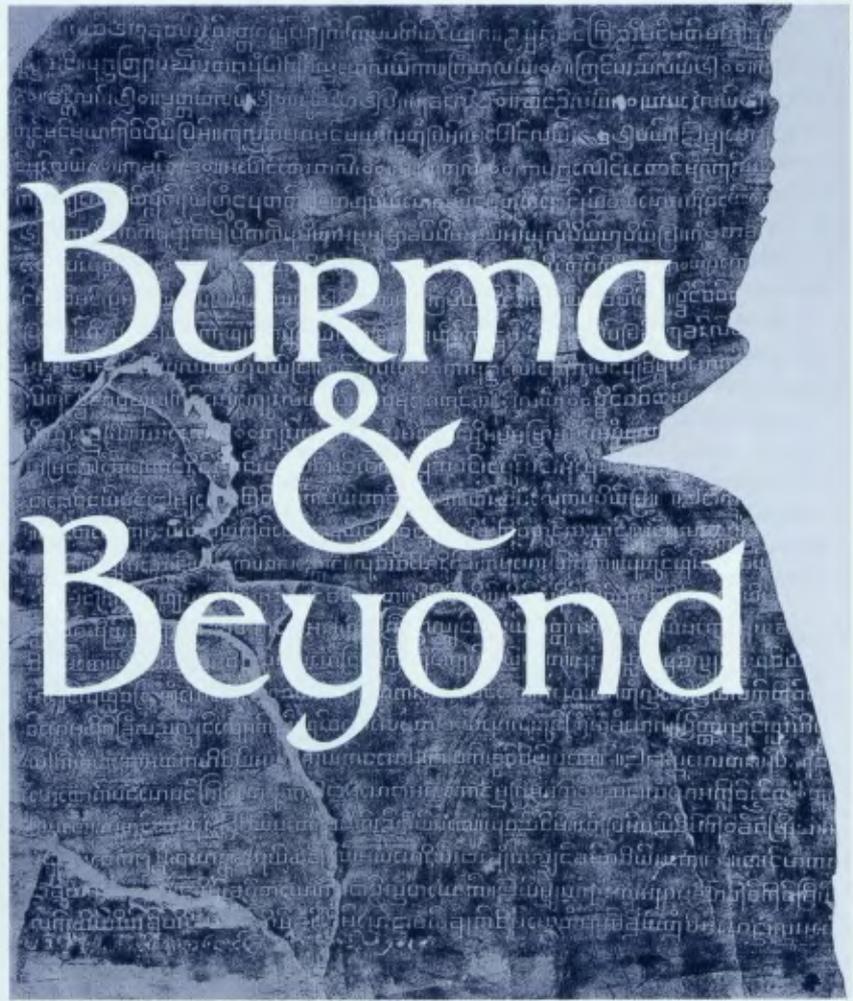


Andrew Gosling tells the story of the Luce Collection, a superb array of books, manuscripts and pictures; and of the man behind it, scholar Gordon Hannington Luce



Gordon Hannington Luce (1889–1979) is widely regarded as the foremost European scholar on Burma. His outstanding library containing books, manuscripts, maps and photographs was acquired by the National Library of Australia in 1980 as part of its effort to develop major research collections on Asia. The Luce Collection contains important source material not only about Burma but on neighbouring areas of Southeast Asia, India and China.

Luce was born in the English cathedral town of Gloucester, the twelfth child of a clergyman whose family came from Jersey in the Channel Islands. From an early age, Luce showed an intense interest in history, languages and literature. At six he was reading Homer in Greek. He also became a fine gymnast. There is a story that at the age of nine, when told at dinner that children should be seen and not heard, he performed a handstand on the arms of his chair in silent protest.

At Cambridge he read Classics and English Literature. His wide circle of friends included Rupert Brooke, Aldous Huxley, Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster, the China scholar Arthur Waley, and other notable figures of the Bloomsbury set. Keynes financed the publication of a volume of Luce's poems, with illustrations by the artist Duncan Grant.

In 1912 Luce was appointed Lecturer in English Literature at Government College in Rangoon. His friend E.M. Forster sailed with him for part of the voyage, a trip which Forster later used as the basis for his novel *A Passage to India*. In Burma, Luce soon developed a friendship with a young Pali scholar, Pe Maung Tin, who inspired him with a deep interest in Burmese culture, particularly in the art and architecture of its former capital, Pagan. Luce devoted the rest of his life to research and teaching on Burmese studies. In 1915 he married Daw Tee Tee, Pe Maung Tin's sister.

Daw Tee Tee was outstanding in her own field. After her children left

Luce was much involved with the recording of Burma's rapidly deteriorating ancient stone inscriptions. Reproduced from G.H. Luce, *Inscriptions of Burma: Portfolio II*, Plate CLXXXVI. Rangoon: University of Rangoon, 1939

(left) A Daru hunter. Photograph used by Luce to illustrate lectures. Photograph from the Luce Papers Manuscript Collection (MS 6574)

Burma for school in England, she became involved in trying to reduce child crime and deprivation in Burma. In 1928 she opened the Home for Waifs and Strays in Rangoon to shelter and aid destitute boys, many of whom were opium addicts. Her work was so appreciated that she was the first woman appointed as a magistrate in Burma. Later, in 1959, she was given the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service, open to the whole of Asia. Luce took an active role in her work, acting as joint secretary and using his gymnastic skills to train the boys.

The first of Luce's many studies on Burmese culture was published in 1916. He was a prolific author throughout his long life and wrote books and articles on a wide variety of subjects relating particularly to Burma's history and languages. The titles of a selection of his works provide some indication of the great range of his scholarship. There are innumerable journal articles, for example 'Chinese Invasions of Burma in the 18th Century', 'The Economic Life of the Early Burman', 'A Century of Progress in Burmese History and Archaeology' and 'An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Karen Languages'. *Inscriptions of Burma* is a



The Incomparable Pagoda, Mandalay, Burma
Reproduced from R.B. Graham, *Photographic Illustrations, with Description of Mandalay and Upper Burmah: Expeditionary Force, 1886-87 by a Cavalry Officer*. Birmingham: A. Pumphrey, c.1887
From the Luce Collection

(right) The Pageant of King Mindon, Plate I
Reproduced from Charles Duroiselle, *Pageant of King Mindon Leaving his Palace on a Visit to the Kyauktawgyi Buddha Image at Mandalay (1865)*
Calcutta: Government of India Central Publications Branch, 1925
From the Luce Collection

photographic record of Burma's rapidly eroding ancient stone inscriptions. His three-volume masterpiece, *Old Burma—Early Pagan*, covers the history, art and architecture of Burma and its capital Pagan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. *Phases of pre-Pagan Burma*, on the earlier history of Burma, appeared posthumously. His writings remain authoritative today and are widely cited. Indeed, in a search on the Internet for 'Pagan', the first work listed is by Luce. In addition to his own studies he was renowned for his generous encouragement and support of local scholars, writers and artists.

Luce was to remain in Burma for half a century. During the Japanese invasion in 1942, he and his wife escaped into India. Even during this perilous journey he gathered

ethnographic notes from colleagues along the route. His original pencil-written diary of this period is held in the Luce Collection. He returned to Rangoon after the war and remained until 1964 when, like other foreigners, he was forced to leave the country, a shattering experience for both Luce and his wife. The final 15 years of his life were spent at 'Uplands', a farm in Jersey which belonged to Gordon's cousin. The high esteem in which he was held by Burmese and Western scholars is reflected in the publication of the two-volume work *Essays to G.H. Luce by his Colleagues and Friends in Honour of his Seventy-fifth Birthday*, which appeared in 1966.

after he had finally left the country, he wrote to the National Library of Australia about its interest in his collection, explaining that 'for nearly a year after my departure from Burma, the Burma Government detained it, but the British Embassy in Rangoon finally succeeded in securing its release, and in returning it to me, in good condition, in Jersey ... I am still hard at work, and so long as my health and eyesight last, it will be in constant use'.

Pamela Gutman, an Australian specialist on Burma, made extensive use of Luce's library in Jersey for her doctoral work. She dedicated her thesis to Luce as her teacher and friend. She recalls how the collection was housed



The history of Luce's library and how it finally came to the National Library of Australia is an eventful one. His earlier collection was lost during the Second World War. As he described in a letter to his sister, dated 25 March 1942, when the Japanese invaded Burma, 'all my library, card indexes of 100 languages of Burma (nearly half of them never recorded before) and thousands of pages of transcriptions from Chinese—25 years of research work in fact—had to be left in Rangoon University Library'. During the Japanese occupation the collection was looted, and bomb damage to the roof allowed monsoon rain to ruin what remained.

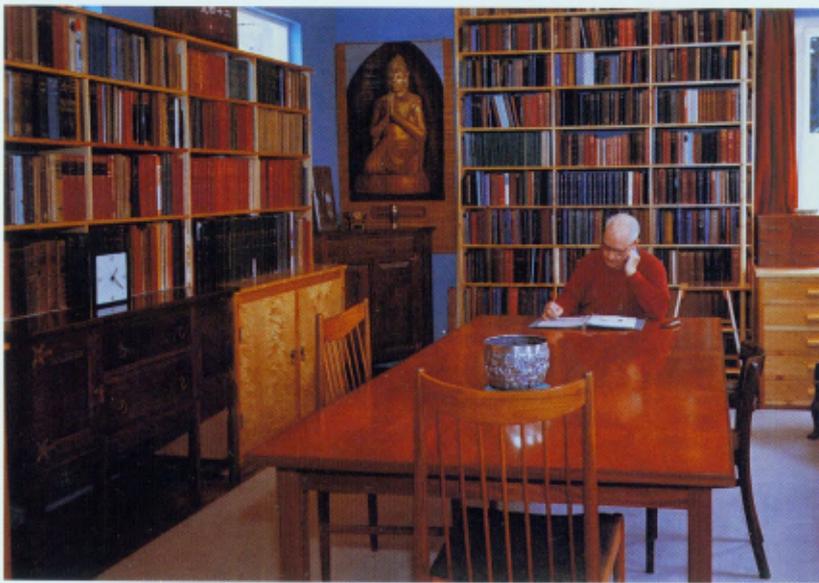
In the years following his return to Burma in 1946, he painstakingly rebuilt his collection. In June 1965,

in what Luce referred to as his 'booksty', a converted pigsty. During the summer that she and other scholars spent with the Luces, each afternoon there would be a seminar on an aspect of Old Burma followed by afternoon tea served by Daw Tee Tee. Luce would often visit the medieval castles of Jersey, dating from around the same time as Pagan. He said that by half closing his eyes on a warm day he could imagine himself back in Burma.

Luce's daughter, Sandra Harding, remembers that 'in the Library, he continued to work on his later publications, and on his precious Word Lists, and, in my opinion, continued to be the inspired and inspiring teacher/lecturer right up to his death. How he would have loved to have done this in Burma.'

The National Library's interest in the Luce Collection dates back many years. As early as 1963, when National Librarian Sir Harold White visited him in Rangoon, Luce expressed the wish that the library should eventually come to Canberra. After Luce's death in 1979, a number of libraries sought to purchase all or part of the collection. Through its Liaison Librarian based in England, the National Library contacted the Luce family and was able to acquire the entire collection.

Graeme Powell, now in charge of the Library's Manuscript Collection, but at that time on a posting in London, flew to Jersey for the day to supervise the dispatch of the material. He remembers



Gordon Hannington Luce (1889–1979) in his library at 'Uplands', St Lawrence, Jersey
 Photograph courtesy of Mrs Sandra Harding
 From the Pictorial Collection

the packing as an exhausting and frustrating experience. A local transport firm had been engaged to ship the collection from the island. A few packers arrived at 'Uplands' with tea chests, but no lids or packing paper. Eventually more packers were sent with supplies of lids and paper. Despite threatening to leave for a football match they finished their task by early evening.

Gutman had strongly supported the Library's acquisition of the Luce Collection because of its value to present and future researchers in Burmese and Southeast Asian studies. She believed its most valuable sections

were the unpublished research notes, working papers, drafts, correspondence over half a century with leading scholars, the annotated versions of Luce's own publications, and photographs of inscriptions, art and architecture of ancient Burma. Among the books were many rare and valuable editions, including an outstanding collection of dictionaries of local languages.

As indicated by Gutman, the Luce manuscripts cover a wide variety of materials. They are stored at the Library in 32 boxes and 22 folios. A broad listing is available. Ten boxes contain general correspondence, mainly to and from scholars, family

and friends. The 1500 or more letters show his wide interests ranging from the history of music to translating the Bible into Asian languages. His personal letters reflect a poet's love of language, his enthusiasm for life and sense of humour. Writing to his sister after the Japanese invasion in 1942, he described how during their escape to India his wife Tee Tee was 'carried in a deckchair by stark naked Nagas'. In contrast, a letter written later the same year to the South African Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts, is a strong and eloquent protest against the discrimination which prevented him from landing at Durban with his Burmese wife at a time when the Allies were fighting against Nazi intolerance.

Many of the manuscript boxes contain notes, catalogues, drafts and correspondence relating to

Luce's books and articles. The collection includes Luce's extensive correspondence with other eminent Southeast Asia scholars including D.G.E. Hall, A.B. Griswold and Eugenie Henderson. There are also several boxes of comparative language word lists and folios of language sheets and charts covering the numerous Asian languages on which he carried out research. These include Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Thai, Mon, Burmese and other languages of Burma.

There are over 2000 books in the Luce Collection. While the main focus is Burma, the collection is rich in materials on the history, languages and cultures of Burma's neighbours in Southeast, South and East Asia. There are a number of rare and valuable first editions, particularly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The books are housed together as a formed collection in the Library's Asian Collections. All titles have been catalogued onto the National Bibliographic Database, and a printed list is also available. There is a separate listing of the 100 books in Burmese from the Luce Collection.

The Luce Collection constitutes one of the National Library of Australia's major strengths in its priority collecting area of Asia and the Pacific. It complements other substantial Southeast Asian holdings, such as the Cœdès Collection on Indochina (described in the January 1996 issue of *National Library of Australia News*), and the Otley Beyer Collection of material on the Philippines. As one of the world's most outstanding resources on Burma, the Luce Collection continues to attract scholars from Australia and overseas to carry out research at the National Library of Australia.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs Sandra Harding and Mr John Luce, the daughter and son of Professor Gordon and Daw Tee Tee Luce, and to Dr Pamela Gutman, for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

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