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DEVELOPMENT OF PĀḲI BASED ON EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE BAGAN ERA

Phyu Mar Lwin

College of Religious Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand

Author for correspondence email; phyumarlwin@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

PāḲi is regarded as the sacred language of Theravāda Buddhism and holds great significance for Theravādins, serving as the principal language for preserving and transmitting the teachings of the Buddha. The Bagan kingdom (11th to 13th century) in present-day Myanmar is widely recognized as a golden age of Buddhist culture, evidenced by the enduring presence of ancient temples, murals, and an extensive corpus of stone inscriptions. This article aims to investigate the profound impact of the PāḲi language on the intellectual, religious, and social life of Bagan society. The study draws upon a wide range of both primary and secondary sources, including donative inscriptions, Burmese chronicles, epigraphic evidence, and the works of modern scholars. It employs historical and textual analysis to reveal the development of both PāḲi and Theravāda Buddhism in ancient Bagan after the 11th century. The findings demonstrate that PāḲi was not only used for religious purposes but also functioned as an indicator of prestige, particularly among the royal elite and learned monks. This study highlights how PāḲi played the crucial role in shaping Bagan society and in promoting the wider spread of Buddhism. By focusing on the Bagan kingdom, this research contributes to the broader discussion on the relationship between language, religion, and culture in pre-modern Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous Buddhist scriptures in the Pāli language are preserved in Theravāda countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.¹ Over time, Pāli developed into a sacred and scholarly language to maintain Buddhist teachings.² There is abundant evidence of Pāli texts dating to the 11th century that have been unearthed in Bagan, the important Buddhist culture center located in present-day Myanmar. Significant records from the region are found on votive tablets, stone slabs, and gold, silver, or copper plates dating from the time of Pyu civilization (ca. 1st–3rd century).³ Notable archaeological evidence includes the Pāli word ‘*samghasiri*’⁴ inscribed on a stamp (dating to the 2nd century, with a script reminiscent of Southern Indian Brahmi script) unearthed at the Beikthano archaeological site.⁵ Additionally, twenty gold plates discovered in the *Khin Ba* mound at Śrīksetra, provide further evidence of the use of Pāli. These plates are recognized as the earliest Pāli inscriptions extracted from the *Piṭaka* (classical Buddhist texts)⁶ during the Pyu era.⁷ A notable aspect of the Pyu inscriptions is the preponderance of Pāli texts derived from the Buddhist canon, such as *Suttanta*⁸ and *Abhidhamma*.⁹

Following the fall of the Pyu kingdom in 832,¹⁰ the Bagan Empire developed gradually from the 11th century onwards. During this early era, the practice of epigraphic culture flourished. The Bagan populace, including kings, queens, princes, ministers, members of the royal family, clergy, affluent individuals, and even commoners, engaged in inscriptions to record their religious deeds on stone. These inscriptions appear in various languages such as Pyu, Mon, Burmese, Pāli, Sanskrit, Siamese, Chinese, and Tamil.¹¹ According to Burmese chronicles, the account of King Anuruddha (also known as Anawrahta, r. 1044–1077) embraced Theravāda Buddhism after his encounter with Shin Arahā, a monk from Thaton, the capital of the Mon kingdom.¹² During his reign, inscribing Pāli language in Burmese script¹³ was exclusively observed on votive tablets. The earliest epigraphs in Bagan are seals bearing the name of *Aniruddha* in Sanskrit or *Anuruddha* in Pāli on votive tablets.¹⁴

¹ K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature, including The Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hinayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), 1-3.

² Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 1-4.

³ Bob Hudson, “A thousand years before Bagan: Radiocarbon dates and Myanmar’s ancient Pyu cities”. *Bagan and the World: Early Myanmar and its Global Connections* (Singapore, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018), 89.

⁴ ‘*samghasiri*’ is a Pāli word which means ‘the glory of monk’, inscribing on a stamp. It is also an evidence of using Pāli in the Pyu era dating from the 2nd century.

⁵ Aung Thaw, *Report on the excavation at Beikthano* (Rangoon, Ministry of Union Culture, 1968), 48-50.

⁶ Pāli inscriptions starting with “*Siddam,avijjāpaccayāsāṅkhārā.....*” as found in the *Abhidhamma* and *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The scripts are similar to Nāgarī script of Southern India (4th-5th c).

⁷ Sein Win, *The Corpus of Pyu Epigraphy*, vol 1 (Yangon: Department of Archaeology, 2016), 11.

⁸ A discourse: CPED (Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries Co., Ltd, 1957), 301.

⁹ The special dhamma; theory of doctrine: PTS PED (London: Pāli Text Society, 1925), 65.

¹⁰ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism, AD 1000-1300.” *Journal of Burmese Research Society* (1978): 2.

¹¹ C. Duroiselle, *A List of Inscriptions found in Burma* (Rangoon, Superintendent Government Printing), i-ii.

¹² Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of Kings of Burma* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 71-74.

¹³ K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature, including The Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hinayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), 4. “Pāli texts have been written in the scripts of various countries—Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand—indicating that Pāli had no script of its own but adopted the script of the host culture.”

¹⁴ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 16.

After the reign of King Kyanzittha (1084-1113), “Pāli and Pāli mixed with Burmese were preferred to write inscriptions instead of Mon language.”¹⁵ Prince *Rajakumār*, the son of King *Kyanzittha*, undertook an act of merit for his deceased father by inscribing a donative record on quadrilateral stone in four languages –Pāli, Mon, Burmese, and Pyu.¹⁶ Subsequently, his grandson, King Caṅsū I who was known by the Burmese name *Alaung-sithu*, is recorded to have constructed the Shwegu temple in 1131, in which two stone inscriptions were engraved and affixed to the temple’s walls.¹⁷ The records include dates of commencement and completion of the construction of the temple in Sanskrit while the rest of the text is inscribed in Pāli.¹⁸ This evidence suggests that Pāli literature was developing during the reign of Caṅsū I.



Figure 1. *The Rājakumar four-faced pillar in the compound of Myazedi pagoda, Bagan, Myanmar.*
Photograph by the author, August 12, 2020.

During the reign of Caṅsū II (1174–1211), several inscriptions were engraved in both Pāli and Burmese. These bilingual inscriptions indicate a shift in linguistic preferences toward Pāli over Sanskrit in Bagan during this period. This language preference is further substantiated by the discovery of many Pāli epigraphs dating after the 11th century. Concurrently, Burmese became a significant vernacular language during the Bagan era while Pāli continued to be used for religious inscriptions. The Bagan era was a prolific period for composition in Pāli not only of donative records but also a multitude of Pāli grammatical works, commentaries and sub-commentaries. This evidence demonstrates the increasing importance of Pāli in

¹⁵ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 61, no. 1–2 (1978): 58.

¹⁶ *Epigraphia.Birmanixa*. vol. 1, (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1960) 1. The Kubyuak-gyi inscription – also known as the Rājakumar inscription or the Myazedi inscription – is found on a four-faced pillar written in Pyu, Mon, Myanmar and Pāli languages: See figure 1.

¹⁷ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 61, no. 1–2 (1978): 11.

¹⁸ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 83.

Bagan during the reign of King Caṅsū II. An important question, therefore, arises: why was Pali an increasingly important language during the Bagan era? It will be demonstrated that PāḲi literature and culture developed in close conjunction with Theravāda Buddhism during this era.



Figure 2. *The inscriptions depository in Mandalay Palace, Myanmar.*
Photograph by the author, August 8, 2019.

PĀḲI : THE LANGUAGE OF BUDDHISM

PāḲi is classified as a dialect of the Middle Indo-Aryan language. As a term describing a specific language, PāḲi was first introduced by European scholars.¹⁹ Generally, PāḲi is recognized as the sacred language of Theravāda Buddhism. Theravādins adhere to the belief that PāḲi is the word of the Buddha or *Buddhavacana*, and that the Buddha himself delivered his teachings in PāḲi. However, the specific language used by the Buddha remains uncertain. According to standard dictionaries, PāḲi can also be defined as “a line; range; or the canon of the Buddhist writing.”²⁰ In addition, Richard Gombrich states: “The word PāḲi (which in PāḲi can also be spelled with a dot under the “*l*”: PāḲi) is connected with a Sanskrit verbal root ‘*paṭh*’, meaning ‘recite’ and originally meant ‘text for recitation.’²¹ Additionally, Steven Collins has noted that “the word PāḲi was not originally the name of a language, but a term meaning firstly a line, bridge, or causeway, and thence a text.”²² The precise origins and meanings of the term PāḲi remain an important research subject among Buddhologists.

¹⁹ K.R. Norman, *PāḲi Literature, including The Canonocal Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hinayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wisebaden, Harrassowitz, 1983), 1.

²⁰ T.W. Rhys Davids, *PED* (London, PTS, 1925), 455.

²¹ Richard Gombrich, *Buddhism and Pali* (Oxford: Mud Pie Books, 2018), 11.

²² Steven Collins, “What Is Literature in Pali?” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 91.

While there is debate surrounding the question of whether Pāli was the language spoken by the Buddha, many scholars concur that it served as the literary language for the early Buddhists. R.C. Childer claims that Pāli belongs to the Prakrits, specifically the Māgadhi language or the Aryan vernaculars of ancient India.²³ The historical and cultural context of Buddhism, particularly its origins in India (*Majjhimadesa*), suggests that the language of early Buddhism was likely derived from various dialects in India. Presently, Pāli continues to be used in several Theravāda Buddhist countries, particularly Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, where many adherents of Buddhism suppose that Pāli and Māgadhi are the same. The precise date and location of the origin of Pāli remain uncertain. However, following the third Buddhist council under the patronage of Aśoka,²⁴ Buddhism disseminated throughout central India, leading to the development of Pāli as a language influenced by numerous different Indo-Aryan dialects.²⁵ Several scholars have posited that Māghadhī serves as the foundation for Pāli. However, Oldenberg advanced a different perspective, proposing that Pāli is the original language of Kaṭṭhā,²⁶ a claim substantiated by his reference to the large inscription at Khandagiri.²⁷, ²⁸ In contrast, Rhys Davids hypothesized that Pāli is derived from the dialect of Kosala,²⁹ and Max Walleiser proposed that Pāli represents the language of Pāṭaliputra.³⁰, ³¹ Furthermore, scholars such as E. Kuhn and Westergaard assumed Pāli functioned as the vernacular in Ujjeni, the capital of Mālava during the time when Mahinda, the son of Asoka, took the sacred text to Ceylon.³²

The Tipiṭaka Pāli-Myanmar Dictionary postulates that Pāli is undoubtedly *Buddhavacana* or the word of the Buddha. In the *Parāṇika-Pāli*,³³ the Buddha used the word “*ariyaka*”³⁴ or “*ariyabhāsa*” to denote his own language. The commentator explains that this *ariyabhāsa* is the language used by the *ariyā* or noble person.³⁵ In the commentaries and sub-commentaries, Pāli is mentioned as *māgadhabhāsa*,³⁶

²³ R.C. Childer, *A Dictionary of the Pāli Language* (London, Trubner & Co., 1875), vii. “The word ‘Pāli’ in Sanskrit means ‘line, row, series’ and by the South Buddhists is extended to mean the series of books which form the text of the Buddhist scripture. *Pāṭibhāsa* means language of the text, which of course is equivalent to saying Māgadhi language.”. See also B.C. Law, *A History of Pāli Literature* Vol I, 1933, ix – xxv.

²⁴ Aśoka is the well-known emperor of Maurya Dynasty (268-232 CE) .

²⁵ M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* Vol II (Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1933), 12. According to Winternitz, the Buddha himself is believed to have spoken the dialect of Kosala, and then he wandered in Māgadha, where he preached in Maghadhi, the dialect of Magadha (present-day Bihar). Winternitz states that the dissemination of the Buddha’s teaching by monks from various regions of India occurred through the medium of their respective dialects.

²⁶ Kaṭṭhā is an ancient region located on the eastern coast of the India.

²⁷ Khandagiri refers to an ancient site of rock-cut caves located near Bhubaneswar, in Odisha, India.

²⁸ Alexander Cunningham, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Survey of India, 1877), 98.

²⁹ Kosala was a powerful kingdom in the northern India during the time of the Buddha.

³⁰ Pāṭaliputra: an ancient capital of India, modern day Patna.

³¹ B.C. Law, *The History of Pāli Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1933), ix-xxv.

³² E. Müller, *A Simplified Grammar of the Pāli Language* (London: Trübner & Co., 1884), iii; see also Ernst Kuhn, *Beiträge zur Pali-Grammatik* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1875), 9; and Niels Ludvig Westergaard, *Über den ältesten Zeitraum der indischen Geschichte mit Rücksicht auf die Litteratur* (Breslau: Verlag von Wilhelm Koebner, 1862), 1–16.

³³ *Parāṇika-Pāli* refers the first part of Vinaya Piṭaka.

³⁴ Vin (B^e) I, 33: *Ariyakena milakkhassa santike sikkhaṃ paccakkhātī, so ca na paṭivijānātī, apaccakkhātā hoti sikkhā.*

³⁵ Ibid. *Ariyakam nāma ariyavohāro māgadhabhāsa.*

³⁶ “*Māgadhabhāsa*: the language of Māgadha.” See *TP PMD*, vol 16, 536.

tantibhāsā,³⁷ *mūlabhāsā*,³⁸ and *pakatibhāsā*.³⁹ The word *māgadhabhāsā* is mentioned frequently, while the others are mentioned very infrequently in the original text, commentaries, and sub-commentaries.

Notably, in the late 17th century, Simon de la Loubère mentioned the name of Pāli as “Balie language, the learned language tongue of the Siamese”⁴⁰ and “the Barly language, the learned language of the Siamese”⁴¹ in his book “*A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*.”⁴² This is believed to be the first documented usage of the term Pāli in a published work although it is plausible that the term had been used earlier. Subsequently, Clough adopted the term in his grammar book in 1824, and Burnouf and Lassen also used the term in their book in 1826.⁴³ According to K.R. Norman, the designation Pāli is a misnomer, as it may be a localized dialect in India akin to Māgadhī in Māgadha or Gandhāri in Gandhāra.⁴⁴

The renowned Buddhist commentator Buddhaghosa identified Pāli as the original words of the Buddha (*buddhavacanam*), akin to the concept of Māgadhī being synonymous with Pāli. From a grammatical perspective, von Hinüber characterized Pāli as an artificial language or a composite language since “it had manifold connections to many dialects was not identical with either of them.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, he asserted that Pāli was “the very earliest language of Buddhism, which most likely was close to the language of the Buddha himself, was an eastern Middle Indic [language]” which is called ‘Buddhist Middle Indic.’⁴⁶ On the other hand, the *Mahāvamsa*⁴⁷ states that “Māgadhī is the root languages of all languages.”⁴⁸ For Theravādins, these commentarial and other chronical evidence is sufficiently reliable to believe that the *Buddhavacana* is indeed Māgadhī.⁴⁹ Moreover, Winternitz also attributes the language of the Theravāda texts to an old form of Māgadhi due to the absence of a distinction between Pāli and Māgadha in the Theravāda tradition.⁵⁰ Conversely, K.R. Norman affirmed that Pāli is not the same as Māghadhī although there is lack of direct evidence about Māghadhī before the time of Aśoka.⁵¹ Consequently, he deduced that

³⁷ “*Tantibhāsā*: the language spoken by the Buddha.” See *TP PMD*, vol 9, 210-211.

³⁸ “*Mūlabhāsā*: the original language.” See *TP PMD*, vol 16, 783.

³⁹ “*Pakatibhāsā*: the original language.” See *TP PMD*, vol 13, 43.

⁴⁰ Simon de la Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam: Envoy Extraordinary from the French King to the King of Siam, in the Year 1687–1688* (London, 1693), 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature: incl. the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hinayana Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Oskar von Hinüber, “Pali as an Artificial Language,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 137.

⁴⁶ Oskar von Hinüber, “The Oldest Literary Language of Buddhism,” in *Selected Papers on Pali Studies* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2005), 194.

⁴⁷ *The Mahāvamsa*: the great chronicle of Ceylon written in Pāli.

⁴⁸ Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, trans. Wilhelm Geiger, assisted by Mabel Haynes Bode (London: Pāli Text Society, 1912; repr., Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 1993), 208. The verse reads: “*Sabbesaṃ mūlabhāsāya māgadhāya niruttiyā*.”

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Geiger, *A Pali Grammar*, ed. K.R. Norman, trans. Batakrishna Bhosh (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2005), 1-8.

⁵⁰ Maurice Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1933), 7.

⁵¹ K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature: incl. the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hinayana Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 3.

“it, therefore, seems very likely that the Buddha’s sermons were preached in a non-Sanskritic language.”⁵² Later, Chowdhury agrees that Pāli and Māghadhī share dialectic links with each other.⁵³

These debates surrounding Pāli reveal a variety of perspectives on the language exist among scholars. Although the language spoken by the Buddha is not fully known, it is generally accepted that Pāli and Theravāda Buddhism are inextricably linked due to the role of Pāli as the language of early Buddhist scriptures. Nihar Ranjan Ray has argued that Pāli is the language of Theravāda Buddhism, stating “Those that use Pāli, in whatever script can safely be said to have belonged to the Theravāda.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, Pāli is regarded as a sacred language in all Theravāda traditions and continues to play an extremely important role in Theravāda Buddhism today.

ARIMADDANA – THE BAGAN EMPIRE

Bagan (formerly known as Pagan), was an ancient capital of the first Burmese empire. Bagan is situated on the eastern banks of the Irrawaddy River, which transverses Myanmar from north to south. The city is located in the central dry zone of Myanmar and the climate has helped preserve historic sites. During the zenith of the Bagan Empire, numerous religious monuments including temples, stupas and monasteries, were constructed in the city by kings, royal families and citizens. To this day, more than 2000 temples and pagodas persist as Buddhist pilgrimage sites. The archaeological evidence, artifacts, and stone inscriptions attest to the splendor of Bagan and the profound devotion of its inhabitants to Buddhism during the 11th to 13th centuries.

The Burmese chronicles state that the first foundation of Bagan was laid in 107 CE, when the city was settled by King Thamoddarit and the inhabitants of nineteen villages in Yunhlutkyun. The city was initially named *Arimaddanapūra*, which translates to “the city that conquers enemies.”⁵⁵ The *Sāsanavaṃsa*⁵⁶ states that Bagan was part of the Aparanta region.⁵⁷ According to the Buddha’s prophecy during his journey

⁵² K.R. Norman, “Pali and the Language of Early Buddhism,” in *Indo-Iranian Languages and Peoples*, no. 116, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 137.

⁵³ Chimpamong Chowdhury, “Did the Buddha Speak Pali? An Investigation of the Buddhavacana and Origins of Pali,” *The Dhaka University Journal of Linguistics* 2, no. 4 (2009): 52.

⁵⁴ Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), 71.

⁵⁵ [Thamoddarit settles near Pagan, 107 AD] When the Kanyans fled, the Pyus fought among themselves and split again into three divisions. The Kyabins took over one division, the Theks another. The third made their home in the country of Taungnyo. After three years they were attacked by the Talaings and spoiled. And they moved thence and founded the country Padaung Thetta and dwelt there. After six years they were attacked and spoiled once more by Kanyans, Thence they moved and built Mindon and dwelt there for three years. Therafter Thamoddarit began to build in the country of Yonhlutkyun in the year 29, Short Era. In the sixteen years after Mahallaka the Brahmin abolished the old era, the kingdom of Thaerhkhittara perished. When the Pyus had fought with the Kanyans and dwelt in Taungnyo, Padaung Thetta and Mindon, in the twenty-ninth year Short Era (including the twelve years interregnum) King Thamoddarit began to build a city with the dwellers in nineteen villages in Yonhlutkyun”: Pe Maung tin & Luce, *Glass Palace Chronicle* (London, Oxford University Press, 1923), 28. See Twin-thin Yazawin. vol. 1, (Yangon, Yarpay Press, 2012), 72.

⁵⁶ *Sāsanavaṃsa* refers to the chronicle of Buddhism composed by Ven. Paññāsāmi in 1861.

⁵⁷ B.C Law, *The History of Buddha’s Religion (Sāsanavaṃsa)*, (London: Pāli Text Society, 1952), 61. Law stated that “*Aparantaraṭṭha* is no other than *Sunāparanta* of the Burmese, i.e., the region lying west of the upper Irrawaddy.” In the introduction of the *Sāsanavaṃsa*, he further elaborated, stating “The history of religion in *Maramma* is nothing more than the his-

to Aparanta, a king named Samutti would one day establish a town called Arimaddana (Bagan), where the Buddha's teachings would flourish and become firmly established.⁵⁸ Consistent with the archaeological evidence, Duroiselle concluded that "the date of Bagan city wall is about 850, the year of the foundation of Pagan."⁵⁹ The two Cham inscriptions from approximately 1050 —Phan-rang (Pāṇḍuraṅga) and the Po-Nagar and Lom-ngo pillars, mention the name of Pagan. In the former, the name is written as Pukaṃ, and in the latter, it was written as Pukāṃ. In Old Mon, the name is written as Pokam, Pukāṃ and possibly Bukāṃ. The earliest mention of Pagan appears in 1093. In Old Burmese (earliest mention in 1196), the name is written as Pukaṃ or Pukam.⁶⁰ In the book "The Indianized States of Southeast Asia," Cœdès stated the following: "Anoratha, who became king in 1044, increased the territory of the kingdom of Pagan, which at the beginning was still small. In internal affairs, his two most remarkable achievements were the creation of a system of irrigation east of his capital, in the rice plain of Kyakse, which became the granary of northern Burma, and the conversion of the country to Theravāda Buddhism."⁶¹ Following the reign of King Anuruddha, the Bagan dynasty underwent a succession of rulers, with the Mongol invasion and gradual fragmentation of the empire eventually leading to the reign of last king, Saw Mon Nit, in 1368.⁶²

BUDDHISM IN THE BAGAN ERA

The Burmese chronicles specifically the *Sāsanālankāra*, the *Sāsanavaṃsa*, and the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, all attest to the enduring presence of Buddhism in Myanmar during the life time of the Buddha. Law corroborated this, stating —"In our Maramma⁶³ country, they say, the religion stood firm from a time when there still remained more than twenty years after the Blessed One's life-time."⁶⁴ Buddhism flourished in Myanmar during the Pyu era (200 BCE – 900 CE),⁶⁵ a period that followed the demise of the Buddha by a century, as recorded in the chronicles.⁶⁶ This assertion is further supported by George Cœdes' description of presence of diverse Buddhist practices in Pyu:

tory of the Buddhist *saṃgha* in Sunāparanta and Tambadīpa, which includes the districts of *Pugan*, *Ava*, *Pinya*, *Myenzain* and also the upper portion of the *Thayet* district on the bank of the river Irrawaddy."

⁵⁸ B.C Law, *The History of Buddha's Religion (Sāsanavaṃsa)*, (London: PāḲi Text Society, 1952), 61.

⁵⁹ *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1921–22 (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1923), 136.

⁶⁰ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 8.

⁶¹ Georges Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 149.

⁶² See the appendix for a detailed chronology of the Bagan kings.

⁶³ *Maramma* is an early term for Myanmar, as referenced in the *Sāsanavaṃsa*.

⁶⁴ B.C Law, *The History of Buddha's Religion (Sāsanavaṃsa)*, (London: PāḲi Text Society, 1952), 61.

⁶⁵ Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 63.

⁶⁶ *The Sāsanavaṃsa* states that Buddhism was established in the Pyu kingdom during the reign of King Dvattabaung; see *The Sāsanavaṃsa*, trans. Bimala Churn Law (London: PTS, 1952), 59.

“Theravāda Buddhism, witnessed at Prome⁶⁷ before the seventh century in the fragments of the Pāli canon previously mentioned, was either supplanted or at least relegated to second place by a school with the Sanskrit canon perhaps the Mūlasarvāstivāda,⁶⁸ whose predominance in Father India I-ching⁶⁹ has affirmed. But farther north, at Pagan, it seems that Mahāyana Buddhism was already firmly established and had assumed, under the influence of Bengal, an aspect that is sometimes said to be Tantric.”⁷⁰

Cœdes states that Mahāyāna Buddhism was already established in Bagan prior to the flourishing of Theravāda Buddhism. Conversely, the chronicles recount a legend in which King Anuruddha became a Buddhist after his first encounter with Shin Araham.⁷¹ The extant evidence can verify that Buddhism was established in Bagan prior to this event, and that the prevailing beliefs were influenced by animism. Luce’s account illuminates this point, stating—“At Pagan itself, Buddhism first shows itself in the Bu-paya, a small bulbous stupa on the river bank, possibly inherited from the pre-Burmese inhabitants, Pyu refugees from Śrīkṣetra. By 1000 AD *Caw Rahan* had built a chapter-house on Mt. *Turuin* and Aniruddha’s father, Kyaung Phyu, a monastery at Myinkaba village in Bagan. But *Nat*⁷² worship and *Nāga*⁷³ worship were still more prevalent than Buddhism.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, the practices of the *Ari*⁷⁵ sect are mentioned in large scale in the chronicles. Nevertheless, Than Tun explains that the veracity of these practices remains uncertain and requires further evidence.⁷⁶ He also asserts that Buddhism during that era was similar to the present day, though it showed a more pronounced Brahmanical influence. Additionally, Than Tun notes the presence of the *Bhikkhuni* order which indicates the existence of female ascetics during that period.⁷⁷

⁶⁷ ‘Prome’ was the name for the city in Myanmar during the colonial period that is known as ‘Pyay’ in the modern-day.

⁶⁸ Mūlasarvāstivāda is a sect of early Buddhism and is a branch of the Sarvāstivāda tradition.

⁶⁹ A Chinese Buddhist monk (635-713) who translate Buddhist texts from Sanskrit and Pāli into Chinese language.

⁷⁰ Georges Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), 87.

⁷¹ A Buddhist monk who came from Thaton, the capital of Mon kingdom. See *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, trans. Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce (London, Oxford University Press, 1923), 71-75.

⁷² A term for spirit in Burmese language.

⁷³ A serpent or *Nāga* demon, playing a prominent part of Buddhist fairy tales, Rhys Davids, *PED* (London, PTS, 1925), 349.

⁷⁴ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 13.

⁷⁵ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000-1300,” *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 61 (1-2) (1978): iv. “The Ari sect was a religious order before the flourishing of Theravāda Buddhism in Bagan and was suppressed by King Anuruddha in the 11th century.”

⁷⁶ Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*, ed. Paul Strachan (Edinburgh: Kiscadale Publications, 1988), 42.

⁷⁷ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000-1300,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 61, no. 1-2 (1978): iv-v.

As stated by the chronicles, the arrival of *Pālipiṭaka* in Bagan occurred after the conquest of Thaton, the capital of Mon kingdom, by King Anuruddha in 1057.⁷⁸ This episode of battle is meticulously detailed, demonstrating the introduction of pure Theravāda Buddhism to Bagan and Upper Burma.⁷⁹ However, there is an absence of contemporary evidence to support this event. The reliability of the information concerning the conquest of 1057, as stated in various chronicles is questionable. It is more plausible that Buddhism was already introduced to Upper Burma before the 11th century.⁸⁰ G.H. Luce also refuted the dramatic episode depicted in Burmese chronicles, highlighting the flaws in these texts as follows:

“Already these accounts cancel themselves out: Aniruddha goes seeking the Tipitaka – now at Thaton now at the Khmer capital Angkor. He receives an insolent refusal now at Thaton, now at Angkor. Kyanzittha the General in one case, Aniruddha the King in the other, performs feats of gymnastics ‘piercing the Cambojans’ (*krwan; thui*); the scene is now Pegu, now Angkor. Each has magic horses that can fly so fast as to give the impression of an army. Each cows his rival with the spectre of streaks of betel blood: but in once case it is the Khmer monarch, in the other that of Nanchao. Hero, scene and villain are alike lost – folktale and history sub-merged in the myth.”⁸¹

Though Theravāda Buddhism was developing in Bagan since the 11th century, it was still a mixture of *Nat* and *Nāga* worship and *Vaiṣṇava* Hinduism blended with Buddhism. Than Tun states, “The people not only believed deeply in the religion but practiced it according to their own lights. They believed then, as at present that religion shall last for five millennium and that they were to support it to their utmost capacity, hence a great deal of dedications to the religion.”⁸² Therefore, during this period, religious practice in Bagan was characterized by a flexibility that did not rigidly confine individuals to a single faith.

PĀLI LITERATURE IN THE BAGAN ERA

On the subject of Theravāda Buddhism in Burma, Nihar Ranjan Ray highlights the proliferation of stupas and temples adorned with Pāli inscriptions during the Bagan period as compelling evidence of the firm establishment of Pāli Buddhism.⁸³ According to K.R. Norman, “Pāli literature means everything that is written in Pāli,”⁸⁴ thus even the writing of a name or a title in Pāli can be considered Pāli literature. From the 12th century onward, Pāli monolingual and Pāli-Burmese bilingual inscriptions are frequently

⁷⁸ *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, trans. Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 71–72; see also Michael A. Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Rāmañña: The Legend that was Lower Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 124–126.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 77–80.

⁸⁰ Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300,” *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 61 (1–2) (1978): 50–51.

⁸¹ G.H. Luce, “Mons of the Pagan dynasty,” *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 36 (1950): 9.

⁸² Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300,” *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 61 (1–2) (1978): 62.

⁸³ Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), 188.

⁸⁴ K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hinayana Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), ix.

found in Bagan. In addition to stone and ink inscriptions written in Pāli, skillful works on Pāli grammar and *Abhidhamma* treatises were also produced in ancient Bagan. The earliest known Pāli inscription from the Bagan era, the Rājakumar four-faced pillar, was engraved in 1113.

In analyzing the Pāli culture of the Bagan era, one notable point is the frequent appearance of Pāli invocations at the beginning of many inscriptions. These include: “*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa; namo tassa ’ti; namo ratanattaya; namo buddhāya; namo sabbaññāya; namo sabbabuddhānaṃ; namāmi rattanattiyaṃ.*” In some cases, Pāli phrases are written in the middle of inscriptions such as “*yeme puññannumodanti...kadāci pi*”. Additionally, some inscriptions conclude with Pāli verses, such as “*nibbana paccayoti.*” Another significant feature observed in Bagan inscriptions is the use of *Pālinissaya*,⁸⁵ a method of translating Pāli into Burmese on a word-by-word basis which reflects the level of Pāli proficiency among the people of Bagan.

Through analysis of Pāli invocations, it seems clear that the people of Bagan were eager to use the Pāli language in their donative records. This use of Pāli may relate to a desire to show respect to the Buddha and Triples Gems through inclusion of Pāli invocations at the beginning of inscriptions. Though the donors did not inscribe their donative records entirely in Pāli language, they started inscriptions with Pāli invocations to show veneration in a manner consistent with established religious ritual. According to Peter Skilling, “the use of that language (Pāli) in the inscriptions is a strong indication of Theravādin activity in the region”⁸⁶ Indeed, writing Pāli invocations at the beginning of inscriptions or a Buddhist treatise became an established tradition in Myanmar that was passed down from the time of ancient Bagan.

Among the Pāli invocations, ‘*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*’ is the most popular from the Bagan era to the present day. It appears at the beginning of the inscriptions, manuscripts and Buddhist books to pay respect to the Buddha. Evidence indicates that the Matimā Mathegyi inscription (1105) is the earliest bilingual inscription starting with ‘*namo tassa*’. Afterward, the ‘*namo tassa*’ invocation was inscribed at the beginning of many inscriptions. According to the excavated inscriptions, there are thirty three inscriptions starting with ‘*namo tassa*’ dating before the fall of Bagan in the mid-14th century. Similarly, the ‘*namo tassa ’ti*’ invocation, which serves as a short form of ‘*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*’ is an important invocation from this era. Twenty seven inscriptions are found with ‘*namo tassa ’ti*’ invocation at the beginning of the passage. Therefore, ‘*namo tassa ’ti*’ is recognized as the second most written invocation. The earliest ‘*namo tassa ’ti*’ invocation is found in the Hle-Htauk-Phayar inscription dating from 1084 under the reign of King Kyanzittha. Other Pāli invocations occasionally appear at the first line of inscription which further suggests that inscribing Pāli invocations was not only for the veneration of the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha) but also makes evident the perception of Pāli as a sacred language among the people of the Bagan dynasty.

⁸⁵ The Shwe-twin Aung Pagoda inscription (1200) and A-Caw-Latt Couple inscription (1261). See figure 3.

⁸⁶ Peter Skilling, “The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland Southeast Asia.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20, no. 1 (1997): 97.

A subset of PāḲi monolingual inscriptions⁸⁷ composed solely in PāḲi is attested during the Bagan era, reflecting the prominence of PāḲi for the religious purpose. Furthermore, forty-five bilingual stone inscriptions, with both PāḲi and Burmese, that date from the late 11th century to the mid of 14th century have been unearthed. Apart from PāḲi invocations, PāḲi verses excerpted from the canonical texts and commentaries, PāḲi verses composed by ancient Buddhist scholars, attributes of donors such as those alluding to kings and the royal family, and donative objects in PāḲi were inscribed together with Burmese language in these bilingual inscriptions. To some extent, the Burmese verses found in bilingual inscriptions are not identical in meaning to their PāḲi versions; however, in some cases, these PāḲi and Burmese inscriptions are more similar in meaning. Generally, royal families, royal officials and wealthy men were the main donors of religious buildings and they sponsored donative inscriptions.⁸⁸ This evidence suggests that PāḲi was particularly important as a classical language that appealed to the elites. PāḲi inscriptions indicate the higher level of education of this group. Knowledge of PāḲi was a source of pride for elites. The use of PāḲi is particularly associated with Buddhist invocations. Whether it be for prestige or a sense of the sacred, PāḲi emerged as an important language and source of inscriptions in Bagan.

Moreover, inscriptions composed in PāḲi were not the only discovered use of the language in Bagan. Scholarly works on PāḲi grammar and *Abhidhamma* treatises also serve as evidence for accessing the development of PāḲi tradition during the Bagan era. The earliest PāḲi grammar treatise entitled the *Kārikā*.⁸⁹ was composed by Dhammasenāpati,⁹⁰ during the reign of Kyanzittha in 1064 CE. Another important and well-known treatise written in PāḲi is the *Saddaniti* composed by Venerable Aggavaṃsa.⁹¹ This work is regarded as the third major text on PāḲi grammar.⁹² Additionally, many grammatical works,⁹³

⁸⁷ The Rājakumar inscription (1113), the Shwegugyi inscription (1131), the Mahādānapati inscription (1231), the Sima inscription (1341), and the Tikekyi-gone inscription (date is undecipherable).

⁸⁸ Arlo Griffiths and Charlotte Lammert, “Epigraphy: Southeast Asia”, *Brill Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 986. Griffiths and Lammert state: “They may be classified as citation inscriptions, caption inscriptions, or donative inscriptions.”

⁸⁹ Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 34. Bode describes the *Kārikā* as the modest little metrical treatise.

⁹⁰ The exact status of “Dhammasenapati” to monkhood remains uncertain. Despite residing in a monastery, it cannot be definitively concluded whether he was a monk or a layman. “Dhammasenapati” is designated as an ācariya (teacher) in the *Gandhavaṃsa*: Bimalendra Kumar, *Gandhavaṃsa* (Delhi: Eastern Book Linker, 1992), 63, 73. However, Forchhammer refers to “Dhammasenapati” as a Burmese nobleman of Bagan: see M. Bode, *The PāḲi Literature in Burma* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 16.

⁹¹ Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 15–16.

⁹² The *Kaccāyana*, the *Moggallāna* and the *Saddaniti* are three main principal works in PāḲi grammar.

⁹³ The *Mukhamattadīpanī*, the *Sambeṇ ṭīkā*, the *Mukhamattasāra*, the *Mukhamattasāraṭīkā*, the *Saddabindu*, the *Saddabinduṭīkā*, the *Sambandhacintāṭīkā*, the *Saddatthabhedacintā*, the *Suttaniddesa*, the *Kaccāyanasāra*, the *Kaccāyanasāraṭīkā*, the *Bālāvatara*, the *Bālāvataraṭīkā*, the *Vāccavācaka*, the *Saddavutti*, the *Saddavuttiṭīkā*, the *Ganthaṭṭhi*, the *Padacintā*, the *Cadyatthadīpanī*, the *Saddā-kyanmwe*, the *Saddā-kyan-nat*, the *Sambandhamalinī*, the *Akkharasammohachedanī*, the *Akkharakosalla*, the *Akkharakosallatīkā*. See ‘The *Piṭakat-taw-thamaing* (Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2000), 183-189.

Vinaya commentaries and sub commentaries,⁹⁴ other expositions⁹⁵ and prosody treatises were written in Pāli during this period.⁹⁶



Figure 3. *The Shwe-Twin-Aung inscription beginning with “namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa,” and Pālinissaya, Amyint Township, Myanmar.*

Photograph by the author, August 11, 2020.

Pāli Literacy in the Bagan Era

After the era of King Anuruddha, Theravāda Buddhism experienced a period of widespread dissemination, potentially prompting the people of the Bagan era, especially those of higher social status, to pursue learning Pāli. Luce assumes that Prince Rājakumār, who established the four-faced pillar inscriptions, was a remarkable Pāli scholar, and recognized as a genuine *Tipiṭakadhara*.⁹⁷ ⁹⁸ Moreover, Luce also states that the high civil officials in the Bagan period also admired the use of Pāli, observing that

⁹⁴ The *Vinayaguḥhatthadīpanī*, the *Nāmacārādīpaka*, the *Sīmālaṅkāraṭīkā*, the *San̄khepavaṇṇanāṭīkā*, and the *Nāmacārādīpakaṭīkā*, the *Paramatthabindhu*, and its commentary, the *Paramatthabindhuṭīkā*. See ‘The *Piṭakat-taw-thamaing*’ (Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2000), 164-171.

⁹⁵ The *Mahābodhivaṇ-ṭīkā*, the *Tathāgatuppatti*, the *Buddhosuppatti* and the *Arahattamaggavaṇṇanā*, the *Lokappattipakāsanī*. See ‘The *Piṭakat-taw-thamaing*’ (Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2000), 174 -178.

⁹⁶ The *Vuttodayatīkā* by Navavimalabuddhi, the *Chandosāratthavikāsanī* by Saddhammañāṇa, and the *Vacanattahajotika-tīkā*. See ‘The *Piṭakat-taw-thamaing*’ (Yangon: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2000), 191.

⁹⁷ *Tipiṭakadhara* is one who memorizes the Tipiṭaka: the three baskets of knowledge of Pāli canon. See *TP PMD*, vol. 9, 498.

⁹⁸ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 76.

many officials wrote in PāḲi sentences on their votive tablets.⁹⁹ Than Tun notes that not only princes and high-ranking officials of Bagan, but also the king himself could be considered as educated in PāḲi literature. He further states, “The most interesting record of Caṅsu I is a PāḲi inscription of two faces... the inscription is PāḲi verse of great poetical merit.”¹⁰⁰ Professor Pe Maung Tin also acknowledged and commends the PāḲi composition of the Shwegugyi inscription, stating – “It is such good PāḲi. Some verses of the prayer remind us of the canonical Metta Sutta, or the Discourse on Love.”¹⁰¹ Despite the development of PāḲi literature, monolingual inscriptions written solely in PāḲi remained relatively scarce throughout the Bagan dynasty for more than two centuries. The Shwegugyi inscription serves as a testament to the high standard of PāḲi ability in the Bagan era. However, this evidence is insufficient to conclude that most people in that period possessed the ability to read and write PāḲi. These inscriptions were primarily commissioned by royalty and are associated with the societal elite. Extant inscriptions suggest that PāḲi studies may have played a crucial role among the clergy, royal family and at administrative levels but were much less significant for the grassroots population. Than Tun states, “As the use of the native tongue became popular, it seems that everybody who could afford a dedication would think his work of merit incomplete unless he recorded it on an inscription.”¹⁰² The inscription can be considered an integral part of religious structures during the Bagan period. From the reign of Caṅsū II (1174–1211) to the early 1300s, approximately fifty inscriptions, both PāḲi monolingual and PāḲi-Burmese bilingual, have been discovered. Many of these inscriptions begin with an invocation in PāḲi. Overall, a significant corpus of PāḲi scholarly works, comprising grammar books, commentaries, and sub-commentaries, was produced during the Bagan era.

On the development of PāḲi in Myanmar during the twelfth century and later, Luce states:

“The period 1113 to 1174 AD was a nimble and an eager age of transition. This is seen most obviously in language. Aniruddha had written in Sanskrit or PāḲi – in Sanskrit, perhaps, for dignity, in PāḲi for ease. Saw Lu wrote PāḲi and (perhaps) Mon; Kyansittha almost always in Mon. His son, Rājakumār, in 1113 CE wrote in four languages: PāḲi, Pyu, Mon, Burmese but normally in Mon. The grandson Caṅsū I, wrote in PāḲi, with dates and epilogue in Sanskrit, and once (at least) in Mon. In his reign and his successor’s, Burmese inscriptions begin to appear; some undated ones may well go back to Kyanzittha’s reign, over even earlier. From Caṅsū II onwards Burmese triumphs. Pyu practically disappears. Mon almost disappears from Pagan at any rate. Sanskrit is confined to a few scholars; and PāḲi mostly to monks”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 99.

¹⁰⁰ Than Tun, History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000-1300, *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 61 (1-2) (1978), 11.

¹⁰¹ Pe Maung Tin, “The Shwegu Pagoda Inscription,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 10, no. 2 (1920): 67.

¹⁰² Than Tun, History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000-1300, *Journal of Burmese Research Society* 61 (1-2) (1978), 18.

¹⁰³ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma, Early Pagan*, vol. 1 (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), 96.

This linguistic progression reflects a cultural shift during the Bagan period. As Burmese became the dominant language from the reign of King Caṅsū II onward, other languages such as Pyu and Mon gradually declined in epigraphic usage. Nevertheless, Pāli continued to be used in inscriptions particularly in religious contexts as evidenced by inscriptions discovered up to the mid-14th century.

CONCLUSION

In Theravāda Buddhist countries, particularly in mainland Southeast Asia, Pāli is regarded as a sacred language mainly used in Buddhist activities. It is hard to imagine Theravāda Buddhism without Pāli, as the religion and language are intrinsically linked. According to tradition, the Pāli Tipiṭaka was introduced to the Bagan kingdom after King Anuruddha's conquest of Thaton, the capital of the Mon kingdom. Based on epigraphic evidence, as Theravāda Buddhism flourished, Pali also became prominent in Bagan. Unlike the present day, Pali was employed to record donations and other affairs in Bagan, mostly for religious purposes. Pāli monolingual inscriptions and Pāli-Burmese bilingual inscriptions reveal that Pāli served as a sacred language for religious purposes among the royal elites, learned monks, and in certain scholarly circles. Proficiency in Pāli was considered a marker of prestige and was closely associated with education and high social status in ancient Bagan. Furthermore, the presence of a substantial corpus of Pāli grammatical treatises and other literary works serves as strong evidence that many Buddhist monks in Bagan were not only devoted to learning Pāli but also enthusiastic about contributing to the Pāli tradition. This phenomenon contributed to a Pāli cultural shift, which was concomitant with the flourishing of Theravāda Buddhism among the Bagan societal elite. These developments demonstrate that Pali functioned as a language of religious scriptures and also as a powerful tool for shaping the intellectual milieu during the Bagan era. Significantly, Pāli invocations such as '*namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*' that continue to place at the beginning of Buddhist scriptures today, suggests a continuity of Pāli culture from the Bagan era into contemporary Myanmar. The evidence related to the emergent Pali culture of the Bagan era is primarily connected to the monastic community but has also had a lasting impact on lay followers of Theravāda Buddhism down to the modern age.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India
B I & II	The Inscriptions copied from stones collected by King Bodawpaya and placed near Arakan Pagoda, 1897
BBHC	Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission
CPED	Concise Pāli-English Dictionary
GPC	The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma
IB	Inscription of Burma (Portfolios)
JBS	Journal of Buddhist Studies
JBRs	Journal of the Burma Research Society
JIABS	Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies
List	A List of Inscriptions found in Burma, 1921

MW	<i>A Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i> . 1986. Monier Williams, Monier Willams, Tokyo: Meicho-fukyukai. (First printed. 1899. Oxford: Clarendon Press)
P	PāḲi
PED	<i>The PāḲi Text Society's PāḲi-English Dictionary</i> . 1921-1925. T.W. Rhys Davids and Willam Stede. London: PTS.
PPA	The Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya, Ava
Pṭkt	<i>Piṭakat-taw-thamaing</i> (The History of Piṭaka)
PTS	PāḲi Text Society
Sdn	<i>The Saddanīti</i>
SN	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>
TP PMD	Tipiṭaka PāḲi-Myanmar Dictionary
UB I & II	Inscriptions collected in Upper Burma
UNM	U Nyein Maung, <i>Rheh Hoñh Mranmā Krokā mrah</i> (The Ancient Burmese Inscriptions)
UHS PMD	U Hoke Sein PāḲi-Myanmar Dictionary

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Kings of Bagan (1044 –1368 CE)

No	Name	Referred to Dr. Than Tun	Referred to Zartardawpon	Referred to GPC	Referred to Twin Thin
1.	Aniruddha	?1044 – ?1077	1044–1077	1017– 1059	1017– 1059
2.	Mañ Lulañ	?1077 – 1084	1077–1084	1059 –1064	1059 – 1064
3.	Thiluiñ Mañ	1084 – 1113*	1084–1111	1064 – 1092	1064 – 1093
4.	Cañsū I	1113 – ?1163	1111–1167	1092 – 1167	1093 – 1168
5.	Im Taw Syañ	?1163 – 1165	1167–1170	1167 – 1171	1168 – 1171
	Interregnum *Minyin Narathinga	1165 – 1174	1170–1173	1171 – 1174	1171 – 1174
6.	Cañsū II	1174– 1211	1173–1210	1174 – 1210	1174 – 1211
7.	Nātoñmyā	1211 – ?1231	1210–1234	1210 – 1234	1211 – 1234
8.	Narasiñgha Uccanā	?1231 – 1235			
9.	Klacwā	1235 – 1249	1234–1249	1234 – 1249	1234 – 1250
10.	Uccanā	?1249 – 1256	1249–1254	1249 – 1254	1250 – 1255
11.	Min-Yin	?1256			
12.	Tarukpliy	1256 – 1287	1254–1287	1254 – 1287	1255 – 1286
13.	Kyawswa		1287–1300	1287 – 1300	1286 – 1298
14.	Sawnit		1300–1331	1300 – 1331	1298 – 1330
15.	Saw Mon Nit		1331–1368	1331 – 1368	1330 – 1368