

2. THE NEW SANSKRIT MS. FROM MINGAI.<sup>1</sup>

*Vienna, 10th August, 1891.*

SIR,—At the monthly meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on November 5, 1890, Colonel Waterhouse exhibited a birchbark MS., obtained by Lieut. Bower from the ruins of the ancient underground city of Mingai, near Kuchar, in Kashgaria. According to the notes in the *Proceedings* (No. ix. of 1890, p. 223), the MS. consists of 56 leaves, most of which are written on with black ink on both sides. A string runs through the middle of the leaves, and two boards protect the volume. According to the same authority, the MS. was made over for deciphering to Babu Sarat Chandra Das, who, however, as well as Lama Phantshog, failed to make out its contents. The notice concludes with the remark that, as the MS. appears to be particularly rare and interesting, heliogravures of two leaves are published in the Plate III., added to the number of the *Proceedings*, “in the hope that some of the members may be able to decipher it.”

As the photo-etchings, which give the *sāṅkaphishthas* of fols. 3 and 9, are very good, and as the MS. really possesses a very great interest for all Sanskritists, I subjoin my reading and translation of the piece on fol. 3, together with some remarks on the alphabet, language, and contents of both the pieces.

By the shape of its leaves the Mingai MS. differs from all other birchbark MSS. known to me. All those which I have seen in Kashmir, as well as the Bakhshali MS., consist of sheets of quarto size. The leaves of the Mingai MS., on the other hand, are narrow, long strips, cut according to the usual size of the palm-leaves. Like the palm-leaf MSS., they are held together by a string, which is not used for any other birchbark volume, because the brittle nature of the material would make such a proceeding dangerous for its preservation.

<sup>1</sup> This paper has already appeared—with the original Sanskrit of the passages here given only in translation, and also accompanied by notes—in the *Vienna Oriental Journal*, vol. v. No. 2.

The writing on fol. 3, which is very large and clear, exhibits the type of the characters of the Gupta period. There are only two letters which slightly differ from those used in the Gupta inscriptions. The initial *a* (see *anavatap-tena*, l. 5) shows a peculiar form in which the upper half of the left limb, represented by a curve open to the left, has been placed in front of the lower half, and has been connected with it by a short stroke. Further, the left limb of *sa* shows mostly a wedge (as in the Horiuzi palm-leaf) instead of a small circle.

The writing on fol. 9 shows in general the same type as that of fol. 3. But it is very much smaller, and there are a few more advanced cursive forms. The initial *a* looks exactly like the *a* of the Horiuzi palm-leaf. For the *ya* we find, besides the old tripartite form, a peculiar looped one, and the form of the Horiuzi palm-leaf. In the letter *śa* the continuity of the top line is mostly broken. There are also several instances of a *sa* with an open wedge in the syllable *sya*. Among the numerals the figure 3 shows the ancient Gupta form, consisting of three horizontal lines one above the other. The figure 9 resembles those occurring on the Valabhī plates and in the Śāradā MSS. In fol. 3 two different signs of interpunction are used. Between words to be taken separately, and at the end of half verses and verses occurs a short horizontal stroke or a small curve, open to the left. Once, in l. 2 after *svāhā*, we have two upright strokes with hooks at the top.

Babu Sarat Chandra Das is no doubt right, when he says (*Proceedings*, *loc. cit.*) that the Mingai MS. appears to have been written by different hands. The volume may even be made up of different pieces, written at different times. The parts resembling fol. 3 belong, to judge from the characters, to the fourth or to the fifth century A.D. Those resembling fol. 9 may be somewhat later. But it is not impossible that the cursive forms already existed during the earlier period named, and that the exclusive use of more antiquated signs on some sheets is owing to individual idiosyncrasies of the writers. These questions can only be settled when the whole

MS. has been thoroughly examined. For the present, this much only appears certain: (1) that the MS. contains a page showing the same characters as the Gupta inscriptions; (2) that both the leaves, published in facsimile, look older than the Horiuzi palm-leaf; and (3) that the Mingai MS. has, therefore, a claim to be considered the oldest Sanskrit MS. hitherto found.

As regards the contents of the MS., fol. 3 apparently contains a charm which is intended to force the Nāgas or snake-deities to send rain. The mutilated line 1 enumerates, it would seem, various plants which are to be used as ingredients for an oblation. L. 2 gives the Mantra for the oblation, which ends with the word *svāhā*. The latter word, as is well known, always indicates the moment of the *tyāga*, when an oblation is thrown into the fire. The Mantra probably consisted originally of an entire Anushtubh Śloka, the first half of which may have begun with the mutilated word *madana* (P) in line 1, and which certainly ended with the syllables *ka me* in line 2. The end of line 2 and the following lines down to the end of the page contain the so-called *Anumantrana*, a further invocation of the snake-deities, intended to propitiate them by a declaration of the worshipper's friendly relations with various individual Nāgas. This snake-charm, which appears to be Buddhistic, was probably composed in Southern India. For it mentions "the district on the banks of the Golā," *i.e.* the Godāvāri, which, rising near Nasik, flows through the whole Dekhan until it reaches the Bay of Bengal in the Madras Presidency.

The language of this piece is the incorrect Sanskrit, mixed with Prakrit forms, which is common in the Buddhist works of the early centuries of our era, as well as in the Buddhist and Jaina inscriptions of the same period, and is found also in the mathematical Bakhshali MS. In line 2 we have the faulty Sandhi *devo samāntena*; in line 3 the faulty compound *nāgarājñā*; in line 4 the insertion of a meaningless *m* between *vāsukinā-m-āpi*, which in Pali is commonly used in order to obviate a hiatus, and the faulty compound *nando-panando*; in line 5 the Prakritic form *pi* for the particle *āpi*.

It is also possible that *parivelāya* in line 2 may be a Prakritic locative for *parivelāyām*.

The metrical portion consists of exceedingly irregular Anushtubh Ślokas. The Mantra ought to end in *samantatah* instead of in *samāntena*, and has one syllable in excess. The last three verses of the Anumantrana have also more syllables than they ought to have. It is noteworthy that this small piece contains a dozen words and meanings not traceable in the dictionaries.

*Translation of Folio 3.*

. . . . "Dundubhî, Gârjanî, Varshanî, cucumber, Patanî, Terminalia Chebula, Hârinî, Kampana. . . .

. . . . May the god send rain for the district on the banks of the Golâ all around; Ilikisi Svâhâ !

I keep friendship with the Dhritarâshtras, and friendship with the Nairâvanas. I keep friendship with the Virûpâkshas and with Krishna and the Gautamakas. I keep friendship with the king of snakes Mani, also with Vâsuki, with the Dandapâdas, with . . . , and ever with the Pûrnabhadras. Nanda and Upananda, [as well as those] snakes of [beautiful] colour, of [great] fame and great power, who take part even in the fight of the gods and the demons— [with all these], with Anavatapta, with Varuna and with Samhâraka I keep friendship. I keep friendship with Takshaka, likewise with Ananta and with Vâsumukha, with Aparâjita and with the son of Ohhibba I keep friendship; likewise always with great Manasvin."

The contents of fol. 9 seem to be different. All the portions which are legible in the facsimile contain medical prescriptions for the cure of disease and for giving to sickly children vigour and health. In line three we have at the end of a prescription which is not entirely decipherable:

"[This is a medicine] which increases the body of a lean boy or of one who is in a decline."

Immediately after these words follows another prescription :

“I will declare the most effective prescription [which gives] strength and a [healthy] complexion. Kuśa-grass, *Moringa pterygosperma*, the root of *Andropogon muricatus*, grapes. . . . A decoction of these, [mixed] with sugar, must be given to a lean person; or let him smear on Ghī, boiled with those [above-mentioned ingredients] and with *Jivantiya*.”

Again I read in lines 10–11 :

“*Schreberia Swietenioides*, *Curcuma longa*, *Rubia Munjista*, pepper and *Pinus Deodaru*—clarified butter mixed with a powder of these [ingredients], also (?) white *Moringa pterygosperma* (?), *Clitoria ternatea* and pomegranates, mixed with water, one shall prescribe for a child, that is suffering from thirst, looks ill and is in a decline. Pounding *Aglaia odorata*, or also *Cyperus* into a paste, one shall give it, together with rice-water and mixed with honey.”

These specimens are amply sufficient in order to establish the character of the contents of the second page. Possibly they may have been extracted from the chapter of a medical work on *bālachikitsā*. I may add that the whole page will become probably legible, if the leaf is well soaked in water and afterwards dried, as the Kashmirians invariably do with old birchbark MSS.

Lieutenant Bower believes the ruins of Mingai and the MS. to be Buddhistic. The latter conjecture is, as already stated, probably correct. For, verse 101 of the *Khandavatta Jātaka* (Fausböll, *Jātakas*, vol. ii. p. 145),

*Virūpakkhehi me mettam Erāpathehi me |*

*Chhabbyāputtehi me mettam [mettam] Kanhāgotamakehi chā  
ti ||*

corresponds with portions of the first and last verses of the *Anumantrana* on fol 3. This agreement shows at all events that similar verses occurred in Buddhist literature.

I trust that Dr. A. F. R. Hoernle, the able and learned secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, will take the

volume in hand, and give us a full account of its contents. If the society wishes to render a real and great service to the students of Indian palæography, it will publish photo-etchings of the whole volume. Every line of the MS. is of the highest importance.

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### 3. THE NEW SANSKRIT MS. FROM MINGAI.

*Dedham, Essex, Aug. 17, 1891.*

SIR,—The “Rain-charm,” translated by Prof. Bühler (*Academy*, August 15, 1891, pp. 138, 139), is certainly Buddhistic, but appears to conform, for the most part, to the North Buddhist type. The Mantra l. 1 contains a list of words which the translator thinks are the names of various plants to be used as ingredients for an oblation; but the Buddhists did not offer sacrifices and oblations.<sup>1</sup> These terms, therefore, may be merely magical or talismanic words, such as we often find in North Buddhist sūtras (see Lotus, ch. xxvi. Kern’s Translation S.B.E., pp. 434–5), and are probably epithets of “Çiva’s female counterpart Durgâ.” In the usual invocations we find these magical terms in the vocative case; and perhaps *Dundubhî*, etc. are Prâkrit vocatives for *Dundubhî*, etc. See Megha-sūtra in J.R.A.S. Vol. XII. Pt. 2, p. 301 (1880).

*Dundubhî*, *Garjanî* (thundering), *Varshanî* (raining), *Hârinî* (? *Harinî*), are the feminines of epithets that could well be applied to Çiva as the representative of Rudra; and *Durgâ* in the Mantra may be regarded as the devî causing thunder, lightning, and rain. Compare the use of *jvalâ*, *ukkâ*, etc., as applied to the goddess *Durgâ* in the Lotus, ch. xxi. (Kern’s Translation, p. 372).

What “cucumber” is I cannot tell, as I have not the Sanskrit text before me; probably *jâlî*, which is a Prâkrit form of an original \**jvâlî*, “flame,” or *jjyotsnî*.

<sup>1</sup> In the Tantra ceremonies flesh and even ordure were thrown into the sacred fire.