

Case Studies of four libraries in Nepal

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Abstract:

Indeed Manuscripts are ancient, unique, valuable, rare documents preserved by our ancestors and that plays a significant role of the documentary heritage of the people in the country and it should not be lost. Those documents are the recorded history, culture and identity of a nation. Realizing its value and significant it has become the concern of national and international communities for storage, preservation, digitization, and access through creating standard metadata. Large number of heritage related documents are available in South East Asia region including Nepal.

The manuscript contains vast amount of knowledge on subjects like Buddhism tradition and belief, customary laws, tradition medicines, astrology, history folktales, worship of gods and goddesses which are written in Sanskrit, old Newari language, Pali and so on.

In the case of Nepal, the country possesses century old vast quantities of valuable manuscripts mostly written in gold and silver letters in varied language like Sanskrit, Hindi, Awadhi, which attract scholars from all over the world. Libraries, archives, museum, religious people have stored and preserved those oldest and rarest manuscripts in their own way.

Regarding digitization aspect too those institutions and libraries are adopting different standards particularly with respect to metadata of the materials. This is the same mostly all over south and South-East Asia including Nepal. However, what is more important to do is to develop standard method for metadata production before preserving and digitization with an aim to bring uniformity in data management and accessibility of data of manuscripts all over the world.

Keywords: Manuscript; Palm Leaf Manuscript; Storage; Preservation; Digitization; Metadata ; Access; Documentary heritage; South-East Asia; Nepal

The four libraries in Nepal where the collection of manuscripts that have preserved, digitized and managed the metadata are Asa Archives, Nepal National Archives, Tribhuvan University Central Library(TUCL) and Kaiser Library.

Asa Archives



Asa Archives is a small but important archive of Nepal. It is a public library of Nepalese manuscripts named after late Asa Man Singh Kansakar. Most of the manuscripts in this archive were personal collection of Kansakar. The donations of other valuable manuscripts and palm leaf documents by well-wishers and friends were added to this collection. The Archives was inaugurated by the Executive Director of the Toyota Foundation, Japan in 1987 A.D. Since then it was made accessible for the public.

Collections: There are many valuable collections of palm leaf, loose leaf, pothi and folded manuscripts. There are more than 7000 manuscripts belonging to various sects and genres in Nepal. Most of them are based on ritual texts, medical texts, manuals of magic and necromancy, astrology/astronomy, Vedic, Puranic, architectural texts as well as tantric text of Shaiva, Buddha, and Vajrayana sects. Those manuscripts are written in Sanskrit, Newari, Maithili, and Nepali language using plain black ink, silver and golden letters. 1100 rolled palm leaf land grant documents are rare documents of the Archive.

Preservation: All those manuscripts are preserved in a plain wooden box of different sizes brought from Diet Library of Japan.

Digitization: In collaboration with conservator Naoko Takagi's team from PCAU (Paper Conservation Asia Unlimited) has completed digitization and computerization of all 7025 palm leaf documents. Those digitized manuscript records are stored in CD/DVD and in a computer.

Catalogue

DPN 5130

Title : SADDARMA PUNDARIKA

Run. No.2914

Subject :SUTRA

Religion : Hindu/Bauddha

Language : Skt/New/Nep

Size in cms.54.0 x 5.0

Folios 5 Lines (in a page) 6

Compl/incomplete

Chapt/ act/

Author/translator

Subscribe / donor

Date :NS/ SS /KS

Ruler / place

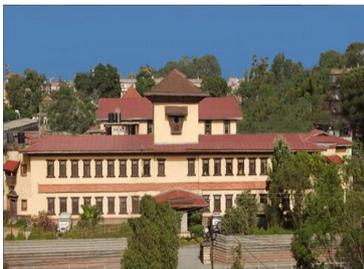
Script: New. /Dev./ Bhuj./Ran./ illus. ,

Material: palmleaf / paper / thyasaphu /

Condition: fine / damaged by worms, rats water/

Beginning, colophon, post-colophon

National Archives



National Archives was established in 1967 under the then Ministry of Education and Culture. History of Nepal reveals that our predecessor had been set up with the objective of managing and preserving the manuscripts and historical documents of Bir Library. The printed reading materials were sent to National Library and Manuscripts was sent to National Archives of Nepal. Thus, the Archive is the principal institution in Nepal for collecting, managing, protecting and preserving the nation's wealth of archival and other documents having national importance of any form. For the accessibility of the manuscripts and historical document, the Microfilm Section is digitizing those archival documents.

Archive contains approximately 30,000 manuscripts dating from 9th century written in traditional Nepali paper, Palm leaf, birch- bark and different kinds of color coated Nepali paper. A number of

manuscripts are written in gold and silver ink. The texts in the collection are in different languages and scripts, particularly Nepali, Sanskrit, Newari, Tibetan, Maithali, Hindi and Avadhi. The subject matter are philosophy, tantrism, religious doctrine, astrology, auyrevadh, lalmohar (official documents brought from Kumari Chowk, Guthisanthan, Treaties, Historical documents, Heretige documents, Tibetan manuscripts.

Rare documents:

It is believed that the following three preserved folios written in Lichchhavi scripts (Gupta) are the oldest Nepalese manuscripts:

- 1) **Palm-leaf manuscripts of the Hindu Sanda Puran, Copied 810 A.D.**
- 2) **Sadhharma- Pundaraka, 8th century Palm leaf Buddhist manuscripts.**
- 3) **Nyayabikasini (Manavadharmanyayahastra) - King Jasthiti Malla legal court written 13 A.D.**

National Archives contains various other types of historical documents such as Royal decree, orders issued by government and authorized official, treatises, historical letters (Shyaha Mohars, Lal Mohars, Khadga Nisas, Sandhipatras, Ekchhapatras, Sawals, Chithhipatras). In addition to that, there are number of Thyasaphus (Concertina-type paper) documents from medieval period, written in one or another Newari scripts. It also houses a vast and varied collection of about 8,000 rare Tibetan manuscripts from 11th to 12th centuries.

Preservation: The bacteria site, fungi site, insect site, Rhodedenti site, dust cleaning by vacuum cleaner like repellent, Naphthalene, are used for preservation of the manuscripts. The old documents after cleaning and binding are kept inside lignin box brought from foreign countries. For the safety of manuscripts following activities are being carried out: Installation of Fire Extinguisher, CC TV camera, Temperature and humidity control and air conditioning. For dust protection manuscripts are wrapped with cloth of different colors. All manuscripts are kept in open steel racks.

Conservation: The National Conservation has a conservation laboratory where fumigation, repair and binding of manuscripts, and other archival documents are carried out using traditional methods. Back supports in documents are also used.

Digitization: The microfilm section of the Archives has started recently digitizing the manuscripts on the basis of phase.

Catalogue

**His Majesty' Government
Ministry of Youth sports and Culture
Department of Archeology
NATIONAL ARCHIVES
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Subject :	Place of Deposit:	Private:	Ms-Doc
TITLE		RUNNING NO.	
AUTHOR		Reel No.	
No. of leaves:	Incompl.	Size in cm:	
Date of filming	Script:- Nagari - Newari - T betan - Maithili		
Medium: paper - palm-leaf, damaged by moths - rats - breakings - Others:			
Paper: Nepali - Indian - mill-made , Thyasaphu - bond			
Date: NS	VS	Shaka	LS
		Colour:	Miniature



Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL)

Tribhuvan University Central Library is the largest academic library in Nepal. It was established in 1959 A.D. in Tripureshwar, Kathmandu along with the Tribhuvan University. This Library holds many special and rare collections like Nepal collection, Singh collection, Archive collection and Manuscript collection. The earthquake of 2015 had partially damaged the building including the room where Manuscripts collection had been stored and after earthquake, the collection was shifted to a safe place in the ground floor. He was trained by the group of Naoko Takagi from PCAU(Paper Conservation Asia Unlimited).

Collection:The library holds 550 manuscripts. The subject matter of the manuscripts are Traditional medicines, Buddhism, Hinduism, Protective deities, History of Nepal written Sanskrit, Newari, Maithili. All of them are rare manuscripts.

Rare manuscripts with abstract:

1. **Astahasrika Prajnaparmita:** It is the sutra based on the perfection of wisdom in 8000 slokas based on the highest value of Buddhist community. The essence of the Prajanaparmita is that all the living or non-living are struttred on the basis of cause and condition, dependent and unreal. Independently they do not exist, dependently they exist as mere appearances. Without the perfect realization of prajnanaparmita Budhhahood is not possible, so in Budhha monasteries this sutra is worshipped, receded and practiced by the members of the monasteries.
2. **Karandavyuha:** It is one of the several Mahayana sutras of Nepalese Buddhism. The Sutra is mentioned in Nepalese chronology, states as : KIng Brisha Deva, grandfather of king Mandeva went to visit the large chaitya, he then succumbed to death there. Yamadutta (servant of King Yamraj) took him to Yamlok, but when Yamraj saw him , chided him for having brought such a virtuous man to hell. Therefore, he was restored to life again. He then compared what he had seen in hell with what was written about it in the Karandavyuha. The text makes clear that it is written during Lichchhavi period.
3. **Pancaraksasctetra:** It is a collection of five sutras and are the words of the Buddha. The sutras is believed to have enormous power which may be used to cope with problems of various nature .Pancharaksha, the five protective deities are worshipped to bring various benefits such as success, freedom from all kinds of danger, birth of a son, easy child birth, cure serious illness , escape misfortune, protection from disasters, effectiveness of medicines and to get enlightenment. It is one of the popular sutras in Newar community.

Those three rare manuscripts are available in three places of Kathmandu valley (Swayambhunath temple, Bhagwan Bahal and Tribhuvan University Central Library). One manuscript written in gold ink is preserved.

Preservation:All manuscripts are preserved in steel racks. Manuscripts are wrapped in the white clean clothes. Conservator Naoko Takaji's team from PCAU(Paper Conservator Asia Unlimited) had helped the library in cleaning , drying few manuscripts by staying a week in the library. They were here in Nepal to continue the digitization manuscripts program in Asa Archives.

They also trained the library staffs for cleaning manuscripts, and other preservation and conservation activities.

Digitization: Manuscripts are not yet digitized due to lack of fund to process and to purchase the necessary equipments for digitization. Library is looking for cooperation to begin this activity to make it possible to access the information of the manuscripts to the readers of national and international community.

	Database of the manuscript
Name of the manuscript	Astasahasrika Prajnāparmita
Subject:	Mahayan Buddhist Sutra
Folio:	242
Size:	40.3 x 9.6 cm
Script:	Ranjana and Pracalit
Date :	N.S. 816
Deposit place:	Tribhuvan University Central Library
Paper :	Harital coated Nepali loose paper
Language :	Sanskrit
T.U.S.N:	354

The database of the manuscript with abstract has been prepared by the manuscript expert from the Department of Buddhist Studies of Tribhuvan University on request of the library.

Kaiser Library



Kaiser library was a private library of Kaiser Shumsher. In 1908 he had visited Great Britain with his father, he collected books, antiques, photographs, animal trophies etc. So Kaiser Library is not only a library but also a small museum. This library remained private for many years. After the demise of Kaiser Shumsher his family donated his collection, 32 ropanies of land, classical historical garden (Garden of dreams) and a small museum of animal trophies to the Government of Nepal in 1968 at a special ceremony.

Collections: Kaiser Library has a collection of more than 600 valuable manuscripts including palm leaf. Those are wrapped in red Nepali cloth and are kept in metal cupboard. Many of them are written in Sanskrit, Newari, Maithili, Bengali, Devanagari, and Tibetan scripts. The subject matter of the manuscripts are Buddhism, Tantrism, Hinduism, Medicine, Astrology

The collection of the library includes many rare manuscripts. Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) had digitized all those manuscript and had maintained catalogues of the digitized manuscripts.

Rare manuscripts

1. Susrutāsāmhita (Sahottartāntra): The 1134 years old palm leaf manuscript, is considered as oldest document in the field of Ayurveda medicine, a systematic and formal tradition of healing, popular in South Asia (Tibet, Central Asia, China, South-East Asia and the Middle East). The manuscript discusses various kinds of diseases related to heart, skin, gynecology, and surgery.
2. Nisvasattatvasāmhita: It is deposited at the National Archives and is said to be the earliest surviving tantric manuscript. This Tantrism had impact on many major Asian religions. The Western World has been influenced by tantras.

These two rare manuscripts of Nepal has now been added in **the UNESCO' Prestigious Memory of the World Register**. The memory of the world Register now includes a total of 299 document collection from the five continents.

Digitization: Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project had digitized all the manuscripts. They had maintained the record of those manuscripts in a Register as follows:

Catalogue	
KL.Acc. No.: 699	KLD No.: 0210
Corresponds to NGMPP Ree No.: c80/7	
Short Title: Susrutasamhita(Sahottaratantra)	
Subject: Ayurveda	
No. of leaves : 141	Size in cm: 53.5x 4.4
Date of photographing : 26th July 2011	Script: Kutila(Lichhavi)
Material : palm leaf with wooden cover	State : damaged
Remarks: 878 AD.(1134 years old)	

Conclusion:

This is in brief the collection, preservation, digitization and developed metadata of two important libraries and two archives existing in Kathmandu valley .Those libraries and archives possess large collection of manuscripts and collected manuscripts are properly stored, preserved and managed. In total There are 38,175 manuscripts are there in those libraries and archives. All those collections are in close access. Developed metadata by them are not similar. Uniformity in database management and accessibility of data of manuscripts is essential to all over the world. Indeed, many other manuscripts are scattered all over Nepal in the monasteries, temples, and old people's house and there is no record of those manuscripts. Nepal is rich in manuscript collection.

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