

# Historical Setting of Buddhism in Myanmar

Ko Ko Naing<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This paper explains the “Historical setting of Buddhism in Myanmar”. How Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar is discussed. How the Myanmar professed in mixture of Buddhism and their traditional beliefs is explained. How the King purified the religion partly to facilitate their role is discussed. The monks formed separate sects in Myanmar history even though they did not differ from one another in robes, literature, doctrine or goal. However, the king’s support was important for a sect to stand itself.

Keywords: Buddhism, Historical setting, Myanmar

## Aim

To understand how and when Buddhism was introduced in Myanmar.

## Introduction

Concerning the introduction of Buddhism into Myanmar, the views of the different scholars are given. Why it is impossible to accept that the earliest form of Buddhism that came to Myanmar was a pure form of Theravada Buddhism is discussed. The traditional belief that the Myanmar came into contact with Buddhism only after Aniruddha’s conquest of Thaton is analyzed.

## Materials and Method

In writing this paper “Historical setting of Buddhism in Myanmar” the primary sources and the secondary sources were used which can be available in the Ludu Library. Accordingly, archive research has been mainly done and historical method is used in doing the research.

## Literature Review

There are a number of books and articles on Buddhism and introduction of it into Myanmar. Since monarchical times, royal historians attempted to examine the arrival of Buddhism and its promotion and propagation throughout the kingdom. Among those who had made records of the development of Buddhism in Myanmar include Mahadhamma Thingyan Medisayadaw and U Tin. The former’s *Thathanalinkara Sadan* (A Treaties on the Religion) has been discussed on the Buddhism from the beginning of Myanmar history to the end of Myanmar monarchy. Similarly, Medisayadaw also attempted to discuss the successive development of Theravada Buddhism emphasizing endeavors of successive Buddhist monks in *Wunthadipani* (A work on the lineage of monks). U Tin also recorded Buddhist missionary works in his *Myanmar Min Oatchoat Pon Sadan* (The Administration of Myanmar Kings). All of them mentioned their views on the advent of Buddhism in Myanmar following traditional believe and religious information. This paper attempts to review these views and to analyze the how and when the Buddhism reached into Myanmar.

## Findings and Discussion

By studying the “Historical setting of Buddhism in Myanmar”, it can be seen that Myanmar relied considerably on Srilanka soon after the Buddhism was introduced into

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Department of History, University of Mandalay

Myanmar. Monks from Myanmar went to Srilanka to study scriptural texts. The monks who returned from Srilanka enjoyed the king's favour and became influential. Then they had to compete with local monks. As only the sect supported by the king won, the national sect was vilified and the *aris* gained notoriety. There is no evidence that the Myanmar Kings persecuted the *aris* as stated in the chronicles.

Buddha *Sasana* means "the Buddha's Teaching" or the period in which the Buddha's teaching or Buddhism exists. Some scholars believe that Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar in the first century AD.<sup>2</sup> Archaeological excavations have revealed that Buddhism flourished in Myanmar from the first to the tenth centuries AD, i.e. in the Pyu Period. Sriksetra, a city in the Pyu land was the earliest locality in Myanmar where Buddhism flourished. Religious buildings in and around the ancient city of Sriksetra can still be seen.

The prevalence of Buddhism was the most important cultural feature of Sriksetra. Buddha images were made in gold, silver and bronze. Terracotta Buddha images were enshrined in the religious buildings. Although Sriksetra and Beikthano were contemporary, evidence suggests that Buddhist influence in Beikthano was still in its infancy.<sup>3</sup> As coins, funerary urns, bricks and beads made of baked clay or stone which had been unearthed at Beikthano were similar to those excavated in Sriksetra, it can be concluded that the two cultures were related. That a stupa-shaped lid of a pot and religious buildings excavated in Halin are comparable to those found in Beikthano points to the fact that Buddhism also flourished in Halin.<sup>4</sup>

Sriksetra flourished from the third to the fifth centuries AD. Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar in the fourth century. Hinayana or Pali Buddhism from India spread to Sriksetra. It is learnt from contemporary Chinese records that there were about a hundred Buddhist monasteries in Sriksetra. Buddhist sects from northern India also spread to Sriksetra. Hinayana school took root in Sriksetra in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. After the fall of Beikthano and Halin, Sriksetra became the centre of a Sanskrit Buddhist sect of the Hinayana school and that of a Pali Buddhist school.<sup>5</sup> The localities in which Buddhism flourished at about the same time as in Sriksetra were Vesali in India and the localities around Mt. Kelasa in Lower Myanmar. It is stated in the Kalyani inscriptions that Buddhism declined in the Mon land during the reign of King Manuha of Thaton. There is an evidence that *Mahayana* Buddhism, which flourished in the early Sriksetra period, existed side by side with *Theravada*.<sup>6</sup> *Mahayana* Buddhism with its distinctive bodhisattva ideal came into being in India in about the first century AD. The inscriptions found at Sriksetra can be divided into scriptural and Pyu inscriptions. The earliest extracts from the Buddhist canon in Myanmar are found in Sriksetra.<sup>7</sup> It can therefore be assumed that Buddhism flourished in Sriksetra. The Pyus first professed Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, which spread to Myanmar by an overland route through Tibet and China. Evidence indicates that these religions made their way not only to the land of the Pyu, which was the earliest locality in Myanmar in which Buddhism flourished, but also to

<sup>2</sup> Dr Toe Hla, *Myebaw Mye-auk Kyauksa Hmattan Mya Ka Pyawthaw Shehaung Myanmar Naing-gan* (A History of Ancient Myanmar as told by the Inscriptions Above and Below Ground), Yangon, Zaw Press, 2004, p.9 (Henceforth: Toe Hla, 20014)

<sup>3</sup> U Aung Thaw, "Beikthano Myohaung" (The Old City of Beikthano), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazaung*, Vol.I, part. ii, 1966. p.298 (Henceforth: Aung Thaw, 1996)

<sup>4</sup> U Myint Aung, "Halin Moyhaung" (The Old City of Halin), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Saung*, Vol.III, part.iii, 1968, p.193 (Henceforth: Myint Aung, 1968)

<sup>5</sup> U Maung Maung Gyi, "Thayehkittaya Pyu Gita Lelagyet," (A Study of Pyu Music in Sriksetra), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazung* (Weikza), Vol.IX, part.i, 1974, p.110 (Henceforth: Maung Maung Gyi, 1974)

<sup>6</sup> U Sein Maung Oo, "Thayehkittaya Myohaung" (The Old City of Sriksetra) *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazaung*, Vol.III, part.i, 196, p.199 (Henceforth: Sein Maung, Oo, 1968)

<sup>7</sup> Sein Maung Oo, 1968, 177

Pagan. The Pyus were devout Theravadins; nevertheless, it seems that the Pyu court was influenced by Brahmanism.<sup>8</sup> Buddhism in those days was a mixture of Theravada and Mahayana. Although the religion of the Pyus of Sriksetra was a blend of various religions, Theravada Buddhism was its mainstay. It is evident that Theravada Buddhists were tolerant of those who followed other religions and lived side by side with them. It seems that fine arts thrived in Sriksetra because image-worship played a vital role in Brahmanism. It is learnt that Pyu Buddhism spread as far as Pagan.

King Aniruddha ascended the throne of Pagan in AD 1044. Successive kings in Pagan, from King Thamudarit to King Aniruddha, following the teachings for the *aris*, held wrong views. King Aniruddha, realizing that the views of the *aris* were false, disliked them and was filled with dread.<sup>9</sup> *Mahayana* Buddhism was prevalent in Pagan when King Aniruddha came to the throne. At that time, a pure form of Theravada Buddhism flourished in Thaton, which was referred to as Suvannabhumi. Religion flourished in Thaton in 1056, during the reign of King Manuha, who was a contemporary of King Aniruddha of Pagan.<sup>10</sup> Religion gradually declined in Thaton (Suvannabhumi). At that time, the *aris* were predominant in Pagan.

Mahayana Buddhism, which made its way to the localities around Pagan and northern Shan states in Upper Myanmar was not a form of *Mahayana* Buddhism which spread to China and Japan. It was the religion of the *aris*, which was a cross between Tantric Buddhism and Lamaism. The *aris* tried to impress their followers with occult practices and alchemy. In AD 904, King Thelekyang succeeded to the throne of Pagan. There were many *aris*, who were referred to in those days as *mahtis*,<sup>11</sup> during his reign. Shin Mahti *Sayadaw*, a well-known occultist, was an *ari*. The practice and behaviour of the *aris* of Shinmahti *Sayadaw's* days were not like those of the *aris* in the reigns of Kings Taungthugyi and Aniruddha.<sup>12</sup> However, the *aris* not only wielded influence in towns and villages but also had great influence in the court during the reigns of Kings Taungthugyi and Aniruddha, when kings as well as royal officials venerated them.<sup>13</sup>

The *aris* debased Tantric Buddhism by making alterations and additions to it. Because they became immoral in King Aniruddha's reign, the king scorned them. Aniruddha felt disdain for the *aris* and longed for a true doctrine. At that time, Shin Dhammadassi (aka Shin Arahan), who had been a monk venerated by King Manuha of Thaton, came to Pagan.<sup>14</sup> Entreated by King Anuruddha who venerated him, Shin Arahan preached the Appamada-sutta to the king. The king, impressed by this sermon, constructed a monastery for Shin Arahan in a locality where the latter would be able to observe *araññakanga-dhutanga* (the austere practice of dwelling in the forest). The king also made his subjects repudiate the teachings of the *aris* and follow *Theravada* Buddhism. Shin Arahan ordained those who had faith in the Religions as

<sup>8</sup> Toe Hla, 2004, 25-30

<sup>9</sup> Mahadhammathingyan, *Thathanalinkara Sadan* (A Treatise on the Religion), Yangon, Hanthawady Pitakat Press, 1956, p.93 (Henceforth: Mahadhammathingyan, 1956)

<sup>10</sup> Ledi U Hla Paing, *Pahkan Thathanawin* (A History of Buddhism in Pagan), Yangon, Gandawin Press, 1981, p.12 (Henceforth: Hla Paing, 1981)

<sup>11</sup> Ashin Muninda, *Buddhabatha Sittan* (A Survey of Buddhism), Yangon, Shwe Thein Tha Printing and Literature, 1978, pp.182-84 (Henceforth: Muninda, 1978)

<sup>12</sup> Ashin Pyinnyeindabhivamsa, *Sinkyethaw Buddhabatha* (A Pure Form of Buddhism), Yangon, Sarpelawka Press, 1965, pp.227-39 (Henceforth: Panyindabhaivamsa, 1965)

<sup>13</sup> Muninda, 1978, 187

<sup>14</sup> Ashin Janakabhivamsa, *Tabawa Thanthaya* (One Life's Cycle), New Burma Pitakat Press, 2000, 3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, p.19 (Henceforth: Ashin Janakabhivamsa, 2000)

monks and purified and propagated the Religion. Thus, *Theravada* Buddhism thrived in the royal capital of Pagan and the kingdom of Myanmar.<sup>15</sup>

The *aris*, who failed to get donations as before harboured deep resentment against Shin Arahan. The king, realizing this, employed a hundred security guards to protect Shin Arahan, and visited Shin Arahan in his monastery daily to listen to the sermons. From then on, with the

people refusing to make donations to them, the power of the *aris* shrank. The king exerted his authority and defrocked Shin Mahti and some of his followers. He made some *aris* serve as lancers and spearmen and as sweepers of elephant and horse dung. Some *aris* fled Pagan.<sup>16</sup> The number of the *aris* dwindled; however, they did not die out.

The *aris* were powerful in Pagan until the reign of King Aniruddha, who suppressed their views after he met Shin Arahan. The people also had come to their senses and refused to worship the *aris*, as there were no scriptural texts or the relics of the Buddha as objects of worships, Shin Arahan advised the king:

"Great King! Of the three aspects of the Buddha *Sasana* – *Pariyatti* (the studying of the scriptures), *patipatti* (the practice of meditation) and *Pativedha* (the realization of the Dhamma), *Pariyatti* is the basis. Pagan does not have the Three *Pitakas* (Buddhist canon) which form the *Pariyatti Sasana*. Religions will endure only if the Buddhist canon and the relics exist. Therefore, you must send a delegation, with gifts, to the country which has Three *Pitakas* and Buddha's relics."<sup>17</sup>

Accordingly, King Aniruddha prepared gifts, wrote a message and sent an emissary to King Manuha of Thaton to request for the *Tipitaka* and the Buddha's relics. As he did not get the *Tipitaka* texts, King Aniruddha waged a war on Thaton. After conquering Thaton, he brought back thirty sets of the *Tipitaka*, together with the relics worshipped by the successive kings of Thaton in the palace,<sup>18</sup> to Pagan and established *Pariyatti Sasana* in Pagan.

As King Aniruddha also brought back a thousand *ariya* monks from Thaton, Pagan became a kingdom endowed with the Three Jewels the representations of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*. Having established the Religions in Pagan, King Aniruddha sent four warriors to Ceylon to get a set of the *Tipitaka*. Then, he made Shin Arahan check the copies of the *Tipitaka* he brought back from Thaton against the copy of the *Tipitaka* from Srilanka, and it was found that they did not differ. He placed the scriptural texts in the library and distributed copies to various localities. King Htilaing Min held on to what Pagan had achieved in King Aniruddha's reign. When some monks from India came to Myanmar, the king showed them great hospitality.

Notwithstanding the statements in Myanmar traditional accounts, some historians believe that Theravada Buddhism was accepted by the majority of the people in the Pagan period and that it was impossible to say that Buddhism in modern Myanmar is pure as it is generally believed. Although Buddhism in modern Myanmar is pure as it is generally believed. Although Buddhism would have been pure when the Buddha Himself was alive, it would be adapted to fit the time and place and to suit the followers. Hence, it is impossible to say that

<sup>15</sup> Ashin Rajinda (*Hpayaphyu Sayadaw*), *Thathana Bahuthuta Pakathani* (Knowledge about Religious Affairs), Mandalay, Shwechinthe Press, 3rd printing, 2004, p.57 (Henceforth: Rajinda, 2004)

<sup>16</sup> Mahadhammathingyan, 1956, 85

<sup>17</sup> Rajinda, 2004, 58

<sup>18</sup> U Tin, *Myanmar Min Oatchoatpon Sadan Hnint Bodawhpaya ei Yazathat Hkawthaw Ameindawtangyi* (The Administration of Myanmar Kings and Bodawhpaya's Edict Called Yazathat), Vol.III, Yangon, Baho Press, 1970, p.99 (Henceforth: Tin, 1970)

Buddhism practiced in Myanmar is in its original form. It is believed that Buddhism in the Pagan Period would not differ much from that practiced in modern-day Myanmar.<sup>19</sup>

It is impossible to accept that Buddhism made its way to Myanmar during the lifetime of the Buddha and that Sona and Uttara came to Suvannabhumi in 235 Religious Era (309 BC) in the reign of King Asoka to propagate Buddhism as tradition asserts. There is no evidence that Buddhism spread to any locality outside Majjhimadesa (central India). Suvannabhumi was not in the list of the localities to which missionaries were dispatched in the reign of King Asoka. Therefore, it is impossible that the Myanmars received the *Tipitaka* from Thaton (Suvannabhumi). There is a scholar who argues that there is no contemporary record which mentions that King Aniruddha waged a war on Thaton to obtain Shweli in the north and Twante in the south. However, it is not possible that he expanded his kingdom for religious reasons. It is also impossible to accept that a pure form of Theravada Buddhism flourished in Lower Myanmar and spread to Upper Myanmar. The statement that the Myanmar came into contact with Buddhism only after King Aniruddha's conquest of Thaton in AD 1057 is not tenable either. The Myanmar must have become Buddhists soon after they entered the central plains of Myanmar in the mid 9th century AD, when they had contacts with the Pyus and the Mons who were Buddhists. The gold leaf manuscripts and Buddha images excavated near Sriksetra also indicate that the Pyus were Buddhists who possessed scriptural texts. Similarly, it is learnt that there were a *baddha sima* and a *mahathera* near Kyaukse, a locality in which the Mons had settled. It can be conjectured that the Pyus, the Mons and the Myanmars would mix with one another. Archaeological research reveals that the two Hpetleik pagodas in Pagan belonged to a date earlier than Aniruddha's reign. It can therefore be concluded that the Myanmars had become Buddhists before Aniruddha conquered Thaton.<sup>20</sup>

Concerning the *Ari* sect, when some scholars studied the history of Pagan relying on lithic inscriptions, it came to light that the *aris* were not as debased as the Myanmar chroniclers had asserted, that it was the national sect (or Myanmar sect) which was opposed by the foreign sect (or Sinhalese Sect) throughout the Pagan period and that the Myanmar kings did not disparage the Myanmar monks even though they were pleased with the Sinhalese monks who observed the Vinaya rules strictly. As the Sinhalese sect emerged victorious in AD 1480 during the reign of King Dhammazedi, aka Ramadhipati, who unwaveringly supported them, the chroniclers vilified the *aris* in the 16th century. A scholar offers a new perspective and states that although the chroniclers exaggerated the *aris'* practice of deflowering brides, there is no evidence that such a practice ever existed in Pagan.<sup>21</sup>

The nature of Myanmar Buddhism and Myanmar's religious toleration can be learnt from the inscriptions belonging to Htilaing Min's reign. It can be learnt from the Shwezigon inscription, which mentions Htilaing Min's regal title, that although Buddhism was the most popular, there were other religions. The king declared himself to be an avatar of Visnu even though he was a Buddhist. Thus, Pagan was not free from Brahmanic influence. The king purified the Religions with the help of Shin Aranhan. It is learnt that there were those who devoutly followed their religions and tolerated the religions professed by the others. Htilaing Min was a king who erected the Zeyabhumi pagoda, which was commonly referred to as Shwezigon, in northeast Pagan, made accurate copies of the *Tipitaka*, sent some officers with donations to Bodh Gaya to repair the temple there, donated the four requisites to monks, and converted a prince who came from abroad to Buddhism. Nevertheless, he performed

<sup>19</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Hkithaung Myanmar Yazawin (A History of Old Myanmar)*, Yangon, Innwa Press, 2002, December, 3rd printing, p.211 (Henceforth: Than Tun, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Than Tun, 2002, 2013

<sup>21</sup> Than Tun, "History of Buddhism in Burma", Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1956, p.IV (Henceforth: Than Tun, 1956)

brahmanical rites in the presence of Shin Arahan according to the palace inscription.<sup>22</sup> Buddhist monks were invited to the site of the new palace to recite the *parittas* to avert evil. It is learnt that brahmins played a leading role in the construction of the palace. Making offerings to Vishnu was more important than other ceremonies. Offerings were also made to Indra. In the Nanhpaya, the image of Brahma was the main image. A temple called Nathlaunggyaung, which stood next to Pahtothamya, still exists. Brahmanic influence can be seen even in the inscriptions written during the reigns of the last kings of the Pagan dynasty. Gavampati is mentioned together with two disciples of the Buddha in an inscription dated AD 1179. All these indicate that Buddhism professed by the Myanmar's in the 11th century was mixed with other religions and that Sivaism had at least enjoyed a position of importance in Pagan.<sup>23</sup>

Shin Arahan, who began to spread Buddhism in Myanmar from Aniruddha's reign onwards propagated the Religions during the reigns of four kings: Aniruddha, Sawlu, Htilaing Min and Alaungsithu. He passed away at the age of 81 in AD 1093, during the reign of King Alaungsithu.<sup>24</sup> Then, King Alaungsithu, who was the donor of the Shwegu temple, entrusted the responsibility of administering religious affairs to Ven. Panthaku, and Religion continued to prosper as Panthaku wrote many books and taught his pupils.<sup>25</sup>

When Alaungsithu died, his eldest son Minshinsaw strengthened his following and marched towards Pagan to seize the throne. Then, Narathu requested Panthaku, who was venerated by all the citizens, to tell Minshinsaw that he did not need to come with his followers and that he should come expeditiously to ascend the throne. Panthaku told Narathu that he would be guilty of conduct unbecoming to a monk if he called Minshinsaw and if Narathu failed to enthrone Minshinsaw. Then, Narathu pledged that he would enthrone his elder brother. Panthaku trusted his words and went and informed Minshinsaw about this. Minshinsaw, believing Panthaku's words, sailed down the river to Pagan. Narathu fulfilled his pledge and enthroned his elder brother. Then, he poisoned the king on the night of his coronation of his elder brother. Then, he poisoned the king on the night of his coronation and usurped the throne. Dissatisfied with this, Panthaku went to Srilanka. King Narathu, worrying that monks might rebel against him as they lived in groups and believing that the kingdom's population would not increase if there were too many monks, forced the monks to leave the Order.<sup>26</sup>

In the reign of King Narapatisithu, a royal preceptor by the name of Uttarajiva, together with his pupil Chappada who was a novice, went to Srilanka. After staying in Srilanka for three years he returned to Pagan in AD 1173. His pupil Chappada, who was ordained as a monk in Srilanka, stayed behind and studied the scriptures for ten years. After studying for ten years, Chappada returned to Srilanka with four Sinhalese monks-Sivali, Tamalinda, Ananda and Rahula, so that they would be able to perform ecclesiastical rites on their own if the monks in Pagan refused to perform them with him. By the time they arrived in Pagan, Uttarajiva had passed away. Chappada consulted with the four monks who came to Pagan with him and performed ecclesiastical rites apart from Pagan monks. Some regard that his intention to perform ecclesiastical rites separately from other monks in Pagan stemmed from his pride.<sup>27</sup> It

<sup>22</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Myanma Htimunaya* (Myanmar Court Etiquette), Yangon, Hpo Wa Press, July, 2003, pp.4-16 (Henceforth: Than Tun, 2003)

<sup>23</sup> Than Tun, 2002, 213-14

<sup>24</sup> Ashin Sirisobhana, *Mahadvara Nikaya Thathanawunthadipani* (A History of the Mahadvara Nikaya), Yangon, Ledimandaing Press, 1974, 2nd printing, p.78 (Henceforth: Sirisobhana, 1974)

<sup>25</sup> Medi Sayadaw, *Wunthadipani* (A Work on the Lineage of Monks), Yangon, Hanthawady Press, 1966, p.82 (Henceforth: Medi Sayadaw, 1966)

<sup>26</sup> Sirisobhana, 1974, 81-82

<sup>27</sup> Sirisobhana, 1974, 86

is believed that the year in which Chappada introduced Sinhalese *Sasana* into Pagan was AD 1181.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Buddhist *Sangha* in Pagan split into Myanmar and Sinhalese factions in the reign of King Narapatisithu. Narapatisithu highly venerated these five monks and made them ordain novices as monks on a barge formed with boats in Ayeyarwady River. Their sect gradually grew. It is learnt that Rahula, one of the leaders of the Sinhalese sect, was smitten with love for an attractive dancer and left the Order. Thai scholars are of the opinion that King Aniruddha of Pagan got Buddhism from Nakhon Pathom in Thailand.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that votive tablets with Aniruddha's seal have been discovered all over Myanmar, from the confluence of the rivers Ayeyarwady and Shweli in the north to Twante in the south, indicates that Aniruddha had expanded his domain. Chappada passed away, and Sivali, Tamalinda and Ananda taught the scriptural texts to their pupils and purified the religion. When King Narapatisithu donated an elephant each to those three monks, Sivali and Tamalinda set their elephants free in the forest. Ananda, however, gave it to his relatives. Then, Sivali and Tamalinda decide to perform ecclesiastical rites separately from Ananda and, thus, the Sinhalese sect split into two factions. Later, Sivali performed ecclesiastical rites separately from Tamalinda because he thought that Tamalinda was guilty of "hinting for material gain" by making suggestions to his lay devotees to make donations to his bright pupils. In this way, the Sinhalese sect splintered into three factions. Thus, the Buddhist *Sangha* in Pagan, split into four factions: Arahan's, Sivali's, Tamalinda's and Ananda's factions. The sect formed by Shin Arahan, who came from Thaton, was called Purima Sangha (the Former Order), as it was the earliest sect; and the three factions of the Sinhalese sect were collectively referred to as Pachima *Sangha* (the Latter Order) as they were formed later.<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusion

In sum, it is impossible to find out when and how Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar. Some scholars believe that Buddhism made its way to Myanmar in the 1st century AD. It is impossible to say that Buddhism which came to Myanmar first was, as Myanmar's today believe, a pure form of *Theravada* Buddhism. The earliest form of Buddhism in Myanmar could be *Mahayana* Buddhism. Moreover, there are scholars who disagree with the generally accepted view that the Myanmar came into contact with Buddhism only after Aniruddha's conquest of Thaton. Furthermore, it is learnt that the *aris* who were disparaged by the chroniclers did not exist in the early Pagan period, but appeared only in the later Pagan period and continued to flourish in the post-Pagan period. Some regard that the *Ari* sect was a national sect, which gained notoriety because they were denigrated in the chronicles. There is no evidence that Myanmar kings had ever persecuted the *aris*. Factionalism within the *Sangha* began when the monks who had received ordination in Srilanka came to Myanmar. Secessions resulted not from differences in the monks' behaviour, robes, practice or goals, but from the secessionists' pride in their probity. Kings Aniruddha, Dhammazedī, Sinbyumyashin of Hanthwady, Thalun and Badon were the kings who had safeguarded and promoted the Religion in the history of Myanmar. The people, monks as well as laypersons, found the reforms effect by some kings impracticable, and the kings had to back down. Some reforms were successful to some extent. However, the kings of Myanmar as well as the people—still believed in spirits and occult arts. The kings, even though they were avowed supporters of the Religion, were not able to repudiate their customs yet.

<sup>28</sup> The date given in the Glass Palace Chronicle, however, is AD 1191

<sup>29</sup> Than Tun, 2002, 212

<sup>30</sup> U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi* (Great Chronicle), Vol.I, Yarpyi Book House Press, July 2006, p.261 (Henceforth: Kala, 2006a)

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Rector and Pro-rectors from Mandalay University for their permission to submit this research paper. And I am also thankful to Dr Toe Hla (Vice-chairman of Myanmar Historical Commission), and Dr Yee Yee Win (Professor ,Head) from History Department, University of Mandalay.

## References

### Secondary Sources

#### Published Books in Myanmar

- Ashin Muninda, *Buddhabatha Sittan* (A Survey of Buddhism), Yangon, Shwe Thein Tha Painting and Literature, 1978
- Ashin Janakabhivamsa, *Tabawa Thanthaya* (One Life's Cycle), New Burma Pitakat Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> Printing, 2000
- Ashin Pyinnyeindabhivamsa, *Sinkyethaw Buddhabatha* (A Pure Form of Buddhism), Yangon, Sarpelawka Press, 1965
- Ashin Rajinda (*Hpayaphyu Sayadaw*), *Thathana Bahuthuta Pakathani* (Knowledge about Religious Affairs), Mandalay, Shwechinthe Press, 3rd printing, 2004
- Ashin Sirisobhana, *Mahadvara Nikaya Thathanawunthadipani* (A History of the Mahadvara Nikaya), Yangon, Ledimandaing Press, 2nd printing, 1974
- Kala, U, *Mahayazawingyi* (Great Chronicle), Vol.I, Yarpyi Book House Press, July 2006
- Ledi U Hla Paing, *Pahkan Thathanawin* (A History of Buddhism in Pahkan), Yangon, Gandawin Press, 1981
- Mahadhammathingyan, *Thathanalinkara Sadan* (A Treatise on the Religion), Yangon, Hanthawady Pitakat Press, 1956
- Medi Sayadaw, *Wunthadipani* (A Work on the Lineage of Monks), Yangon, Hanthawady Press, 1966
- Tin, U, *Myanmar Min Oatchoatpon Sadan Hnint Bodawhpaya ei Yazathat Hkawthaw Ameindawtangyi* (The Administration of Myanmar Kings and Bodawhpaya's Edict Called Yazathat), Vol.III, Yangon, Baho Press, 1970
- Than Tun, *Hkithaung Myanmar Yazawin* (A History of Old Myanmar), Yangon, Innwa Press, 2002, December, 3rd printing
- , *Dr. Myanma Htimunaya* (Myanmar Court Etiquette), Yangon, Hpo Wa Press, July, 2003
- Toe Hla, Dr., *Myebaw Mye-auk Kyauksa Hmattan Mya Ka Pyawthaw Shehaung Myanmar Nainggan* (A History of Ancient Myanmar as told by the Inscriptions Above and Below Ground), Yangon, Zaw Press, 2004

#### Published Books in English

- Bimala Chun Law, *The History of Buddha's Religion (Sasanavamsa)*, Delhi, Sri Satguru, Publications, 1952
- Mendelson, F Michael, Sangha and State in Burma, *A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975
- Than Tun, Dr., "History of Buddhism in Burma", Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1956

#### Journals

- Aung Thaw, U, "*Beikthano Myohaung*" (The Old City of Beikthano), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazaung*, Vol.I, part. ii, 1966
- Maung Maung Gyi, U, "*Thayehkittaya Pyu Gita Lelagyet*," (A Study of Pyu Music in Sriksetra), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazung* (Weikza), Vol.IX, part.i, 1974
- Myint Aung, U, "*Halin Moyhaung*" (The Old City of Halin), *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Saung*, Vol.III, part.iii, 1968
- Sein Maung Oo, U, "*Thayehkittaya Myohaung*" (The Old City of Sriksetra) *Tetkatho Pyinnyapadetha Sazaung*, Vol.III, part.i