

# The British in Burma: Pagan and Other Sites during the Colonial Era, 1852-1942

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## Abstract

This paper argues that British scholars provided the groundwork for the conservation of important archeological and cultural sites in Burma, particularly the ancient ruins of Pagan. Rather than neglecting the preservation of this heritage, as Burmese archaeologist U Nyunt Han suggested in 1989, British archaeologists, historians and epigraphers concentrated on documentary records, including lithic inscriptions, rather than undertaking major repairs to ancient sites. This approach was an outgrowth of shortages in funding and a fundamental adherence to “conservatism” in the repair and preservation of ancient monuments —an approach rooted in the precepts of British antiquarianism and the work of the Archaeological Survey of India with which Burma was associated during the colonial period. The paper contributes to the fields of conservation history, archaeology and post-colonial studies.

## Introduction

The history of the French scholars and conservators at Angkor and the Dutch at Borobudur is well known. The French, particularly through the agency of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, built a scholarly apparatus that still in many ways prevails in well-publicized restorations in Cambodia, as well as among the Cham sites in Vietnam (Clementin-Ojha and Manguin 2007). Dutch antiquarians began work at Borobudur in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and laid out the principles for conservation practice at Prambanan and other ancient sites throughout the “Netherlands East Indies” (Kempers 1976, Adams 1990). There they created the beginnings of a professional archaeological service that continues to work on sites in Indonesia and elsewhere in the region. Thailand’s more independent steps to preserve Ayutthaya, Sukhothai and other heritage sites have also been the subjects of scholarly overviews, most recently that of Australia-based scholar Maurizio Peleggi (2002).

Burma, renamed Myanmar in 1989, however, has received less scholarly scrutiny. In part this is due to the country’s relative isolation from the international conservation community, especially since the emergence of a military government after 1988. But in part, too, it is because the British appear to have done so little during the period of colonization that their efforts seemed unworthy of recognition.

U Nyunt Han, Director-General of the Burmese Archaeological Department, complained in 1989, that the “annual budget allocated for the conservation of Pagan ancient monuments [was so limited during the colonial period] that not more than ten ancient monuments had been repaired or attended to” (U Nyunt Han 1989:91). (Charles Duroiselle, the chief British expert in the 1920s and 1930s, claimed that the antiquities department had restored 41 monuments at Pagan but admitted that much of the work was minor; Duroiselle 1939:328-29). Unlike in the Dutch or French colonies, there was little training of staff or technicians during colonial times — Duroiselle relied on local masons and public works departments — and certainly little effort to prepare Burmese nationals to serve as managers or scholars. But was this an intentional effort to ignore Burma’s heritage or simply a matter of inadequate funding and little interest?

The reasons for the differences in approach and the levels of commitment to conservation of the past among the various colonial authorities in Southeast Asia during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are complex and beyond the scope of this paper. What deserves attention, however, is the level of British involvement at ancient sites such as Pagan and the special direction that British antiquarians and conservators took in both the investigation and repair of architectural monuments. Never committed to conservation to the same degree as the French and Dutch, British scholars and archaeologists, nonetheless, established the beginnings of a program of research and documentation that would persist well into the period of Burmese independence. Relying on epigraphic research and prone to cautiousness, British authorities were committed to careful documentation and were hesitant to intervene with actual physical remains. Money was in part an issue, but a basic British reluctance to tamper with the vestiges of the past was perhaps the more important factor behind their approach.



Figure 1 Indo-China, 1886.

## The Colonial Presence

Seeing an independent Burma as potential threat to British interests in Bengal, the British absorbed the country through a series of military campaigns, interspersed with treaties between British authorities and Burmese sovereigns. Beginning in 1819, the British took over the area known as Rakhaing (known too as Arakan) and the nearby border area of Tanintharyi (Tenaserim). A dispute in 1852 led to the seizure of Rangoon, a move followed by a military campaign into central Burma, known as the Second Anglo-Burmese War. Beginning in 1878, the Burmese King Thibaw Min attempted to reassert the power of the old kingdom and simultaneously lost the support of his own people, many of whom fled to the British Lower Burma. In 1885, Thibaw retreated to his palace in Mandalay while British troops controlled the countryside. The following year the last Burmese king and his family went into permanent exile to India (Phayre [1883], Cady 1958; Casino 1992; Thant Myint-U 2001).

Although the conservation and study of antiquities was not an immediate concern of the new British authorities, Burma's ancient remains had long been of interest to British and other European travelers; and much as with French archaeologists in Indochina, British archaeologists and historians would eventually make ancient sites in Burma, such as Pagan (Bagan) and Pegu (Bago), the foci of special study. Mostly abandoned and far from centers of population, the ancient remains of Burma stood as evidence of the past and as source of scholarly engagement for a few antiquarians and linguists — though not initially an object of colonial policy.

The first record of British interest in Burma's ancient remains was that of diplomat Michael Symes, who wrote an account of his travels in 1795. Stopping at Pagan, he explained:

Leaving the temple at Logahnunda, we approached the once magnificent city of Pagaham. We could see little more from the river than a few straggling houses, which have the appearance of having once been a connected street: in fact, scarcely anything remains of ancient Pagaham, except its numerous

molding temples, and vestiges of an old brick fort, the ramparts of which are still intact (Symes 1800; cited in Strachen 1996:2).

A generation later, during the First Anglo-Burmese War, Colonel Henry Havelock noted the “sensation of barren wonderment is the only one that Pagaham excites.” He went on to complain: “There is little to admire, nothing to venerate, nothing to exalt the notion of taste and invention of the people that the traveler might have already formed in Rangoon or Prome” (cited in Yule [1856]:33). However, the civilian envoy John Crawfurd thought that the “vast extent of the ruins of Pagan, and the extent and splendour of its religious edifices, may be considered by some as proofs of considerable civilization among the Burmans” (Crawfurd 1829:129). Other British travelers had similarly opposite reactions.

In 1855, Henry Yule, an officer with the Bengal Engineers, then serving as an assistant to the British envoy at Ava, began the first careful study of Pagan. Drawing upon his engineer’s training he undertook a detailed inventory of the monuments, counting between 800 and 1000 shrines. Assisting him was Captain Linnaeus Tripe, an amateur photographer, and the artist Colesworthy Grant. Both contributed to Yule’s later book *Narrative of a Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855*.

Pagan and other sites continued to draw the interest of travelers in succeeding years. Robert Abreu’s descriptions of the abandoned European colony at Syriam and ruins along the Sittang River repeated the typical western reaction to ancient sites. Surveying Pegu as part of his work with the Forestry Office in 1856, he noted:

The most remarkable are the remains of Pagodas. They are picturesque in appearance, although bare and desolate, as well from form and disposition of their construction, whose sides are furrowed by the channels silently worn in them by the rains. The traveler surveying them will scarcely fail to be absorbed in deep reflection; while their contemplation will call forth various interesting associations in his mind, as these remains themselves have a peculiar solemnity from their lonely and startling evidences of past grandeur (Abreu [1858]:101).



**Figure 2** Linnaeus Tripe, the Thapinyu Pagoda, Pagan, Burma, 1855.

Other travelers expanded upon these impressions. These included the German ethnographer Adolph Bastian (1826-1905), who visited in 1862. British travelers to Pagan and other sites included J. Talboys Wheeler in 1871 and Charles Alexander Gordon in 1874. However, it was the Swiss *Pali* specialist Emil Forchhammer who first began to study the monuments in depth. Taking a position at the newly established Rangoon College in 1881, he soon afterward published the two-volume *Notes on the Early History and Geography of British Burma*, including a separate treatise on the Shwedagan Pagoda in Rangoon (1884). He also produced a detailed report on the temple of Kyauk-ku-ohn-min, located near Pagan at Nyaung-U (Forchhammer [1891]).

Also active in Burma during this period was the administrator and amateur archaeologist Richard Carnac Temple (1850-1931) — not to be confused with the more famous Sir Richard Temple, one-time Governor of Bombay and British politician. Later knighted for his wide-ranging contributions to the British Empire — including nearly half a century as editor and publisher of the scholarly journal *The Indian Antiquary* — Temple published several pieces on Burmese sites (Temple 1906). Self-educated in archaeology, Temple was also an avid collector, both of objects and of folk tales. Appointed Assistant Commissioner in Burma in 1886, he became a Deputy-Commissioner in 1888. Between this time and 1894, when he took a position as Chief Commissioner for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, he conducted several studies of historic sites in Burma (Venn J. and J.A. [1958]).

Other Europeans in Burma had less scholarly aims. The German collector Fritz von Noetling spent his holidays detaching glazed ceramic plates from several important temples. In 1899, Theodor Heinrich Thomann dismantled parts of temples, taking murals from Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi and other sites. Learning of these activities, the British District Commissioner had Thomann and his accomplices expelled, although most of Thomann's hoard of treasures was already in Germany by that point (Luce 1949:85; Strachen 1996:4). Thomann would write the first major book on Pagan after his return, *Pagan. Ein Jahrtausend buddhistischer Tempelkunst*, published in 1923.

### The Archaeological Survey of India and the “Burma Circle”

Burma's ancient sites would begin to gain some level of protection in the wake of British annexation. This came in large part through the Indian parent institution, the Archaeological Survey of India, or ASI. Founded in 1861 as part of measures introduced after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the ASI built upon nearly a century of British scholarship in India. Sir William Jones (1746-1794) was the most famous of the British students of ancient India and his efforts had led to the creation of the “Asiatic Society” in Calcutta, followed later by similar organizations in other Indian cities during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Roy 1961; ASI 2010a).

The ASI's first director was Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), a retired former British military engineer and impassioned antiquarian. Under Cunningham's leadership, the fledgling ASI examined major sites throughout the country and also began a regular publication series on the organization's findings. During Cunningham's tenure, the ASI also pushed for legislative reforms aimed at protecting ancient sites. The Indian Treasure Trove Act of 1878 was to discourage the looting of important archaeological sites. Another act in 1886 required permits for any excavations of historic sites (ASI 2010b).

In the 1880s, the ASI began to expand to include new areas of responsibility. In 1881, the government created the new position of Curator of Ancient Monuments, a post held initially by Major Henry Hardy Cole (1843-1916). Two years later, the British authorities consolidated several regional surveys into a central organization.

The government also created a new office of Government Epigraphist, to deal with the many ancient Indian inscriptions. John Faithful Fleet (1847-1917) held the job initially and began the tradition of publishing newly discovered inscriptions on a regular basis (Roy 1961; ASI 2010a).

At the time of his retirement in 1885, Cunningham suggested a new regional organization for the survey. These would include what he termed independent “circles,” three covering the northwest and central provinces; a fourth taking control of Bengal and nearby areas; and a fifth centered on Bombay and including Hyderabad and Madras. These fell under the authority of an interesting group of mostly military officers who mixed scholarship with fact-finding for the empire — and launched the idea of “archaeologist-as-spy” that inspired Kipling and countless later writers. These all contributed to the work of the ASI, adding to publications and extending the knowledge of empire.

In 1866, one of these figures, James Burgess (1832-1916) became the new Director-General of the ASI. Burgess decided to compress the organization into three “circles,” and to create new positions in archaeology, epigraphy and exploration for each division. With Burgess’s retirement in 1889, the government decided to divide the organization in half, with separate “Superintendents” for the north and south (ASI 2010a). Looking for a fresh approach, the government then accepted the recommendation of the Asiatic Society’s Calcutta and Bombay chapters to reinstate Cunningham’s original five-part division and to place more emphasis on conservation of known monuments over new exploration. The Asiatic Society also emphasized the need for more historical research and proposed funding for an “Epigraphist” in the central office to preside over “honorary epigraphists” in other areas — eventually including Burma.

The appointment of Lord Curzon (1859-1925) as the Imperial Viceroy in 1899 marked a turning point for the ASI. Highly educated and interested in a wide range of scholarly topics, Curzon perceived the problems inherent in the regional organization of the department and ordered the reinstitution of the post of Director-General (Roy 1961). The new officer was to have a formal background in archaeology and would coordinate with other agencies of the Indian government,

particularly the Geological Survey (Cumming 1939). Traveling to Burma in 1901, he was impressed with the country's many ancient remains (Duroiselle 1939). He suggested that Pagan have a museum — the first Ananda Museum of 1904 was the direct outcome of Curzon's idea — and charged British authorities there to preserve the famous teak palace at Mandalay (unfortunately, later destroyed in World War II by an Allied bombardment).



**Figure 3** Lord Curzon and his wife, Mary Victoria née Leiter.

Curzon appointed John Hubert Marshall (1876-1958) as the ASI's new Director-General. Marshall immediately set about putting the ASI on a more scholarly footing. Marshall's most important early achievement was the passage of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1904 (Act No. VII). In part the brainchild of Curzon, the act was the first comprehensive law for antiquities in India and did much to promote conservation of ancient sites. Under the law, the ASI had the responsibility of surveying and mapping historic monuments; providing protection in the form of fences where necessary; acquiring both freeholds and leases over ruins or other kinds of cultural sites; and prosecuting those who abused ancient buildings or sites or stole from them. This legislation would create the framework for a half century of work for the ASI, as well as laying the foundations for later Indian laws (Roy 1961:87-91; ASI 2010b).

The ASI would eventually have 22 “circles” covering all of India. Burma entered into the fold in an informal way in 1899 with the formation of an “Epigraphy Office,” under the direction of Taw Sein Ko, a Chinese resident of Mandalay. Burma became a corresponding member of the ASI in 1902 (Taw Sein Ko 1926; Duroiselle 1939:325). Never well integrated into the ASI as a whole, Burma nonetheless received recognition and funding through the central office; and the Burmese office contributed regularly to the ASI’s *Annual Reports*. However modest, this was Burma’s first formal introduction to western ideas of scholarship and conservation.

### Archaeologists and Epigraphers in Burma

British authorities had given little attention to ancient sites prior to the intervention of the ASI. District officers had created a number of “trust schemes” to pay for repairs and maintenance for several religious sites, most of the money coming from Burmese themselves. After Curzon’s visit in 1901, the government made more funds available (Duroiselle 1939). An immediate project was in fact the palace at Mandalay, in which Curzon had taken a personal interest. In fact less than fifty years old at the time he visited the extensive site — King Mindon had built the palace between 1857 and 1859 as part of his new capital — the palace was a masterpiece of Burmese artisanship. Curzon called for annual funding to maintain the palace and cautioned against over repair or restoration.

Authorities applied similar guidelines to other sites as well. Generally left to the care of local people, district officers began to press for minor repairs to older *pagoda*, initially relying on local public works departments for the actual work. In 1902, the central government allocated money for the repair of thirty sites in Pagan, again channeled through district public works departments. Other sites around Burma had no direct funding available (Duroiselle 1939).

Travel writer George W. Bird provides an excellent snapshot of the condition of Burmese monuments at the time. A long-time employee of the Education Department, stationed in Rangoon, Bird wrote his *Wanderings in Burma* of 1897 for the average western tourist, providing site-by-site descriptions of ancient temples and temple ruins throughout the country. Illustrated by photographs by Frederick Oertel (1862- ) and Felice Beato (1832-1909), Bird describes Pegu, Prome, Moulmein, Sagaing, Mingun, Ava, Shwebo and especially Pagan.

The first impression is of the remoteness of most of the sites and the small numbers of local people still living near the ancient monuments. At Shwetha-Yaung, he writes of a huge image of the Buddha, which “was found buried in dense jungle some 15 years ago by a railway contractor” (Bird 1897:171) At Thaton, he explains: “Of archaeological remains few exist at the present day, and beyond the imperfect mounds, marking the ramparts of the old city, a few pagodas, but little of interest is to be seen” (210). In Pagan, he explains that “The remains of an endless number of pagodas, temples, monasteries, and other religious buildings, extend along the river bank from the cliffs above Nyaungu on the north, for a distance of eight miles, with a breadth of nearly four miles” (334). These were clearly sites for a few intrepid travelers, not major sites for tourism.

Beginning in 1904, with passage of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, conservation efforts in Burma accelerated. The government “Epigrapher” Taw Sein Ko immediately compiled a list of sites needing repair. Holding the seemingly exalted, but in fact modest, post of Superintendent — sometimes referred to as Director — of the Burmese Survey from 1902 to 1915, Taw Sein Ko submitted short reports on the temples and also initiated repairs of some of the most important sites (Taw Sein Ko 1926; Duroiselle 1939:325). According to Pagan’s recent chronicler Paul Strachen, Taw Sein Ko relied on the advice of the village headman of Pwasaw when surveying the monuments in Pagan. The village authority provided many of the monument names, creating many, according to Strachen, on the spot (1996:4). These include many of the names still used at Pagan and other sites.

In 1907, Taw Sein Ko issued a report summarizing the work up to then. As predicted, the wood palace at Mandalay had used up most of the available money allotted to the preservation. The government, with the help of the local district commissioner, had committed to the preservation of thirty Pagan monuments “at the public expense.” Taw Sein Ko divided the Pagan monuments into several classes: those associated with Anawrata following his conquest of Thaton; temples influenced by Singhalese ideas; structures showing the possibility of central Indian influence; and finally the coalescence of elements in the great temples such as Shwesandaw and Swezigon (Taw Sein Ko 1926).

By 1910, the amateur historian and archaeologist Charles Duroiselle (1871-1951) had joined in Taw Sein Ko's efforts. A self-taught scholar of Burmese and also *Pali* and other ancient languages, Duroiselle had arrived in Burma from his native France sometime in the late 1890s, working first at the Rangoon High School. He later secured a post at the Government College at Rangoon, teaching French and *Pali* and succeeding James Gray as the Professor of *Pali* sometime early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From 1910 on he contributed many articles and reviews to the *Journal of the Burmese Research Society*, demonstrating his wide knowledge of Burmese history and language. He also completed a number of translations and compilations of *Pali* inscriptions (U Pe Maung Tin 1951; Strachen 1996:5; Open Library 2010).

Throughout this time, he was also a committed amateur archaeologist, surveying sites at Pegu (Bago) and Prome (Pyay) and especially at Pagan. He worked extensively also at the Pyu site of Sri Ksetra and at Ava, Amarapura and Sagaing. In his later memoir, he emphasized that only Pagan had a large number of well-preserved monuments, due to the relative dryness of the area.

In 1912, Duroiselle accepted the offer of an appointment in the Archaeological Survey in Mandalay, under Taw Sein Ko. Succeeding Taw Sein Ko as director in 1915, Duroiselle attempted to better outline the history of each of the monumental sites, relying especially on the analysis of inscriptions. His work owed much to the fellow *Pali* scholar Louis Finot of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient (EFEO), with whom he maintained a correspondence. He also worked closely with Malay-based linguist Charles Otto Blagden (1864-1949) in the compilation of a catalog of "lithic and other inscriptions" published in the *Epigraphica Birmanica*, a multivolume record begun by Taw Sein Ko. He later wrote a detailed analysis of Ananda Temple in Pagan, published as a monograph by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1937.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Duroiselle and his mostly Burmese staff made an assessment of the condition of remaining Pagan sites. They identified approximately 800 specific remains, spread over about 80 square miles (200 square kilometers). The "best preserved" of these were in turn divided into two

categories: those that should be protected from treasure-hunters and another 43 considered eligible for conservation work. The department divided these by category — elongated, with a bell-form stupa; rectangular with a porch; and single stupa with surrounding walls and corridors — and then began a systematic process of slow restoration and repair of these.

By 1939, the department had completed repairs to 41 of the 43 selected monuments. As Duroiselle explained:

The work was not one of reconstruction, but merely of conservation, rebuilding only such parts, mostly battlements, of which numerous original models were at hand; and endeavouring always by means of a tinted cement or plaster to merge the new work with the old so as to make them barely distinguishable (Duroiselle 1939:328-29).

At Prome, the Burma department preserved several sites as well. For those at Thaton, Duroiselle emphasized that they were too far gone to warrant conservation. Overall, it was a modest program of repairs with less than dramatic results.

### Linguists and Historians

Although it seems that Duroiselle was operating in a vacuum, he in fact had a great deal of advice from outside the Archaeological Survey itself. Among his closest advisors was John [J.S.] Furnivall (1878-1960). One-time Commissioner for Land Settlement, Furnivall was one of the founders of the Burma Research Society (Moore 2007:27). He later became Lecturer in Burmese Language, History and Law at Cambridge University, a post he held from 1936 to 1941. He also wrote one of the first English-Burmese dictionaries, collaborating with C.W. Dunn on the work.

Another contributor to the Archaeological Survey's work was J.A. [John A.] Stewart (1882-1948). Arriving in Burma around 1905, Stewart also worked in the Settlement Department. His colonial career interrupted by World War I, Stewart returned to Burma in 1918 to take on a succession of administrative posts,

in the 1930s, becoming Commissioner for Magwe District. He too worked on an English-Burmese Dictionary, publishing a first volume in Rangoon in 1940. This became the basis for Furnivall and Dunn's project. Leaving Burma before the war, Stewart became the first Professor of Burmese at the University of London, helping to found the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Another colleague was C. O. [Charles Otto] Blagden, author with Walter William Skeat of the two-volume *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906). Blagden lived in British Malaya and was active with the Raffles Museum in Singapore, but also made trips to Burma as part of his own research. From 1919 on he worked with Duroiselle on the periodic *Epigraphica Birmanica*.



**Figure 4** Gordon Hannington Luce, wife Ma Tee Tee, possibly during Japan sojourn.

However, the key new figure in Burmese research at the time was Gordon Hannington Luce (1889-1979). Arriving in Burma in 1912 to teach at the then Government College in Rangoon, Luce quickly became an expert in *Pali* and *Sanskrit* and soon became knowledgeable in Old Burmese and Mon (Hall 1980; Strachen 1996:5). He also could read Chinese sources, which helped in better understanding later Burmese history. Unusual for a British resident, Luce distanced himself from colonial society, married a Burmese woman and switched from teaching English to become a lecturer in Burmese and Far Eastern History at what had evolved by 1920 to be the University College, Rangoon. To further his abilities he took a leave of absence to study at the Sorbonne, working with the famous EFEO epigraphist Louis Finot and EFEO Sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878-1945).

Luce's lifelong contribution to the antiquities of Burma was his encyclopedic study of the early period of Pagan. Carried out with the help of his brother-in-law, U Pe Maung Tin and his Burmese friend Ba Shin, Luce based his work on the record provided by inscriptions. With little knowledge of architecture and concepts of art or architectural history, he nonetheless grouped the monuments by period and type, creating the first sound chronology of Burmese temples. His work appeared in numerous journals and other publications from the late 1910s on (Hall 1980).

Luce never worked directly for the Archaeological Survey but consistently helped in its work. He was in frequent communication with Charles Duroiselle and helped on Duroiselle's inventory of Pagan sites. Criticized in recent years by Burmese scholar Michael Aung-Thwin (1985) for his emphasis on the Mon contribution to Burmese culture and his reliance on inscriptions over other kinds of evidence, he nonetheless made incalculable additions to worldwide knowledge of Burmese sites.

### Conclusions

Unlike the French in Cambodia, the British never fully committed to the restoration of a "lost empire." The work had a scholarly dimension and remained in many ways the province of privileged amateurs. The New Delhi-based ASI provided advice and some funding, but never offered the dimension of material and moral support that the EFEO did for the work of the Conservation d'Angkor

in Cambodia or even the Dutch government in Java. Duroiselle and his mostly Burmese colleagues muddled on throughout the 1920s and 1930s, fixing loose bricks and walls, recording ancient paintings and conducting new archeological research when possible. The restoration of Burma's past was neither a governmental nor an economic priority for the British colony. Burma was, for all intents and purposes, a backwater of the British Raj and its monuments a curiosity for the occasional traveler rather than a focus of national attention.

In 1937, the British instituted a new policy of limited self-rule for Burma. The government in India continued to play a role in most political decisions but gradually the British authorities expected the Burmese to develop their own competencies. This occurred slowly in the small realm of archaeology and conservation, with the ASI still providing advice and some financial assistance. In fact, Duroiselle's official appointment as head of the Archaeological Survey in Burma coincided with the act (Open Library 2010). But it was clear that the end of the old regime was close at hand.

In 1942, Japanese troops entered Burma breaking Britain's long hold on the country. Duroiselle as with other foreigners had to leave quickly. Luce, reluctant to part with his many years of research notes and his Burmese friends and family, fled with his wife at the last moment to India. The new Japanese-backed government had little time for ancient monuments; and there were no conservation projects over the duration of the war. The war itself caused destruction throughout the country, including the loss of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century place at Mandalay. British forces retook the country in 1945.

Throughout the 1950s, Luce and other scholars continued to study Burma's ancient remains. Luce himself arrived back in Burma in 1945, staying until 1964 when political events finally forced his departure (Strachen 1996:6; Tinker 1985). The independent Burmese government created an Archaeological Survey in 1948, modeled very much upon that developed by the British twenty years earlier. Independent scholar Dr. Than Tun continued research at Pagan and in 1948, U Le Pe Win became the director of Burma's archaeological service (U Nyunt Han 1989:94).

As a newly independent country Burma could scarcely afford to devote much time or energy to conservation. The acrimonious break from Britain also extended to advice and financial assistance; so unlike Cambodia, Vietnam or Indonesia, the Burmese could no longer draw upon outside expertise or funding. Similarly left-leaning Ceylon (later renamed Sri Lanka) provided advice in the 1950s; and in the 1970s, following a particularly damaging earthquake affecting Pagan, the Burmese enlisted experts through UNESCO in the repair and conservation of damaged monuments (U Nyunt Han 1989:94). The EFEO made a separate commitment, assigning architect Pierre Pichard to create a monumental inventory of Pagan's sites (Pichard 1992, 1994, 1992-1998).



Figure 5 Pagan, c. 1950.

After 1988, all of this changed. Facing increasing public unrest and fearful of outside influence, Burmese military and political leaders established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and placed the country under martial law. UNESCO and other foreign organizations had to leave, and Burma fell back on its own meager resources. Although the British may have introduced the beginnings of a national conservation program, the new country of Myanmar decided to take its own special course of action, one rooted more in popular practice and less “antiquarian” in its aims (Covington 2002; Cf. Pauk 2000).

Never well funded, the colonial archeological service did in fact lay the ground work for Burma's and now Myanmar's conservation work. Scholars such as Luce, Furnivall, Stewart and Blagden contributed significantly to Burmese historical research, providing the scholarly basis for assessment of monuments at Pagan and elsewhere. Far from mere "epigraphists," as U Nyant Han suggested in 1989, British scholars made their greatest contribution in their efforts to understand Burmese history and language. Actual work at Pagan and other sites suffered due to a lack of financial resources but also because of a fundamental respect for these original and unmolested sites.

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