

SOAS Bulletin of

# Burma Research

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TIGER ON THE SHWEDAGON!

REVIEWS

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### A TIGRESS ON THE SHWEDAGON: A RESEARCH NOTE

Donald Stadtner brought the following piece of history regarding the Shwedagon to our attention and sent a photograph of glasswork that recorded the event, together with the text below from Walter del Mar, *The Romantic East: Burma, Assam, & Kashmir* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906, 27-28). We reproduce it further below along with a detail of the glass painting, from a private collection in Yangon. The scene depicts the incident quite literally, with the soldier climbing "to the roof of one of the smaller shrines....." Although del Mar refers to the animal as a tiger, it was in actuality a tigress and the events discussed below occurred on 3 March 1903, the tigress having moved to the vicinity of the Shwedagon from Gyophu Lake.<sup>1</sup>



“There is [a] story ... in relation to a tiger, which in some unexplained manner found its way into Rangoon, and sought refuge on one of the terraces of the base of the Shwe Dagon pagoda. Down rushed the monks and temple attendants in a panic to the fort below the pagoda and implored the soldiers to come up and kill the ferocious beast and so save them from a terrible death. After much difficulty and some danger the tiger was traced to its hiding place, and in order to get at him a soldier had to climb to the roof of one of the smaller shrines from which he killed the animal. Next day there was a great commotion. The very pongyis who had begged the soldiers to kill the tiger denounced them as wicked slayers of the temple’s nat or good spirit, and not only hung the skin over the spot where it was shot, but ultimately placed on the pagoda platform a plaster image of the tiger to be worshipped by the faithful and shown to the curious.”

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<sup>1</sup> The Wildlife Conservation Society, “Historical Records of the Tiger in Myanmar Pre-1999,” Citing Colonel Hla Aung, *Large Animals of Cat Family*.