

An Analytical Study of the Function and Usage of Kuṇḍaliya in Pāli Tipiṭaka Manuscripts

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Introduction

Palm-leaf manuscripts lack a fixed convention for distinguishing characters, words, sentences, or paragraphs, and no standardised system of word division is observed. Nevertheless, the spacing between characters and words is maintained with a notable degree of consistency by the scribes. A thorough understanding of scribal styles and manuscript composition techniques is essential for researchers engaged in the study of palm-leaf manuscripts. In certain Pāli Tipiṭaka manuscripts, verses and prose sections are inscribed continuously without implementing any system of character separation. Despite this, Pāli manuscripts contain a distinctive symbol known as the **kuṇḍaliya**.

The **Kuṇḍaliya** is a distinctive punctuation mark utilised by Scribes. In Pāli, the term kuṇḍaliya is rendered as kuṇḍālābharāṇa. In scribal practice, the use of a full stop as a terminal punctuation mark is not practically feasible on a Palm-leaf folio. Consequently, such distinctive punctuation conventions appear to have emerged in the Palm-leaf manuscript tradition. The research problem concerned the identification of the methods of kuṇḍaliya usage reflected in Pāli manuscripts. This research analyses the function of this symbol through selected textual illustrations. The study contributes to a more precise understanding of its role and significance for scholars engaged in the field of palm-leaf manuscript studies.

Objective

The objective of the present study is to examine the patterns of Kuṇḍaliya application within the discourse contained in these manuscripts to identify its distinctive literary characteristics and patterns of usage.

Methodology

For the study, a qualitative research methodology was adopted. Five selected Pāli Tipiṭaka manuscripts representing the Khuddaka Nikāya, Mahāsatipatṭhanasutta, Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā, Dīghanikāya, and Sumaṇigalavilāsinī Manuscripts from the Manchester Digital Collections of the

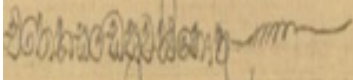
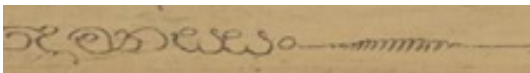
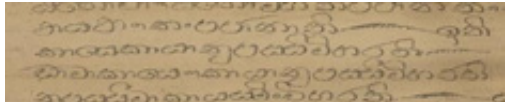
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University of Manchester served as the primary sources. These manuscripts, compiled in the Sinhala script and dating approximately from the nineteenth century, were examined through systematic textual analysis to identify the patterns of Kuṇḍaliya application. Secondary sources included relevant research works, catalogues, palaeographical studies, and editions of Pāli texts, which were consulted to provide additional contextual information.

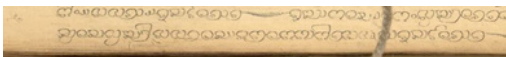
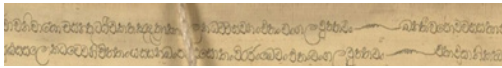
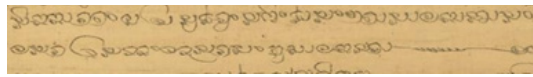
Result and Discussion

The analysis of selected Pāli Tipiṭaka palm-leaf manuscripts reveals that the **kuṇḍaliya** was not employed according to a completely uniform pattern. Scribes used both elongated and abbreviated forms of the symbol, possibly reflecting variations in regional scribal traditions and manuscript composition technique.

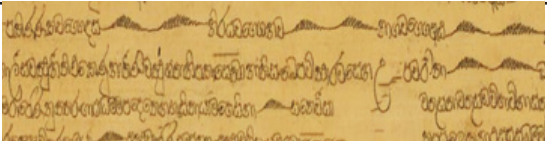
The kuṇḍaliya form applied in both long and short styles

 The kuṇḍaliya form is applied in short style.	Identification Number: PALI 18 R38610 Text: Khuddaka Nikāya (Pāli MS 18-28) Folio: අ (ā) Script Type: Sinhala
 The kuṇḍaliya form is used in short style.	Identification Number: PALI 79 R45195 Text: Mahāsatipatṭhanasutta (Pāli MS 79) Folio: ක (kā) Script Type: Sinhala
 In some cases, scribes employed both long and short forms of Kuṇḍaliya within the same a single palm-leaf manuscript. Furthermore, variations can also be observed in the graphical forms of Kuṇḍaliya used by different scribes.	Identification Number: PALI 79 R45195 Text: Mahāsatipatṭhanasutta (Pāli MS 79) Folio: කි (ki) Script Type: Sinhala

A Single Kuṇḍaliya Usage in Pāli Manuscripts

A single kuṇḍaliya is used to indicate the end of a paragraph within a sutta.	 Identification Number: PALI 79 R45195 Text: Mahāsatipaṭṭhanasutta (Pāli MS 79) Folio: කා (kā) Script Type: Sinhala
The kuṇḍaliya is also placed at the end of a stanza	 Identification Number: PALI 18 R38610 Text: Khuddaka Nikāya (Pāli MS 18-28) Folio: ආ (ā) Script Type: Sinhala
A distinctive feature of this usage is that the Kuṇḍaliya is placed at points corresponding to a pause in recitation. In this context, it enables the reader or reciter to identify the appropriate points at which to pause, thereby facilitating the accurate and fluent delivery of the text.	 Identification Number: PALI 18 R38610 Text: Khuddaka Nikāya (Pāli MS 18-28) Folio: ආ (ā) Script Type: Sinhala

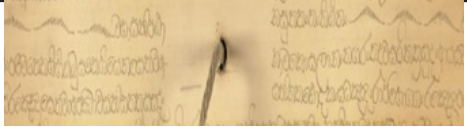
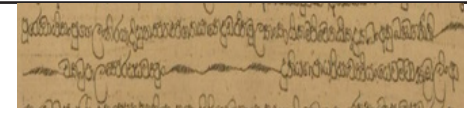
Usage of Two Kuṇḍaliya Symbols in Pāli Manuscripts

Two kuṇḍaliya symbols are occasionally employed in Pāli manuscripts to mark passages that receive further explanation or commentary. Their occurrence appears to indicate a transition from the main textual passage to an explanatory section or a scribal indication related to textual interpretation.	 Identification Number: PALI 9 R38601 Text: Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (Pāli MS 9) Folio: ඳො (dhau) Script Type: Sinhala
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Usage of Three Kuṇḍaliya Symbols in Pāli Manuscripts

The occurrence of three **kuṇḍaliya** symbols demonstrates that the symbol was not restricted to ordinary sentence division. In some manuscripts, scribes employed multiple kuṇḍaliya marks as a distinctive device for emphasis, textual

demarcation, or clarification of particular passages.

On specific occasions, three kuṇḍaliya symbols are positioned both before and after the sutta's title at its conclusion, with no fixed pattern governing their use.	 Identification Number: PALI 15 R38607 Text: Dīghanikāya (Pali MS 15) Folio: ௪ (ḍhī) Script Type: Sinhala
Three kuṇḍaliya symbols are deployed to provide further clarification of a point. An illustrative instance of this practice appears in the Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā manuscript, particularly in the narrative of Chakkhupālathera.	 Identification Number: PALI 9 R38601 Text: Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (Pali MS 9) Folio: ௭ (ku) Script Type: Sinhala

Usage of Four Kuṇḍaliya Symbols in Pāli Manuscripts

The occurrence of four kuṇḍaliya symbols at the conclusion of Pāli manuscripts indicates a distinctive scribal convention associated with textual completion. In some manuscripts, these symbols appear together with benedictory passages, suggesting their possible role in marking the closure of the text and emphasising the auspicious completion of the manuscript.

Other Contexts of kuṇḍaliya Usage

The manuscript is concluded with multiple **Kuṇḍaliya** symbols in its final section. Although the arrangement and number of these symbols vary from one palm-leaf manuscript to another, they are commonly utilised to mark the formal completion of the manuscript. In most cases, these Kuṇḍaliya symbols appear after the colophon or the benedictory passage, thereby indicating the conclusion of the text.



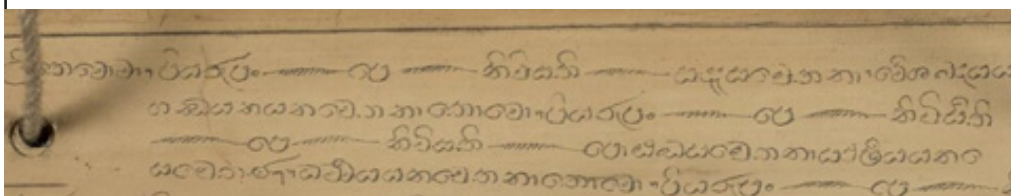
Identification Number: PALI 9 R38601
Text: Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā (Pali MS 9)
Folio: ௭! (dhau)
Script Type: Sinhala

The Use of Peyyāla in Conjunction with the Kuṇḍaliya

The **Peyyāla** serves to denote the repetition of earlier recorded discourse of the Tipiṭaka. The abbreviation “pe”  is inserted within the text, with two kuṇḍaliya marks arranged at both its beginning and its end. The Saddasāratthajālini categorises Peyyāla into four types. Ādi-Peyyāla con-

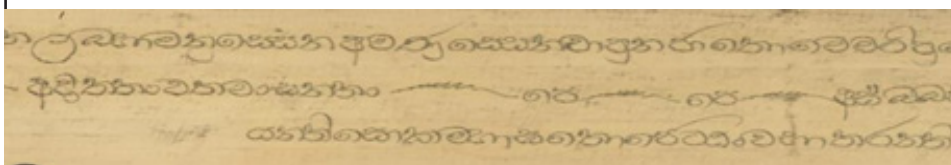
denses the opening section while retaining the middle and concluding parts; Anta-Peyyāla abbreviates the conclusion, keeping the opening and middle intact; Madhya-Peyyāla condenses the middle section, using letters such as “ya” and “va”; and Sarva-Peyyāla abridges the entire discourse. Different scribal traditions employ varied letters for condensation, with indigenous scribes typically using “pe” and unmarked sections indicated by a circular sign. Variability in Peyyāla placement reflects the absence of a fixed convention, which may present challenges for readers.

The Configuration of Peyyāla in Conjunction with Kuṇḍaliya in the Manuscripts.



Identification Number: PALI 79 R45195
Text: Mahāsatiṭṭhaṇasutta (Pāli MS 79)
Folio: ෧෪ (ji)
Script Type: Sinhala

In sections that are elongated, the abbreviation “pe” is sometimes used, and in certain two “pe” notations are employed to indicate repetitions.



Identification Number: PALI 18 R38610
Text: Khuddaka Nikāya (Pāli MS 18-28)
Folio: ෨෯ (ṇaṃ)
Script Type: Sinhala

Conclusion

Considering these observations, the Kuṇḍaliya is a distinctive scribal symbol characteristic of many Pāli manuscripts. This symbol, which is an inherent feature of Pāli manuscripts, has been applied in diverse forms and functions according to scribal practices. Therefore, a precise understanding of its application within manuscripts is crucial for the systematic study of these manuscripts. An awareness of the usage patterns of Kuṇḍaliya enables researchers to obtain a clear and accurate understanding of the textual structure and overall

context of each manuscript. The Peyyāla method serves as a singular, methodical technique, facilitating the concise presentation of discourses. In Pāli Tipiṭaka manuscripts, the integration of Kuṇḍaliya and Peyyāla exemplifies an effective indigenous method of textual organisation.

Keywords - Kuṇḍali, Peyyāla, Punctuation, Repetition, Tipiṭaka Manuscripts

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