

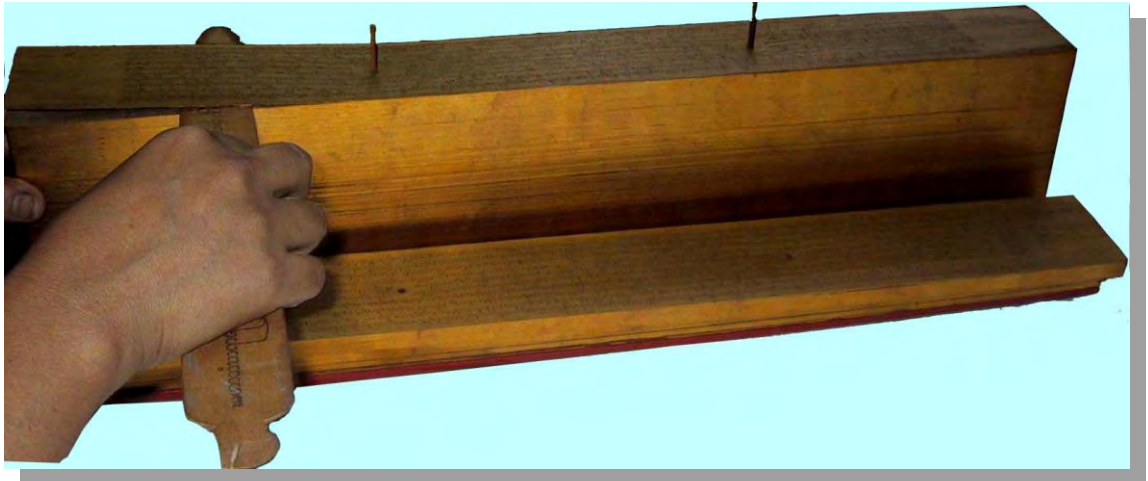
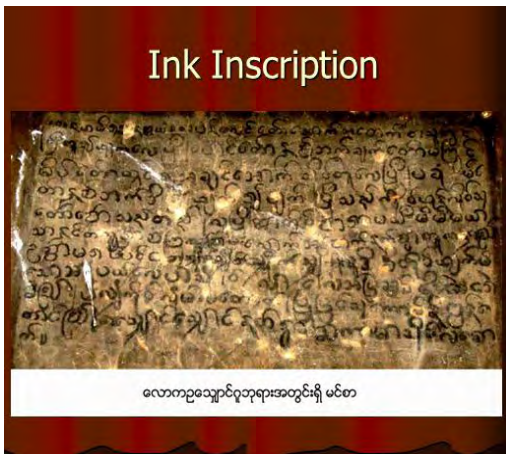
Preservation and Conservation of Ancient Myanmar

Manuscripts

By

Ms. Tin Phone Nwe

Chief Librarian (Retired),
Universities' Central Library
Part-time Professor,
Depart. of Library and Information
Studies,
University of Yangon



Myanmar has valuable historical and literary materials in traditional texts and different kinds of medium used for the written records of the past.

They are:

Stone Inscriptions

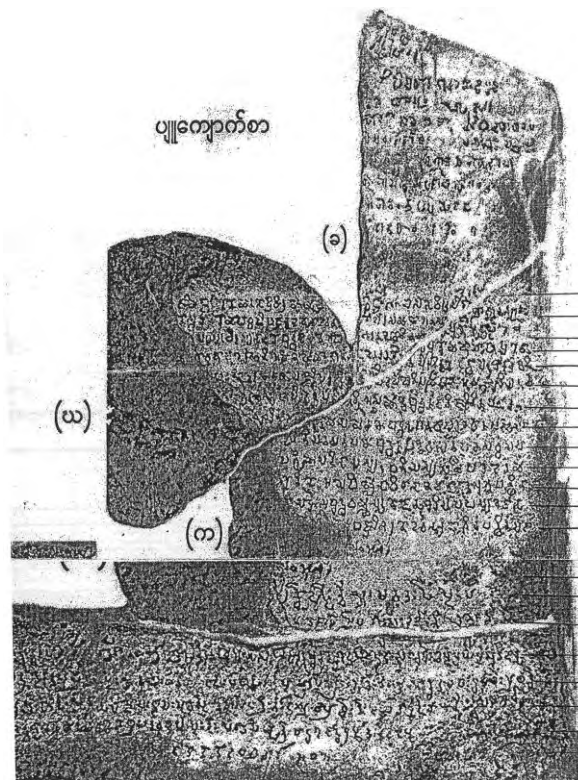
Palm-leaf Manuscripts

Parabaiks (Handmade Paper)

Bell Inscriptions and

Ink or gloss Inscriptions (On the walls of the Bagan Pagodas)

Stone Inscriptions



Sawlumin Inscription (A.D 1053-54)

King Sawlumin inscription 1053-1054 with 5 languages. This inscription was one of the oldest surviving stone inscription of Myanmar it was discovered in Myitthar Township Mandalay region in 17 Nov, 2013. The slab size 1.75 metre (5.7 feet) in height and 1.06 metre(3.5ft) in breadth.

The stone inscription will inscribe in multiple languages including Myanmar , Mon, Pyu, Pali and the Gun (Khun or Kengtung Shan). It describe King Sawlu donation of Buddha images religious bondsmen, farmlands and rice and also include curses and wishes.

The inscription which contains 415 ME (25 march, 1053 to 1054) could upend the current understanding of the early Bagan period and the actual time of inscription can be proven.

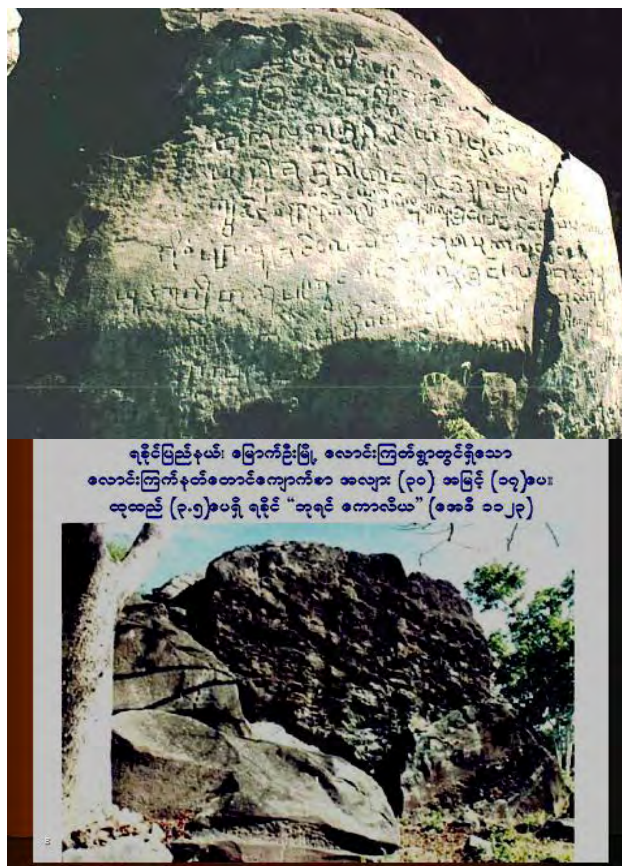
This inscription date 60 years earlier than Myazedi inscription (c.1112/1113) one of the oldest known stone inscription in Burma.



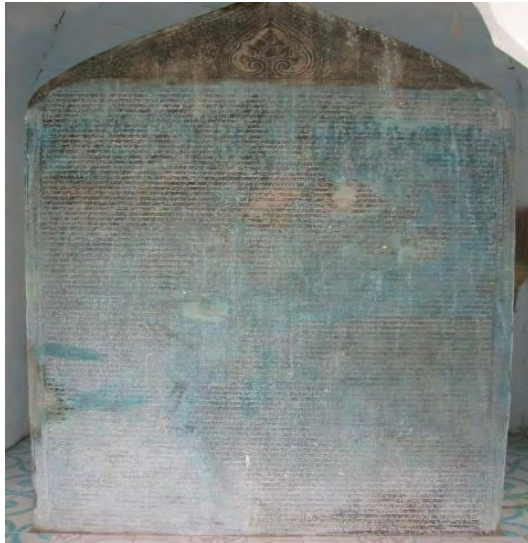
Myazedi Inscription

Myazedi Inscription (c.1112/1113) inscribed 4 languages Myanmar, Mon, Pyu, Pali. It describe the donation of Buddha images also include farmlands, curses and wishes Yaza Kumar son of King Kyan Sit Thar.

The Largest Stone Inscription of the world in Rakhine State (A.D 1123)
by King Kawliya, width 30 feet, high 17 feet



The Longest stone inscription Kaung Mu Taw at Sagaing Division by Taung Phe Lar Sayadaw (High Priest) (A.D 1636).



Kaung Mu Taw Inscription

Palm-leaf Manuscripts

(5) Kinds of Palm-leaf MSS. (Pe-Sar)



Shwe-Myin
(Gilded on all four edges)



Palm-leaf manuscripts: Myanmar used the palm-leaf manuscript when Buddhism was introduced to Myanmar in the 1st century A.D. According to Myanmar tradition the life span of the palm-leaf manuscript is a thousand years, but no palm-leaf manuscript had survived older than 350 years, because of the harsh tropical climate and improper storages. The only oldest palm-leaf manuscript of 530 years is housed at the Universitiesp Central Library. It was about the Myanmar arithmetic written in prose form in A.D. 1493.



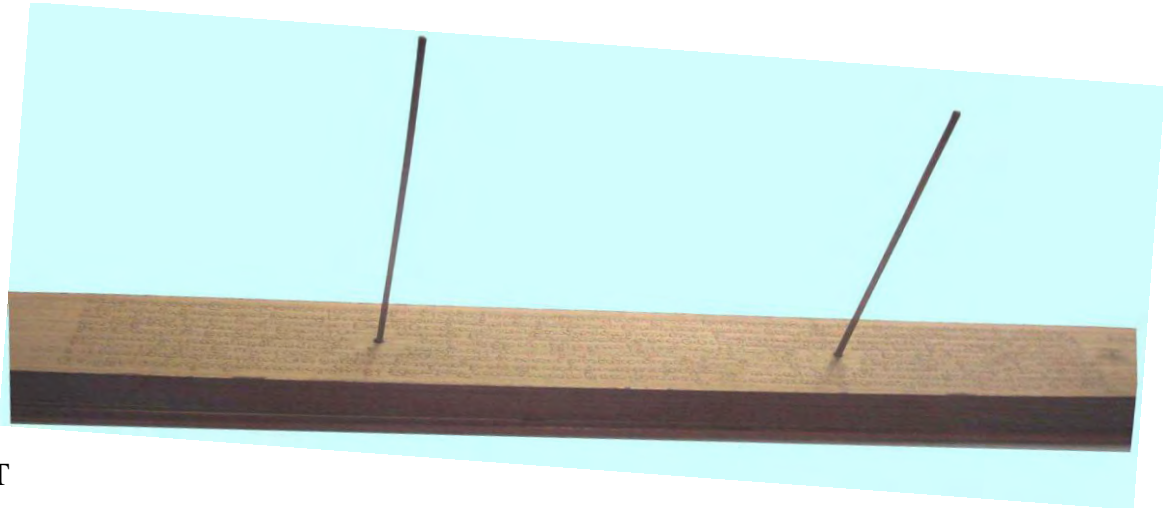
Writing on the palm-leaf

In the olden days there were professional scribes known as Kyaung-Sa-Ye (monastic scribe). The scribes used a writing table about two feet in height with a cloth cushion knob on the writing table. The letters were engraved on the palm-leaves by using a pointed iron or stylus pen.



Pagination on Palm-leaf Mss

Pagination of palm-leaf manuscript bundles is not numerical. It is alphabetical according to the Myanmar alphabet, consonant letters in conjunction with twelve Myanmar vowels. Twelve leaves make one set/ and is known as on Anga(one chapter). Palm-leaf bundles are counted by these sets. Palm-leaf manuscripts are also classified by the number of lines on each leaf. Ranging from 8 to 12.



T

Two small holes were made in all the leaves called **Palin Bauk** through which two small bamboo-sticks known as **Palin Taing** were inserted to hold the manuscripts bundle in place, preventing the leaves from falling out.



Cover for Palm-leaf mss.

The manuscripts bundle was then placed between two wooden covers **Kyan Bhone**. The first and last pages of a palm-leaf manuscripts bundle had extra blank leaves sewn in, usually ten in front and ten at the back. These extra palm-leaves were intended to be used for repairing and replacing those which will get broken or damaged.



Wrapping Cloths



Wrapping Tape

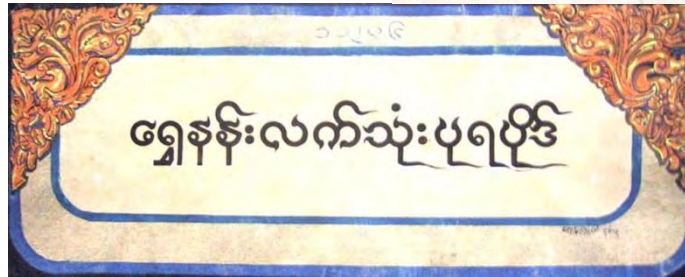
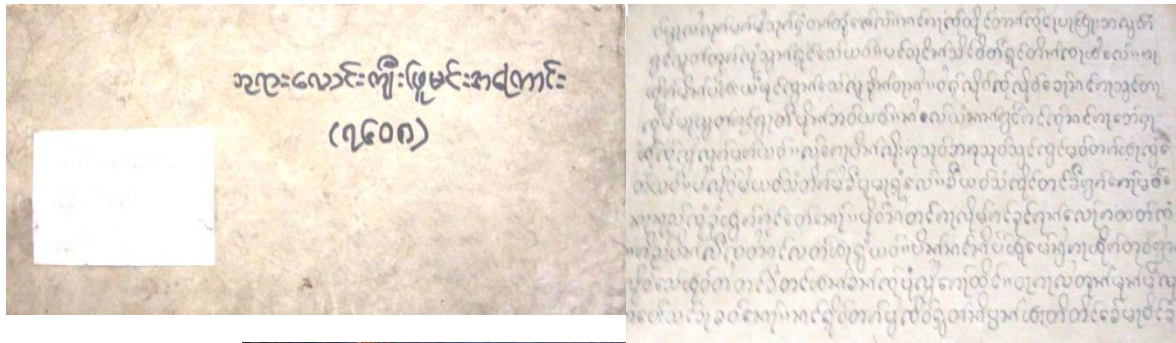
After that, the bundle was tied with the riband about 2 inches in breadth and a yard in length. It is called *Pe-Si-Kyo*. This riband was hand woven with colours and contained useful biographical information of the donor.

Parabaik-paper manuscript

Parabaik were produced from the hand-made paper and usually called a **folding-book**. They were made from the Maing Kaing paper, a kind of paper made from mulberry pulp in Maing Kaing town in the Shan States, Myanmar. The bigger parabaiks were usually made from bamboo pulp. They were classified according to the number of folds which range from single fold to 64 folds.



Black Parabaik



White Parabaik

Parabaiks were of two kinds, the black and the white. The black parabaiks were mainly used as a note book and writing drafts which were later transferred to either white parabaiks or palm-leaves manuscripts. Black parabaiks were commonly used by the people and they were the rich source of social and economic history for the researchers. Black parabaiks were records kept by individuals and families. They were financial transactions, agricultural records, day to day accounts, diaries, traditional medicine, traditional law, astrology, astronomy, alchemy and census. Over thirty to forty subjects of topics can be found in these black parabaiks.



Soap Stone

The soap stone or steatite is used as a writing material.

The white parabaik was for royal use such as royal orders. Illustrated coloured works made called Yaungzon Parabaik. Ink from the soot of crude oil or vegetable oil is used for the white parabaik. For illustrated, coloured parabaik, the colours were natural colours without use of any chemical.



Colour Parabaik

The neem gum was added with all these paints to make the colour fast. Gall (Gall Juice) of animals like, python, peacock, and hamilton's carp were often mixed with ink to give the paint a shining effects and it also conserved the colour for years

Inscribe label for mss.



Using inscribed label for mss

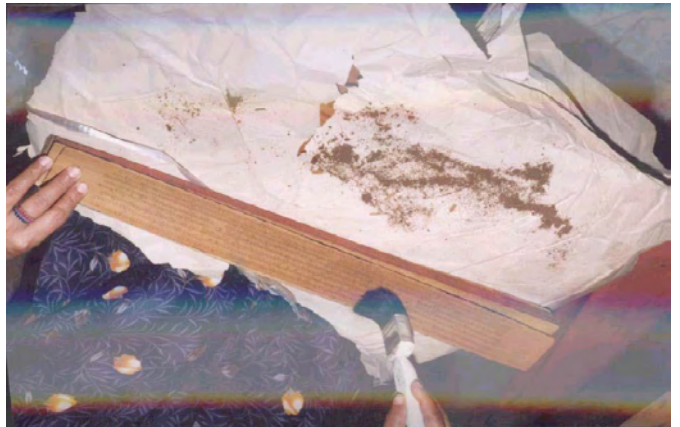
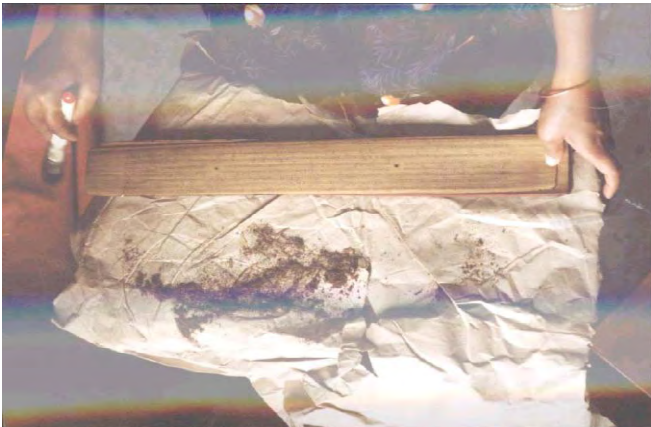




The Orders of Royal (*tha-gyaung sar-gyon-daw*)



Trying to clean the dirt and dust of the Palm-leaf





Mild detergent



Washing the Palm-leaf with lukewarm water and with a mild detergent



Drying in the air

Applying Lemon Grass Oil to Prevent the Insects





Applying lemon grass oil from left to right not from bottom to top

Traditional Methods of Preservation and Conservation of the Ancient Manuscripts

Simply clean the dust from the palm-leaves with a soft paint-brush from left to right and right to left (not up wards or down wards). The palm-leaves can be washed with water and soap or with a very mild detergent to remove the stains and spots and dry in the air. Applying crude oil and turmeric powder was used before, but now lemon grass oil, citronella oil, camphor oil are applied on the surface of the palm-leaf (by applying these oils it brings back the flexibility and protection from insects). Wrapping the manuscripts bundles with cloth or handmade Maing Kaing paper (acid free) is also one of the methods for conservation. Now we use Maing Kaing paper (hand-made) to wrap the palm-leaves bundles.

Repairing palm-leaf mss and Replacing with Blank Palm-leaf



Repairing broken edges

Patching up the broken edges
with tapioca glue *Thargu*



Bell Inscription



Mingun Bell

Mingun Bell was casted by King Bodaw Phaya at Kaungboun dynasty of A.D 1808. It weight 55555 viss(90.52 tons.It is the third largest bell in the world.



King Dhammazedì Bell

King Dhammazedì donated an enormous bell weight 324 tons, and 12 feet cubits across and 18 feet high at Shwedagon.

Singu Bell



King Singu also had an enormous bell cast, had it consecrated and installed it in a protective pavilion on the north – west corner of the pagoda. Weighing 25 metric tons, this bell was 11 feet 3 inches high, 7 feet 6 inches wide across the month and 1 foot 8 inches thick.

King Singu also had an enormous bell cast, had it consecrated and installed it in a protective pavilion on the north – west corner of the Pagoda. Weighting 25 metric tons, this bell

was 11 feet 3 inches high, 7 feet 6 inches wide across the month and 1 foot 8 inches thick. At the end of the Anglo – Myanmar war the British dismantled the great Singu bell and carried it off as booty. However in ferry it to the ship that was to transport the bell the raft capsized and the bell sand to the bottom of the Yangon river. British military engineers tried everything they could think of to raise the bell, but failed to do so and finally gave up the attempt. After the war Myanmar salvage experts raised the bell successfully and the great Singu bell was proper place at Shwedagon in the year 1826. It is place up to now at the North-west corner of Shwedagon platform.

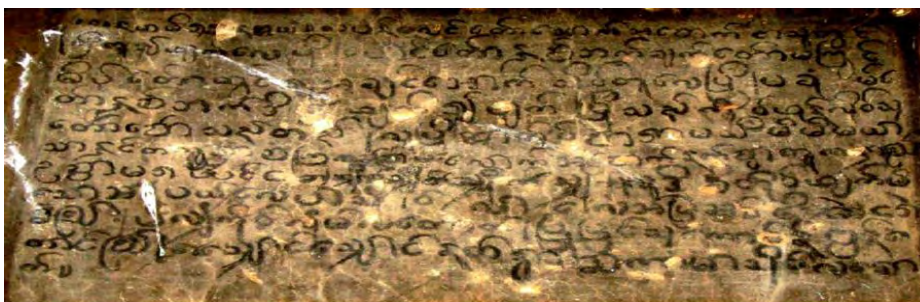
Tharyarwady Bell

King Tharyarwady donated great bell to Shwedagon. It has weight 40 metric tons, 20 feet high, 7 feet, 6 inches at its widest casted on 19 Feb, 1843.

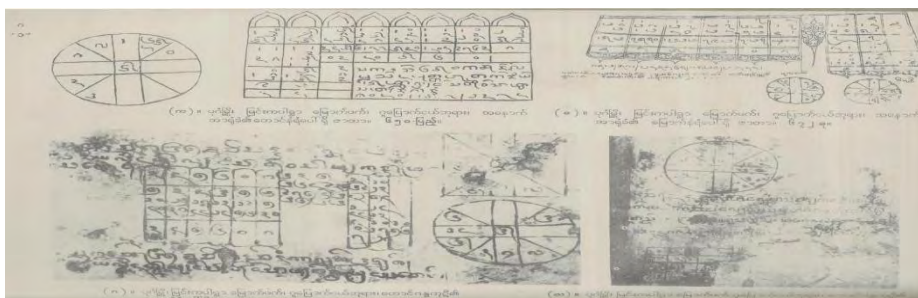
The bell placed on the North–East of the pagoda platform.

Ink/gloss inscription(Minsa)

This inscription exists only in Myanmar (unique). There are two kinds one is written on the wall at the cave pagoda about the horoscopes of the Kings and Queens and Royal family about donations, traditional medicine ,prays and subtitle of the mural painting about the history of the donars. There are also prose and poetrys of the distinguish writers. The ink or gloss inscriptions mostly written at the wall painting (Mural Painting).



လောကဥသျှောင်ဂူဘုရားအတွင်းရှိ မင်စာ



Ancient

Myanmar Manuscripts & Inscriptions are the reflection of History and culture heritage. The Manuscripts have grater impact on social and economic development of Myanmar and the languages standard. Regarding these manuscripts young people will not know or see such valuable

artifacts that they should cherish and take pride. These manuscripts are the documents and evidences of Myanmar History. We also have these evidences aside from learned monks and men that emerged women writers and poets. This is these evidence Myanmars are literate since the time of first century AD, and also the women have equal rights with the men since that time. We all should cherish and value our cultural heritage.

1947 Octennial Report on Education, 1700 – Venetian Merchant – Manucci.

" The Kingdom governed by the pen, for not a single person can go from one village into another without a black book and writing"

Thank You