

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.<sup>1</sup> Pulleybank shows that modern Chinese *kiang* (*chiang*) 'river' was pronounced something like /karaŋ/ or /kraŋ/ in Old Chinese. Such forms would no doubt be cognate with Mon-Khmer words for 'river, stream'. Our word in modern Mon is *kruñ* /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 *m-lac* (modern Burmese *mrac*); the Maru word is *rit*, while Tibetan has *ču*, *ču-bo*, *ču-klun*, *bab-ču*, and *sañ-po*. The northern Chinese word is of course *kiang*; it is *ho*, which referred primarily to the Yellow River. The word *kiang* is applied to other watercourses 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 Sino-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 Sino-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,<sup>2</sup> 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

Gulf were "the cannibals of Besynga," near a  
Mormouth. Near Besynga, lying inland, was the land  
Chryse. This Chryse, the "golden land," is most  
probably to be identified with Suvannabhūmi, situated  
around the beautiful isolated rock of Mount Kelasa.  
Herodotus'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<sup>3</sup> and  
Kai in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula.  
Their basic vocabulary is closely connected with  
Proto-Khmer. Moreover, an island in the Gulf of  
Mormouth is known in Mon palmleaf manuscripts as  
Sma' smuiñ /smaŋ/ 'island of demons'; this has been  
rendered into Burmese as *Bilugyun* 'ogre island'.  
Sma' smuiñ /smaŋ/ is probably to be identified with  
Smang 'Negrito'. I am of the opinion that in olden  
times the Mon regarded the Smang as sea demons. There  
is a legend of fearsome sea demons raiding the royal  
palace at Thaton, devouring the newborn princes, and  
flinging back into the sea. They were finally  
driven out by Sona and Uttara, the two pious Indian  
ascetics said to have been dispatched by the great  
Asoka in the 3rd century B.C. This story is quite  
famous, for it appears in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the 4th-  
century-A.D. chronicle of Ceylon.<sup>4</sup> 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  
described 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  
demons," *Rakṣapura*, a Sanskrit name since "corrupted"

to rakuhih (lakuhih).<sup>5</sup>

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 Kalinga, where he slew a hundred thousand and took more than that number as prisoners of war.<sup>6</sup> 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 *ba* and pronounced [ʔbaʔ].<sup>7</sup> The other is simply *m* and *b* in ligature, transliterated *mba* but pronounced [ʔbɛʔ]. 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 consonants, 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 ordinary s while the latter has been replaced by s, or y. For example,

OM kṣeḥh /kseḥ/ <sup>8</sup> 'horse'	>	mM khyeh /cheh/
mṣun /msun/ 'five'	>	msun /pəson/
lakṣan /lakson/ 'sign'	>	lakyan /lekson/

### *Period of Florescence*

Written Mon was at its zenith during the early Burmese period, and it is a curious fact that we have as yet found no other Mon kings in the history of Burma who employed their language more elegantly than the Burmese king known as Kyansitha. He wrote in Old Mon, but in a truly poetic way. It was a great event in the history of our country when such a miracle 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 constellation 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 inscriptions of Burma while George Coedès 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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> Despite a few reputable 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:

OM rinleh /rinleh/ 'to dance'	>	mM leh /leh/
jiñjeh /jinjeh/ 'to sing'	>	dayeh /həyeh/
dindar /dindər/ 'to shade'	>	dalaw /hələw/
dindu /dindu?/ 'to teach'	>	dalo /hələʔ/
'iñcim /incim/ 'to feed'	>	phyuim /phyəm/
kindam̃ /kindəm/ 'to make or build'	>	khanam̃ /hənəm/
yimās /yimah/ 'to shine'	>	tamah /əmah/
tubok /tuʔbok/ 'to present'	>	thaḃà /thaʔhaʔ/
jun /jwn/ jin /jin/ 'to offer'	>	juin /jɜn/
'bow /əbww/ 'to suck'	>	mau /mɛa/
kirloh /kirlwh/ 'to penetrate'	>	kluh /kləh/
tñey /tɲey/ 'sun'	>	tñay /ŋoa/



OM kintu /kintu?/ 'moon'	>	mM gatu /hətao?/
aṅgāw /aṅgaw/ 'frog'	>	ṇau /ŋea/
jlow /jəlow/ 'cattle'	>	glau /klea/
tyāṇ /tyaiŋ/ 'fowl'	>	cāṇ /caŋ/
kinlo /kinlo?/ 'oyster'	>	knu /ənao?/
darkot /dərkot/ 'lizard'	>	dakot /həkot/
kloḥ /kloḥ/ 'water crow (cormorant)'	>	'kiah /əkloḥ/

## (Kinship Terms)

ambo / <sup>m</sup> bu?/ 'mother'	>	mi /mi?/
amba / <sup>m</sup> ba?/ 'father'	>	ma /me?/
kandar /kəndər/ 'wife'	>	kalaw /kalo/
kamwa /kəmwa?/ 'younger uncle'	>	tra /tra?/
kmun /kmun/ 'nephew'	>	kmin /kəmen/
kumci /kumci?/ 'younger sibling'	>	de' /de?/
munyow /munyow/ 'elder brother'	>	yau /yea/
kumst /kumsi/ 'father-in-law'	>	khāmsi /khamse/
kumci dnal /kumci? dnal/ 'younger sister-in-law'	>	de' sTdnT /de? soedni

## (Loanwords)

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

Skt. <i>vihāra</i> <sup>11</sup>	OM piḥār /pihar/ 'speech; to speak'	mM huim /həm/ ~ lhuim /lhəm/
P. <i>vihāra</i>	biḥār /bihar/ 'monastery'	bhā /phea/

. <i>chāyā</i>	OM cirhāy /cirhai/ mM chāai /chai/ 'beauty'	
. <i>rāṣṭra</i>	rās /ras/ 'country'	raḥ /reh/
. <i>vyādēsa</i>	byādes /byades/ 'prophecy or command'	pyaḥduih /pyahd3h/
. 'aṅgāra	aṅgār /angar/ 'Sunday'	aṅā /aṅea/
. <i>caitra</i>	cey /cea/ 'April'	cay /coa/
. <i>prajñā</i>	prajñā /prajna/ 'wisdom'	pañā /pɔna/
. <i>puṇya</i>	pun /pun/ 'merit'	puin /pɔn/
. <i>vajra</i>	bajra /bajra/ 'diamond'	buit /pɜt/
. <i>vāṇijya</i>	banik /banoik/ 'trade'	bnik /hənoik/
. <i>vicāra</i>	bicār /bicar/ 'judge'	bcā /həca/
. <i>saṅghātī</i>	siṅgāl /singal/ 'monk's robe'	sṅā /əha/
. <i>dharma</i>	dhar /dhar/ 'law, doctrine'	dhaw /dho/
. <i>dhyāna</i>	dhyān /dhyan/ 'supernatural power'	jhān /chan/
. <i>lāṅgula</i>	laṅgūr /langur/ 'pair'	lṅaw /ənc/
. <i>dravya</i>	drabya /dra?bya?/ 'treasure, property'	drap /grɔp/
., <i>Pali</i> <i>toraṇa</i>	torin /torin/ 'ornamental arch'	taruin /tarɔn/

All the above specimens show that Mon has  
 nged extensively in the course of time both  
 nologically 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".<sup>12</sup> 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 -ui-. Examples:

# Short medial vowels passing to -ui-

OM	bap /ʔbap/		mM	
	bip /ʔbip/ 'wild duck'	>		buiip /ʔbɔp/
	bup /ʔbup/			
	tbañ /tʔbaŋ/			
	tɸun /tʔbuŋ/	>		tɸuin /ʔbaŋ/
	'sambhur deer'			
	tgat /tgət/			
	tgit /tgɪt/ 'quail'	>		tguit /əkʰɪt/
	tgut /tgut/			
	kɔip /kʔdɪp/ 'head'	>		kɔuip /ʔdɔp/
	'ut /ut/ 'all'	>		'uit /ɔt/
	gris /gris/ 'liver'	>		gruih /krɜh/
	grip /grip/ 'jungle'	>		gruip /krɜp/
	casin /caʔsɪŋ/	>		casuin /ciʔsɔŋ/
	'to enjoy'			
	cap /cɔp/			
	cip /cɪp/ 'to reach'	>		cuip /cɔp/
	ɸuk /ʔduk/ 'to ride'	>		ɸuik /ʔdak/
	tal /tal/			
	til /tɪl/ 'to plant'	>		tuiw /tɔ/
	yuk /yuk/ 'to lift'	>		yuik /yak/
	sɔik /sʔdoik/	>		sɔuik /həʔdak/
	'to be pleased'			

## Examples of long medial vowels

antūl /ɔntul/ 'above'	>	latū /ətao/
kwTl /kwɪl/ 'cart'	>	kwT /kwɪ/
twāñ /twan/ 'village'	>	kwān /kwan/
kyāl /kyaɪ/ 'wind'	>	kyā /kya/
lɸTr /lʔbɪr/ 'sea'	>	ɸT /ʔbi/
gūr /gur/ 'to rain'	>	gū /gu/
ār /ar/ 'to go'	>	ā /a/
āc /āt/ 'to beg'	>	āt /at/
tirwTl /tirwɪl/	>	tawT /tawi/
'to surround'		

# Examples of medial variation between a and e

OM kamlac /kəmləʔ/ kumlec /kumləʔ/ 'thief'	>	mM palat /pələʔ/ kamlat /kəmləʔ/
clac /cləʔ/ clēc /clēʔ/ 'pediment'	>	klac /kləʔ/
srañ /srəʔ/ sreñ /srēʔ/ 'silver'	>	sran /sən/
manglañ /məŋgləʔ/ mangleñ /məŋglēʔ/ 'tamarind'	>	manglan /məŋklən/

## Examples of medial variation between ā and e

kyāk /kyaik/ kyek /kyek/ 'object of reverence'	>	kyāk /kyaik/
pāñ /paŋ/ peñ /peŋ/ 'mouth'	>	pāñ /paŋ/

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

kmin /kmin/ kmun /kmun/ 'to rule'	>	kmin /kmin/
jiljip /jiljip/ jiljup /jiljup/ 'dubba grass'	>	dajip /həjip/
dukip /dukip/ dukup /dukup/ 'chief'	>	dakuip /həkəʔ/
goḥ /gwh/ guḥ /guh/ 'cave'	>	guih /kəh/
duk /duk/ dok /dwk/ 'to be poor'	>	duik /dak/
smiñ /smiŋ/ smen /smen/ 'king'	>	smiñ /smoiŋ/
tinliñ /tinliŋ/ tinleñ /tinlēʔ/ 'needle'	>	tniñ /ənoiŋ/
kirjiḥ /kirjih/ kirjeḥ /kirjeh/ 'zeal'	>	gaceh /kəceh/
ḍik /ʔdoik/ ḍek /ʔdek/ 'slave'	>	ḍik /ʔdoik/

OM wiñ /wiŋ/ 'to play'	>	mM weñ /wɔiŋ/
weñ /weŋ/		
saŋgiḥ /səŋgiḥ/	>	sñeh /sŋeh/
suŋgeh /sumgeh/		
'to be rich'		
slok /slwk/ 'to wear'	>	sluik /slak/
sluk /sluk/		
croñ /crwŋ/	>	sruin /saŋ/
cruñ /cruŋ/		
'to build'		
pgohh /pgwh/ 'to blow'	>	bguih /həkʒh/
pguh /pguh/		
ploh /plwh/	>	pluih /plɔh/
pluh /pluh/		
'to unfold,		
to blossom'		
rmiñ /rmoŋ/ 'to hear'	>	lmiñ /lmoŋ/
rmeñ /rmeŋ/		miñ /moŋ/
thic /thit/	>	thek /thoik/
thec /thet/		
'to be good'		

The regular vowel o usually remains the same, sometimes passes into short a or ǎ and ui. e.g.:

tos /twh/ 'to preach'	>	twah /twɔh/
dmoñ /dmwŋ/	>	dmǎñ /mɔŋ/
'to dwell'		
gloñ /glwŋ/ 'many'	>	gluiñ /glɔŋ/

The wide range of consonants occurring before and after vowels shows that they have little or no influence on the latter except in the case of the initials, where influence was considerable. For example, ca puñ 'to eat rice' is now pronounced [pɔŋ ~ ʃi? pɔŋ], according to the locality. The corresponding expression in Cantonese is ca? pɔŋ. Is this a loan? Another case in point is OM 'añca 'rice', which in modern Mon is spelt laca and pronounced /əca? ~ ləci?/, depending on the dialect. Although 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/
dirdas /dirdɔs/ 'existence'	>	dadah /dɔdɔh/
sdas /sdɔs/ 'will exist'	>	sdah /sdɔh/
pa'das /pɔ d s/ 'to bring into being'	>	pdah /pɔdɔh/
grañ /graŋ/ 'to know'	>	grañ /greaŋ/
gurañ /guraŋ/ 'to tell'	>	garañ /gəreaŋ/
sgurañ /sguraŋ/ 'will tell'	>	sgarañ /sgəreaŋ/
sūl /sul/ 'to write'	>	khyū /chu/
sisūl /sisul/ 'writing'	>	skhyū /schu/
pa /paʔ/ 'to do'	>	pa /paʔ/
spa /spaʔ/ 'will do'	>	spa /spaʔ/
puwa /puwaʔ/ 'deed'	>	pwa /pwaʔ/
jnok /jɲwk/ 'to be great'	>	jnok /hɲwk/
jumnok /jumɲwk/ 'greatness; extent'	>	jamnok /hɲɲwk/
hum /hum/ 'to bathe'	>	hum /hum/

OM phum /phum/ 'to bathe another'	>	mM phum̃ /phum/
mun /mun/ 'to inform'	>	pmiñ /pmoin/
pumun /pumun/ 'to send word to'	>	bakan /həkən/
pdar /pdər/ 'to shade'	>	pdaw /do/
dindar /dindar/ 'to be shaded'	>	dalaw /həlo/
rinleḥ /rinleh/ 'to dance'	>	leḥ /leh/
raleḅ /raleb/ 'to make anything dance'	>	paleḅ /pələh/
hāp /hap/ 'to eat'	>	hāp /hap/
rhāp /rhap/ 'food'	>	cna hāp /həna? hap/
gruñ /grwŋ/ 'to laugh'	>	gruñ̃ /graŋ/
ginruñ /ginrwŋ/ 'laughter'	>	garuñ̃ /gəraŋ/
sāl /sal/ 'to spread'	>	laḥ /leh/
snāl /sna/ 'mat'	>	snā /hna/
mic /mɸc/ 'wishing to be'	>	mik /moik/
pumic /pumɸc/ 'desire'	>	pmik /pəmoik/
jin /jin/ jun /jɸn/ (/jwn/) 'to offer'	>	juiñ /j3n/
juṃwiṇ /jɸmwɪn/ 'present'	>	jmiṇ /jmoin/ cmiṇ /cmɪn/
moy /moa/ 'one'	>	mwaai /moa/
mirmoy /mirmoa/ 'unit (one apiece)'	>	mwaai mwaai /moa moa/



OM bār /ʔbar/ 'two'	>	mM bā /ʔba/
birbār /birʔbar/	>	bā bā /ʔba ʔb
'twin, double'		
pi /piʔ/ 'three'	>	pi /piʔ/
pumpiʔ /pʊmʔiʔ/	>	pi pi /piʔ pi
'triad, triple'		
ptam /ptɔm/ 'to plant'	>	ptam /ptɔm/
tam /tɔm/	>	tnam /hnɔm/
'plant, tree'		
tey /tea/ 'hand'	>	tay /toa/
titey /titea/	>	datay /hetoa/
'to lead'		
tol /tol/ 'thread'	>	tow /to/
tiltol /tiltol/	>	datow /heto/
'tradition'		
ḍey /ʔdea/ 'in'	>	ḍai /ʔdoa/
pḍey /pʔdea/ 'inside'	>	pḍai /ʔdoa/
tirḍey /tirḍea/	>	thaḍai /həʔdo
'middle'		
nor /nor/	>	nū /nu/
'from, after'		
mnor /mnor/	>	mnū /mnu/
'time after'		
to' /toʔ/	>	ta' /taʔ/
'plural suffix'		
tinmo' /tinmoʔ/	>	tma' /əmoʔ/
'all, every'		
beh /beh/ 'you'	>	beh /beh/
beh to /beh toʔ/	>	beh ta
'all of you'		/beh toʔ/
deh /ʔdeh/	>	ḍeh /ʔdeh/
'ja /əjeʔ/		
'he, him, her, she'		

OM	deh to' /ʔdeh to/ deh t'eh /ʔdeh t'eh/ ja t'eh /əjeʔ t'eh/ 'they, them'	>	mM deh ta' /ʔdeh toʔ/
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'ey /ea/ 'I, me, my, mine'	>	'ai /oa/
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poy /poy/ 'we, us'	>	puiai /poi/
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The plural suffix t'eh and the word for 'he, 'ja do not occur in modern Mon but are restricted to Old Mon. Kum is another word for 'you' which we do not have in modern usage. For example:

kum t eh ñah bār /kum t'eh nah ʔba/  
'you two people'.

beh ta ñah bā /beh toʔ nah ʔba/  
'you two people'.

The two deictics are:--

OM wo' /woʔ/	mM wwa' /woʔ/ 'this'
goh /guh/	gah /goh/ 'that'

The two emphatics in Old Mon ci and da are still used in today's literature but not in spoken . In Old Mon ci is often used with kum as in ci while da often combined with gam as in gam da. kum ci is used as an emphatic only. It has nothing to do with the other usage of kumci as meaning 'younger brother or sister'.

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

na ānisañ kyāk wo mic das kyāk  
/naʔ aniʔsəŋ kyaik woʔ mit dəs kyaik/

mM: na anisāṇ kyāk wwa smik dah kyāk  
/na? a?ni?səŋ kyaik wwo? smoik dəh kyaik/

"By the benefit of (donating) this Buddha, may  
(I) become a Buddha."

OM: rūp ɓip thar ɓār ma guṇ bley  
/rup ?ɓip thər ?ba me? guṇ blea/

mM: rup ɓuip thaw ɓā ma guṇ blai  
/rup ?ɓɒp thaw ?ba me? gaṇ bloa/

"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,

OM: himo ma sdas yo /hi?mw? mə sdəs yo/

mM: mu ma sdah ro /mu mə sdəh rao/

"What will happen?"

OM: cmat tā /cmət ta/

mM: cmat hā /hmət ha/

"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.

I rb > b	OM rbin	mM buin 'to be firm'
rm > m	rmiṇ	miṇ 'to hear'
tl > kl	tlā	klā 'before, first'
kṣ > khy	kṣap	khyap 'to think'

> g	OM kiñcem /kincem/	mM gacem /həcem/ 'bird'
	kinkan /kinkən/	gakan /həkən/ 'to send a message'
	kintu /kintu?/	gatu /hətao?/ 'moon'
	kando' /kəndo?/	gadui /hət3?/ 'ferry'
> k	clac /cləc/	klat /klət/ 'pediment'
	klik /klik/	klik /kloik/ 'pig'
	clo /clo?/	klo' /klo?/ 'to cross'
> s	cris /cros/	sruih /səh/ 'bosom, chest'
	cruñ /crun/	sruin' /saŋ/ 'to build'
	crok /crok/	srok /hərok/ 'street, lane'
	crow /crww/	srau /sao/ 'handsome'
	croh /crwh/	srah /hərcəh/ 'to put on, to practise, to adorn'
> d	jiñjuñ /jinjun/	dayuin' /həyaŋ/ 'post of building'
	jiñjeh' /jinjeh/	dayeh /həyeh/ 'to sing'
> g	jirla /jirla/	dala /həle?/ 'thorn'
	jlow /jlww/	glau /glea/ 'cattle'
> g	drep /drep/	grip /grip/ 'to run'
	dlañ /dləm/	glam' /gləm/ 'chamber, room'
	dlin' /dlin/	glin' /gloin/ 'to be long'

I d > g	OM dluñ /dluŋ/	mM gluñ /gluŋ/ 'boat'
t > k	twāw /twaw/ twāy /twai/	kwau /kəwao/ 'black cuckoo' kwāai /kwai/ 'to offer, present'
j > d	jurām /joram/	darām /həram/ 'granary'
n > l	ñirñāc /pirnat/	lañāt /ləpat/ 'sight'
p > b	pubar /pubar/	babuiw /be?bo/ 'to show'

### Medial clusters

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

rk > k	birket /birket/	baket /həket/ 'to be red'
rt > t	birta /birta?/ birtam̃ /birtom/	bata /həta?/ 'tail' batam̃ /bətom/ 'night'
nt > t	bintāñ /bintaŋ/ bintil /bintil/ binton /binton/	batāñ /hətaŋ/ 'to be white' batT /hətce/ 'sand' baton /həton/ 'to teach'
nr > r	tinrañ /tinraŋ/ tinrem /tinrem/	tarañ /əraŋ/ 'door' tarem /ərem/ 'to be old'
nm > m	tinmāt /tinmat/	tamāt /mat/ 'vulture'
nt > t	tintāñ /tintan/	dhitāñ /dhitan/ 'sal tree'
rc > c	circun /circun/	dacun /həcun/ 'walking stick'

rc > c	OM <i>circas</i> / <i>circəs</i> /	mM <i>coh</i> / <i>coh</i> / 'decade, group of ten'
nt > t	<i>kantir</i> / <i>kəntir</i> /	<i>katuiw</i> / <i>kəto</i> / 'coming into existence'
	<i>kanta</i> / <i>kənta?</i> /	<i>gata</i> / <i>gəta?</i> / 'in front, presence'
	<i>kintāp</i> / <i>kintap</i> /	<i>gatāp</i> / <i>hətap</i> / 'to be in time'
	<i>kintāl</i> / <i>kintal</i> /	<i>gatā</i> / <i>həta</i> / 'bottom'
lw > w	<i>kilwa</i> / <i>kilwa?</i> /	<i>kawa</i> / <i>əwa?</i> / 'bat'

There are a few original clusters from which the second medial consonant is dropped, as follows:

mb > m	<i>lambāy</i> / <i>ləmbai</i> /	<i>lamāy</i> / <i>kəmai</i> / 'snake charmer'
nl > n	<i>kinlap</i> / <i>kinləp</i> /	<i>knap</i> / <i>ənəp</i> / 'volume'
	<i>kinlo</i> / <i>kinlw?</i> /	<i>kanu</i> / <i>ənəu?</i> / 'oyster'
	<i>tinlum</i> / <i>tinlum</i> /	<i>taniṁ</i> / <i>ənim</i> / 'to sink'
	<i>tinlūr</i> / <i>tinlur</i> /	<i>snow</i> / <i>hno</i> / 'bolt'
	<i>tinlah</i> / <i>tinlah</i> /	<i>tanah</i> / <i>ənah</i> / 'leaf'
	<i>tinliñ</i> / <i>tinlip</i> /	<i>taniṁ</i> / <i>ənoinj</i> / 'needle'
nd > n	<i>ganḍiṁ</i> / <i>gəṇ?diṁ</i> /	<i>ganiṁ</i> / <i>hənoinj</i> / 'bell'

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

nd > l	<i>kandar</i> / <i>kəndar</i> /	<i>kalaw</i> / <i>kəlaw</i> / 'wife'
	<i>dindan</i> / <i>dindən</i> /	( <i>badan</i> / <i>hədən</i> /) 'to conceal'

I nd > l	OM dindāy /dindai/	mM dalāy /həlai/ 'to lean'
	sandeh /səndeh/	saleh /həleh/ 'to doubt'
nd > n	kindam̄ /kindəm/	khanam̄ /hənəm/ 'to build, found'

### Final Consonants

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

OM -s	mM -h
-ŋ	-n
-c	-t
-ñ	n ~ ñ
-r	-w

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

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

mM kmā	/əma/	'pond'
lñuiw	/əŋ3/	'some'
dacām̄	/həcam/	'eight'
khamān	/həman/	'son-in-law'
kha'ah or ga'ah	/həch/	'daughter-in-law'
baḅū	/heʔbu/	'to be drunk'

### ree Stages of Spelling

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

OM kin uy	MM ka uy	mM ga uai /ge?ui/ 'medicine'
kirkūl	grakū	gakū /ge?kao/ 'family'
kirmin	kramin	kmin /kəmin/ 'sovereignty'
giŋgiñ	gaŋgeñ	gaheñ /gehoiŋ/ 'to jaunt, to travel'
girluñ girlon	graloñ	galuiñ /heləŋ/ 'quantity'
guñ ir guñm ir	gam T	gamT /hemce/ gamhT khamT 'monk'
cu aḥ	ca aḥ	s aḥ /he?ah/ 'to cleanse'
jirku	jraku	jaku /hekao?/ 'body'
tirtūy	dratuy	datuai /hetce/ 'benefit'
tumbāḥ	tabāḥ	tmaḥ /əmah/ 'to shine'
tḍuñ	tḍon	kduiñ /daŋ/ 'umbrella'
pinḍon	pandāñ	palāñ /pəlɔŋ/ 'to escort, to send'
mirnas	banah	bnuh /hənuh/ 'to remember'
piryām	prayām	payām /pəyam/ 'time'
mirmok	mramok	bmāk /həmɔk/ 'east; to appear'



OM sinrañ	MM sarañ	mM carañ /heraŋ/ 'work, act'
sirsūl	dasū	kasū /kasao/ 'writing, drawing'
sirsuk	drasok	tsuik /sak/ 'happiness; rich'
dirhat	darhat	jrahat /thot/ 'strength'
rin ut	ra it	l it /leit/ 'end'
rinduk	randuk	ranuk /rnuk/ 'to complete'
rum̃ba	lamba	lma /əmeʔ/ 'hunter'
rmeñ	rman	man /mon/ 'mon (people)'
sam̃bhuc	sambut	smut /həmot/ 'food offered to gods or spirits'

### *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), Suvannabhūmi (Thaton), Arimaddanapura (Pagan), Haribhūñjaya (Lamphun in Northern Thailand), and Hañsāwatī (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 Suvannabhūmi,

ignable to the early 11th century and referring to the coronation of King Makuta and the carving of the sculpture by Queen Muḥ Taḥ who dwelled at Martaban, 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, lying about 30 miles above the Gulf of Martaban. The remains of a city wall are visible in the vicinity of the cave. Local tradition says that there was a city called Campānagar.

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

Haribhūñjaya, a Mon state in Northern Thailand, has yielded 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 Nyaung-U in 1971.<sup>13</sup> A stone slab has also been discovered in Laos near Vientiane.

After another gap, Mon epigraphy reappeared in the 15th century at Hanṣāvatī in inscriptions mostly engraved by a Mon queen, Shin Saw Pu, and her son-in-law King Rāmādhīpati. 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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<sup>1</sup>E. G. Pulleybank, "Chinese and Indo-Europeans," in *JRAS*, 1966. 1-2:9-39.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>Blagden spelt this name *Semang*, but I learn from Malaysians that they call these peoples *Smang*.

<sup>4</sup>See Williams and Norgate, *The Dipavamsa* (London, 1879); also Geiger and Bode, *The Mahavamsa* (Colombo, 1912), 82.

<sup>5</sup>For the legend and for the word *rakṣapura* see, respectively, *Epigraphia Birmanica*, III, Part II, and *Inscriptions of Burma Portfolio*, IV, plates 358 and 359.

<sup>6</sup> See *Asokan Rock Edicts*, No. XIII, translation into English by Dr. Sircar.

<sup>7</sup> Editor's note: Typographical limitations require throughout this paper the substitution of b for the author's IPA symbol for implosive b.

<sup>8</sup> OM = Old Mon; mM = modern Mon. The phonetic equivalence of all OM forms cited is hypothetical.

<sup>9</sup> 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).

<sup>10</sup> H. L. Shorto, *A Dictionary of Modern Spoken Mon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) and *Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions from the Sixth to the Sixteenth Centuries*. London Oriental Series, volume 24 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> See Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New Edition (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1899), 1003c.

<sup>12</sup> In *JA*, 10<sup>e</sup> série, XV (1910):477-505.

<sup>13</sup> See *JSS*, 59 (1971). 1.