

REVISITING GREATER INDIA: ARCHAEOLOGY IN MYANMAR (BURMA) IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Madhuparna Roychowdhury

The cultural history of ancient South-east Asia, including that of Myanmar or Burma, has been a contested terrain between the exponents of Indianization and the protagonists of local genius in the fields of sculptural art, architecture and literature. Epigraphic and literary evidence by way of Sanskrit and Pali inscriptions and texts conveyed the impression of a deep impact of Indian Hindu-Buddhist culture in South-east Asia. The civilizational links that were forged between India and what was often imagined as ‘Further’ or ‘Greater India’ had at times been explained in terms of a kind of political hegemony and cultural conquest, while there are other views that insisted on different forms of local adaptation of influences flowing from India, particularly by the political elites who used the Brahmin priests and their ideas for purposes of political legitimisation. Indeed, the Hindu colonization theory along with the notion of a civilizing mission came to be disputed on the legitimate ground that instead of blindly emulating Indian culture, the local population adopted features of what came from India through the maritime connection. If the discussion on Greater India by Indian historians was linked with a nationalist envisioning of a glorious past, when Indians freely cruised along the high seas to reach the distant shores, with their merchandise or the armies of soldiers, artisans and Brahmin priests, the story of local adaptation gained prominence once the South-east Asian nations became independent and tried to discover the cultural foundations of their national identities.¹ In 1942, in an essay in the celebrated *Journal of the Greater India Society*, U. N. Ghosal, the well-known Calcutta historian of ancient Indian social history, recounted the wide extent of research on Indian influence in South-east Asia and Central Asia. Ghosal made use of the archaeological reports to make out a case for Indian influence in the development of Burmese language and religion. It appears from his account that the intellectual environment in colonial Burma, in view of the work of Burma Research Society, Archaeological Survey of India and French scholars like General L.de. Beylei and Charles Duroiselle, was particularly attuned to the Indian influence argument.² The essays published in the *Journal of the Greater India Society* in Calcutta, however, spoke in many voices, as historians associated with the Greater India movement, were not necessarily impervious to the idea of adaptation by local cultures of ideas travelling from India. Rabindra Nath Tagore, who was the patron of the Society, was primarily interested in the civilizational links between India and South-east Asia. Among professional historians, Niharranjan Ray, who was closely associated with the Greater India Society, in a

major 1932 monograph on 'Brahmanical Gods in Burma', wrote about the presence of a school of sculptural art in Burma.³

Historical evidence on which these competing theories are based, hinges on the extensive reportage on archaeological excavations by the officials of the Archaeological Survey of India. Burma being a part of the British Empire, was virtually treated as an Indian province by British rulers till 1935, when the country was given administrative autonomy. For a long stretch of time, the Burma circle of the ASI was managed by a French man, who might have imported into Burma the idea that the French scholars had suggested for Indo-China under the influence of Sylvain Levi's notion of 'extended India'. Duroiselle had received his training in the Hanoi based Ecole française d' Extrême-Orient (the French School of the West) of which Sylvain Levi was one of the co-founders. Levi's ideas, of course, were devoid of the kind of nationalistic aggressive spirit that later informed some of the writings of Indian historians and Duroiselle, quite expectedly, remained an exponent of the Indianization argument in a softer version. His predecessor in the office of the chief of the Burmese Archaeological Survey since its foundation in 1899, Taw Sein Ko, however was a local scholar of Chinese origin, who was less entranced by this vision. Primarily an indigenous scholar, Taw Sein Ko was born of Chinese parents and was educated in the English College of Rangoon, before he went to London to qualify for the bar, which he did successfully after which he received an appointment in the Civil Service. Taw Sein Ko qualified the Indian influence argument by drawing attention to other competing kinds of cultural influences derived from China and Sri Lanka in shaping Burmese culture and the dialogues among such men like Duroiselle and Taw Sein Ko, on cultural links between India and Burma, which one encounters in the reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, remained the early formative influence for research on ancient and medieval Burma.⁴

The Burmese archaeology from the beginning was concerned with epigraphy, partly because of an abiding preoccupation with the origin of Burmese language. Since the nucleus of the archaeological department was the epigraphic office, established in 1902, conservation-archaeology had less priority till the 1920s and 1930s. While, in the colonial period, Pagan and Sri Kshetra commanded almost exclusive attention, post-independence archaeology in Burma generated a more elaborated knowledge about a few other sites like Beitkhano and Halin.⁵ Even though in Burmese tradition the existence of different Piyu political centres, from Halin in the north to the Beitkhano in the south is traced from the second century, concrete archaeological evidence by way of military fortification, religious architecture and sculptures, assigns them to the sixth century. Already in the early twentieth century Sri Kshetra was extensively explored while the earliest rock-cut temples excavated by colonial archaeologists at Powun-Daung in 1914, among other things, established the antiquity of Halin as a centre of Pyu culture. Halin, also known as Halingyi or Hamsavati, is also associated in Burmese Buddhist tradition with the name of a legendary Buddhist ruler from India, Mahasammatta. Since the early centuries of the



Plate 9.1a: Ananda Temple, Pagan/Modern Bagan.



Plate 9.1b: Ananda Temple ---Pagan/Modern Bagan.



Plate 9.2: Sopada Pagoda, Pagan /Modern Bagan.



Plate 9.3a: Vishnu Temple, Pagan /Modern Bagan.

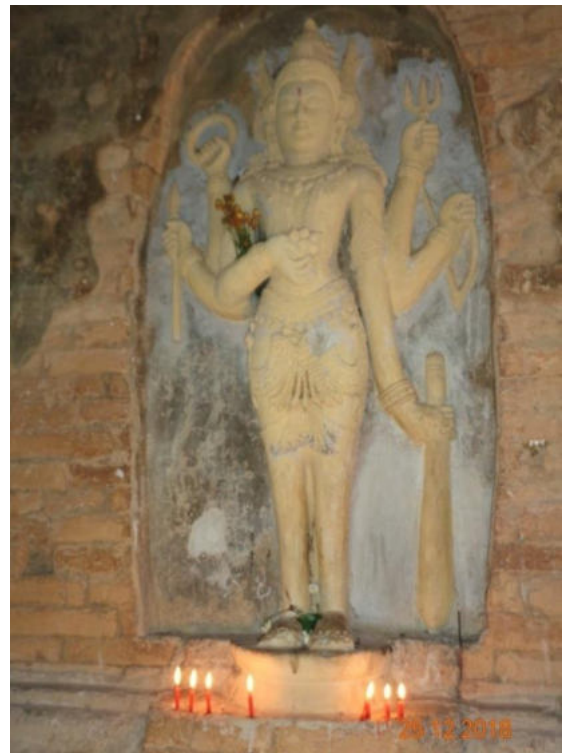


Plate 9.3b: Vishnu Temple Interior: Pagan/ Modern Bagan.



Plate 9.4: Phaya Thon Zu Phaya: 13th century A.D, Pagan/ Modern Bagan.



Plate 9.5: Nandamannya Temple, Pagan/ Modern Bagan.

Christian era, people in this settlement apparently fostered the Hindu Buddhist culture that the Pyus represented. Pyus excavated the earliest of these caves and followed Indian models. The report mentions particularly the Barabar caves to the north of Gaya, indicating that there was a good deal of intercourse between the central and eastern India on one hand and the Burma on the other through the overland trade routes. One of the early caves is called Nat-taung or spirit cave from a stone sculpture representing the female guardian spirit of this hill who is riding side-ways on an animal, supposed to be a tiger. The figures of the deities in the caves have striking resemblance with medieval Indian images although some of the Buddha images particularly in the later caves had Mongolian features.⁶ Beikthano, a fortified settlement of the sixth century, that represented Pyu culture, was known in Burmese chronicles as Vishnupura, which along with Sri Kshetra conjure up the presence of Vaishnavism in the region, confirmed also by the discovery of several Hindu sculptures. In addition, the archaeological legacy of *Mahayana* Buddhism exists in the numerous religious monuments, votive tablets, plaques, *Jataka* murals and temples.⁷

Pagan, of course, because of the sheer expanse of the archaeological zone, commands greater attention. Even now after so many devastations by earthquakes, Pagan boasts of more than four thousand monuments, including great temples like the Ananda Phaya (**Plate 9.1a - 9.1b**). The story of Pagan had begun with clusters of villages, which in course of time developed into a number of distinct settlements, each of which possesses significant religious buildings. The division of Pagan's archaeological map also corresponds to some extent to different palace areas, established by the kings of Pagan from early historical times.⁸ Such a large-scale building activity at Pagan between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, usually looked upon as a period when Pagan imperialism reached a high point of expansion and consolidation, points towards the large amount of resources that Pagan monarchy possessed for patronising the construction of these temples. It seems that Pagan's location on the overland trading route between eastern and north-eastern India and South China, which passed through the Arakan corridor and moved upwards towards Yunan, touching Pagan and Nan Chao, must have produced considerable commercial wealth, both for the state and the trading population.⁹ The Pagan rulers, since the time of Anwartha (the Sanskrit name being Aniruddha) and his successor Kyanzittha (Jnanasiddha in Sanskrit), also consolidated their control over maritime trading points like Pegu and Thaton besides the Arakan corridor, along with the rich agricultural regions in the extended northern and southern frontiers of the kingdom. The rice fields of Kyaukse in the north-east and Minbu in the south-west turned Pagan, also known as Pukom with the classical name of Arimaddanapura, into a rich city despite its location on an arid plain.

II

In this larger background, we try to introduce the reports, especially of the early periods, when the terms of this discourse were defined by the Survey's reportage. Systematic information about Burma came from 1902 onwards, roughly the time when Sir John Marshall, with Curzon's

inspiration, gave a new thrust to the activities of the Archaeological Survey of India. The report of 1902 regrets the fact that some of the richest temple sites in the British Empire, especially Pagan, had hitherto been neglected. But it didn't take much time for Taw Sein Ko to take the initiative in clearing the debris and the jungles around these structures, make them accessible and adopt an effective strategy of documentation and conservation. In the Report of 1905 Taw-Sein-Ko tries to qualify the Indianization thesis by drawing attention to an equally important Chinese and Ceylonese influence in the temple architecture of Pagan.¹⁰

In 1904 with a more elaborate exploration in Pagan, Taw started studying more closely the ancient monuments and noted his views on the architecture and religion in early medieval Burma. A couple of small pagodas at Pagan persuaded Taw to trace the origin of Burmese Buddhism in Ceylonese and Chinese influence as well, mildly raising questions about the theory of Indianization as the basis of Buddhism in Burma. In a small pagoda, situated at Kyinlo, a deserted village about eight miles to the south-east of Nyaung-u which is presently the site of the airport at Pagan and in ancient times formed one of the major clusters of the ancient city. Taw discovered a stone image of Buddha which presented the impression of a distinctively Burmese style in which 'the body is short and squat and the features are not particularly pre-possessing'. Taw's main interest was in the technical and aesthetic features of the Burmese tradition of sculptural art, contrasting the Burmese images with what he described as the Aryan type.¹¹ In a long essay on the stone sculptures in the Ananda temple at Pagan, published in the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Charles Duroiselle emphatically stated that the artists and sculptors who were employed by the Pagan rulers were mostly Indians, familiar with the conventions of medieval Indian iconography. Local artists, on the other hand, were lacking in originality and merely followed the conventions that were developed in India, particularly in eastern India during the Pala-Sena period. The only Burmese element that Duroiselle found in the Ananda temple came from the representation of buildings in the background of the sculptures.¹²

There was however a strong dissenting argument. In an essay in the report of 1906-07 on 'Some Conservation Works in Burma', Taw Sein Ko had gone into greater length about the non-Indian influence in the religious and ceremonial architecture at Pagan, whose prototypes may be looked for also in China, Tibet and Ceylon. While talking about the Seinnyet and Sapada pagodas at Pagan, he writes that 'situated half-way between the villages of Myinpagan and Thiypyitsaya, which were at one time centres of Talaing (Mon) and Indian influence, the Seinnyet pagoda, a cylindrical structure of the eleventh century, represents a distinct stage in the development of Buddhist religious architecture in Burma', reflecting amalgamation of varied influences, especially from Ceylon. Unlike most earlier temples, which had five receding terraces, the Seinnyet pagoda rests on a triple square basement which symbolises the abode of the four Maharaja, the guardian kings of the four quarters, according to Chinese symbolism. The upper half of the dome is decorated with a band of lotus petals and is surmounted by a foliated

capital, which takes the place of a “dhatugabbha” or a relic chamber in a Ceylonese pagoda. The Sapada pagoda (**Plate 9.2**) was built on the model of a Ceylonese monument, sponsored by a monk who received his ordination in Ceylon and founded a sect at Pagan during the late twelfth century. For Taw this pagoda ‘is a landmark in the history of Burmese Buddhism as it commemorates the religious intercourse between Burma and Ceylon’. The thirteenth century Mingalazedi temple at Pagan was projected as the zenith of Burmese religious architecture that began to flourish in Pagan under the patronage of the Pagan rulers, before the Pagan kingdom was devastated by the invasion of the Mongols at the close of the thirteenth century.¹³

While Taw’s search for authentic Burmese architecture yielded a few useful results in Pagan, his views on the origin of Buddhism in Burma could be disputed on the basis of epigraphic and architectural evidence that carried the markers of a stronger and earlier Indian presence. Before long, from around 1907-08, Taw had to come to terms with new archaeological evidence in the older historical site of Sri Kshetra in central Burma.¹⁴ The early excavations at Sri Kshetra was funded by the French in which Taw Sein Ko collaborated with de. Beylei in unearthing one of the most ancient urban settlements of Burma. Sri Kshetra had a legendary history and according to Buddhist chronicles, the city was founded by Duttabaung a century after the *nirvana* of Buddha. Leaving this legendary history aside, the archaeological legacy of this Pyu city state, which along with a few other centres of Piyu culture like Beitkhano and Halin in central and northern Burma represented a stage in the evolution of Burmese history, are dated between the 6th and the 9th centuries, much before the rise of the Pagan kingdom. These smaller political entities were later overshadowed by the larger territorial monarchy of Pagan, representing a more advanced stage of state formation, bordering on an imperialism that sought to control northern and southern Myanmar from a more powerful political centre in central Myanmar.¹⁵

Hmawza or Yathemyo, meaning the city of the Rishi, which had been identified as Sri Kshetra of the Burmese chronicles, is situated 5 miles to the east of the modern city of Prome, which finds its earliest mention in a Portuguese travel account. Literary evidence that traced the history of this settlement from the early Christian era informs us that at the beginning of the second century the city was abandoned, leaving behind archaeological ruins which point towards the existence of a fairly large city which was possibly the seat of a local kingdom. Chinese sources of later times including the travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang and I-Tsing mention the city, which also finds a place in the section on southern Barbarians in the annals of Chinese Tang dynasty. Also known as Brahmadesa in ancient Indian literary sources, its ancient connection with India was demonstrated by a couple of gold scroll inscriptions written in the eastern Chalukya scripts. Other archaeological finds include votive terracotta tablets, carrying the usual Buddhist legend of *ye dhamma hetupabhava* and stone sculptures. One of the sculptured stones found at Zegu pagoda (east) persuaded John Marshall to comment that it ‘derives its style from the familiar Gupta work of northern India’. It can hardly be assigned to a later date than the 7th

century and belong to a time when it was customary for the votaries of Buddhism in Burma to adore groups of the Buddha and his attendants and devotees carved in stone', indicating how in the Pyu cities like Sri Kshetra, Hindu deities and *Mahayana* Buddhism had precedence over the *Theravada* school.¹⁶

The more the archaeology of Sri Kshetra was explored, the greater was the credibility of the Indianisation thesis. Even in Pagan, Taw Sein Ko had to make allowance for Indian influence existing prominently in the early history of Pagan architecture. In the *Archaeological Survey of India's Annual Report of 1907-08*, he writes 'the best specimen of stone architecture at Pagan, if not in the whole province is the Nanpaya', a temple built by Manuha, the Mon king, who was confined as a prisoner at Pagan by Anwartha after the conquest of Thaton. 'The Sikhara on its top indicated its descent from Indian prototypes'. On the other hand, on the summit of the decorated arches over each of the windows sat Hindu deities, while Hindu architectural motifs were freely used in the wealth of ornamentation in the friezes, the most noteworthy being the images of four faced Brahma on two sides of the pillars. Brahma's mount *hamsa* (swan), incidentally had been the 'national emblem' of the Mon rulers, although the Mon country was the first to be exposed to the impact of *Theravada* Buddhism from Ceylon, thanks to the proximity of the Mon political centre of Thaton in southeast Myanmar to the Bay of Bengal trading network around northern Malaya. The architectural style of the Nanpaya temple of Pagan, read with the archaeological finds of Sri Kshetra, shows how since an earlier time in central and southern Myanmar Indian architectural and sculptural art along with Hindu religious ideas had a remarkable presence. Besides the usual maritime routes, much of this influence also came to these regions by overland trade routes that linked Arakan and Eastern India with China. The importance of the Arakan corridor for transmission of religious ideas is confirmed by the Buddhist votive inscriptions from Arakan, in addition to Gupta period sculptures and coins in the two historical cities of Dhanyabati and Vesali in Arakan. The votive inscriptions were all written in either Sanskrit or in Pali and not a single one in the vernacular language, which is a fairly clear measure of how the transmission of Buddhist ideas and practices from India to Burma had a long history, going back to the fifth century and up until the eleventh century the influence of this linguistic culture was evident in both *Mahayana* and *Theravada* Buddhism. After the eleventh century however the *ye dhamma* inscriptions disappeared from *Theravada* practice and continued to be used in the *Mahayana* context for many centuries thereafter. *Ye dhamma* inscriptions, which were also present at Sri Kshetra between the seventh and the tenth centuries, were written in Pali and Sanskrit languages. While the gold leaf inscriptions are datable to the sixth century, some of the later ones, were inscribed on the statues of *Mahayana* deities like Tara and Avalokiteswar, suggesting a powerful presence of *Mahayana* Buddhist culture, which had been disseminated in Burma through northern and eastern India.¹⁷

III

The competing perspectives of Indianisation and local adaptation were also manifest in rival interpretations of religious symbols. At Sri Kshetra, the discovery of a round clay tablet with the *Lingam* depicted on its upper face and flanked on either side by images that resembled the head of a *naga* occasioned similar competing interpretations. It was found amongst objects pertaining to the Shiva cult and the symbols in the clay tablets had striking resemblance with similar symbols used in Arakan coins, along with the bull. While this evidence became a strong ground for arguing that ‘the traces of the Shiva cult, found near Prome, had northern Indian origin and reached central Burma through Arakan, which had received the Shiva cult from northern India. Taw Sein Ko claimed it as a Buddhist symbol that in the end suggested the absorption by Buddhism of a pre-existing Shaivite faith in central Burma, where the *Lingas* were transformed into small Buddhist stupas. This, according to Taw Sein Ko indicates the complete and harmonious absorption by Buddhism, in the early centuries of the Christian era, probably in the fifth century A.D., of two rival and co-eval cults, namely Shaivism and Naga worship. The use of the symbols of such religious sects was intended in the first place to enhance the sanctity of the stupa in popular perception by way of its acceptance as an object of worship by the worshippers of serpents.¹⁸ Despite Taw’s valorisation of *Theravada* Buddhism in determining the religious culture in Burma, the cultural milieu in the early period was certainly more eclectic and allowed for the co-existence between different streams of culture, quite natural in a period when the fuzzy political frontiers did not create a fixed and unalterable binary between external influence and internal features. Duroiselle, who wrote the report on Sri Kshetra in 1911-12, replacing Taw Sein Ko as the head of the Burmese archaeology department, made this point with great precision when, commenting on a fragmentary Pali inscription, he wrote that such epigraphic evidence suggested the co-existence in lower Burma at an early period, of both Sanskrit and Pali, and therefore also of the two forms of Buddhism, the *Mahayana* and the *Hinayana*. They flourished there side by side or in alternate periods of supremacy. Duroiselle felt that from the 11th century onwards, the ‘*Hinayana*’ made vast strides and finally superseded the other form. The latter, however, did not disappear so rapidly and completely as may have been thought; for it has, even up to the present day, left deep traces behind it.¹⁹

At Pagan evidence for this argument came from a Vishnu temple (**Plate 9.3**) which stands alone as an architectural symbol of Hinduism in a milieu dominated by monuments professing the triumph of *Theravada* Buddhism that was so assiduously pursued by Anwartha and his able descendent Kyanzittha during the 11th and 12th centuries. Named as Nat-Hlaung-Kyaung, the Hindu temple at Pagan obviously carried the stigma of an inferior shrine. The name implies that it was built for housing, not figures of the Buddha, but statues of deities inferior to him. Although Burmese tradition assigns the date of the building of the temple to the early tenth century, archaeological evidence points towards the late 11th or 12th century, by which time the

Pagan monarchy had emerged as a fervent supporter of *Theravada* Buddhism. A Tamil inscription from the 13th century mentions this shrine as a temple of foreign merchants settled in Pagan. Whatever might have been the original intention behind the construction of the temple, the temple presented certainly an eclectic religious culture which fostered Hindu forms of worship and *Mahayana* Buddhism in the heart of a *Theravada* land. The sculptures demonstrate the influence of north Indian style and some of them including an exquisite figure of Shiva are now housed in the Pagan museum.²⁰

The prevalence of *tantric* Buddhism in pre-Pagan Burma tells the same story about an eclectic religious culture nourished by the migration of *tantric* Buddhist practices associated with *Sahajayana* and *Vajrayana* in Bengal. In a long essay on the impact of *tantric* Buddhism on Burmese art, Duroiselle argued that what was known as the religion of *Ari*, representing a Buddhist sect in Pagan, that was popular in the region before the aggressive assertion of *Theravada* ideology by the Pagan monarchy in the 11th century. It was a *tantric* Buddhist sect that co-existed with Mahayanaism at Pagan. The presence of *Mahayana* influence, as has been suggested earlier, is evident from votive tablets, stone carvings, frescoes and Bodhisattva images. Burmese chronicles often mention that before the 11th century Buddhism did not exist at Pagan. This was merely a sectarian view that overlooked the many dimensions of Buddhist religious practice in order to establish the supremacy of *Theravada*. In the perception of *Theravada* orthodoxy such practices were distasteful to the purer faith professed by the *Theravada* monks from Ceylon. The frescoes of the Payathonzu (**Plate 9.4**) and Nandamannya temples (**Plate 9.5**) at Minnanthu near Pagan bear testimony to these multiple facets. Apparently the monks professing allegiance to this sect, were the priests of the Naga and Spirit-worshippers, who were fairly numerous and officiated at the bloody sacrifices connected with this older form of worship. Profoundly influenced by Tantrism, which was a common feature of Hinduism and Buddhism, the monks resorted to a system of sorcery and witchcraft which had for its aim the attainment, by spiritual means, of desired objects, whether material or otherwise, and by means of *mantras*, charms and alchemy. In the perception of their Theravadist enemies, they were also addicted, as revealed by the frescoes, to grossly immoral practices, characteristic of *Vajrayanas* and *Sahajiyas* of Bengal and Nepal. Such practices however, did not disappear, as has been hitherto thought, in the 11th century even after Anwartha's persecution of the popular sects.²¹

IV

It seems that in a strange way the historical dialogue between Indian influence and indigenism became linked with the spiritual battles of different schools of Buddhism. In the report of 1917-18 Duroiselle also identified the stages through which this history can be studied by reference to sculptural art. Some of the sculptures enable historians to recall the sculptures of later medieval Gupta art with their sharp features, oval face, broad and high forehead and aquiline nose and slender waist. They are decisively reminiscent of the northern Indian style

influenced by the Gandhara art. A stage came when the face became round and ‘the pointed up-turned chins’ which denotes a spirit of enquiry is absent; the chest is still protruding and the upper and lower limbs are still abnormally developed, but the legs from the knees downward are very slim and the anatomy is less perfect. A Buddha figure of this kind in the Ananda Pagoda for Duroiselle, was based on south Indian models, while there are images which also indicated the transition from Indian to a Mongolian type in which case the images lose their sharp features and came to be endowed with ‘a short thick-set body and heavy expression’. Such images appear more frequently in the later temples like in the Damayazika pagoda, built by king Narapatisithu in 1196 A.D.²²

The eclecticism that we find in religious culture also informs the linguistic culture in Pagan. The famous Myazedi inscriptions of 1112 A.D. issued by Kyanzittha’s son Rajakumar had four different versions in the four different languages of Pali, Pyu, Mon and Burmese, which indicates that the Pagan monarchy were keen to achieve a sort of cultural assimilation between different groups and their assimilationism was built into a political system that did not recognise inflexible boundaries and frontiers. Use of more than one language for an inscription and erection of multiple copies in different locations was usual in early-medieval Burma. The Myazedi inscription, however, acquires adequate significance in its contribution to proper and scientific historical periodization in Burmese history. Found at Myinkaba near the Myazedi pagoda in the neighbourhood of Pagan in 1886 by E. Forchhammer, then Professor of Pali at the Rangoon College, the inscription was issued by the son of the famous Pagan ruler Kyanzittha. The inscription has been of greatest value for the rectification of chronological error of the Burmese Chronicles regarding the succession of the great Pagan rulers from Anwartha onwards. Kyanzittha’s rule on its basis could be more accurately assigned between 1104 and 1112 A.D. But what is more important is the manner in which the personality of Kyanzittha and its career were celebrated, confirming the impressions that the chronicles produced about the strength, dynamism and wisdom of this great Burmese ruler.²³ Kyanzittha built lavishly and a large number of major Pagan temples, including the Ananda temple, received his patronage. It seems that during Kyanzittha’s rule, Pagan monarchy reached a highpoint of prosperity and consolidation and such developments were naturally accompanied by a substantial accretion of royal power and authority, which was manifest among other things in several commemorative temples that Kyanzittha built during his tenure.²⁴

Such practices point towards a change in the character of the Pagan monarchy that ultimately was responsible for the systematic promotion of *Theravada* culture by the Pagan rulers. The pursuit of *Theravada* culture, initially by Anwartha and then more powerfully by Kyanzittha destroyed the eclectic culture, which admitted of a good deal of Indian influence but promotion of *Theravada*, which eventually became an important marker of Burmese national identity had something to do with the political practices of a monarchy with authoritarian and somewhat

despotic pretensions. This can be gauged from the monarchy's fluctuating relationships with the monkish orders. In their attempt to control the monkish order, the Ceylonese connection, which had something to do with the conquest of Thaton, back in the eleventh century, turned out to be very useful. In view of the monks' and temples' extraordinary control over agricultural resources and slave labour, a contest of power was inevitable with the monarchy, which was equally concerned about augmenting the royal treasury. The large numbers of donated inscriptions, some of which are displayed in the Pagan museum, record the extensive donation of land and slave labour by private individuals to the monkish order. In order to control the monkish order and take away a substantial portion of its economic resources, the Pagan rulers used their allegiance to *Theravada* culture to denounce the connection of some of the monks with Mahayanism and *Tantric* forms of worship. Since the latter appeared as significant aberrations from the pure faith and therefore deserved penal action, one of the ways to purify them was to force them to renounce their wealth, slaves and property and undertake a journey of purification to Ceylon, which at that time was the spiritual nodal point of *Theravada* Buddhism. This fluctuating relationship between the rulers and the monks was certainly an important dimension of state-craft in Pagan but the cultural implications are not far to seek. *Theravada* Buddhism became in the process, the dominant royal cult. Although Mahayanism in a variety of ways managed to survive in rituals, ceremonies and sculptures, yet *Theravada*, in whatever may be its practice in Burma, became the official creed. The rise of *Theravada* as a royal creed and the accompanying decline of Mahayanism eventually became a site for studying the contest between Indian influence and indigenous developments. The emergence of Burmese national identity with its historical association with *Theravada* and the Pagan monarchy created the rhetorical context in which such discussions continued. The Pagan monarchy and the *Theravada* religious ideology that it promoted came to feature in Burmese history as two related developments that established the priority of the nation and its historical identity over an imagined or real foreign influence.²⁵

Notes and References:

1. *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia Volume I: From Early Times to c. 1500*, edited by Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge, 1992); I. W. Mabbett, 'The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: Reflections on the Historical Sources', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Sep. 1977), pp. 143-161; For new archaeological evidence indicating the process of localization of Indian ideas and practices in different regions of South-east Asia, see the very significant anthology entitled *Early Interactions between South and South East Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, edited by Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani and Geoff Wade, published in 2011 by the Singapur based institute for South Asian Studies.
2. U.N. Ghosal, 'Progress of Greater India Research during the Last Twenty-five Years (1917-42)', in the *Journal of the Greater India Society* (IX/2,1942, pp. 59-135), reprinted in Kwa Chong-Guan (ed.), *Early Southeast Asia viewed from India: An Anthology of Articles from the Journal of the Greater India Society*.

3. A detailed treatment of the early French contribution to southeast Asian archaeology resulting in the idea of Greater India is available in Susan Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic mode' in *Modern Asian Studies* 38, 3 (2004) pp. 703-744. Susan Bayly's work on the French contribution to the concept of an extended India also shows how the dominant version of Indianization encountered discordant and dissenting voices. For an assessment of this archaeological heritage from the southeast Asian perspective, see also Kwa Chong-Guan's introductory essay, 'Visions of Early Southeast Asia as Greater India' in Kwa Chong-Guan (ed.), *Early Southeast Asia viewed from India: An Anthology of Articles from the Journal of the Greater India Society*; Sugata Bose, *Hundred Horizons; The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, (Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2006), carries a detailed treatment of Tagore's visit to South-East Asia and the context in which the poet, inspired by the sight of ancient architecture of the region was persuaded to think about the footprints of his ancient ancestors; Niharranjan Ray, *Brahmanical Gods in Burma* was originally published by Calcutta University in 1932 and was later reprinted from Leiden in 2001.
4. Penny Edwards, 'Relocating the Interlocutor: Taw Sein Ko (1864-1930) and the itinerancy of knowledge in British Burma, *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 12, No. 3, (November, 2004), pp. 277-335.
5. Myo Nyunt Aung, *Archaeological Conservation of Bagan Ancient Monuments in Myanmar*, p. B25; *Historical Sites in Myanmar*, Aung Thaw, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Department of Archaeology and National Museum.
6. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1914-15*, (Swati Publications, Delhi), pp. 49-55, carries a detailed discussion of the Powun-daung caves.
7. Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Myanmar*, (published by the Department of Archaeology and National Museum, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Government of Myanmar); see the brief informative essays on different ancient sites in Burma.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-98; a discussion of these different locations within the larger context of Pagan's fairly extensive boundary is also found in Myo Nyunt Aung, *Archaeological Conservation of Pagan Ancient Monuments in Myanmar* (Web Article).
9. Rila Mukherjee (ed.), *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism*, Delhi, 1911; see the introduction, especially, pp. 3-5, for information on the overland trade routes. It also has significant information about the sources of Pagan's wealth, its control over agricultural hinterlands and locational importance in the trading networks between China and eastern India.
10. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1905-1906*, Taw Sein Ko's Report on Some Early Excavations at Pagan, pp. 131-134; Sir John Marshall recorded his regret about the relative neglect of archaeology in Burma in the first report that he drafted in 1902, once the new series of reports began to be published.
11. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1905-1906*, Taw Sein Ko's Report on Some Early Excavations at Pagan, pp. 131-132.

12. Charles Duroiselle, 'The Stone Sculptures in the Ananda Temple at Pagan' in the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1913-1914*.
13. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1908-1909*, Taw Sein Ko's Report on 'Conservation in Burma', pp. 29-32.
14. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1907-1908*, pp. 36-37
15. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1909-1910*, 'Excavations at Hmawza Near Prome', pp. 113-123.
16. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1909-1910*, 'Excavations at Hmawza Near Prome' p.116; in the Report on Hmawza, Marshall's opinion on a sculptured stone found at the Zegu pagoda (east) is cited by Taw Sein Ko.
17. Kyaw Minn Htin, 'Early Buddhism in Myanmar: *Ye dhamma* Inscriptions from Arakan', in Manguin, Mani and Wade, (et. al.), *Early Interactions between South and South-East Asia*,....already cited. Modern Burmese scholarship identifies the middle of the twelfth century as a period of transition, when most of the inscriptions began to be inscribed in the Burmese language. For this see Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Myanmar*, (published by the Department of Archaeology and National Museum, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Government of Myanmar), p. 65. Aung Thaw also identifies this period when Alungsithu, Kyanzitha's successor was ruling in Pagan as a transitional phase, when a distinct Burmese architectural style began to emerge. The basic design, of course, came from Buddhist India, yet the buildings at Pagan 'are so designed and adapted to conform to Myanmar ideas, that on the whole they exhibit entirely different appearance from the Indian structures, signifying the aesthetic temperament of the Myanmar people'.
18. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1910-11*, Report on the 'Excavations at Hmawza, Prome District' by Taw Sein Ko, pp. 89-93.
19. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1911-12*, pp. 141-148.
20. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1912-13*, pp.136-138. In addition, in many of the Buddhist temples as well figures of Hindu deities featured as significant accretions. For example, in the Abeyadana temple at Pagan, the frescoes on the inner walls display figures of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Indra and other divinities of the *Mahayana* pantheon. One of the pagodas in Pagan is also known as the Ganesh pagoda where a stone figure of Ganesh was originally placed at each corner of the square terraces.
21. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1915-16*: an essay entitled, 'The Ari of Burma and *Tantric* Buddhism', by Charles Duroiselle.
22. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1917-18*, pp. 28-29.
23. See Taw Sein Ko and Charles Duroiselle, (eds.) *Epigraphia Birmanica* Being Lithic and other Inscriptions of Burma, Rangoon, 1919, Vol. I, Part I, see the Preface written by Charles Duroiselle and the Introductory section of the Myazedi Inscription at Pagan.

24. For example, the Abeyadana temple, named after Kyanzittha's queen, commemorated a meeting between the queen and her husband, when the queen brought food for the king. The Nagayon temple at Mynkava, celebrated an event in his life, which, following the legends associated with the temple, elevated the King to a divine pedestal. The chronicles say that when Kyanzittha retired in a forest, a young Naga came to look after him and protected him with his hood. For a discussion of such commemorative temples, the English translation by Taung Goe of a Burmese pamphlet entitled 'Plastic Arts Adorning the Nagayon Temple' (N.P.N.D.) has yielded important insights.
25. *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: Volume I, Part. I, From Early Times to c. 1500*, edited by Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 24-244.