A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
OLD MON EPIGRAPHY AND MODERN MON

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Introduction

The early history of the Mon is not easy to fathom. One may well ask where the original homeland of this people was. Dr. G. H. Luce once told me that during one of his visits to London he happened to be present at a discussion of this important question between a number of scholars of international repute. Mr. A. Christie of the University of London suggested the Tonkin basin as the cradle of the Mon-Khmer-speaking peoples; this view, Luce said, found general acceptance. That was three decades ago.

Now I should like to propose an alternative hypothesis, namely that Mon-Khmer-speakers inhabited the Yangtze Kiang basin long before the Chinese entered this territory. This view grows out of a paper by Dr. E. G. Pulleybank, professor of Chinese at Cambridge University.¹ Pulleybank shows that modern Chinese kiang (chiang) 'river' was pronounced something like /karaŋ/ or /kran/ in Old Chinese. Such forms would no doubt be cognate with Mon-Khmer words for 'river, stream'. Our word in modern Mon is kruŋ /kruŋ/; essentially the same word is found in Bahnar, Cham, Muong, Halang, Jarai, Achinese, and Vietnamese.
In contrast, the Old Burmese word for 'river' is mlac (modern Burmese mrac); the Maru word is rit, while Tibetan has ʂu, ʂu-bo, ʂu-kluṅ, bab-ʂu, and ʦaṅ-po. The northern Chinese word is of course ʃiāŋ; it is ho, which referred primarily to the Yellow River. The word ƙiāŋ is applied to other intercourses in Central China, but is never so used in the North.

There is good historical evidence, therefore, that the Yangtze region was originally a non-Chinese language zone and was only drawn into the sphere of Chinese civilisation in the first millennium B.C. The etymology of this particular word definitely points to an original non-Chinese language having non-Khmer affinities. It is likely that, as linguistic research advances, other evidences of this important kind will come to light. As Dr. Pulleybank says, "Linguistics will, I am convinced, ultimately prove one of the most fruitful and enlightening methods of inquiry. Stone and potsherds are notoriously silent and language is after all one of the basic elements in a people's culture." I agree absolutely, for I believe that in the absence of written records and archaeological finds our main reliance must be on the evidence of comparative linguistic studies. The latter are to all appearances preferable to comparisons of other cultural features, because primitive customs and the like are less stable than language.

Although language is constantly changing, it nevertheless preserves traces of its earlier forms. Judging by the linguistic links between them and by other historical facts, I am of the opinion that the non-Khmer-speaking peoples, who belong to the same
Mongoloid race as speakers of Chinese, Thai, and Tibeto-Burman, probably occupied Central China in prehistoric times while Austronesian-speakers and Negroid peoples were struggling in the coastal areas to the south. Some five thousand years ago the Indochina littoral was apparently settled by Austronesian-speakers while the interior was inhabited by Austroasiatic-speakers—that is to say, tribes speaking Mon-Khmer languages. To the north of these in southern China and adjoining regions dwelt the ancestors of the Thai and Tibeto-Burman-speakers. Within the last fifteen centuries or so, under pressure of growing population and the Chinese advance into the south, the Thai and the Tibeto-Burmans have flooded Indochina with successive waves of conquering immigrants who have broken up the political organization of earlier inhabitants.

According to Chinese accounts, supported by archaeological and epigraphical evidence, a Mon kingdom known as Dvāravatī flourished in Lower Thailand in the 6th century A.D. following the break-up of the Fu-nan empire. In Lower Burma no archaeological excavation has been attempted yet, though a few sites known to us above ground can be shown to antedate the 11th century. Heavy rainfall, especially on the east coast of the Gulf of Martaban where Mon civilisation took root, is cruel to antiquities. In any case, the zone of Mon speech and settlement has steadily dwindled during the past millennium while that of the Burmese has correspondingly grown. At present the estimated number of people who declare themselves Mon is about one million.

Ptolemy, writing in the 1st century A.D., informs us that the inhabitants of the east side of
the cannibals of Besynga," near a
vermouth. Near Besynga, lying inland, was the land
Chryse. This Chryse, the "golden land," is most
probably to be identified with Suvaṇṭabhūmi, situated
around the beautiful isolated rock of Mount Kelasa.
Klemey's "cannibals" may well have been Negritos.
These certainly had lived along the coast of Burma;
they are still found, under the names of Smang and
Kai in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula.
Their basic vocabulary is closely connected with
Khmer. Moreover, an island in the Gulf of
Ortaban is known in Mon palmleaf manuscripts as
ka’ smuiñ /smaŋ/ 'island of demons'; this has been
rendered into Burmese as Bilugyun 'ogre island'.
A smuiñ /smaŋ/ is probably to be identified with
smg 'Negrito'. I am of the opinion that in olden
times the Mon regarded the Smang as sea demons. There
was a legend of fearsome sea demons raiding the royal
palace at Thaton, devouring the newborn princes, and
floshing back into the sea. They were finally
driven out by Sona and Uttara, the two pious Indian
priests said to have been dispatched by the great
buddha in the 3rd century B.C. This story is quite
true, for it appears in the Dharavamsa, the 4th-
century A.D. chronicle of Ceylon. It is repeated
in the 15th-century Kalyani Mon inscriptions, which
state further that the capital of the Mon king
was located on the northwest side of Mount Kelasa,
with the eastern half built on the hill, the western
half built on the plain. The remains of the city
walls and moat are still to be seen there, as
scribed in the records. What is more, two Mon
inscriptions at Thaton dating back to the early 11th
century mention that Thaton was once "the city of
monks," Rakṣapura, a Sanskrit name since "corrupted"
to rakuih (lakuih).  

The Paklat Mon chronicle, printed in Thailand half a century ago, claims that there were fifty-seven kings of Thaton, beginning from the lifetime of the Lord Buddha in the 6th century B.C. One of these, Sirima-Soka, is said to have been a contemporary of the Indian Aśoka. As far as the coming of Indian culture into Indochina is concerned, I consider that Indian settlers would have reached the coastal areas of both the Gulf of Martaban and the Gulf of Siam following the arrival of Aśoka's missionaries in the 3rd century B.C., possibly even earlier, just before the king became a devout Buddhist, during his invasion of Kaliṅga, where he slew a hundred thousand and took more than that number as prisoners of war. It can be expected that in the aftermath of such a catastrophe great numbers would have escaped across the sea.

Vowels and Consonants

The Mon writing system, like those of the Khmer and Javanese, is clearly derived from a South Indian type identical with the Pallava character of the 5th century A.D. The Mon discarded some Indian symbols for which they had no use, but created two new symbols to represent their glottalized consonants. One is a circle with a dot in the centre, transliterated Ḗa and pronounced [ʔba?]. The other is simply m and b in ligature, transliterated mba but pronounced [ʔbe?]. While the first appears with the earliest specimens of written Mon, the second does not appear until modern Mon.

Significantly, the Mon borrowed their vowel and consonant symbols from Sanskrit; modern Mon has twelve vowels and thirty-five consonants. Oddly
ough, the "vowel support" is included among the
consstants, though it is used as an inherent vowel.
The modern language uses two symbols which do not
occur in Old Mon, namely ai and au. On the other
hand, the ś (ś) and ṣ (sh) of the devanāgarī are
found side by side in Old Mon but are nowadays no
longer in use: the former has been replaced by
primary s while the latter has been replaced by s,
or y. For example,

OM kṣēh /kseh/ 'horse' > mM khyeh /cheh/
msun /msun/ 'five' > msun /peson/
lakṣan /laksan/ 'sign' > lakyan /lekson/

The Period of Florencence

Written Mon was at its zenith during the early
Buddhist period, and it is a curious fact that we have
so far found no other Mon kings in the history of
Burmese who employed their language more elegantly than
the Burmese king known as Kyansitha. He wrote in
Monese, but in a truly poetic way. It was a great
moment in the history of our country when such a
poem occurred. An extract from the translation
of one of Kyansitha's Old Mon inscriptions reads:

When King Kyansitha reigns, if any mighty
army should come, an auspicious constel-
lation and a good omen of victory should
appear before him. In time of war, he
shall ride upon a noble steed that has
swiftness as the steeds that are of the
breed of the clouds and shall fight with
victory. In time of peace, he shall be
seated on a throne made of gold and adorned
with gems and shall enjoy the splendour of
royalty. The maiden daughters of many
princes from seven cities, adorned with
gems of various kinds, having the fragrance
like the fragrance of jasmine flowers and
having the splendour like the splendour of
the spouse of King Indra, all shall attend
him. The tears of those who are parted from their beloved ones, by a course of benefits, by loving kindness which is even as a hand, the king shall wipe away. The nasal mucus of all those who are sick at heart, by a course of benefits, by compassion which is even as water, the king shall wash away. With his right hand rice and cakes, with his left hand ornaments and fine apparel, the king shall give to all his people. All the people shall be like children resting in their mother's bosoms, so shall the king keep watch and ward them with beneficial effects...

History of Mon Studies

The first attempt to study Mon epigraphy systematically was made in 1909 by Dr. C. O. Blagden of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, with the help of Pāli and Burmese texts engraved on the same pillar and containing the same matter as the Mon of the Myazedi quadrilingual inscription stone at Pagan. He made strenuous efforts in tackling the early Mon records, which were unintelligible to anyone in those days. He was the true pioneer of early Mon studies. He deciphered and edited almost all the Mon inscription of Burma while George Coedes and Robert Halliday performed a similar service for Old Mon writings found in Thailand. G. H. Luce joined them in this task around 1920 and is still pursuing it energetically in his ripe old age in the Channel Islands. He has read and edited most of the Mon and Burmese ink-inscriptions of the Pagan temples. He is indeed our guiding star in the matter of Old Mon as well as Old Burmese. His latest work appeared in three large volumes.

The third scholar among Englishmen who has tackled and is still tackling Mon studies is
Professor H. L. Shorto of the University of London. has already published a dictionary of modern Mon and one of the Mon inscriptions. Despite a few disputable entries, both are quite admirable and are among the finest reference works for Mon-Khmer studies.

**Comparison of Old and Modern Forms**

To study early Mon epigraphy is not easy even for a native Mon speaker. It looks like a different language, and I found it far from immediately intelligible. To get an acquaintance with it, one must devote several years to arduous study because its evolution in the course of fourteen centuries has been so radical that it is quite difficult to recognize even common words such as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OM rînleŋ /rînleŋ/</th>
<th>mM leh /leh/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jînjeŋ /jînjeŋ/</td>
<td>dayeh /hayeh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dîndar /dîndar/</td>
<td>dalaw /həlɔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dîndu /dînduʔ/</td>
<td>dalo /həlɔʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'încim /încim/</td>
<td>phyuim /phym/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kindâm /kindəm/</td>
<td>khanâm /hənəm/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yimâs /yimah/</td>
<td>tâmaŋ /əmah/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuʔbok /tuʔbok/</td>
<td>thaʔâ /thaʔhaʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jun /jûn/</td>
<td>juin /jän/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jin /jîn/</td>
<td>mau /mea/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'bow /əbwɔ/ 'to suck'</td>
<td>kluîh /klɔh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirâh /kîrlîh/</td>
<td>tñay /nɔa/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OM kintu /kintu?/ 'moon'  >  mM gatu /hetao?/
anĝaw /aŋgaw/ 'frog'  >  ǹau /ņea/
jlaw /jelaw/ 'cattle'  >  glau /klæa/
tyān /tyain/ 'fowl'  >  cān /caiŋ/
kinlo /kinlo?/ 'oyster'
>  knu /ənəo?/
darkot /darkot/ 'lizard'
>  dakot /hakot/
kloŋ /kloŋ/ 'water crow (cormorant)'
>  'klaŋ /əkloŋ/

(Kinship Terms)
ambo /mbw?/ 'mother'  >  mi /mi?/
amba /mba?/ 'father'  >  ma /me?/
kandar /kəndar/ 'wife'  >  kalaw /kalɔ/
kamwa /kɔmwa?/ 'younger uncle'
>  tra /tra?/
kmun /kmun/ 'nephew'  >  kmin /kəmən/
kumci /kumci?/  >  de' /de?/
kaŋci /kamci?/ 'younger sibling'
munyow /munyow/  >  yau /yəa/
minyow /minyow/ 'elder brother'
>  khāŋsi
kuṁsT /kumsT/ 'father-in-law'
>  khamsɔe/
kumci dnal /kumci?  >  de' sTdndT
dnal/ 'younger
sister-in-law'  >  de? sədni

(Loanwords)
The following illustrate loans from Sanskrit (Skt.) and Pāli (P.), which undergo the same deformation as native Mon items:

Skt. vihāra11  OM pihār /pihar/  mM huim /həm/ ~ lhuim /ləhm/ 'speech; to speak'
P. vihāra  bihār /bihar/  bhā /phəa/ 'monastery'
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mon Word</th>
<th>Sanskrit Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chāyā</td>
<td>OM cīrhāy/cirhai</td>
<td>mM chāai/chai</td>
<td>'beauty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rāṣṭra</td>
<td>rās/ras</td>
<td>raḥ/reḥ</td>
<td>'country'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vyādēsa</td>
<td>byādes/byades</td>
<td>pyahduiḥ/pyahduḥ</td>
<td>'prophecy or command'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'aṅgāra</td>
<td>aṅgār/angar</td>
<td>aṅā/aṅēa</td>
<td>'Sunday'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caitra</td>
<td>cey/cea</td>
<td>cay/coa</td>
<td>'April'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prajñā</td>
<td>prajñā/prajña</td>
<td>paṅā/poṇa</td>
<td>'wisdom'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puṇya</td>
<td>pun/pun</td>
<td>puin/pon</td>
<td>'merit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vajra</td>
<td>bajra/bajra</td>
<td>buit/p3t</td>
<td>'diamond'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vāniṣya</td>
<td>banik/banoik</td>
<td>bnik/henoik</td>
<td>'trade'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vicāra</td>
<td>bicār/bicar</td>
<td>bca/heca</td>
<td>'judge'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saṅghātī</td>
<td>siṅgāl/singal</td>
<td>sṅā/śēha</td>
<td>'monk's robe'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharma</td>
<td>dhar/dhar</td>
<td>dhaw/dho</td>
<td>'law, doctrine'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhyāna</td>
<td>dhyān/dhyan</td>
<td>jhān/chan</td>
<td>'supernatural power'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lāṅgula</td>
<td>lāṅgūr/langur</td>
<td>lṅaw/ənɔ</td>
<td>'pair'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dravya</td>
<td>drabya</td>
<td>drap/ɡrap</td>
<td>/dra?bya?/ 'treasure, property'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pali</td>
<td>torin/torin</td>
<td>taruin/taron</td>
<td>'ornamental arch'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the above specimens show that Mon has changed extensively in the course of time both etymologically and lexically. Consequently, as
Professor Shorto remarks, "It is not unfair to suggest that they [the Mon records] yield an opportunity for the study of linguistic evolution which is unparalleled in South East Asia." From observation of the badly corrupted loanwords in Mon, I am inclined to think that the Sanskrit element is not small; it has penetrated into our language very deeply. In fact, there is sufficient proof to show that original Buddhism in Burma had a predominantly Sanskrit basis before Pāli superseded it with the coming of Singhalese Pāli scriptures.

Orthography and Phonology

The stages of Mon orthography are very complicated, and there are many problems in the phonology due to variant spellings. Dr. Blagden has shown how complicated is the vowel system of Mon in his learned article "Quelques notions sur la phonétique du Talain". Whether in Old Mon the two series of initial consonants, surds and sonants, gave different phonetic value to their following vowels, as they do today both in Mon and Khmer is quite questionable. One may assume that if surds and sonants were formally distinguished in pronunciation such vowel distinctions were not needed. It was not merely a question of vowel length but also of vowel quality. Forms with long ā, ī, and ū generally preserve those vowels in the modern spelling, though only medial ā continues to be written long. Long ā and short a are very seldom interchangeable. A few instances which occurred in Old Mon may be due to carelessness on the part of a scribe. Short medial vowels were often quite indeterminate; these for the most part passed into modern -u-.

Examples:
Short medial vowels passing to -ui-

OM ḅap /?bap/
    bıp /?bıp/  'wild duck' >  ṭuip /?bıp/
    ṭul /?bıp/

tement /t?man/  >  ṭuini /?man/
    'sambhur deer'

tગat /tġat/
    tğılt /tġit/  'quail' >  tguilt /əkh3t/
    tgüüt /tgüüt/

kطيب /k?diip/  'head' >  kdüip /?diip/
    'ut /ut/  'all' >  'uit /eit/

gɾis /gris/  'liver' >  gruih /kr3h/
    grıp /grıp/  'jungle' >  grüp /kr3p/

casıń /ca?siŋ/  >  casuíñ /ci?siŋ/
    'to enjoy'

cıp /cıp/  'to reach' >  cuip /cıp/
    cıp /cıp/  'to reach' >  cuip /cıp/

dęk /?dęk/  'to ride' >  duiık /?dak/
    tal /tal/  'to plant' >  tuiw /to/

til /til/  'to plant' >  tuiw /to/

yuk /yuk/  'to lift' >  yuik /yak/
    sʤık /s?doik/  >  sʤuk /he?dak/
    'to be pleased'

Examples of long medial vowels

antūl /ɔntul/  'above' >  latū /ətao/
    kwTl /kwil/  'cart' >  kwT /kwT/
    twañ /twaŋ/  'village' >  kwān /kwan/
    kyël /kyel/  'wind' >  kyā /kya/
    ljbTr /l?bir/  'sea' >  bT /?bi/

gür /gur/  'to rain' >  gū /gu/
    ār /ar/  'to go' >  ā /a/
    āc /aṭ/  'to beg' >  āt /at/
    tirwTI /tirwil/  >  tawT /tawi/
    'to surround'
### Examples of medial variation between a and e

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OM kamlac /kɔmlɔt/</th>
<th>mako palat /pəlɔt/ kamlat /kɔmlɔt/</th>
<th>thief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cloc /clɔt/</td>
<td>klat /klaːt/</td>
<td>pediment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cliec /clɛt/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sran /sɾɔn/</td>
<td>srana /sɾɔn/</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sren /srɛn/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manglan /məŋlɔn/</td>
<td>manglana /məŋklən/</td>
<td>tamarind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mangle /məŋlɛ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of medial variation between a and e

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kyāk /kyaik/</th>
<th>kyāk /kyaik/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kyek /kyeik/</td>
<td>'object of reverence'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pān /pain/</td>
<td>pān /pain/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peñ /pen/</td>
<td>'mouth'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Examples of medial variation of i, u, e, o

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kmin /kmin/</th>
<th>kmin /kmin/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kmun /kmun/</td>
<td>'to rule'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiljip /jiljip/</td>
<td>jiljip /jiljip/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dukip /dukip/</td>
<td>dukip /hekɔp/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dukup /dukup/</td>
<td>dukup /hekɔp/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goh /gwh/</td>
<td>goh /k3h/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guh /guh/</td>
<td>'cave'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duk /duk/</td>
<td>duk /dak/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dok /dwk/</td>
<td>'to be poor'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smîn /smiŋ/</td>
<td>smîn /smiŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smeŋ /smɛŋ/</td>
<td>'king'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinliŋ /tinliŋ/</td>
<td>tinliŋ /tənliŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirjih /kirjih/</td>
<td>kirjih /kərjih/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirjeŋ /kirjeŋ/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dik /dik/</td>
<td>dik /dik/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ñek /dek/</td>
<td>'slave'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OM waṁ /wəṁ/ 'to play' > mM weん /wənŋ/
samgīh /səʊmgih/ > sŋeh /səŋəh/
sunghēh /sumghēh/ 'to be rich'
slok /sləʊk/ 'to wear' > sluik /slək/
slu̯k /sləʊk/ 'to wear'
cro̯n /crəʊn/ > sruĩn /saŋ/
cru̯n /crəʊn/ 'to build'
pgooh /pəʊh/ 'to blow' > bguih /bək̚h/
pgu̯h /pəʊh/ 'to blow'
plo̯n /pləʊn/ > pluĩn /pləŋ/
plu̯n /pləʊn/ 'to unfold,
to blossom'
rmĩn /rməʊn/ 'to hear' > lmiŋ /lməʊn/
rme̯n /rməŋ/ 'to hear'

The regular vowel ə usually remains the same, sometimes passes into short a or å and ui. e.g.:
tos /təʊs/ 'to preach' > twah /twəh/
dmoŋ /dməʊŋ/ 'to dwell'
gloʊ /gləʊŋ/ 'many' > gluĩn /gləŋ/

The wide range of consonants occurring before after vowels shows that they have little or no influence on the latter except in the case of the finals, where influence was considerable. For example, ca puñ 'to eat rice' is now pronounced pəŋ ~ fi? pəŋ/, according to the locality. The corresponding expression in Cantonese is ca? pəŋ. This a loan? Another case in point is OM 'añoča nəke', which in modern Mon is spelt ləcə and pronounced /əca~ ləc̚i?/, depending on the dialect. Through the present distribution of Mon speakers in
Burma has contracted, there are three main varieties in their speech, still known as the Bassein, the Pegu, and the Martaban dialects after the three major regions.

**Morphology**

Morphological relationships to be seen in early Mon records are quite interesting. The processes both of prefixation and infixation play a considerable role. Some examples showing prefixation:

- **OM das /dɔs/ 'to be'** > **mM dah /dɔh/**
- **dirDNA /dirDɔs/ 'existence'** > **dadah /dedɔh/**
- **sdas /sdɔs/ 'will exist'** > **sdah /sdɔh/**
- **pa'das /pd s/ 'to bring into being'** > **pdah /pdɔh/**
- **graN /gɾaN/ 'to know'** > **gɾaN /gɾeаN/**
- **guraN /guraN/ 'to tell'** > **garaN /gəɾeaN/**
- **sguraN /sguraN/ 'will tell'** > **sgaraN /sɡəɾeаN/**
- **sul /sul/ 'to write'** > **khyụ /chu/**
- **sisul /sisul/ 'writing'** > **skhyụ /schu/**
- **pa /pa?/ 'to do'** > **pa /pa?/**
- **spa /spa?/ 'will do'** > **spa /spa?/**
- **puwa /puwa?/ 'deed'** > **pwa /pwa?/**
- **jNok /jnwk/ 'to be great'** > **jNok /hnw̃k/**
- **jumNok /jumnw̃k/ 'greatness; extent'** > **jamNok /hənw̃/**
- **hum /hum/ 'to bathe'** > **hum /hum/**
OM phum /phum/ 'to bathe another' > mM phum /phum/
mun /mun/ 'to inform' > pmiŋ /pmoiŋ/
pumun /pumun/ 'to send word to' > bakan /hekɔŋ/
pdar /pdɔr/ 'to shade' > pdaw /do/
dindar /dindar/ 'to be shaded' > dalaw /helo/

rindleh /rindleh/ 'to dance' > leh /leh/
raleh /raleh/ 'to make anything dance' > paleh /paleh/

hāp /hap/ 'to eat' > hāp /hap/
rhāp /rhap/ 'food' > cna hāp /hena? hap/

gruŋ /grwŋ/ 'to laugh' > gruŋ /grañ/
ginruŋ /ginrwŋ/ 'laughter' > garuŋ /gerañ/
sāl /sal/ 'to spread' > laŋ /leh/

snāl /snal/ 'mat' > snā /hna/

mic /mɑc/ 'wishing to be' > mik /moik/
pumic /pumɑc/ 'desire' > pmik /pemοik/

jin /jin/ > juin /jɔn/
jun /jən/ (/jwn/) 'to offer'
jumwin /jʌmwin/ 'present' > jmin /jmoiŋ/

moy /moa/ 'one' > mwaal /moa/
mirmoy /mirmoa/ 'unit (one piece)' > mwaai mwaai /moa moa/
OM ḅar /ʔbar/ 'two'
  birbär /birʔbar/ 'twin, double'
  pi /piʔ/ 'three'
  pumplʔ /pʊmplʔ/ 'triad, triple'
  ptám /ptám/ 'to plant'
  tam /tám/ 'plant, tree'
  tey /teʔ/ 'hand'
  titey /titeʔ/ 'to lead'
  tol /tol/ 'thread'
  tilitol /tilitol/ 'tradition'
  ọgay /ʔdeʔa/ 'in'
  pọgay /pʊgay/ 'inside'
  tirọgay /tirdeʔa/ 'middle'
  nor /nor/ 'from, after'
  mnor /mnor/ 'time after'
  toʔ /toʔ/ 'plural suffix'
  tinmoʔ /tinmoʔ/ 'all, every'
  beh /beh/ 'you'
  beh to /beh toʔ/ 'all of you'
  ọgeh /ʔdeh/ 'he, him, her, she'

> mM ɓa /ʔba/
> ɓa ɓa /ʔba ʔba/
> pi /piʔ/
> pi pi /piʔ piʔ/
> ptám /ptám/
> tnam /tnam/
> tay /toa/
> datay /hetoa/
> tow /to/
> datow /heto/
> ɗai /ʔdoa/
> pɗai /ʔdoa/
> thaɗai /hɗaʔdua/
> nū /nu/
> mnū /mnu/
> taʔ /taʔ/
> tmaʔ /ʔamoʔ/
> beh /beh/
> beh ta /beh toʔ/
> ɗeh /ʔdeh/
OM ḍeh to/ /?deh to/
    ḍeh t'eh/ /?deh t'eh/   →   ḍeh ta'
    ja t'eh /æje? t'eh/   /?deh to?/
        'they, them'

'ey /ea/
    'I, me, my, mine'

poy /poy/ 'we, us'   →   puiai /poi/

The plural suffix t'eh and the word for 'he,
'ja do not occur in modern Mon but are
ricted to Old Mon. Kuṁ is another word for 'you'
ch we do not have in modern usage. For example:

kuṁ t'eh ṇaḥ bār /kum t'eh ṇah ?ba/
    'you two people'.

beḥ ta ṇaḥ bā /beh to? ṇah ?ba/
    'you two people'.

The two deictics are:--

OM wo' /wo?/   mM wwa' /wo?/ 'this'
    goh /gwh/    gah /goh/ 'that'

The two emphatics in Old Mon ci and da are
ll used in today's literature but not in spoken
. In Old Mon ci is often used with kuṁ as in
ci while da often combined with gaṁ as in gaṁ da.
kuṁ ci is used as an emphatic only. It has
bing 'younger brother or sister'.

The two clause-subordinating particles in Old
, na and ma, are still in use in modern times.
example,

na ḍenisaṅ kyāk wo mic das kyāk
    /na? ani?son kyaiw? mit das kyaiw/
"By the benefit of (donating) this Buddha, may (I) become a Buddha."

"Two figures of golden ducks that carry pearls (in their beaks)."

The two interrogatives tā and yo in Old Mon are now deformed into hā and ro respectively. For example,

"What will happen?"

"Is it true?"

**Formulae of Change**

Besides the vowel changes shown above, Mon shows considerable evolution in its initial, medial and final consonants, as will be noted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Old Mon</th>
<th>Modern Mon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ñ &gt; b</td>
<td>rbin</td>
<td>buin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rm &gt; m</td>
<td>rmin</td>
<td>min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t1 &gt; kl</td>
<td>tla</td>
<td>kla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kṣ &gt; khy</td>
<td>kṣap</td>
<td>khyap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k &gt; g</td>
<td>OM ki̱ncem /kincem/</td>
<td>mM gacem /hecem/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kinkan /kinkən/</td>
<td>gakan /həkəν/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kintu /kintuʔ/</td>
<td>gatu /hətəoʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kandoʔ /kəndoʔ/</td>
<td>gadul /hətəʔʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c &gt; k</td>
<td>clac /clɔc/</td>
<td>klat /klot/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clik /clik/</td>
<td>klik /kloik/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clo /cloʔ/</td>
<td>kloʔ /kloʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c &gt; s</td>
<td>crls /cros/</td>
<td>sruin /soh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cruń /cruŋ/</td>
<td>sruin /saŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crok /crok/</td>
<td>srok /hərək/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>crow /crwɔ/</td>
<td>srau /sao/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>croh /crwh/</td>
<td>srah /hərəh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j &gt; d</td>
<td>ji̱njuŋ /jinjuŋ/</td>
<td>dayuŋ /həyəŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ji̱njeh /jinjeh/</td>
<td>dayeh /həyəh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j &gt; g</td>
<td>jirla /jirla/</td>
<td>dala /heleʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jlow /jlow/</td>
<td>glau /glaeə/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d &gt; g</td>
<td>drεp /drep/</td>
<td>grip /grip/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dläm /dləm/</td>
<td>gläm /gləm/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dliŋ /dliŋ/</td>
<td>gliŋ /gloŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Id &gt; g</td>
<td>Omen</td>
<td>mm-g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t &gt; k</td>
<td>twaw</td>
<td>kwaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>twai</td>
<td>kwai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j &gt; d</td>
<td>juram</td>
<td>heram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n &gt; l</td>
<td>nirnat</td>
<td>lenat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &gt; b</td>
<td>pubar</td>
<td>babulw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medial clusters**

Of two medial consonants, the first is usually dropped out as will be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rk &gt; k</th>
<th>birket</th>
<th>baket</th>
<th>'to be red'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rt &gt; t</td>
<td>birta?</td>
<td>bata?</td>
<td>'tail'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>birtom</td>
<td>betom</td>
<td>'night'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nt &gt; t</td>
<td>bintain</td>
<td>batain</td>
<td>'to be white'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bintil</td>
<td>betoe</td>
<td>'sand'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>binton</td>
<td>beton</td>
<td>'to teach'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nr &gt; r</td>
<td>tinran</td>
<td>tanan</td>
<td>'door'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tinrem</td>
<td>tarem</td>
<td>'to be old'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nm &gt; m</td>
<td>tinmat</td>
<td>tamat</td>
<td>'vulture'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nt &gt; t</td>
<td>tintan</td>
<td>dhitan</td>
<td>'sal tree'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rc &gt; c</td>
<td>circun</td>
<td>dacun</td>
<td>'walking stick'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are a few original clusters from which the second medial consonant is dropped, as follows:

mb > m

lambāy /lombai/  lamāy /kəməi/  'snake charmer'

nl > n

kinlap /kinlop/  knap /ənɔp/  'volume'

kino /kino?/  kanu /ənəo?/  'oyster'

tinlum /tinlum/  tanim /ənɪm/  'to sink'

tinlur /tinlur/  snow /hnə/  'bolt'

tinlah /tinlah/  tanah /ənah/  'leaf'

tinlin /tinlin/  tanin /ənəıŋ/  'needle'

ŋ > n

gandin /gən?din/  ganiŋ /hənəıŋ/  'bell'

Most of the nd medial clusters changed to l except a few, as follows:

nd > l

kandar /kɔndar/  kalaw /kələw/  'wife'

dindan /dindon/  (badan /hədən/)  'to conceal'
I nd > l
OM dindāy /dindai/  mM dalāy /helaï/
  'to lean'
sandeñ /sondeh/  saleñ /heleï/
  'to doubt'
nd > n
kindam /kindom/
  khanam /heman/
  'to build, found'

Final Consonants

As seen from the above data, the rules for final consonant changes are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OM</th>
<th>mM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-s</td>
<td>-h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-n</td>
<td>-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-n</td>
<td>n ~ ń</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-w</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final l also becomes w. Final y is always rewritten with the new symbol aï, i.e. a leftward dash not unlike ɾ. In the same way, final w after a or o is always rewritten with the new symbol au, i.e. a rightward dash not unlike ɾ.

It will be noted also that most of the initial consonants are not pronounced according to the spelling in spoken Mon. An h or ø sound is usually preferred. For example, the word for 'demon, ogre' in OM is rakṣa (Skt. rakṣasa) while in modern Mon it is rakuih ~ lakuïh, pronounced /əkʰə/. Others are:

- mM kmā /əma/  'pond'
- lñuiw /ənʃ/  'some'
- dacām /həcam/  'eight'
- khamān /həman/  'son-in-law'
- kha'ah or ga'ah /həch/  'daughter-in-law'
- bañū /heʔbu/  'to be drunk'
### Three Stages of Spelling

All the words cited so far have been in only 3 forms of spelling. It may be of interest if we compare the OM and MM orthography with that of Middle Mon (MM):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OM kin uy</th>
<th>MM ka uy</th>
<th>mM ga uai /ge?ui/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kirkūl</td>
<td>grakū</td>
<td>gakū /ge?kao/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kirmin</td>
<td>kramin</td>
<td>kmin /kəmín/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giŋgiŋ</td>
<td>gangeŋ</td>
<td>gaheŋ /gehoinŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girluŋ</td>
<td>graloŋ</td>
<td>galuiŋ /helanŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guŋ ir</td>
<td>gam T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gummaŋ ir</td>
<td>gamhT</td>
<td>khamT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cu aŋ</td>
<td>ca aŋ</td>
<td>s aŋ /he?ah/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jirku</td>
<td>jraku</td>
<td>jaku /hekaoʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tirtūy</td>
<td>dratuy</td>
<td>datuai /hetoe/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tumbaŋ</td>
<td>tabaŋ</td>
<td>tmaŋ /əmah/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tdaŋ</td>
<td>tdoŋ</td>
<td>kduŋ /danŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pindoŋ</td>
<td>pandañ</td>
<td>palañ /pelɔŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirnas</td>
<td>banah</td>
<td>bnuh /henuh/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piryaŋ</td>
<td>prayam</td>
<td>payam /payam/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirmok</td>
<td>mramok</td>
<td>bmåk /həmملك/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM sinrañ</td>
<td>MM sarañ</td>
<td>mM carañ /herañ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sirsūl</td>
<td>dasū</td>
<td>kasū /kasao/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'writing, drawing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sirsuk</td>
<td>drasok</td>
<td>tsuik /sak/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'happiness; rich'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dirhat</td>
<td>darhat</td>
<td>jrahat /thot/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'strength'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rin ut</td>
<td>ra it</td>
<td>l it /leit/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'end'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rinđuk</td>
<td>ranđuk</td>
<td>ranuk /rnuk/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'to complete'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruńba</td>
<td>lamba</td>
<td>lma /əmɛʔ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'hunter'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rmeñ</td>
<td>rman</td>
<td>man /mon/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'mon (people)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sāṃbhuc</td>
<td>sambut</td>
<td>smut /həmət/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'food offered to gods or spirits'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the above stages of Mon orthography, covering a period of well over a thousand years, reveal considerable complexity both in philology and phonology.

The Mon epigraphical records cited in this paper are from five distinct kingdoms: Dvāravatī (Old Siam/Thailand), Suvaññabhūmi (Thaton), Arimaddanapura (Pagan), Haribhunjaya (Lamphun in Northern Thailand), and Haṅsāwatī (Pegu).

From the early Mon kingdom of Dvāravatī, around the Menam basin, we have traces enough to establish certain linguistic peculiarities, in records engraved as early as the sixth century A.D. Then, after a gap of about four hundred years, there follows a group from the Lower Burma state of Suvaññabhūmi,
ignoble to the early 11th century and referring
the coronation of King Makuta and the carving of
the sculpture by Queen Muḥ Taḥ who dwelled at
Trip, a city which we are unable to identify. It is
mentioned on one of two inscribed stone Buddhas found
along with a Vishnu with fine carvings in Kawgun
Te, lying about 30 miles above the Gulf of
Taban. The remains of a city wall are visible in
the vicinity of the cave. Local tradition says that
was a city called Campānagar.

Next come the old writings belonging to the
writings from Aniruddha (1044-1077 A.D.) down to
Mungisithu (Cānsū I, 1113-1160 A.D.) on which
classical Mon was largely based. They were not only
lithic form but many were appended to frescoes or
oral paintings on the inner walls of the temples of
Pagan in the form of ink inscriptions. Colourful
plated ceramic plaques and votive tablets with Mon
inscriptions are quite plentiful. Pagan was, of course,
Burmese kingdom and the use of Mon by their
monarchs is a curious historical fact in the history
of Burma.

Haribhuṅjaya, a Mon state in Northern Thailand,
holds nearly a dozen Mon stone slabs belonging to
the 12th and 13th centuries. The latest find has
been edited by A. B. Griswold and Dr. Prasert ṇa
agara in 1971. 13 A stone slab has also been
covered in Laos near Vientiane.

After another gap, Mon epigraphy reappeared in
the 15th century at Haṅsāvatī in inscriptions mostly
graved by a Mon queen, Shin Saw Pu, and her son-in-
v King Rāmādhipati. We call these inscriptions
Middle Mon. Oddly enough we find no inscriptions
concerning the Martaban Dynasty which flourished
from the 13th century. A number of bronze bell inscriptions and copper-plate as well as silver-leaf Mon writings are found elsewhere in Burma, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries.

The irregular variations in spelling, especially of vowels, which signal the evolution of the Mon sound-system, certainly present problems both intricate and extreme almost at all periods. Consequently, Professor G. H. Luce, our greatest living authority on Old Mon, often remarks, "Old Mon and Modern Mon are well-nigh two different languages and Modern Spoken Mon is yet a third!" G. H. Luce is still working on another big volume of the Linguistic Survey of Burma; including both Mon and Burmese epigraphy with their relations to Indo-Aryan languages.

Thus the Mon language is not unlikely to be regarded by the world of scholarship as one of the major topics in the field of Austroasiatic linguistics analysis.

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2 Daw Thin Kyi, professor of Geography at Rangoon University, is of the opinion that the present coastline on the east side of the river Sittang is about ten miles in advance of what it was at the beginning of the Christian era.
3 Blagden spelt this name Semang, but I learn from Malaysians that they call these peoples Smang.
4 See Williams and Norgate, The Dipavamsa (London, 1879); also Geiger and Bode, The Mahavamsa (Colombo, 1912), 82.
5 For the legend and for the word raksapura see, respectively, Epigraphia Birmantica, III, Part II, and Inscriptions of Burma Portfolio, IV, plates 358 and 359.
See Asokan Rock Edicts, No. XIII, translation into English by Dr. Sircar.

Editor's note: Typographical limitations require throughout this paper the substitution of \( b \) for the author's IPA symbol for implosive \( b \).

OM = Old Mon; mM = modern Mon. The phonetic equivalence of all OM forms cited is hypothetical.

Gordon H. Luce, Old Burma - Early Pagán, by... assisted by Bo-Hmu Ba Shin, U Tin Oo, the Staff of the Burma Historical Commission, the Burma Archaeological Department, and Many Other Friends. Published for Artibus Asiae and The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Artibus Asiae..., Supplementum 5 (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, 1969-70).


In JA, 10e série, XV (1910):477-505.