

Title	The Meritorious Deeds of King Nātoṅmya
All Authors	Sanda Linn
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Abstract	King <i>Nātoṅmyā</i> (AD 1211-1231), he was also called King Htilominlo and his personal name was Zeyyatheinkha. He had done great works of merit in Bagan. He left the inscriptions which recorded his donations. King <i>Nātoṅmyā</i> was a pious king and a great builder of religious structures. He built not only Myanmar style (Htilominlo Temple), but also Srilanka style (Setanagyi Stupa) and India style (Mahabodhi Temple). Through the study of meritorious deeds of King <i>Nātoṅmyā</i> , he had great benevolence towards the public, good inspirations and devotion to religion and a good diplomatic knowledge can be known. Besides, it also can be known that the political, economic and religious conditions of Bagan at that time.
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## Introduction

King *Nātoṇmyā* (AD 1211-1231) was one of the sons of King Narapatisithu (AD 1174-1211). His personal name was Zeyyatheinkha. He was also called Htilominlo. His royal title was Sri *Tribhavanādityapavaradhammarājā*- the Victorious King, Sun of the Three Worlds, most Excellent King of the Law. He was also called *Uccanā*, a name adopted for the first time by a Bagan king. This name was probably derived from the name *Uccanātha* – the High Protector, which has a close resemblance to *Uccadeva*, a name of Vishnu. He succeeded to the throne of his father on 19 August 1211. There are many ancient monuments in Bagan which proved that the Buddhism flourished in Bagan throughout Bagan Period. The people of Myanmar became united for the first time in the reign of King *Aniruddha* of Bagan, who was popularly known as *Anawrahta Min Saw*. Buddhism was introduced into Myanmar under his patronage. With the flourishment of Theravāda Buddhist religion, many religious establishments such as stupas, temples, monasteries, and libraries were built one after another by kings, ministers and commanders. Like other Bagan kings, king Htilominlo also built many religion edifices such as, pagodas and temples, monastery, land, field, etc. He built the temples and stupa is not only very large size but also significant style.

## The Meritorious Deeds of King *Nātoṅmyā*

There are many ancient monuments in Bagan which proved that the Buddhism flourished in Bagan throughout Bagan Period. Like other Bagan kings, king *Nātoṅmyā* also built many religion edifices such as, pagodas and temples, monastery, land, field, etc.

King *Nātoṅmyā* left the inscription which recorded his donations. According to the inscription, it is known that King *Htilominlo* made donations to *Mahadhī kloṅ phayā*<sup>1</sup> for two times. He recorded his first donation on the obverse side of the inscription and second donation on the reverse side. According to the inscription, it is learnt that he first donated in AD 1220 (Myanmar Era 582). Regarding it, it is mentioned thus:-

“*Sakarac 560 bhat nhac mlwaytā lachan 5 ryak  
krasapatiy niyā mahadhī dhammārajaguru kuiw maṅkrī  
Nātoṅmyā ṇai so cā saṅ rakā maṅphlacpri mahādhikloṅ  
purhā ā maṅkrī Nātoṅmyā lhū so mlacssālai 100 te  
laiārapkā tamut cattaruy carañ naṁsār wā arap n hui k̄ lai  
60 te jepntit cāraṅ nauiw rwā arap n hui k̄ lai 30  
samuicava lai 10 apoṅ 100*”<sup>2</sup>

It means that the King *Nātoṅmyā* donated the lands to *Mahadhi kloṅ purha* (Mahathe monastery) of his mentor ‘*Mahadhī dhammarājaguru*’ when he became king. He donated 100 *pay* (pe) of lands from *Mlacssa*. Moreover, he donated 60 *pay* (pe) of lands from *Tamut*, *Cattaruy*, *Caran* and *Namsa* village, 30 fields from *Nauiw* village and 10 fields from *Samuiwcava*; 100 *pay* (pe) in total.

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<sup>1</sup> Fig – 1, *Mahadhī* Monastery

<sup>2</sup> ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာ့ကျောက်စာများ (Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions) Vol – I, Yangon, Department of Archaeology) 1972, p. 129<sup>1-6</sup> ( Hereafter cited as *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol. -I )

Besides King *Nātoṇmyā*, his mother and sister also made donations to *Mahadhi kloṇ*. It can be seen as:-

“*maṅkri Nātoṇmyā nhamā acomaṅlha ṇaiso  
kuiwtolhūruy kuiwtoruy lhūsolai 140 te lhūso laiarapkā  
mlacsā tak̄siy nhuiḱ 50 panan lai 20 te calaṅarap nhuiḱ  
rwāsā lai 70 te mipurhāco mrakansaṅ lhūso lai 100  
laiarakpā phak̄maṅhuiw nhuiḱ 70 manpaṅcara  
klok̄uprwā toṅle lai 30 te*”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the King *Nātoṇmyā*'s sister *Acomaṅlha* donated 140 fields from *Mlacsā*, 50 fields from *Tak̄siy*, 20 fields from *Panan* and 70 fields from *Rwāsā* in *Calaṅ*. The King's mother *Comrakansaṅ* donated 100 fields: 70 fields from *Phak̄maṅhuiw* and 30 fields from the south of *Mapaṅcaraklok̄up* village.

The King *Nātoṇmyā* donated lands for the second time in AD 1223 (Myanmar Era 585). It was inscribed on the reverse side of the inscription as follows:-

“*Sakarac 585 khu asin nhac naṃyunlchan 8 (rya) k̄ 5 ne  
mahāthīkloṇ bhurā ā Nātoṇmyā mankrī lhūtuaṅ so laṅmapla  
arap nhuiḱ arhiymhakā calaṅkhlyoṅ toṅmhakā calaṅkhloṅ anok̄  
mhakā laṅmaplā mle nhaṅ acap mlok̄ nhaṅ arhiy mlok̄ thoṅ ...  
mle nhaṅ acap*”<sup>2</sup>

According to the inscription, it is known that King *Nātoṇmyā* donated the lands to *Mahathī kloṇ bhurā* in AD 1223 and that in *Laṅmapla* lands, to the east is *Calaṅkhlyoṅ*, to the south is *Calaṅkhlyoṅ*, to the west connecting *Laṅmaplā* and the lands connecting north and north-east corner.

After his donation, the King *Nātoṇmyā* did not pray for his merit. The inscription mentioned as:-

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<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, p.129<sup>7-11</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.140<sup>1-5</sup>

“i ṇaalhūkuiw coṇmakhyaṇ so sūkā lūcañcim natcañcim  
nirabbancañcim lhyaṇ ralecekun sate”<sup>1</sup>

According to this inscription, it is known that King *Nātoṇmyā* wished the people who protected his merits would attain blissful peace of *Nibbāna*.

By studying the inscription of the two donations, it can be seen that King *Nātoṇmyā* donated the fields in AD 1220 for the first time and the lands in AD 1223 for the second time. He donated not only the lands and the fields but also the religious monuments to the Sāsana. They are<sup>2</sup>:-

- (1) The Htilominlo Temple
- (2) The Mahabodhi Temple
- (3) The Gawdaw-palin Temple and
- (4) The Setanagyi Stupa

One of the meritorious deeds of the King *Nātoṇmyā* is the Hitlominlo temple.<sup>3</sup> The temple was built in AD 1207.<sup>4</sup> King *Nātoṇmyā* had inscribed a stone inscription about this donation. The inscription contains 38 lines. In the past, it was called ‘*Khemavara* Inscription’, for it was found inside the precinct of ‘*Khemavara*’. Later, it was called ‘The inscription of King *Nātoṇmyā*’, because the inscription expressed the king’s name and his donations.<sup>5</sup> Now, it is kept in Bagan Archaeological Museum: The inscription number is (50).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, p.140<sup>8-9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Minbu Aung Kyaing & Mg Kyi Pann, *နာတောင့်မြားမင်းကြီးကောင်းမှုတော်ထီးလိုမင်းလိုဘုရားကြီး (The King Nataungmya's Merit; Htilominlo Temple)*, Yangon, Htay Yaung Sone Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, June, 2010, p.20 (Hereafter cited as

*Htilominlo Temple*)

<sup>3</sup> Fig-2, Htilominlo Temple

<sup>4</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol. -I, 1972, p.83<sup>1</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Minbu Aung Kyaing and Mg Kyi Pann, *Htilominlo Temple*, p.53

<sup>6</sup> Fig - 3, Inscription of King *Nātoṇmyā* (Inscription number (50) from Bagan Archaeological Museum)

Table showing King Nātoṇmyā's donation of lands and fields.<sup>1</sup>

Sr. No	The name of the lands and the fields	Acres(pe)	
		Lands	Fields
1.	The lands connecting south west	300	
2.	The lands from south of <i>Nham phai</i> river	10000	
3.	The lands from <i>Riypupkaṁcwai</i>	1500	
4.	The lands from <i>Casinriyphlū</i>	10000	
5.	The fields from <i>Khoṅcā</i>		700
6.	The fields from <i>Ṇapoktū</i> in <i>Tapaṅ</i>		300
7.	The <i>Panlan</i> fields from <i>Mracsaphaṅ</i>		50
8.	The fields from <i>Manip</i>		700
9.	The fields from <i>Kuin</i>		1000
10.	The fields from <i>Calañkyakpakuinkyāñ</i>		500
11.	The fields from <i>Paṅ</i> township		500
12.	The fields from <i>Raṅuan</i>		500
13.	The fields from <i>Kantū</i>		500
14.	The fields from <i>Kukhannwaynī</i>		50
	Total	21800	4800

Total of Lands = 21800 pe

Total of Fields = 4800 pe

The inscription lines 2 and 3 describe thus:

“*Sri Tribhavanādityāpavaradhammarājā mañ so .. toṅmyā maṅkrī.*”<sup>2</sup> It is known from them that the title of the king *Nātoṅmyā* as *Sri Tribhavanādityāpavaradhammarājā*. Moreover, line 3 mentioned that the King *Nātoṅmyā* desired for the boon of omniscient Buddhahood.<sup>3</sup> According to lines 4 and 5, it is known that the dancers entertained at the king's donation ceremony. He offered the *Piṭaka* and then built the temple. He offered ‘*rhuy pok' pok'* (golden pop-corn), ‘*ṅuy pok' pok'* (silver

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol.-I, pp-83, 84<sup>6-13</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 83<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Vol.-I, p. 83<sup>3</sup>

pop-corn), offered ‘*chami*’(light) and ‘*sañ put*’(food).<sup>1</sup> Line 19 and 20 describes that he held his ceremony as follows:

“*ceñ kha rā tī ruiy puiw pā aat ryā rahan saṃgā nhañ akwa recaṅto khla i. krā pā sipā so maṅsā ama sathe sūkrwai tuiw sañ lañ anumoaṅā kho pā kun.*”<sup>2</sup> It means that:

“The drums and the fifes are played and together with the retinue the ministers and venerable monks, the royal water of purity was poured. All those princes, ministers and the rich people who heard and knew called aloud the anumodana.”<sup>3</sup>

It can be known from the above extract that the King *Nātoṅmyā* poured water and invoked the Great Earth to witness for his merit and that he also wanted the princes, ministers, the rich, etc to enter *nibban mañ so ma siy prañ* - the City of no Death called *Nibbāna*.<sup>4</sup>

Lines 21-35 mention that the King *Nātoṅmyā* put curse on the people who destroyed his merit. The king may expect that his merit might last long. If the people destroy his merit, he cursed them to be suffered in hell; *Mahaniraya* consists of eight levels: *sañjuiw ṅray, kālasut ṅray, tāpana ṅray, patāpana ṅray, saṅghata ṅray, roraw ṅray, mahāroraw ṅray* and *avici ṅray*. Moreover, he cursed those people not to have a chance to pay obeisance to the Future Buddha.<sup>5</sup> Lines 35-38 mention that the King *Nātoṅmyā* wished the kings, the princes, the ministers and the monks who protected his merit to become the victorious kings and the rich men and to be superior to the other people.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol.-I., p. 83<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84<sup>19,20</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Dr Than Tun, *၂၀၀၀-၁၉၄၅ ဘီစီ (Political History of Bagan Period)* Yangon, Pho Wa Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2005, p.41 (Hereafter cited as *History and Buddhism*)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.41

<sup>5</sup> *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol.-I, pp. 84,85<sup>21-35</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Vol.-I, p. 85,86<sup>35-38</sup>

The Htilominlo Temple, the donation of King Htilominlo, is situated close to the Nyaung U – Bagan road. Pichard describes that the Htilominlo Temple is a very large three - storeyed temple.<sup>1</sup> However, Dr. Kyaw Latt describes that it is a very large two-storeyed temple, with an entresol level.<sup>2</sup> It was also called as *Tilokamaṅgalā* - Blessing of the Three Worlds.<sup>3</sup> Generally, the main shrine entrance hall is facing towards the east. The Buddha images face towards the four cardinal points on the each of the two shrine storeys. All the crenellations of the whole temple are decorated with green and yellow sand-stone glazed plaques. The Htilominlo Temple was constructed with brick and used the system of stone reinforcement.

On the walls of the south-eastern window are the horoscopes of certain personages, which are inscribed in order to secure them against damage or loss by fire, rebellion, war, etc.<sup>4</sup> The fine plaster carvings, the green and yellow glazed stone plaques, straight arches of the cells and the fine brickwork on the Htilominlo Temple can be seen.

The Mahabodhi Temple was built by King Htilominlo in AD 1216.<sup>5</sup> He built the Mahabodhi Temple after the model of the temple at Bodhagaya in India.<sup>6</sup> The original Mahabodhi Temple had been erected on the place where Siddhatha first attained Supreme Enlightenment. According to the inscription, the King Kyanzittha

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Pichard, *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, Volume -VII, UNESCO 2000, pp-92-99 (Hereafter cited as Pierre Pichard, *Inventory* , Vol-7)

<sup>2</sup> Dr Kyaw Latt, *Art and Architecture of Bagan and Historical Background with data of important monuments*, Yangon, Mudon Serpay, 2010, p-139. (Hereafter cited as Dr Kyaw Latt, *Art and Architecture of Bagan*)

<sup>3</sup> Dr Than Tun, *တစ်နေ့တစ်လေ့မှာပင် (Slow and Study Wins the Race to Bagan)* Yangon, Pho Wa Press, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, August 2006 (Hereafter cited as Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*) p. 229.

<sup>4</sup> Taw Sein Ko, *Archaeological Notes on Pagan with Plan*, Delhi, Manager of Publication, 1936, p.10. (Hereafter cited as Taw Sein Ko, *Archaeological Notes on Pagan*)

<sup>5</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*, p.469

<sup>6</sup> *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, Universities Historical Research Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, February 2005, p-33 (Hereafter cited as *Glorious Bagan*,2005)

sent a mission to Bodhagaya to repair the *Vajrasana* or Mahabodhi at *Sri Bajras* before AD 1098.<sup>1</sup> The inscription mentioned that:-

The King *Sri Tribhuvanādityādhammarājā* sent the mission with the many of jewels by the ship to repair to *Sri Bajras*, *Vajrasana* or Mahabodhi temple at Bodhagaya where *Siddhatha* first attained supreme enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhagaya<sup>3</sup> was built with the stone brick. It was built in the reign of the King *Asoka*. The Mahabodhi at Bagan was built with brick masonry.<sup>4</sup> It was built in the reign of the King Htilominlo.<sup>5</sup>

Of these two temples of the Mahabodhi, on each side of the square tower has the same style with the niches in which seated and earth touching images of the Buddha are housed.<sup>6</sup> But the Mahabodhi in Bagan was not an exact copy of the original at Bodha Gaya.<sup>7</sup> The base of the Mahabodhi at Bodhagaya, is dwarfed and the square tower is pyramidal shaped. At the Mahabodhi in Bagan, the base is higher and the square tower is much sharper than that of Bodhagaya. At the Mahabodhi Temple of Bagan, the height of the base quadrangular block may be the same as that of the square tower.<sup>8</sup> King Htilominlo built the Mahabodhi Temple with the seven

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<sup>1</sup> G.H.Luce *Old Burma-Early Pagan*, New York University, Vol.- I, 1969, p- 77 (Hereafter cited as Luce, *Old Burma*, Vol. I)

<sup>2</sup> U Chit Thein, *ရှေးဟောင်းမွန်စာပေါင်းစုံ* (*Ancient Mon Inscriptions*) 1965, p.12<sup>9-12</sup> (Hereafter cited as U Chit Thein, *Ancient Mon Inscriptions*)

<sup>3</sup> Fig - 4, Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhagaya (Adapted from Krishna Deva, *India Temples of North*, National Book Trust, India, March 1969, p. 8)

<sup>4</sup> Fig - 5, Mahabodhi Temple at Bagan

<sup>5</sup> Mg Kyi Pann, *မဟာဗောဓိစေတီတော်* (*The Mahabodhi Temple*), Yangon, Htay Yaung Sone Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 2010, pp-9,10 (Hereafter cited as Mg Kyi Pann, *Mahabodhi Temple*)

<sup>6</sup> Fig - 6, Niches on the square tower

<sup>7</sup> *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, 2005, p.33

<sup>8</sup> *ပုဂံစေတီပုထိုးများ* (*Pagodas and Temples of Bagan*), Universities Historical Research Centre, Yangon, Popa Publishing House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2004, p.40 (Hereafter cited as *the pagodas and Temples*, 2004)

places,<sup>1</sup> in each of which of the Buddha sojourned for seven days just after Enlightenment like that of the Bodhagaya.<sup>2</sup>

On the south wall of the upper terrace has the gloss.<sup>3</sup> It ruins as follows:-

*“dwa yam Narapaticansuman sato mañkrī Nātoñmyā  
koñmhutō... pruiñtwañ nhuić lhū tō mhu so a koć a cāpuĩso  
mreapuiñakhrā ...”*<sup>4</sup>

The above gloss says that the Mahabodhi Temple was donated by the King *Nātoñmyā* (AD 1211-1231). It also mentions that the tax collected from the Bagan market was donated to the Mahabodhi Temple.<sup>5</sup>

King Htilominlo donated another temple named the Gawdaw-palin.<sup>6</sup> The tradition claims that the Gawdaw-palin Temple was left unfinished by the king Narapatisithu (AD 1174-1211) and completed by his son, King Htilominlo.<sup>7</sup> Gawdaw-palin was built in AD 1227.<sup>8</sup> The Gawdaw-palin Temple had no inscription. There were various traditional accounts about Gawdaw-palin. According to the records kept in front of the temple say that King Alaungsithu (AD 1113-?1163) held the ceremony of paying homage to the king’s ancestors at the site of the Gawdaw-palin. Therefore, Gawdaw-palin means “making obeisance to the images of the King’s ancestors placed on his throne”.

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<sup>1</sup> Fig - 7, Buddha image in Mahabodhi Temple (Adapted from Mg Kyi Pann, *Mahabodhi Temple*)  
Fig - 8, Hole of old brick where Bodhi Banyan tree grown outside the west edge roof of Mahabodhi Temple (First week of the Buddha sojourned)  
Fig - 9, Buddha gazed intently ‘without winking’, *Animisa* (Second week of the Buddha sojourned)  
Fig - 10, Jewelled Walk, *Ratanacañkama* (Third week of the Buddha sojourned)  
Fig - 11, House of Gems, *Ratanaghara* (Fourth week of the Buddha sojourned)  
<sup>2</sup> Mg Kyi Pann, *Mahabodhi Temple*, p.10  
<sup>3</sup> Fig - 12, Gloss on the south wall of the upper terrace  
<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.30  
<sup>5</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*, p.236  
<sup>6</sup> Fig -13, Gawdawpalin Temple  
<sup>7</sup> *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, 2005, p.31  
<sup>8</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*, p.469

The Gawdaw-palin Temple is situated inside the Bagan City-wall. It is a very large, two-storeyed temple.<sup>1</sup> It is square in plan, with porticoes on all four sides. The main shrine is on the upper level. Each of the two storeys is surmounted by three receding terraces, which have the corner stupas. The Gawdaw-palin Temple used the system of the stone reinforcements. The height of the temple is 180 feet.<sup>2</sup>

The Setanagyi Stupa<sup>3</sup> was also built by the King Nātoñmyā . It was built in AD 1236.<sup>4</sup> It was also called *Sissanagyi*.<sup>5</sup> According to *the Glass Palace Chronicle*, the King *Nātoñmyā* was sad when his queen Eindawthin (*aimtōsañ*) and his son Taramun (*taramwan*), born of the chief queen Taungpyinthi (*Toñprañsañ*), passed away. As he was sad, he could not take food nor water. Therefore, the ministers persuaded him to take food and water back. The king thought that it would be a long time to attain *Nibbāna* by praying to be a Lord Omniscient. Therefore, he vowed to attain *Nibbāna* by becoming a silent Buddha. And then he built a stupa called Setana Stupa.<sup>6</sup> Dr Than Tun had written in his book that the Setana-gyi Stupa was a Hindu temple in the past, and that the name was *Sissana* (*Cañcanā*). Later, the King *Nātoñmyā* rebuilt that temple as the stupa and called it the Setanagyi Stupa.<sup>7</sup>

The Setanagyi Stupa is situated on the south-east of Thiripitsaya. It is a very large stupa and the type belongs to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>8</sup> The Setanagyi Stupa is at the centre of a square enclosure wall. There are two square walls. The outer wall has gateway on each side. The plan is square. Each side of the plinth is decorated with

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<sup>1</sup> Pichard, *Inventory* ,pp.270-275

<sup>2</sup> *Glimpses of Glorious Bagan*, 2005, P.31

<sup>3</sup> Fig-14, Setanagyi Stupa

<sup>4</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*, p.469

<sup>5</sup> U Bo Kay, *ဂုဏ်သုတေသနလမ်းညွှန် (Guide to research on Bagan)*, Yangon, Sarpeybeikman Press, 1981, p.361(Hereafter cited as U Bo Kay, *Guide on Bagan*)

<sup>6</sup> Pe Maung Tin and G.H Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, Rangoon, Rangoon University Press, 1960, p.154 (Hereafter cited as *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 1960)

<sup>7</sup> Dr Than Tun, *Slow and Study*, p.469

<sup>8</sup> Pichard , *Inventory*, Vol.-IV, 1994, pp.206-209

thirty nine elephant heads (total 156)<sup>1</sup> alternating with kalasa pots<sup>2</sup>. Paul Strachan says in his book that the use of elephants in this position is partly decorative and partly protective<sup>3</sup>. In the upper part, it has the hemispherical dome and the square crowning block<sup>4</sup>. The stucco carvings with a lotus petal design were carved or moulded on each of the four faces of the harmika box.<sup>5</sup>

Buddhism flourished in the Pyu City States. The excavations of the old cities, like Beikthano, Sri Ksetra and Halin, revealed quite a number of religious objects belonging to Hinduism and Buddhism (of both Mahāyāna and Hinayāna Sects). Some of the sculptures discovered in Sri Ksetra are distinctively Mahāyanist.<sup>6</sup> The religious objects mostly of Theravāda Pāli Buddhism unearthed at Sri Ksetra, are notably famous twenty gold-leaf manuscripts and two gold plates. Two gold plates were found at Maung Kan's field Lebow Village, Pyay in 1897. The script is identical with the Kadamba script of South India of 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Each plate contains three lines of Pali beginning with the popular Buddhist formula "Yedhamma hetuppabhawa".<sup>7</sup>

A book of 20 gold leaves of gold, exactly like the old palm-leaf manuscripts was discovered in Khin Ba's Mound, Hmawza in 1926. They are inscribed on one side only. Each of the first 18 leaves of gold contains three lines, the 19<sup>th</sup> four lines and the twentieth only two. It is the earliest record in Pali of the Paṭiccasamuppāda formula in Myanmar datable to 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. Another gold plate was found in 1928 at Kyundawza Village near Pyay. It has two lines of Pali in Pyu script beginning with

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<sup>1</sup> Pichard, *Inventory*, Vol.-IV, 1994, pp.206-209

<sup>2</sup> Fig -16, Plinth of the Setanagyi Stupa

<sup>3</sup> Paul Strachan, *Pagan Art and Architecture of Old Burma*, Singapore, Kiscadale Press, 1989, p.12 (Hereafter cited as Strachan, *Pagan Art and Architecture*)

<sup>4</sup> Fig-17, Hemispherical dome and square crowning block of the Setanagyi Stupa

<sup>5</sup> Fig-18, Harmika box of the Setanagyi Stupa

<sup>6</sup> U Aung Thaw, *Historical sites in Burma*, The Ministry of Union Culture, Sarpay Beikman Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1972, p.26 (Hereafter cited as U Aung Thaw, *Historical sites in Burma*)

<sup>7</sup> Dr Nai Pan Hla, *Archaeological Aspects of Pyu, Mon, Myanmar*, Yangon, Thin Sapay, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2011, p.29 (Hereafter Cited as Dr Nai Pan Hla, *Aspects of Pyu, Mon, Myanmar*)

the formula in praise of the Buddha: “*i ti pi so bhagava āraham...*”<sup>1</sup> This archaeological finds at Sri Ksetra proved to be a solid evidence for the prevalence of (Pāli) Theravada Buddha Sasana in Myanmar in the fifth century AD.<sup>2</sup>

Bagan first received the Mahāyāna type. Under King Aniruddha (AD 1044-1077) who unified the Mon and Myanmar Kingdoms in 1057, the first Union of Myanmar was established. In the reign of King Aniruddha, Shin Araham and Aniruddha tried to get the Piṭaka from Thaton and he drove away the Aris and introduced Theravada into Bagan. Under King Kyansittha (AD 1084-1112) Bagan’s religion, slowly but surely, changed from Tantric Mahayana of East Bengal to Theravada of South India and Srilanka. Since the reign of King Aniruddha, the kings and people of Bagan did the meritorious deeds. Although Buddhism had flourished throughout the long history of Myanmar, the reign of Anawrahta served as a landmark in the development of Buddhism in Myanmar. Religious fervour, brought on by the flowering of Theravada Buddhism, inspired the king of Bagan and their subjects to undertake great works of merit and to give lavishly to the Religion. Religious donations were made to acquire merit, be reborn in the celestial realms, to come into the presence of Metteya, the next Buddha, and finally to attain *Nibbāna*. The kings and people of Bagan donated lands, religious buildings and slaves. Their great works of merit were recorded by engraving stone inscriptions. King Htilominlo, like his predecessors, had done great works of merit in Bagan. The inscriptions engraved during the reign of King Htilominlo proved that he was a devout Buddhist.

In brief, since the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, Kings of Bagan were converted to Theravāda Buddhism. They built many pagodas, temples and other religious edifices in and around Bagan to acquire merits which could help them attain

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Nai Pan Hla, *Aspects of Pyu, Mon, Myanmar*, p.29

<sup>2</sup> U Ye` Naing, “Arrival of Buddha Sasana in Myanmar”, Seminar Paper, August 2003, p.14

*Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal of Buddhism. Like his predecessors, King Htilominlo was a pious king and a great builder of religious structures. He not only tried to complete the construction of some pagodas and temples built by his predecessors but also constructed some from the beginning to the end, including the Htilominlo Temple. Another note-worthy point is that as he ruled over the kingdom righteously and justly, no rebellion, except one which rose among the restless tribes to the north of Tagaung, appeared during his reign.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, he can be said to be a contributor to the flourishing of Theravāda Buddhism, in addition to being a righteous king.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Columbia University Press, New York, London, 1967, p. 55  
(Hereafter cited as Dr Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*)

## Conclusion

Throughout Bagan Period, Kings and the people had been building pagodas, temples and other religious structures continuously in conformity with the changing times. Like other Bagan kings, king *Nātoñmyā* also built many religion edifices such as, pagodas and temples, monastery, land, field, etc. In addition to the Htilominlo Temple which assumes the Myanmar style, King *Nātoñmyā* built the Mahabodhi Temple and the Setanagyi Stupa which are not in Myanmar style. The Mahabodhi Temple is built in the style of the Mahabodhi Temple in Buddhagaya of India. Consequently, Myanmar pilgrims, not being able to visit India, can worship the Mahabodhi Temple even in Bagan. This suggest that King *Nātoñmyā* had great benevolence towards the public, good inspirations and devotion to religion. Besides, he built the Setanagyi Temple which assumes the Srilanka style. It, just at a glance, convinces one to think that this temple is a Srilanka style one. The construction of the Mahabodhi Temple and the Setanagyi Stupa infers that King *Nātoñmyā* had a good diplomatic knowledge and built friendly relation with India and Srilanka. Apart from pagodas and temples, he donated the great Mahāthe Monastery to his teacher. He also dedicated many acres of religious land and fields generously to the Buddha's Sāsana. This shows that he had great confidence (Sadhā) in the Buddha's Sāsana and that he made a lot of contributions to its perpetuation. As it is learnt from the study of the Htilominlo Temple that dancers staged their performances during the *Gu Ihwat pwai*, the Pagoda Festival of the Htilominlo Temple, it can be assumed that there prevailed peace and tranquility in the kingdom at that time. Since, during the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD (Late Bagan Period), kings and the people of Bagan, with great devotion to the Sāsana, donated the Htilominlo Temples and other religious edifices, it can be supposed that the Buddha's

Sāsana would be flourishing to its great extent in those days. Construction of many such colossal religious buildings created many job opportunities for workers including painters, masons, etc, thus contributing to the economy of the people. Moreover, as Kings and the people donated religious land very frequently, it can be deduced that the national economy of Bagan improved. As it was the time of prevalence of peace and tranquility, prosperity and flourishing of the Sāsana, it can be considered that the rate of construction of religious buildings, which are the indicators of them, would be on the increase. The construction of the grand Myanmar style Htilominlo Temple, Mahabodhi and Setanagyi Stupa can be ascribed to the combination of modern and changing ideas of the Bagan architects, their higher architectural technologies and the great confidence of King *Nātoñmyā* in the Sāsana. Despite repeated weatherings for many years, this temple can stand intact up to today. This suggests that the technology of constructing temple would develop with great momentum at that time. Through the study of the architecture and arts of the Htilominlo Temple, can be known that the political, economic and religious conditions of Bagan at that time.

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Fig-1, Mahadhi Monastery



Fig-2, Htilominlo Temple

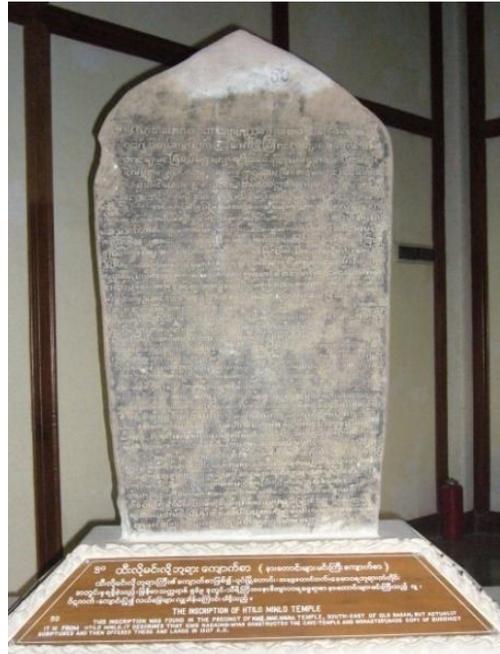


Fig-3, Inscription of King Natonmya



Fig-4, Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhagaya

(Adapted from <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1056>)



Fig-5, Mahabodhi Temple at Bagan

Photo by researcher



Fig-6, Niches on the square tower of Mahabodhi Temple at Bagan

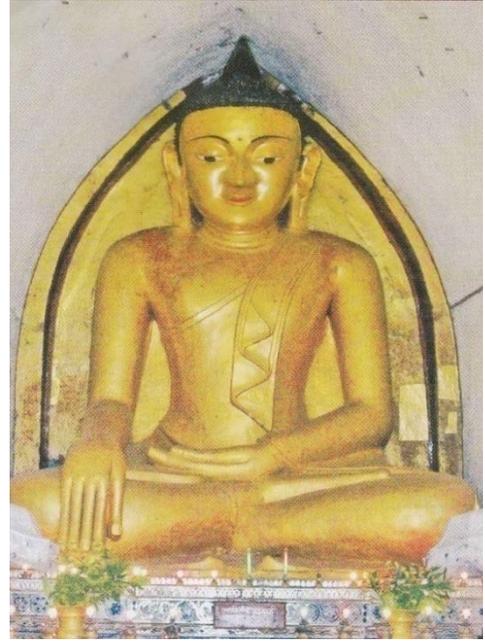


Fig-7, Buddha image in Mahabodhi Temple at Bagan



Fig-8, Hole of old brick where Bodhi Banyan tree grown



Fig-9, *Animisa*, second week of the Buddha sojourned



Fig-10, Jeweled Walk, *Ratanacaṅkama*



Fig-11, House of Gems, *Ratanaghara*

Photo by researcher

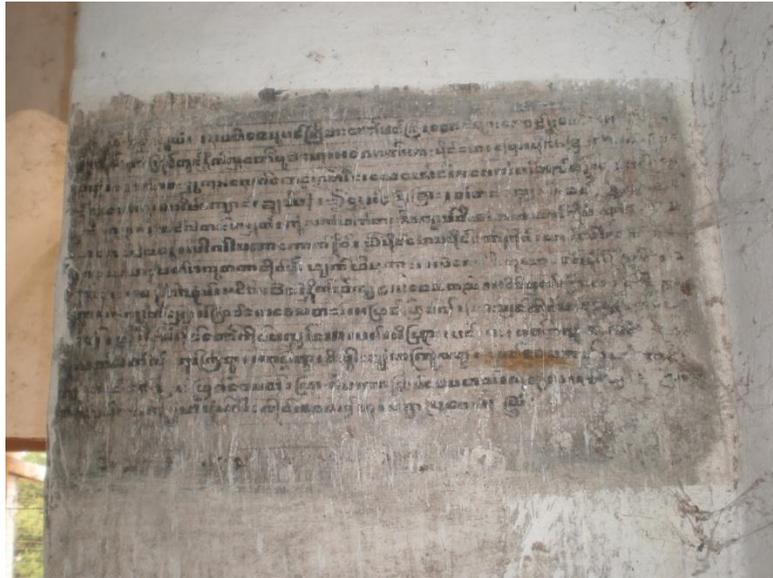


Fig-12, Gloss on the south wall of the upper terrace of the Mahabodhi Temple



Fig-13, Gawdawpalin Temple

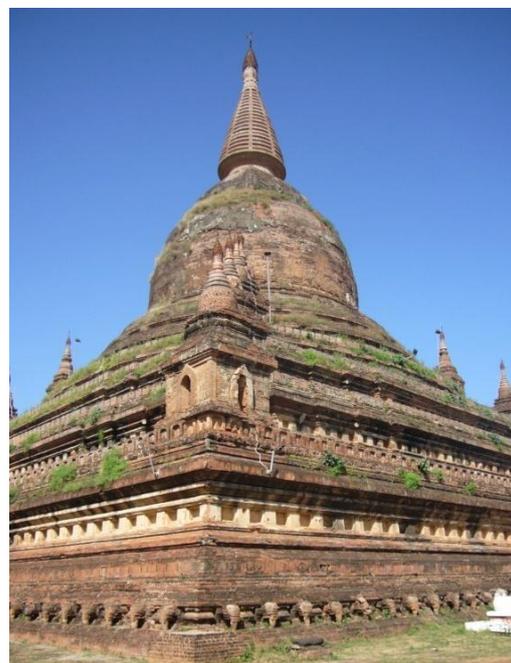


Fig-14, Setanagyi Stupa

Photo by researcher



Fig-15, Plinth of the Setanagyi Stupa



Fig-16, Hemispherical dome and square crowning block of the Setanagyi Stupa



Fig-17, Hermika box of the Setanagyi Stupa

Photo by researcher