

Two Recently Discovered Mon Inscriptions of Aniruddha

Nai Pan Hla

In 1971 a votive tablet of Aniruddha bearing an inscription in the Mon language was discovered at Momeit in Northern Shan State. Again on March 8, 1983, we discovered another terracotta votive tablet signed by Aniruddha himself, written in the Mon language, at Kalaymyo, a small town on the Chindwin River some 300 miles northwest of Pagan.

Aniruddha (also known as Anawrahta) was king of the Burmese kingdom of Pagan (Arimaddanapūra) from 1044 to 1077 A.D. He conquered the Mon kingdom of Thaton (Sudhammavattī), and had many other military campaigns both eastward and westward, even assisting in a campaign in Srilanka in 1069. He left terracotta votive tablets with Sanskrit and Pali inscriptions, but strangely no stone inscriptions by him have yet been found.

Professor G.H.Luce wrote as recently as 1969, "Aniruddha had written in Sanskrit and Pali -- in Sanskrit, perhaps, for dignity, in Pali for ease. ...Aniruddha himself, so far as we know at present, never wrote in Mon" (1969:96,101). So these new discoveries add important linguistic evidence to our knowledge of Aniruddha's relationship with the Mons.

We are told by tradition that Aniruddha was a devout Buddhist whose main motivation was to obtain, by persuasion or force, copies of the Tripiṭaka and relics of the Buddha from Ramaññadesa (Western Mon), Dvāravatī (Eastern Mon), Ceylon, Cambodia, and China. The most learned Mon monk Shin Arahan of Thaton became the advisor to Aniruddha in both religious and political affairs. So when Aniruddha's campaigns in Vesali (Arakan) and East Bengal failed to get the Buddhist texts there, Shin Arahan advised him that the Mon kingdom of Thaton had numerous Buddha relics and 30 sets of the Tripiṭaka and that king Manuha (Sūriyakumāra) of Thaton was politically weak. Meanwhile the Khmer king Sūriyavarman I (1002-1050 A.D.) had overrun the eastern Mon (Buddhist) kingdom of Dvāravatī (old Siam); he was also making raids into Thaton, so that this second Theravada Buddhist kingdom was in danger of falling under Brahmanist Khmer rule too.

So Aniruddha heeded Shin Arahan's advice and turned southward. He overran the Pyu kingdom of Prome (Śrī Kṣetra)¹, then in 1057 marched on Thaton, capturing it and carrying back to Pagan not only the Buddhist manuscripts but also all the relics, all the Mon architects, artists, and learned monks, and King Manuha and his royal family?² I am of the opinion that Aniruddha's main motive in capturing Thaton was to protect or save its Theravada Buddhism from the Shaivite court of Angkor. There is no sign of quarreling between Mon and Burmese.³ And in Pagan the Mon royal family was treated with respect, not as captives, even being allowed to build a large Mon-style temple in Paga

In consequence of this the Mon language was even used at the Burmese court, and its use in religious matters in Pagan is well attested in numerous stone inscriptions, terra cotta plaques, votive tablets, bricks, and ink inscriptions describing the mural paintings on the inner walls of all the early temples of the Pagan dynasty. But until our recent discoveries, evidence was lacking that Aniruddha himself used the Mon language. This gap has now been securely filled.

Following are the texts and translations of the Mon inscriptions on the two votive tablets signed by Aniruddha.

(A) Votive tablet found at Moneit in 1971:

Mon text

1. wo' kyāk a
2. niruddhadeva gna smiñ ju
3. m nok ma lāt
4. (na) tey kum

Translation

1. This Buddha (image)
2. Aniruddha, the divine
3. the great king who made
4. even (with) his own hands.

(B) Votive tablet found at Kalaymyo in 1983:

Mon text

1. wo' kyāk mun
2. aniruddhadeva gna smiñ
3. jum nok lāt
4. na tey kum

Translation

1. This Buddha (image) which
2. Aniruddha, the divine
3. the great king made
4. even with his own hands,

These two texts are only slightly different. In A the attributive particle ma is used before the verb lāt 'make', but B has its equivalent the attributive particle mun before the name aniruddhadeva. Palaeographically and orthographically the two texts are identical. It is clear in both inscriptions that kum is written in the Thaton Mon fashion with the vowel u hanging under the middle of the consonant k. (MS)

Glossary

aniruddhadeva =proper name; title of the king.

(also anuruddha) Skt. a - niruddha - deva 'unobstructed god'
(divine or superhuman)

kum (also kum, kumm) =also, even, again.

Mod. Mon kuim /køm/.

- kyāk (also kyek) = God, Buddha, sacred being or thing, object of worship. With prefix gna in gna kyāk means 'queen, princess'. When combined with Skt. śrī in kyāk śrī means 'prosperity, glory, blessing from the goddess Śrī or Lakshamī (spouse of Vishṇu)'. Spoken Mon /caik soe/ or /cot si/.
- gna = prefix for king and queen.
Now no longer used for king, only for queen or princess. Mod.Mon /həneʔ/ or /həneʔ/.
- jum nok = big, great, large, of high rank, full grown, mature. Noun form jirnok /hənok/ 'bigness, size, adult, chief, leader, head' as in /hənok kwāñ/ 'village headman', /hənok dəŋ/ 'governor', /daik hnok/ 'flooded, high tide', /proa hnok/ 'heavy rain', /təeʔ hnok/ 'big earth, mother earth, the world'.
- tey = hand, arm.
Literary Mon tai /toa/
- na = with, by, by means of, through.
spoken Mon /nəʔ/ or /neʔ/.
- ma, mun, min = that, which, whose, whom.
Mod.Mon has only ma /məʔ/ or /meʔ/.
- (also man)

lāt

= to make, to slice.

No longer used in Mod.Mon.

wo'

= this

Mod.Mon wwa' /wu?/. But most commonly used in spoken Mon is /ino?/'this' (vs. /ikoh/ or /ite?/ 'that').

smin

= king, prince, monarch; usually it has

(also smen)

the prefix gna in OM but not always. gna smin jum nok 'the great king'. Smin dhammarāja 'king of the Law'. Smin lokapāl pan 'the four regents or guardian gods of the 4 Quarters'. Smin 'in 'Indra'. Smin devatāw 'king of the gods (Indra)'. In Mid. Mon and Mod.Mon, it often combined with Pali 'ekarāja as Smin 'ekarāt 'monarch, king'; tala ñah Smin dhaw 'His Majesty the King of the Law'. Smin, in literature and spoken Mon also means officer, ruler, governor. deh dah smin 'He is an officer'. Smin jnok 'Head of a Department or high ranking officer'. Smin buiw 'General or Commander-in-Chief' (P.bala >bal>buiw). Smin yuim 'king of Death' (Skt. /P.yama>yam>yuim). Smin tñai 'Sun-god'. Smin tala 'government' (tala=lord). /hmoiq/or/hmoim

Footnotes

1. It may be conjectured that at the time Aniruddha overran the Pyu he had already received Sanskrit Buddhism from Bengal through Arakan. His worship of Lokanātha (a form of Avalokiteśvara) as found on his votive tablets obtained elsewhere in Burma is another evidence that he was not a pure Theravādin in the earlier part of his reign before he met the Mons.
2. A Burmese chronicle describes the capture of Thaton: "He brought away the sacred relics, kept in a jewelled casket which was worshipped by a line of kings in Thaton. And he placed the thirty sets of the Piṭaka on the king's thirty and two white elephants, and brought them away. ... Thereafter he sent away separately, without mixing, such men as were skilled in carving, turning, and painting; masons, moulders of plaster and flower patterns, blacksmiths, silversmiths, braziers, founders of gongs and cymbals, filigree flower-workers, doctors and trainers of elephants and horses, makers of shields round and embossed, of divers kinds of shields both oblong and convex, forgers of cannon, muskets and bows, men skilled in frying, parching, baking and frizzling; hairdressers, and men cunning in perfumes, odours, flowers and the juices of flowers. Moreover to the noble Order who knew the books of the Piṭaka he made fair appeal and brought them away. He also took Manuha (Sūriyakumāra) and his family and returned home to Puḡārāma (Pagan)." (From the Glass Palace Chronicle)

The Kalayani Mon inscriptions of Pegu state: "After the theras Sona and Uttara had founded the Buddhist religion in Ramaññadesa, it flourished for a long time. In the course of time, however, its power declined, because civil dissensions arose and the extensive country was broken up into separate principalities, and because the people suffered from famine and pestilence, and because, to the detriment of the propagation of the excellent religion, the country was conquered by the armies of the Seven Kings During the reign of Sūriyakumāra, who bore the name of Manohor, ruling the city of Sudhuim (Thaton), the power of the kingdom became very weak ... In 1601 A.B. 419 Sakkarāj (1057 A.D.) King Aniruddha, the lord of Arimaddanapūra (Pagan), took a community of monks together with the Tripitaka, and established the Religion in Pukām." (Taw Sein Ko & Blagden)

3. Concerning the prestige of the Mons and the Burmese, note the appeal for help sent by the king of Srilanka to Aniruddha "the king in the Ramañña country" in 1067 A.D. (Luce 1969, Vol.I, p.39)

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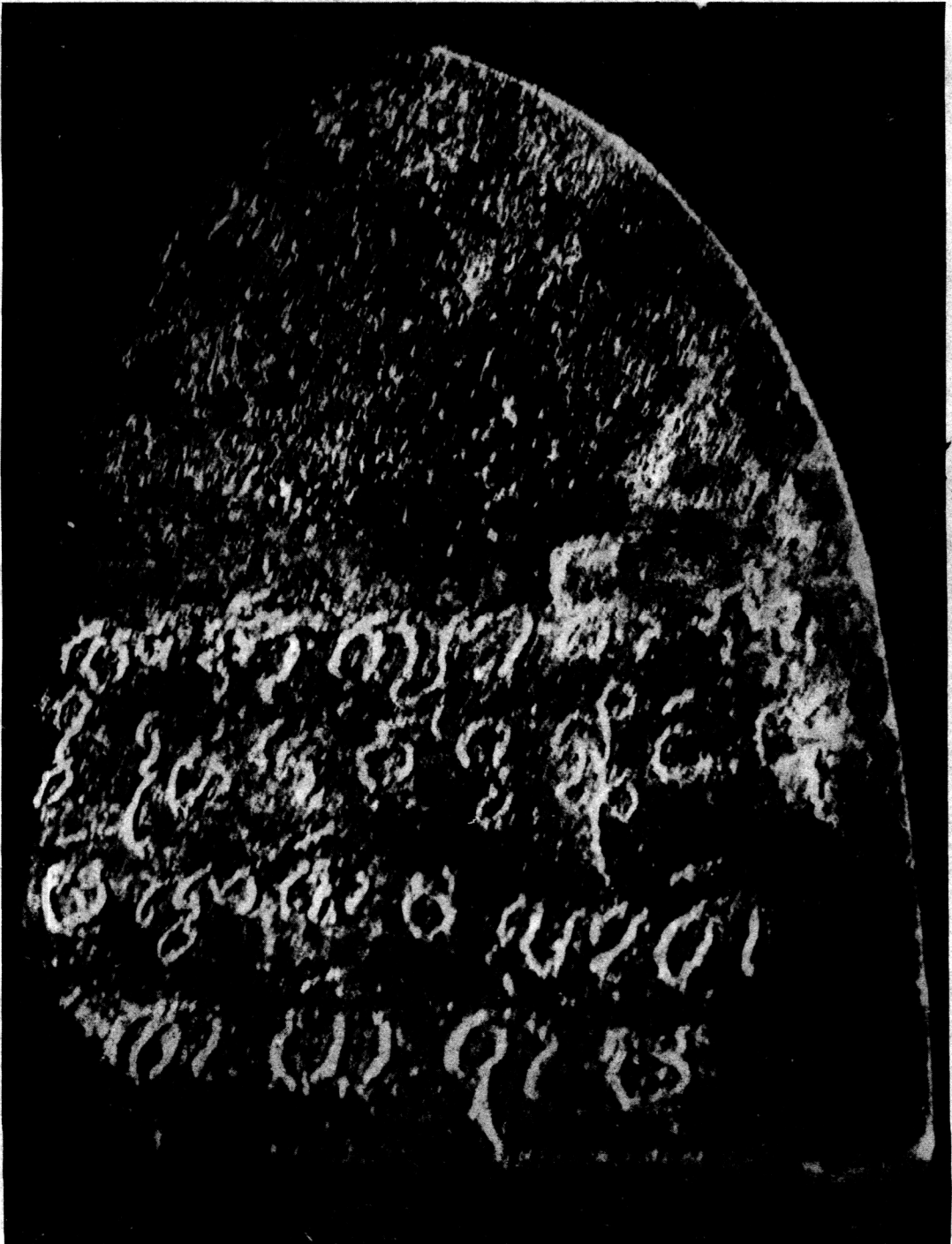
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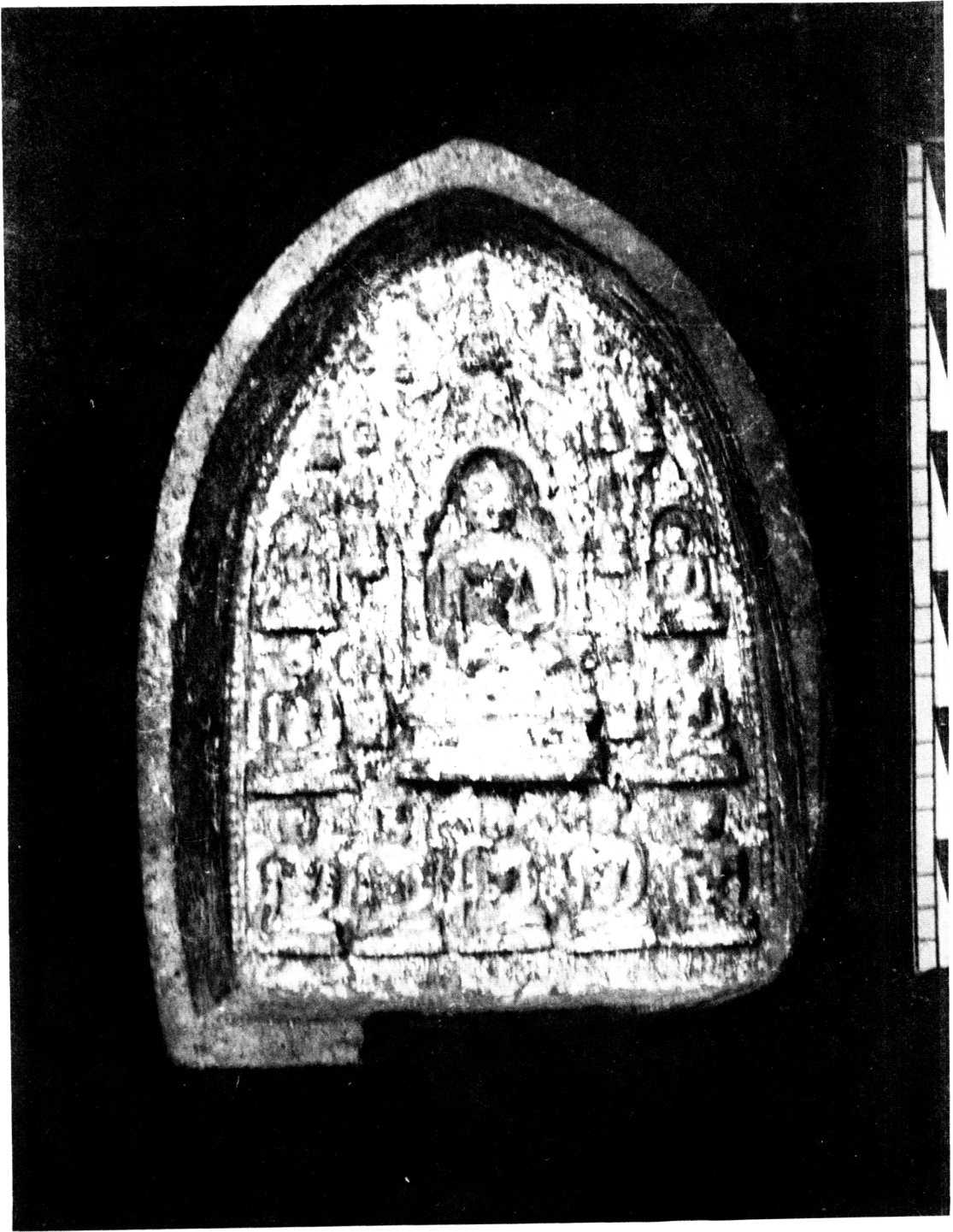
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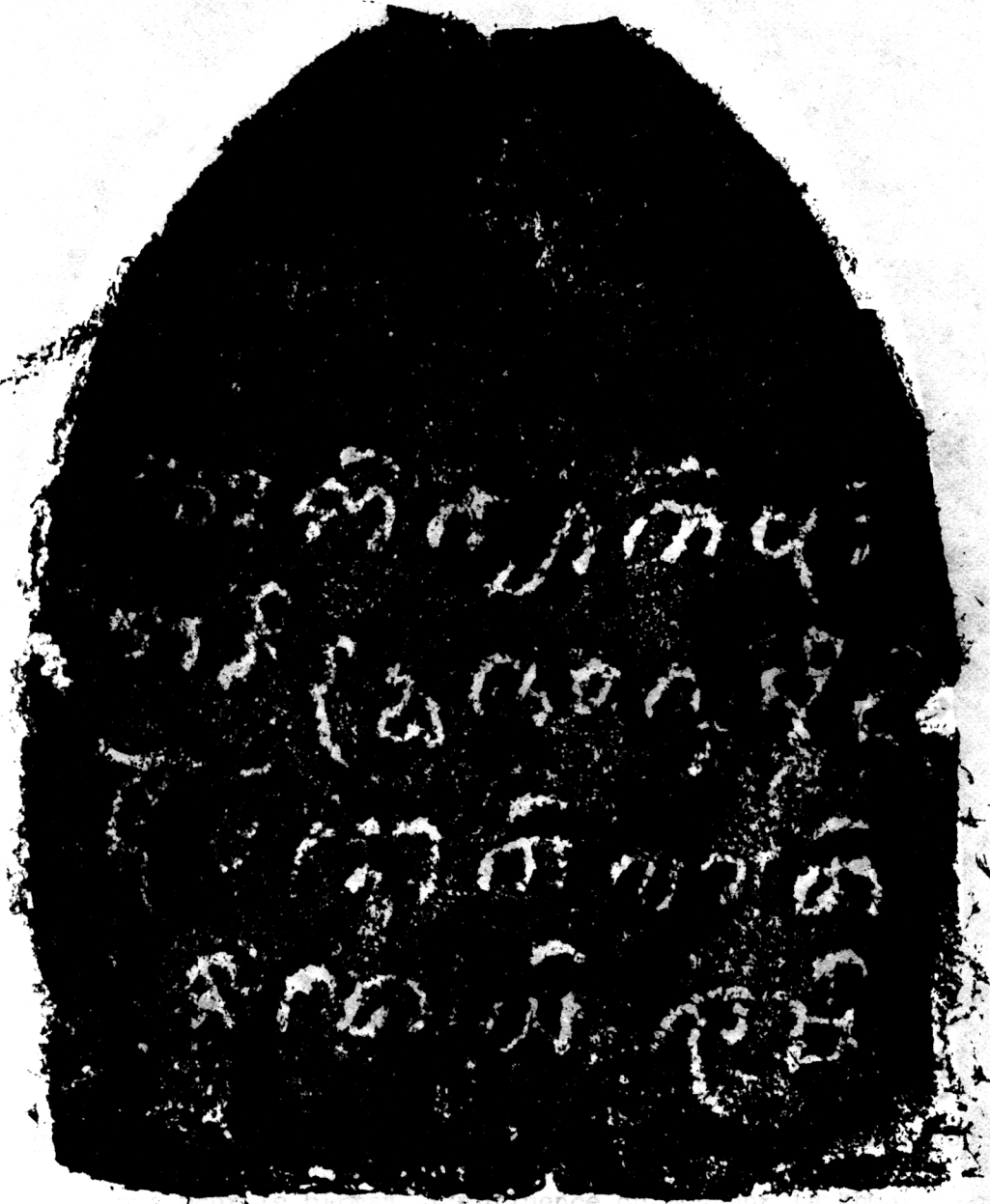


A. The Momeit Tablet. Mon Inscription.



B. Obverse face of the Momeit Tablet.

Bears ten Buddha images in bhūmispaśa
mudrā manner.



C. The Kalaymyo Tablet. Mon Inscription.



D. Obverse face of the Kalaymyo Tablet.

(It is identical to obverse faces of Aniruddha's other votive tablets bearing Sanskrit and Pali inscriptions.)