

Nagayon Maha Bodhi Temple

Nagayon Maha Bodhi Temple in Meiktila came into existence during the Bagan Period, especially during the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries A.D. (pho:1). This elegant and well-preserved pagoda was built by Japanese monk in 1981 with the name of Nagayon Maha Bodhi. Nagayon means "sheltered by serpent" and Maha Bodhi means "the Buddha attained enlightenment".



pho:1 Board Record, Nagayon Mahabodhi

Mahabodhi Temple of Bagan was modeled after the famous Maha Bodhi temple in Bodhgaya, Bihar State, India during AD 500.



pho:2 Maha Bodhi Temple, Bagan

It commemorates the spot where the Buddha attained enlightenment; this monument was built during the reign of King Nantaungmya (1211-34) (pho:2).

The lower section of Meiktila's Nagayon Maha Bodhi Temple is quadrangular block supporting the pyramidal structure. The pyramidal spire, covered in niches which enclose seated Buddha figures, rises from a square block. This temple is different from the common bell-shaped ones. It contains relics mounted on top of the bell-shaped main structure. One can find the mixing of India and Japan style (pho:3).



pho:3 Nagayon Mahabodhi Temple, Meiktila

The temple features are one story standing on broad terraces assembled to create a pyramid effect. The brickwork throughout is considered some of the best in Meiktila.

This Temple represents some of the finest ornamental work which is carved stucco on moldings, pediments and pilasters. These are today in fairly good condition. Glazed plaques around the base and walls are also still visible.

Buddha images face the four directions from the ground floor; the image at the main eastern entrance sits in a recess built into the wall. Inside the temple, the main Buddha image is four life size and shelters under the hood of a huge *Naga* or serpent (pho:4).



pho:4 Buddha image under the hood of Nagas

The *Nagas* are borrowed from eight different animals. In that sense, it is combination of these eight animals. We can find the camel's head, fish scales and a stag's horns, the eyes of a rabbit, the ears of a bull and the belly of a clam. Aside from this; a snake's image is demonstrated in the length of the dragon's neck. A dragon figure is a complicated figure to draw and requires knowledge of history as well as artistic talent to create. Dragon art galleries are valuable sources of such information and facts. The Japanese dragon art have also been depicted in early European and Indian art. The dragons are revered and worshipped in that culture. It's also been associated with magical powers and was believed to control nature (storms and torrents). This ancient oriental imagery is also common in Japan and Korea.

The interior passage around the base is covered with fine decorations and there are traces of Japan's monk statues, Myanmar's monk statues, other *sasana* records and Japanese donors record (fig:5).



pho:5 Japanese Donors Record

tairways lead very close to the top of this temple, from where the views are superb.

The temple compounds with pillar of peace (pho:6), commemorative plaque (pho:7) and various Japan statues (pho:8) are much respected by Myanmar nationalities and ethnic groups.



pho:6 pillar of peace



pho:7 Commemorative Plaque



pho:8 Various Japan Buddha Statues

Water purification (fig:9), armour-plated (fig:10) and guess house are found outside the temple.



pho:9 Water Purification



pho:10 Armour-plated

There were good ties between the people of Myanmar and the people of Japan, so the cultural relations were all mixed up in such small building in Nagayon Maha Bodhi temple.

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