA*. I, 86). Elsewhere in the discourses the term *akkhara* occurs in contexts where it does not necessarily imply writing, e.g. when it stands for the letters or syllables that make up a verse (*S.I*,38), or a saying (*D.III*, 86), or that should be known in their proper sequence (*Dhp*.352).

The word explanation to the *pācittiya* rule against teaching recitation to someone who is not fully ordained employs the same term, *akkharāya vāceti* (Vism. IV, 15). Here *akkhara* clearly stands for something said, not something written. The same is the case for an occurrence of *akkhara* in an explanation that a monk might give of a short saying by the Buddha, *imehi akkharehi imehi padehi imehi vyañjanehi*, which clearly refers to a verbal explanation and bears no relation to writing (A. V, 260).

Another occurrence of *akkhara* is as part of a qualification of a Brahmin knowledgeable in the Vedic lore or phonology and etymology, *sākkharappabheda* (D. I, 88). Since the Vedas were passed down orally, here too *akkhara* would not be related to written letters. Hence even though the *Brahmajāla Sutta*'s reference to guessing at letters might indeed refer to written letters, as suggested by the commentary, it could also be that the game originally involved a form of guessing that was independent of writing. Such a game could be, for example, to pronounce only part of a word, where the playmate then has to divine the missing syllable, *akkhara*.

In addition to reference to *akkhara*, several passages mention *lekha* or *likhati*, which in later literature stands for writing.⁵ One example can be found in listings of different crafts in the *Udāna* and the *Vinaya*, which refer to the *lekhāshipa* (Ud. 32 and Vin. IV, 7). According to the commentary on the *Udāna*, this particular craft involves the drawing or writing or letters (UdA. 205). Other passages in the *Vinaya* indicate that if a young boy trains in this art his fingers will become painful (Vin. I, 77 and Vin. IV, 128). This would indeed be the case if he were to write letters, especially in view of the type of writing material that he would have had at his disposal in ancient India.

Elsewhere in the discourses *lekha* stands for drawing or carving lines on rock, earth or water (A. I, 283). The corresponding verb *likhati* refers to painting with various colours (M. I, 127); to carving a bowl out of wood (Vin. II, 110); or to smoothing the surface of wood with a plane (A. II, 200; cf. also Vin. II, 112). The sense of painting seems also to be the import of *lekhika* in verse in the *Therīgāthā*, which compares the beauty of a woman's eyebrows to a stroke, presumably the stroke of a painting brush (Thi. 256). Thus enough the *Udāna* and *Vinaya* listings of different crafts might indeed intend writing, as suggested by

the commentary, they could also intend some craft related to painting or carving.

This other sense of painting appears to be relevant to the description of a robber wanted by the king, referred to in the *Vinaya* as a *likhitako coro* (Vin. I, 75). This need not be a written description of the brigand, but could also be a 'wanted' circular that employs a painting made in resemblance of the robber.⁶ In view of the need to get the cooperation of larger sections of the population for tracking down the robber, a painting would in fact be a more probable device employed in such circumstances than a writing description. Even by the time of Asoka, when writing was definitely in use in ancient India, sizeable portions of the population would have been unable to read such a description, whereas a painting would have been intelligible to everyone.

The explanation for a *pācittiya* regulation that prohibits nuns from learning worldly crafts makes a special allowance that they could; however, learn *lekha* (Vin. IV, 305). This regulation uses the expression *lekhaṃ pariyāpuṇāti*, employing a verb that is elsewhere used for learning something by heart. The next regulation in this part of the *Vinaya* speaks of *lekhaṃ vāceti*, teaching someone else to recite *lekha*. Since both activities would not fit writing, and as *lekha* occurs here together with learning or teaching someone else to recite *dhāraṇa* and *paritta*, the passage might rather intend some form of drawing.⁷

Another reference to *lekha* occurs in the word explanation of the first *pārājika* regulation, according to which a monk is guilty of killing even if he only praises death by way of a *lekha*, *lekhāya saṅvaṇṇeti*, thereby conveying the message that whosoever commits suicide in a particular way will gain wealth, fame, or got to heaven (Vin. III, 76). For each *akkhara* the monk incurs a *dukkata* offence. The commentary explains that this refers to writing a letter (VinA. II, 452). The way this case is described in the *Vinaya*, this seems indeed the most straightforward explanation.

A less probable but nevertheless not entirely impossible interpretation of this *Vinaya* passage could be developed based on a reference in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* to the *caranaṃ nāma citam* (S. III, 151), which according to the commentarial explanation stands for a canvass with paintings taken around by wandering Brahmins to illustrate karma and its fruits, *imaṃ*

kammaṃ katvā idaṃ paṭilabhati (SA. II, 327).⁸ Applied to the present case, the original idea of the *Vinaya* regulation could have been the dispatching of a painting that depicts the fruit of the deed of suicide to be wealth, fame or a heavenly rebirth. Just as in the case of the Brahmins who would wander around and give oral explanations of their painting, in the present case, too, such a painting could have been accompanied by an oral explanation, hence the reference to *akkhara*. Nevertheless, of the various instances of *lekha* examined so far, the present instance seems most strongly to point to actual writing.

Finally a reference to books appears to be implicit in a passage in the *Aggañña Sutta*, which describes Brahmins who settle near villages and make *gantha* (D. III, 94). Though in addition to its original meaning as “knot”, *gantha* eventually came to mean “books”, this need not be the original implication of the present instance. In two verses in the *Sutta Nipāta*, “Brahmins are said to ‘knot together mantras’ – the words are *mante ganthetvā*– and the reference is to their composing Vedic texts” (Sn. 302 and 306).⁹ The passage in the *Aggañña Sutta* would carry the same sense, in fact the commentary explains that composing of Vedic texts and teaching their recital is meant, ‘*ganthe karontā ‘ti tayo vede abhishaṅkarontī ceva vācentā ca* (DA. III, 870).

In sum, then, though there are several passages that suggest the existence of writing, close inspection shows that they could also be interpreted otherwise. The fact remains that the earliest period of Buddhist literature was carried on by oral transmission. The exigencies of oral tradition have left their mark on the material transmitted and are evident in such stylistic features as frequent repetition and the arrangements of strings of words in an order that follows the principle of waxing syllables (See VĀCĀ and WAXING SYLLABLES). For the same reason, the discourses refer to one who is learned as *bahusuta*, one who literally “had heard much”. The early Buddhist orality is also reflected in the repeated recommendations given in the discourses on how to properly keep the teachings in mind in order to ensure their proper transmission to posterity.

By the time of Asoka, writing was evidently known and in use (See also ASOKA). According to the traditional account given in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa*, the scriptures of the Theravāda

tradition were committed to writing during the first century BC in Sri Lanka (*Dpv.* 20.20-21 and *Mhv.* 33.100-101).¹⁰ The same seems to have happened soon enough also on the Indian mainland, since recent fragment findings appear to date to the first century AD.¹¹ Unlike the early discourses, later works refer in fact quite explicitly to writing, thus the *Lalitavistara* or the *Mahāvastu* offer listings of various types of script (*Lal.* 88 and *Mhv.* I, 135), and a Gandharan sculpture depicts the bodhisattva at school, holding a writing slate.¹²

Nevertheless, “oral tradition continued to exist side by side with written scriptures for many centuries to come”.¹³ In fact, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-xien, who towards the beginning of the fifth century travelled India in search of *Vinaya* manuscripts, had considerable difficulties to obtain copies as *Vinaya* material was still transmitted mainly through oral means (*T. Li*, 864b17).¹⁴

The employment of writing for the transmission of Buddhist literature provided a safe measure against loss of text, which in an oral tradition invariably depends on the unbroken continuity of those who have memorized it. Another and perhaps similarly important aspect of the introduction and use of writing would have been that, as long as texts were transmitted only by oral means, “it must have been difficult, if not impossible, to slip a new text into the curriculum”. Thus “something which is palpably new has no chances of survival”,¹⁵ as it will not be transmitted by the majority of the reciters.

Once writing comes into use, however, even texts not accepted by the majority could be transmitted to later generations. Notably, among the Buddhist literature that came into being after writing had come into use, recurrent references to the merits of copying manuscripts and preserving them can be found.¹⁶ These references reflect the importance of copying and preserving manuscripts as the central means to preserve this literature for posterity. Thus the impact of the introduction of writing on Buddhist literature must have been considerable; enabling the preservation of texts and therewith of ideas that otherwise would soon have been forgotten. Though much of this literature has been lost due to the vicissitudes of Indian Buddhism, fortunately considerable sections of Buddhist literature have been translated into Chinese and Tibetan, and thereby have been preserved until today.

The impetus that writing would have given to the development of Buddhist literature has its modern counterpart in the publication of Buddhist writings on the internet and in the progressive digitalization of Buddhist scriptures, thereby enabling free worldwide access to Buddhist thoughts and ideas. Most of the oriental editions of the Pali canon are by now available in digital form,¹⁷ as well as a considerable number of Sanskrit fragments.¹⁸ The entire Chinese canon has been digitalized,¹⁹ and the Tibetan canon is in process of being similarly converted.²⁰ This inaugurates a new epoch in Buddhist studies, greatly facilitating research and international exchange. Thus writing, in its earlier forms as well as in its modern computerized form, has played and still plays a remarkable role in the spread and study of Buddhism.

Analayo

References

- 1 Rhys Davids: *Buddhist India*, Delhi 1997: 109-110
- 2 Winternitz: *Geschichte der Indischen Literatur*, Leipzig 1908:31
- 3 McCrindle: *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, London 1877: 69.
- 4 Scharfe: *Education in Ancient India*, Leiden 2002: 12. On what could be a very early instances of writing in Sri Lanka cf. Norman: "The development of Writing in India and its Effect upon the Pali Canon", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, 37, 1993: 247.
- 5 Notably, most of the passages where *lekha* or *likhati* seem to refer to writing occur in the prose of the *Udāna* or in the explanation to rules found in the *Vinaya*. Both appear to belong to a later Stratum of the Pāli canon, being originally commentaries on the *Udāna* verses (See also UDĀNA) and the *pātimokkha*. During the time of oral transmission, these commentaries then acquired canonical status and thereby came to be part of the canonical *Udāna* collection and of *Vinayapiṭaka*
- 6 Von Hinüber: *Der Beginn der Schrift und frühe Schriftlichkeit in Indien*, Wiesbaden 1989: 38
- 7 Gombrich: "How the Mahāyāna began", *The Buddhist Forum*, 1990: 28 suggests that this passage probably "refers to drawing amulets"; cf. also von Hinüber op.cit. :39.
- 8 Cf. also Ray: "The parallel tradition: Early Buddhist narrative sculpture", *Bulletin of the Deccan College {postgraduate and Research Institute}*, 54-55, 1994/1995: 350 on the relationship of the "tradition of picture recitation in ancient India" to the Buddhist *bhāṅakas*.
- 9 Gombrich op.cit. : 27
- 10 For a survey of the reasons for this decision against its historical background cf. Adikaram: *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon, Dehiwala 1994:79.*
- 11 Salomon: "A Preliminary Survey of Some Early Buddhist Manuscripts Recently Acquired by the British Library", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 117, 1997: 353-358.
- 12 Dehejia: *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*: Delhi 1997:203.
- 13 Bechert: "The Writing Down of the Tripiṭaka in Pali", *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunde Südasiens*, 36, 1992: 53; cf. also Malalasekera: *The Pāli Literature of Ceylon*, Kandy 1994: 46
- 14 Demieville "A propos du Concile de Vaisali", *T'oung Pao*, 40 1951: 246/247 note 1 remarks That the lack of *Vinaya* manuscript could also have been in part due to the intentionally Restricted circulation of such material.
- 15 Gombrich op.cit: 26-27.
- 16 Gombrich op.cit: 29. On what eventually became a 'cult of the book', in the sense of reverence And worship directed to particular texts similar to that usually dedicated to a *stūpa* cf. the study By Schopen: "The Phrase 'sa pṛthivīpradeśaś catiyabhūto bhavet' in the Vajjracchedikā: Notes on The Cult of the Book in the Mahāyāna", *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 27, 1975: 147-181.
- 17 The Burmese edition has been digitalized by VRI, cf. <http://www.tipitaka.org/>; the Ceylonese edition by SLTP, cf. <http://www.buddhistethics.org/palicanon.html>; and the Siamese edition by Mahidol University (only for sale). The PTS edition has also been digitalized in Thailand, but due to copyright restrictions has been withdrawn from circulation.
- 18 GRETEL offers a range of downloads at http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/bene_1/fiindolo/gretel.htm.

- 19 The digitalization of the Chinese canon has been undertaken by CBETA, cf. <http://www.cbeta.org/>.
- 20 Parts of the Tibetan canon have been made available by the AC project, cf. <http://www.asianclassics.org/>

YEBHUYASIKĀ See **ADHIKARAÑASAMATHA**

YĀGA See **SACRIFICE**

YAGÑĀ See **SACRIFICE**

YAKKHA. According to the *Pāli English Dictionary (PTS)*, “*Yakkha* is the name of certain non-human beings, as spirits, ogres, dryads, ghosts and spooks. Their usual epithet and category of being is *amanussa*, i.e. not a human being (but not a sublime god either); a being half deified and of great power as regards influencing people (partly helping, partly hurting)...”¹ According to Monier Williams, *Yakkha* is, “a living super-natural being, spiritual apparition, ghost, spirit...”² To Ananda K. Coomaraswami, it had, besides these popular meanings, associations with the *Yaksa* cult, which came to be widely known in India, several centuries after the sixth century B.C. According to him, “In any case, the ideas of the wonderful, mysterious, supernatural, unknown, of magical power, invisibility, and spirit hood are all more or less involved in the early references; but these ideas are hardly to be distinguished from those connected with the *yaksa* concept when later on, the cult of *Yaksas* comes into view, and it is often, especially at that time, difficult to distinguish between *Deva*, *Devata* and *Yaksa*, especially in Buddhist literature, where all alike are regarded as rebirths of human beings, and subject in due course to further human incarnations...”³

While there are numerous references to *Yakkhas* in Pāli texts, strewn throughout both the early as well as the later portions of the Pāli canon, several discourses are found among the earliest portions of the canon where a ‘*yakkha*’ or ‘*yakkhanī*’ often plays the leading role. These discourses are comparable in most respects, to the large majority of the discourses of the Buddha which claim to be records of actual events which took place during the life-time of the Buddha. Of such texts, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* collection of *suttas* titled the

‘*Yakkha Saṃyutta*’ seems to preserve the earliest traditions⁴ regarding the *yakkhas* in Pāli texts.

A careful examination of the contents of the majority of the *Yakkha Suttas* of the Pāli canon, shows that they do not lend themselves to a purely mythological interpretation of the term as has been commonly advanced and accepted by the traditional exegetes and modern scholars. This doubt regarding the validity of the traditionally accepted interpretation of the term arises out of the strong philosophical bias displayed in some of these *suttas*.

The possibility of the term, *Yakkha* having philosophical associations not only in connection with certain early texts of the Pāli canon, but also in connection with certain references in early Vedic texts have been noted by several scholars. Professor O.H.De.A. Wijesekera remarks, “The curious term *Yakṣa* which makes its appearance for the first time in the Ṛgveda and there seems to denote primarily “the mysterious” (Wandering) has in later *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* developed several shades of meaning, the most important of which for the early Indian thought is undoubtedly its *philosophical* significance. Its commonest sense, however, seems to be the mythological as denoting a species of certain non-human beings, demons, ogres or spirits.... Several aspects of its Vedic use have been discussed by Hertel, Boyer, Geldner, and others, but its philosophical use as found particularly in the *Upaniṣads* and early Pāli literature has therefore received no adequate presentation”.⁵

The *PTSPāli Dictionary*, too, seems to have noticed its philosophical associations, when it observes, “Exceptionally, the term *Yakkha* is used as a philosophical term denoting the “individual soul” (cp. similar Vedic meaning “*das lebendige Ding*” (B.R.) at several AV. passages); hence probably the old phrase: *ettāvatāyakkhassa suddhi* (purification of heart)”.⁶ A perusal of the textual references where *Yakkhas* are found mentioned shows that these philosophical associations are always found in the earlier texts, while the later texts show evidence of the mythological sense.⁷

In their listing in popular Buddhist mythology, the *Yakkhas* belong to a lower class of non-human beings and they are therefore, not considered capable of any intellectual accomplishments as to understand

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