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# MYANMAR PARABAIKS

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Myanmar *parabaik* is an old style book in Myanmar. There are many primary source materials in the form of *parabaiks*. These sources are like a treasure-trove for historians. The *parabaik* tell of the land and its effects on the urban society. Many *parabaiks* shed light on the life of previous generations. Some economic activities are reflected in these *parabaiks* as well. *Thet-kayits* (loans and mortgage deeds) can also take the form of *parabaiks*.

The *thet-kayits* are the most reliable and useful documents for the study of Myanmar social and economic life. They throw light upon several dimensions of the Kon-baung (Pre-colonial) society. Generally speaking, all *thet-kayits* are similar although they were made in different parts of Myanmar. They can be classified into seven types: chronologies, names and address of the involved parties, reasons for seeking loans,



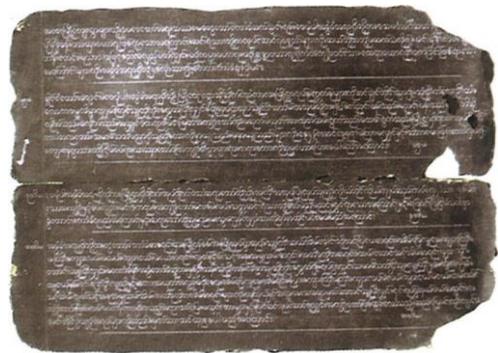
White folded book

detailed property descriptions (land, slaves, buildings, jewelry, orchards, etc.) pledged or sold, loans or prices in silver with the description of its quality, detailed terms of agreement, and witnesses including assayer,

weigher, draftsman, and scribe.

The *thet-kayits* had no signatures of the contracting parties. To date, there have been no instances reflecting fraud or related legal cases. Through the *thet-kayits* that reveal the different social status groups and the use of different qualities of lump silver currencies, readers might receive a broader perspective of the socio-economic patterns of the period under study.

Unlike printed books, the cited *parabaiks* rarely bear titles. However, they bear all sorts of knowledge. Thus, the



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*parabaiks* serve as precious and reliable sources. They become records of administration when used by royal officials. They provide us with some historical facts on social relationships, economic activity and administrative and religious matters. Some administrative records-such as royal commands, royal court instructions, reports from local officials to the central government, lawsuits and court decisions, and tax returns or census rolls of ordinary people and crown officials, are also included in them. •