

**UNIVERSITY OF YANGON
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS
HELD IN MINYWA SANPYA VILLAGE,
AYARDAW TOWNSHIP, SAGAING DIVISION**

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Roll No. MRes-Anth-4 (2008-2009)

MASTER OF RESEARCH (ANTHROPOLOGY)

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Research Thesis is submitted for the Degree of
Master of Research in Anthropology

Submitted

By

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May, 2009.



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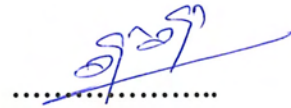
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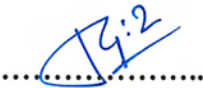
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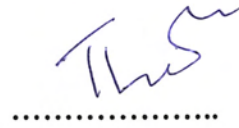
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Abstract

Minywa Sanpya village is on the bus highway of Ayardaw-Myinmu, ten miles south of Ayardaw Township, Sagaing Division. Only Bamar nationals live in this region. Minywa model village has (3025) peoples. All the villagers are Buddhists. The chief livelihood is farming (agriculture). The festivals celebrated by Minywa model villagers throughout the year are mainly religious festivals and people of all ages are seen to participate in them. They are full of generosity. In ceremonies there is no question of hiring people or property. Every villager from the children to the aged feel they have to volunteer to do something. One can see the relationship among the relatives, monks, man and monk, donors and helpers, parents and children, old and young, man and woman. Again one can see their harmony relationship. The aims of this thesis are to find out the values of social activities and to point out the changes and continuity of life style of Minywa Sanpya villagers.

Introduction

Religious Festivals are celebrated on a grand scale throughout the whole of Myanmar. They all may have the same basic principles, meaningfulness and aims, but each region has their own special peculiarities, as the Myanmar saying goes “each monastery has its own mantra, each village has its own verse” every region of Myanmar boasts of a variety of ways they celebrate the same feast. This thesis entitled “The Significance of Religious Festivals held in Minywa Sanpya Village, Ayardaw Township, Sagaing Division”, attempts to present, how this little village, “Minywa” in its own way, demonstrates how they are preserving the noble qualities of their native region, their character, their culture, customs and habits in celebrating their year round religious festivals.

Minywa model village is situated in Ayardaw Township, Sagaing Division. It is called as Anyar* where many Myanmar nationals live and people living in Lower Myanmar refer to them as Anyarthar*. Ayardaw Township is (27) miles east of Monywa Town, Sagaing Division. It is known as “World Famous Ayardaw”, because it was awarded in 1986, the “Sasakawa Health Prize” by the World Health Organization. The people of Minywa model village in Ayardaw Township are still preserving the traditional customs by wearing the traditional dress, continuing to work in the fields and making the domestic arts and crafts. Just as they are able to preserve the traditional customs and culture, they are able to keep abreast with the changing modern technology. The village of Minywa is bright with electricity derived from organic gas. There are also some people who do scientific agriculture. The festivals celebrated by Minywa model villagers throughout the year are mainly religious festivals and people of all ages are seen to participate in them.

*Anyar – up river (region and joining the upper reaches of the Ayeyarwady River)

*Anyarthar – person, especially a man hailing from upcountry

The religious festivals celebrated during the year are; New Year Festival, Pouring water on the sacred Bodhi(Banyan) Tree, Incessantly recitation of Patthana, Religious Activities during lent, Thadingyut Festivals of lights, Kahtein Ceremony, Mya Thein Tan Pagoda Festival, Auspicious Novitiation Ceremony, Ordination Ceremony, Meditation Centers and Htamane Festival. All the religious festivals, the donors always offer food and drinks to all comers rich or poor. By doing they believe is that they can get benefit for now and future life. The villagers individually as well as collectively donate very generously money, foodstuffs and labor. One can observe the spirit of harmony among them. One can see the same religious fervor in the villagers regardless of being poor or rich. Religious festivals are not just a religious celebration of refuge in the Triple Gems but also a family reunion of scattered homes. So it is a charitable occasion as well as a social engagement. The monks also have the occasion to meet each other. Especially close relatives feel they must heap to make the donation a success and also show unity and kinship duties and customs. It is to make the donation a crowded affair and to develop a spirit of unity and reciprocal help among the villagers. So religious and social work are often coupled together. The villagers take pride in discharging their religious duties of never forgetting to take refuge in the Triple Gems as a native trait and the spirit of unity and harmony in all their activities, all in a way of preserving the Myanmar traditions.

The aims of this thesis are to find out the values of social activities and to point out the changes and continuity of life style of Minywa Sanpya villagers. Minywa Sanpya village, Ayardaw Township, Sagaing Division is chosen as my field area because there are many distinctive social activities in individual and society. The Significance of Religious Festivals held in Minywa Sanpya village, Ayardaw Township, Sagaing Division has been written from Cultural Anthropological and Ethnographic point of view. To analyze the data by participant observation, key informants interview, taking photographs, questionnaire and book research, holistic investigation methods, functionalism and structuralism are used to accomplish in this research. This thesis is composed with V chapters.

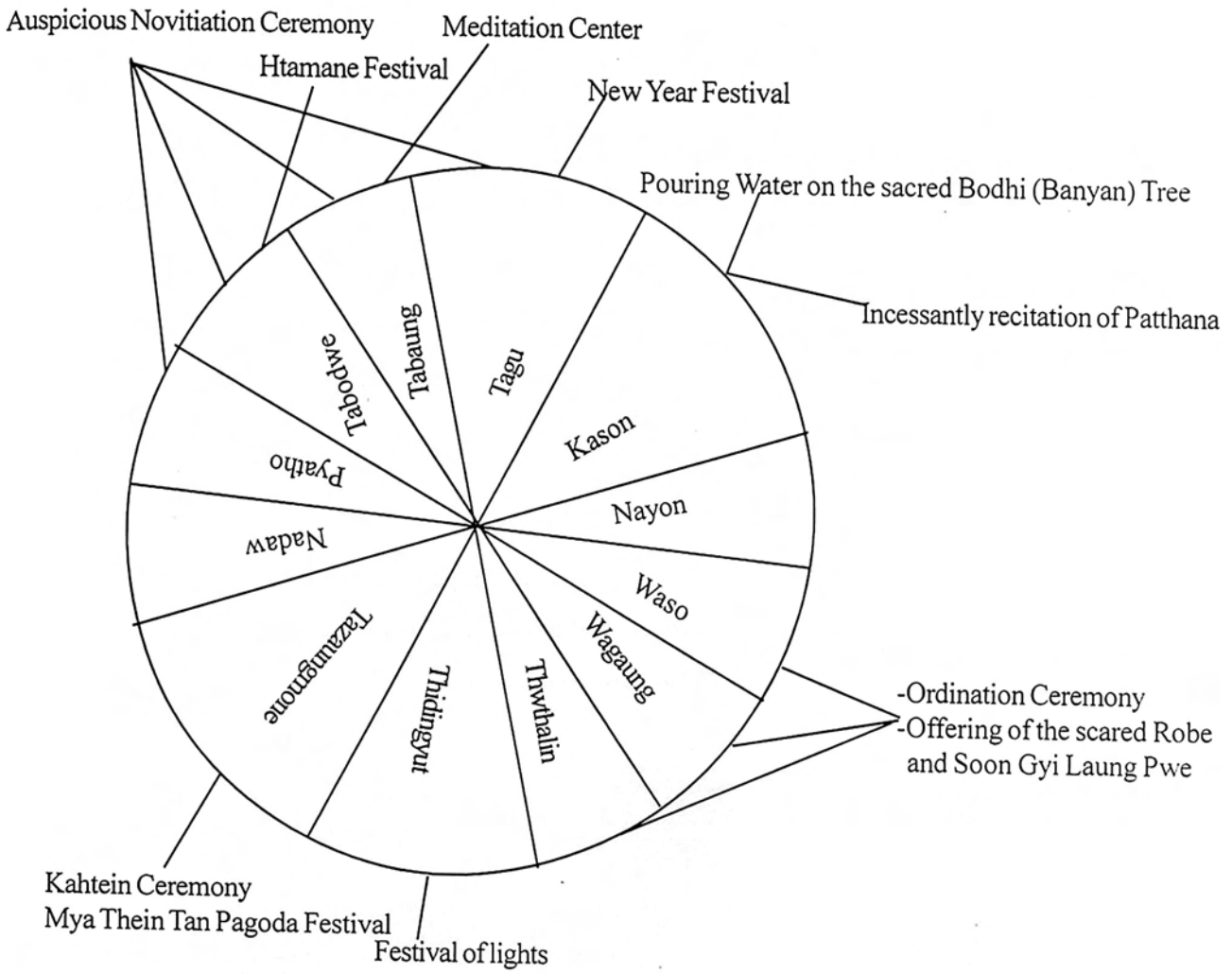
In chapter (I), Literature Review

In chapter (II), Religious Festivals in Tagu (April) and Kason (May)

In chapter (III), Religious Activities during the Buddhist Lent and at the end of Lent

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In chapter (V), Others Festivals



The Twelve monthly Seasonal Festivals

Chapter (I)

Literature Review

(1) Historical Background

Minywa model village is nearly five hundred years old. According to the Myanmar Era 888 the Royal Kingdom of Ava was crushed like a bael fruit. At that time a Shan King by the name Tho-Han-Bwa ascended the throne. He was a very cruel and mean king. He seized and killed the learned monks and burnt the Pali treaties and palm leaf manuscripts. The learned monks shouldering their religious duties fled from the royal kingdom and had to take refuge in far away places from the royal kingdom. In the same way the Myanmar Royal family dynasty were exterminated like ridding the reeds by the roots. Everybody of royal blood had to flee from the Royal Kingdom of Ava and hide in far away places.

Thus the two princes of Ava dynasty fleeing from Tho-Han-Bwa's ruthless harm arrived in this region. The region was a plain, pleasant with streams and river lets to make a living. It was free from harm and peaceful. So they founded a new village and lived in it. The names of the two princes were Gamaadikammika and Gamasamutthapaka and the village was named "Minywa". Actually, the village they founded was not in the present site. It was two furlongs to the west of the present day Minywa. It was between the two villages of Min Kan Gyi and Min Kan Lay villages where the Ywa Soe Ma Pagoda is.



Photo (1) Ywa Soe Ma Pagoda

The ancient people have built a Pagoda and Waso monastery on the east of the original Minywa, in the north, they have built Oatpho monastery and a Pagoda and in the south is Zee Kan Kone. They have consecrated a pagoda. The elder prince dug a big pond in west of the village and donated it for the use of the villagers. Because it was the elder brother's gift, they called it "Min Kan Gyi". The younger prince also dug a pond in the east part of the village and also donated it for the villagers to use. It was named "Min Kan Lay" and both are still known today.

The villagers also built a big pond twelve acres in area in the southern part of the town. They built a bund round the pond to prevent the water flowing down from the north flowing away. So it was called "Si Kan". But as time passed, it is known today as "Zee Kan". The people of Minywa who were the descendants of the two princes lived peacefully and happily from the Myanmar Era 888 to 1247. The exile of King Thi-Baw in 1247 left the country in a law-less state and Ayardaw Township and its environs became rampant with thieves and dacoits. Minywa had prospered and existed for (359) years until the fall of Myanmar.

In ancient times, Minywa was a big prosperous village, inhabited by simple people. It had given birth to learned monks and famous physicians. Minywa was devoid of thieves and robbers and the people could work on the broad fields and amass wealth. There are few poor people in the village from 888 to 1247. So bad characters came to the village to steal and rob the rich and poor. So the natives of Minywa moved to other places. So the village that was founded in (888) thrived for (359) years, then in (1247) it became a deserted village.

When Minywa became a ruined village, a retired army officer U Lu Wa, a native of Minywa lived in the golden city of Yatanapon. He served in the reigns of King Mindon and King Thibaw. He was loyal and courageous and skilled in combat. He was also a man of great vision and had great authority. When U Lu Wa heard about the unsettled condition of Minywa and how his native villagers could not live in peace, he left Yatanapon and came back to Minywa. He also tried to organize the return of the villagers who left Minywa. After the return of the villagers, he chose a place two furlongs east of the old village and founded a new village. He believed the new site will prove to be profitable for the natives, who were originally from the old village of Minywa. Again these people are descendents of the two princes, so they are of royal leanage. So the newly founded village was named "Minywa".

The new Minywa was personally administered by the retired army chief. He tried to preserve peace and stability of the village and encouraged development of the lives of the people. He also gave preference to religious affairs and donated a brick building on the east front of Mya Thein Tan pagoda for worship. After the passing away of the great army-chief, his sons U Yar Gyi, U Sandar, U Kan Tha, U Kyu, U Phu and grandson U Sein Tun continued to work for the prosperity of Minywa as village head men.

As they have worked and united for the progress and development of the village, the Peace, Stability and Development Council on (7-7-2006) recognized "Minywa" as a model village. According to the Peace, Stability and Development Council, a model village must have the following qualities.

- (1) The village roads must be nice.
- (2) The roads connecting villages must be convenient.
- (3) The roads connecting the village and town must be fine.
- (4) There must be sufficient water for drinking and for agriculture.
- (5) Building a Home for Youth.
- (6) There must be suitable schools.
- (7) There must be a well equip hospital and dispensaries.
- (8) To build a park and play-ground.
- (9) Proper garbage dumps and clean environment.
- (10) To use fly-proof toilets.
- (11) To plant shade trees, fire wood plantation and flower garden nurseries.
- (12) To make village fences, house fences and village gate neatly.
- (13) To keep the cemetery systematically and to have a village common field.
- (14) To have a village administration office building and a village library.
- (15) To organize a village, water and fire patrol and a village security council.
- (16) To have a fine village assembly hall and keep the religious buildings in good conditions.
- (17) To erect a village signboard at the entrance of the village, with data concerning the village such as number of families, population etc....
- (18) To have electricity for the village streets and houses.
- (19) To mark a market site and to develop a systematic market place.
- (20) To organize a social affairs NGO (Non Government Organizations) association.



Photo (2) Minywa Sanpya Village

(2)Geographical Background

Ayardaw Township consists of (165) villages and Minywa model village is included in it. Minywa model village is on the bus highway route of Ayardaw-Myinmu, ten miles south of Ayardaw. It is between North Latitude 22°5' and 22°10' and East Longitude 95°30' and 95°35'.

On the north side of Minywa model village is Thakhutpinle group, on the east is Nyaungchayhtuk group and on the west side is Maletha group. The area is (13139) acres or (19.90) square miles. The village has some high lands and 80% is plains. It is (532.317) feet above sea level. It is in the Dry zone with very little yearly rainfall, hot, dry climate region. The yearly average rainfall is (44) days only.

(3)Population and Education

Minywa model village has (3025) people, (428) houses and (529) families. All the villagers are Buddhist (Table.1). No other religion is seen here. The education situation can be seen in the table (2). Although the chief livelihood of Minywa villagers is farming (agriculture), the table (3) shows the other means of livelihood done by other people. The daily income of Minywa model village woman is about Kyat 1300 and a man is about Kyat 1500. According to the Minywa model village's progress (2007) record the table (4) shows the yearly average income of one person.

No	Village	House	Family	Under(10)years			Above(10)years			Total		
				Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Minywa	428	529	696	700	1396	758	871	1629	1454	1571	3025

Table (1) Number of people and dwelling in a settlement

No	M.A Degree	B.A Degree	Technology College	Agricultural Science	University of Distance Education	Matriculation Class	Primary And Middle Class	Basic Education Passed
1	1	55	5	3	72	22	519	1215

Table (2) Matters relating to education

Farmers	373
Husbandry	62
Traders	27
Government Service	9
Industrial Worker	17
Handicrafts	58
Others*	455
Total	1001

Table (3) Profession

Others*-take up any job that comes by

Subject	2003-2004 Year	2004-2005 Year	2005-2006 Year
Average income of one person	136516 Kyat	157266 Kyat	195172 Kyat

Table (4) Income

Rainfall in inches		Temperature	
Lowest	Highest	Lowest	Highest
30"	35"	70°	107°

Table (5) Meteorological conditions

(4) Communication

Minywa model village can be reached by Car-road and Cart-road. From Minywa model village to Ayardaw Town about ten miles roads connecting villages.

Minywa to Nyaungchehtauk (4) miles

Minywa to Maletha (6) miles

Minywa to Nwamathin (4) miles

Minywa to Ngakin (2) miles

Both Car road and Cart road can be used. They are red earth roads. There is a direct Car road from Ayardaw to Wetlet Township, Naunggyiaing village, Myinmu Town. So Minywa model village people can go to neighboring villages directly by Car road through Ayardaw Township.

Chapter (II)

Religious Festivals in Tagu (April) and Kason (May)

(1) New Year Festival (Thingyan Festival)

The season in the month of Tagu is very hot weather in Upper Myanmar, Anyar regions. There is a Myanmar saying "In Tagu all the water is used up and in Kason all the water is dried up". Welcoming the New Year with Thingyan or the water festival is celebrated in the whole of Myanmar in all varieties of traditional customs peculiar to each region and people. In Minywa model village, the New Year Thingyan festival is performed according to the traditional customs of Upper Myanmar (Anyar) rural village. Unlike the big cities where people go out to be drenched and grand pavilions erected with song and dance and merit making, the elderly go to the monastery to keep the Sabbath*. Only the young males and children go round the village and pour water gently on the young maidens. They have to protect their maidenly modesty and stay home and accept the young man's visit and may pour back on the young man in a courteous way.

The word Thingyan is derived from Sanskrit Language (Samkranta) and Pali Language (Sankants) meaning "change" from one place to another or "arrive" from one place to another. Myanmar traditional New Year festival has the meaning of changing from the Old Year to the New Year. It is the symbol of wiping the slate clean the entire wrong one has done the grudges and the evil deeds with the pure, cool water and the good will of forgiving each other.

During the Thingyan period the old and aged, the young maidens and children go to the monastery and take the precepts. They have to prepare before hand so they could spend the Thingyan in peace. The young children pick up trash in the house compound to keep it neat and tidy for the New Year. The young men and girls cut grass and prepare fodder for the animals, fetch water, cut firewood. They also buy things to give in charity, things to eat and make traditional snacks during the Thingyan from the opening day to the New Year.

*Sabbath- observe the eight Buddhist precepts

On the first opening day of Thingyan, only 5-10 year olds play with water till the afternoon. The others are occupied with working for alms giving duties during this season. The donation of alms food (Soon Laung*) is performed on each day of the Thingyan at a particular pagoda. So on the second day of Thingyan it is at Ywa Soe Ma pagoda on the east side of the village. On the third day, it is the Shwe Bon Tha pagoda in the middle of the village and on the fourth and last day it is at the Oatpho pagoda in the north side of the village. On the morning of the "Soon Laung", the village monks, led the village pagoda trustees, arrive at the particular pagoda at 8 o'clock in the morning.

The rice offered to the monks by the young ladies, because they have personally cooked the food. The traditional snacks are offered by the elder women, who also have made them. The snacks are typically "anyar" food. Such as nya-taya, moat-paut, ka tut-wa, bain moat (baked-cake), moat-si-kyaw (fried sweet glutinous rice snack). When the 'Soon-laung' is over, the people go to a monk, waiting on the pagoda terrace to give the precepts and make a libation ritual of the alms giving. Then the monks return to their respective monasteries and the people go home to take their tiff in carriers and go to their respective monasteries to keep the Sabbath.

In the afternoon, when the young ladies come home, the young men of the village come with buckets of water to court the ladies they love. Since the water play is done in the presence of the elders, it is permitted with good will as washing away the woes of the old year. This is indeed a peculiar trait of Minywa water-festival.

Thus the young ladies are escorted home with the young men pouring water and courting her when they arrive home. The young men then went round the village, visiting the houses with the permission of the parents. Of course if the lady is sick, she is exempted from the sprinkle or splash.

Individual donors usually send cold-drinks to the five monasteries during this Thingyan. They also provide the lay people keeping the fast with cold drinks. When the young men and children are tired out after going round the village, they go and eat and rest at the places where food and drink are given to everyone who comes to the pavilion. The donors may be single or groups of pan-leaf-pickers, paddy-planters, and

*Soon Laung- put food into a monk's bowl on his daily round

weeders and so on, who pool to do this meritorious deed of giving. Everyone is welcome, rich or poor, good or evil.

In Minywa model village, Thingyan festival playing with water is not the chief object. More important to them is the qualities of the water. To them the symbol is the cool and cleanness of water that purifies all evils. The inseparable nature of water as uniting things or bringing harmony. The elderly (40-65) year old men and women clean the pagoda and monastery compounds. They pour scented water on the Buddha images and shrines.

The young and middle age (15-40) year olds try to keep in mind that they are getting older and try to help the aged (60-90) years olds. They try to do charity with water that is "obeisance with water". They do personal cleanliness for the aged. They wash the hair of the aged person with shampoo and they cut the finger and toe nails. The labor groups like the pan-pickers group, the paddy-planters, and the weeders do obeisance with foodstuffs like rice, oil, onions and so on. They also call it "obeisance with water" because it is done in this season.

On the New Years' Day, the whole family tries to keep the Sabbath. The reason is that they want to pass the whole year with this good morality of being free from evil. In the evening, at 4 o'clock, the whole village assembles at the Village Hall and makes preparations to recite the Parittas. At 5 o'clock the President of Peace and Development Council and elders go to the Thidayon monastery to supplicate the monks to come and recite the Parittas for the whole village to be free from harm. After the recitation the monks was offered things and cold drinks. The congregations too were given cold drinks. Most of Buddhists, believe that giving charity on New Year's Day will bring luck the whole year round and also enjoy health and happiness.

(2) Pouring water on the sacred Bodhi (Banyan) Tree (Nyaung Ye Thun Pwe)

According to Myanmar calendar, Kason is one of the hottest months in summer. The name Kason itself, explains the author of Vohāralīnatthadīpanī, implied the season when water gets dried up in pools or steams. When Tagu is gone and Kason come the chief festival is pouring water on the sacred Bodhi tree on the full moon day of Kason. This particular auspicious day is chosen because

- (1) All Buddhas were enlightened about the Four Noble Truths on this day
- (2) Gautama Buddha was born on this day
- (3) Gautama Buddha gained Enlightenment on this day

(4) The Buddha entered Parinibbana on this day

(5) Dipinkara Buddha prophiced that Thumeda hermit will become a Buddha on this day

(6) The Maha Bodhi tree grew on this day

So the full moon day of Kason is known as Buddha day. This custom of watering the Bodhi tree was done from the life time of the Buddha. King Kosala of Savatti began this custom. Many people came to the Buddha when He was sojourning at Zetawan monastery. But when He was on a journey, people were disappointed at not seeing him. Because of the Buddha power the seeds sprouted at once into a Bodhi tree. The pilgrim can be comforted by seeing these trees in the Buddhas absence.

During Kason, the weather is very hot and dry. So they water these Bodhi trees so that they will not wilt. By keeping the Bodhi alive they are showing the gratitude they owe to the Buddha. On the full moon day of Kason, "Soon Laung pwe" and "Nyaung Ye Thun Pwe", pouring water on the sacred Bodhi tree are led by the village chairman of the Village Peace and Development Council. At 8 o'clock in the morning on full moon day, except for the three monks reciting Patthana* at the foot of the Bodhi tree on Mya Thein Tan Pagoda, all the monks of the village have to go to the "Soon Laung" pwe. Later one monk gave the precepts and the libation rites.

At 4 o'clock in the evening, villagers of all ages gather in again, carrying water pots with easily available seasonal flowers. Led by the village musical troop, the old and young men, women and children, walk in the procession to the Mya Thein Tan Pagoda. When they arrive, they circle the sacred Bodhi thrice and then pour the flowers and water on the tree. It is the symbol of serenity and freshness. It is offered to the Buddha and the tree itself is a symbol of the Buddhist, believing firmly that such good deeds are meritorious.

(3) Incessantly recitation of Patthana

The incessantly recitation of Pahtan is celebrated from the first waxing moon of Kason to the full moon day of Kason in Minywa model village. It is recited incessantly at the village Padetha Hall, in the centre of Minywa. All the senior monks of the monasteries have to take turns to recite the Patthana without a break through out

*Patthana – treatise on the 24 causes of worldly phenomena

the days and nights. Donors take care of the first meal of Buddhist monks taken at daybreak, meal offered to monks before noon and cold drinks. The incessantly recitation of Patthana ends at midday on full moon day. The following benefits are gained by it.

- (1) One could overcome the misfortunes one is facing.
- (2) One could be free from catastrophes about to happen.
- (3) One could accomplish works that are blameless and beneficial.
- (4) One can avoid committing blameless but unbeneficial work.
- (5) One can accomplish all good works one do.
- (6) In is last existence, one will enter Nibbana.

Myanmar New Year (Thingyan) begins with sprays of cool water showering on friends with goodwill and loving kindness. During the Thingyan period almost the old people and young girls go to the monastery and keep the Sabbath. The young men and women meet at the aged people's homes to pay homage. There is goodwill and loving kindness all around, an auspicious way to start the New Year with. In Minywa model village, Thingyan festival playing with water is not the chief object. More important to them is the qualities of the water. It means the symbol of water is the cool and cleanness that purifies all evils. They value of alms giving mantels where food and drinks are given to all comers rich or poor.

On New Year's Day evening, there is recitation of the Parittas alms giving because the Myanmar Buddhist believes that such acts would guard them from harm and be lucky throughout the year.

Come Kason, the second month of the year and once again water is poured on the Bodhi tree, the tree of enlightenment. So they value by keeping the Bodhi tree alive they are showing the gratitude they owe to the Buddha. The incessantly recitation of Patthana benefits are one could overcome the misfortunes one is facing, one could be freed form catastrophes about to happen, one could accomplish works that are blameless and beneficial, one can avoid committing blameless but unbeneficial work, one can accomplish all good works one does; in is last existence, one will enter Nibbana.

Chapter (III)

Religious Activities during the Buddhist Lent and at the end of Lent

(1) Religious Activities during the Buddhist Lent

The month of Waso (from July to October) is considered a holy month for the Buddhist. In the time of the Buddha, the monks would come to the Buddha and make a vow, meaning they will dwell in this monastery during the three months of rains. The monks reside in one place during Buddhist lent which is from full moon of Waso to full moon of Thidingyut for three months; the lay people have to take care that the monks not to have difficulties about their daily sustenance and the robe. Buddhist lent beginning from first waning day of Waso month is called Purima and beginning from first waning day of Wagaung month is call Pacchima . Waso robes are offered to the monks from first day of Waso to full moon day of Waso. Even though it is the time the farmers have to work very hard in the fields, they have to find the time and means to serve the needs of the monks, so that they can carry on their work of learning and teaching the scriptures. The villagers individually as well as collectively donate very generously money, foodstuffs and labor. Every Sabbath day the villagers of Minywa model village offer food to the five monasteries.

The day before the Sabbath, about thirty young men of (15-30) years, gather at the village rural development hall, at about 5 o'clock in the evening. Anyone can join this charitable work group, so villagers who have gone to town to study or to work, volunteer to give labor if their home visit coincides with this collection of food for the monks of the monasteries. Even the villagers who have to work for their daily food volunteer when they can spare the time from their work. A retired village Peace and Development Council Chairman U Kyaw is president of this food for monasteries collecting group, since the days of power. He is a selfless man and does his utmost for the welfare of the village. Now too he is trusted with full power to manage the religious duty of the association. This procession of about thirty youths goes round the village to collect the food for monks the next day starts at 5 o'clock in the evening. They start from the north side of the village to the south side, walking two by two in a long file to receive the offerings. This procession walks through all the main roads and by-lanes of the village.

Each house comes out to offer generously whatever they could afford. It may be rice, peanuts, lentils and farm fruit and vegetables, desserts. The procession is led by a man beating a gong announcing their approach and behind the procession is the village orchestra of the bamboo clapper, brass cymbals, oboe and drums joyously bringing up the rear. They arrive back at the village hall and deliver all they had collected money and goods into the hands of the pagoda trustees. Then the particular pagoda donors and their families or relatives and volunteers help to cook tomorrow's lunch or midday meal of the monks. The basic menu is rice, one meat dish, steamed sweet peas and sour soup is a constant. More dishes may be added if single donors come with their own home cooked foods. The next morning when the food is ready they share it of all the five monasteries and take them to the respective monastery. The abbot of the monastery gives the precepts, the blessing and shares the merits. The villagers, who come to the monastery at this time, take the precepts and listen to the sermon. The villagers of Minywa model village are pious and on Sabbath days, nearly all the whole family, that is the elderly man and woman the young girls and children go to the monastery and pagoda taking their lunch in tiff in carriers. The young man of the family who has to work usually drives them to the pagoda or monastery with his bullock cart. He usually returns home to work after dropping them. In this way the young man helps the older people like grandmother, grandfather, parents to have the time to observe the Sabbath in peace and quiet. They keep house and do the necessary household chores. The young children are taken along to make them hear the teaching of the Buddha and become good in behavior and character. It is good enough if they can keep the "Sila*" just for a sitting, if not the whole day and to make the children become familiar with Buddhist religious practices from young. The children also enjoy these trips to the monastery with grand parents or their parents and relatives. The family either walks or rides the bullock cart to the monastery. After they have finished the ritual of offering the food and utility, taking the precepts and listening to the sermon, they feasts on all eatables brought from home and have a good time. The old people meditate and the young play or do the cleaning of the monastery compound. They come home in the evening only at sunset.

*Sila- the precept (which are five, eight and ten in number)

An extraordinary custom of Mīnywa model village is for any young girl who has come of age to wear a shawl whenever she goes to a pagoda or a monastery. It is a beautiful gesture to see a young girl wearing a shawl paying obedience even to a monk passing by her house. Another delightful custom of “Anyar” region is during the Lent period the monks take turns to visit the house of aged people who cannot go to the monastery to give the “Sila” precepts, so they can keep the Sabbath at home. The villagers honor and revere the monks not only for religious purposes but also depend on them for advice in their social, economic, health matters. They usually accept the advice of the wise and experienced monks.

Waso is the time when villagers do meritorious deeds and practice contemplation and self-denial. Villagers make it a point of fasting and observing precepts one day in the week. Even habitual drinkers take a vow of abstinence, for the season, at least. It is good in a way for people to be reminded of the need for self discipline. Marriages are taboo during the lent. This has nothing whatsoever to do with any religious concept. Monsoon season is a busy time for the farmer and it is more convenient to celebrate weddings after the harvest is safely home.

(2) Thidingyut Festival of Lights (at the end of lent)

Thidingyut (October) is the month when the Buddhist lent ends and the monks are free to leave their lent period residence. Thidingyut is the seventh month of the Myanmar calendar. The rains and winds have calmed and the weather is pleasant for travel. The monks are free from lent period restriction now and go back to their native villages.

One of the traditional cultural celebrations in Thidingyut month is the festival of lights. It originated in the legend of the Buddha visiting Tavatimsa for three months to preach Abhidhamma to Santutthita celestial being (Gotama Buddha’s mother). It is the people of the earth welcoming the Buddha on his return to the human world with the festival of lights and funfairs. It is also the month for paying respects to our aged grandparents, parents and old teachers. The pagoda festivals, funfairs, paying homage to the aged and offering of lights are celebrated throughout the whole of Myanmar.

Minywa model village’s way of celebrating the festival of lights is a perfect picture of the upper Myanmar rural village religious, social, cultural traits. There are about (100) pagodas in Minywa model village but only twelve of them are under constant care and repair and only these twelve pagodas are offered in the

This Waso Lent period “Soon” offering ends on the full moon day of Thidingyut. They also have a dry goods offering on that day. It is celebrated at Shwe Bon Tha Pagoda or Ywa Pagoda in the middle of the village. All the monks residing in the village are invited to the alms giving. The donors wait on either side of the mat laid down on the road for the monks to walk on in single file between the donors. Each monk is attended by a youth to help him carry the offers as they are respectfully offered to him. The donors are mostly middle aged women and young ladies.

The men do their part by providing funds for the donations. It is the sharing of responsibility between a man and a woman. It is not only uncooked rice but it is anything a donor can afford such as candles, soap, sweets, sugar, tea, coffee, hand-towels, ball pens and exercise books and bananas. The elderly men and women go to the pagoda to listen to the sermon. There the men sit in the front row and the women sit in the back row. The alms giving starts at 9 o'clock in the morning, all the monks meet at the village hall. Then led by the most senior monk, they walk in single file according to their monk hood. The youths attending the monks were at one time monastery boys in their childhood. They have come back to the village to pay the debt of gratitude they owe to the monks and monasteries. The present monastery boys are too young to be able to carry the load of donations.

Thidingyut full moon day grand alms giving (Soon-Gyi-Laung) is a great occasion and nearly all the maids take part in it. This is the time one can see the most beautiful ladies come out to show their beauty so that the area round the procession is also crowded with young men. They court the girls by staying not far behind the rows of ladies and draw their attention by firing crackers till the procession of monks come. This continuous firing of crackers is also one of the features of Thidingyut full moon day in Minywa model village.

In the evening of Thidingyut full moon day the villagers go to the twelve pagodas they had gone to during the Waso lent for offering of lights. They go to the pagoda that is close to their house. They have a leader for the young single ladies and a male leader of the young single boys. About a week before the lights offering at the pagodas, they collect donations for the festival. They are called “Bout” (paddy transplanting crew collected at random) in groups. A Bout headwoman is usually a



Photo (4) "Soon" offering on the full moon day of Thidingyut



Photo (5) Donation of alms food

married, older woman of experience and able to take charge of things. Bout in groups are poor as well as well to do girls working as paddy planters because in Minywa model village, the young ladies know that when they come of age they must earn their own living. They are hard-working and take pride in the fact that they can give in charity and wear fine clothes with their own hard earned honest labor. So they welcome especially the work called by the Bout headwoman before a festival. They also vie with each other individually as well as Bout groups wearing the same design clothes and offering lights at their respective pagodas. The spirit of harmony among them can be observed.

The girls put the multicolored candles on the platform while the men climb up the higher levels of the pagoda. It starts at about 6 o'clock in the evening. The older people and the children arrive at their family pagoda only at about 6 o'clock. They also bring candles and scented sticks to offer at the pagoda. The children also enjoy themselves with fireworks and crackers given by parents and relatives. At this time the young men of the village also come to the pagodas in groups especially to the pagodas where their ladies are. They court the girls with fireworks and crackers. On that same night at home, the altar and the house and compound are lit with lights. The householder also lights a candle each at the cow-shed, the food trough and the cart. As he lights the candles, he also prays and tells the cows "my benefactor cows offer lights to God and pray that you will not be reborn as a cow in your next existence. I also will pray for you". The young girls also light a candle on the Thanakha* grinding stone slab. It is to the guardian angel of the stone-slab. They also pray to make them beautiful.

The villagers of Minywa model village make preparations for the Sabbath day alms giving on the day before. People who can afford not only cook the best meat dish but also include fruits and sweet meats for dessert. The poor also may not be able to eat meat curry every day, but they too try their utmost to offer a meat dish to the monks on that day. So, poor or rich, their spirit of generosity and religious fervor is the same. They have to get up early at 4 o'clock in the morning and cook to be in time for the "Soon". They go there early to clean and tidy up the place. The same religious fervors among the villagers regardless of being poor or rich.

*Thanakha – a kind of tree the bark and root of which are used in making a fragrant paste for cosmetic purposes

In the past they used peanut or sesame oil in earthenware cups with a twisted cotton wick as oil lamps. But today the readymade colored candles are more convenient. The objects of the offering may have changed but their spirit of generosity still remains the same. So this is the spirit of Thidingyut season, paying respects to those to whom respect is due and remembering those to whom one owes gratitude.

In this chapter by observing Waso Lent and Thidingyut festival can be explore, beginning of the Lenten season, the farmers have to work very hard in the fields, they have to find the time and means to serve the needs of the monks, so that they can carry on their work of learning and teaching the scriptures. The villagers individually as well as collectively donate very generously money, foodstuffs and labor. The young children are taken along to make them hear the teaching of the Buddha and become good in behavior and character. It is good enough if they can keep the precepts just for a sitting, if not the whole day and to make the children become familiar with Buddhist religious practices from young. The villagers honor and revere the monks not only for religious purposes but also depend on them for advice in their social, economic, health matters. Waso is the time when villagers do meritorious deeds and practices contemplation and self-denial. Thidingyut, the seventh month of the Myanmar calendar, marks the end of Lent. Waso Lent period “Soon” offering ends the full moon day of Thidingyut. In the evening of Thidingyut full moon day the villagers go to the twelve pagodas they had gone to during the Waso Lent for offering of lights. Minywa model village, the younger know that when they come of age, they must earn their own living. They are hard-working and take pride in the fact that they can give charity and wear clothes with their own hard earned honest labor. One can observe the spirit of harmony among them. One can see the same religious fervor in the villagers regardless of being poor or rich.

Chapter (IV)

Religious Festivals in Tazaungmone (November)

There are two kinds of religious festivals hold in Tazaungmone. They are Kahtein ceremony and Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival.

(1) Kahtein Ceremony

Tazaungmone is the eight month of the Myanmar calendar beginning the cold season in this month. It is a pleasant time of the late rains moving into the early cold weather. The paddy fields are fresh and green and the paddy seeds are peeping out at the shoots. The farmers are happy to see the fruit of their labors flourishing.

Tazaungdine means the post or torch that brings the light. Myanmar Buddhists celebrate the Kahtein festival every year as a seasonal ceremony in the month of a Tazaungmone. Kahtein alms giving are to honor the monks by providing them with the robe which is one of their essential needs. Just as the roots of a tree keep it firm and alive, so the monks are the foundation on which our Buddha's Sasana must be firmly rooted, to flourish. A Kahtein ceremony celebrated by the community is a joyous affair where everybody can participate regardless of class, rich or poor, young or old. It is given with a pure heart, as a religious duty, a meritorious act, a social function and a cultural heritage. The villagers of Minywa model village are Myanmar Buddhist, so they celebrate the Kahtein Robe offering ceremony for the monks who are shouldering the duty of keeping the Sasana alive. It is a ritual that must be done within a certain period of time that is from first waning moon of Thidingyut to full moon of Tazaungmone. During this period the monks are entitled to the Kahtein robe and other requisites of a monk. They are also entitled to certain privileges by participating in the Kahtein ceremony. They are provided for their daily food by going on the daily alms round, but the robe, medicine etc are not offered daily. So at this time the donors tie their things of the robe, towels, soap, medicine, toothpaste, brush etc to a bamboo frame like a "Padethapin*" and carry it to the monastery where the Kahtein is to be held. It is as if the monks can just pluck off what he needs.

*Padethapin – tree shaped stand where various articles of offering are hung

This Kahtein ceremony is celebrated without fail in all the five monasteries of Minywa village every year. They do not have enough robes for change in the rainy season. The Buddha, knowing this sanctioned that the robe may be offered to the monks once, in one year, especially in this one month period of time only. So this Kahtein ceremony is according to the rules laid down by the Buddha.

There are three types of Kahtein robe offering in Minywa village.

- (1) Single private donor Kahtein robe offering
- (2) Minywa School Kahtein robe offering
- (3) Community Kahtein robe offering

The villagers of Minywa model village try their best to provide the five monasteries with the Padethapin every year. No monastery has ever been without a Padethapin. People who are most interested in the auspicious Kahtein alms giving festival are the men and women in their forties, because it is essentially a religious ceremony without any merry making. The young do not participate as in Thingyan, Mya Thein Tan Pagoda festival, and Thidingyut lighting festival. The preparations for offering the Kahtein robe have to begin working by September and October.

The single donor has to decide at which monastery she will donate and inform the abbot of the monastery. The chairman of the village council and the villagers are informed by their hundred house head. Then they can find out which monasteries have still no donors. Then the villages pool their resources and have a community Kahtein for one of the five monasteries in turn each year. This was done up to the year 2000.

But after it, Minywa natives living in Mandalay began to lead the community Kahtein. They would come back to Minywa; have meetings to organize the collecting of donations and work body and soul for the success of the Kahtein. They are usually well off and experienced and the old men of the villager honor and trust; One of them would be the Patron and driving force of the community Kahtein. They would start working from October, contributing and collecting funds for the Kahtein.

Minywa School Kahtein is celebrated by the students of the school who are from Minywa village as well as from neighboring villages. The head of the school and the teachers organize the collection of money and things for the Padethapin. And then they find out the monastery and donate the Padethapin and held the Kahtein ceremony at that monastery. These activities may be teaching or guiding the children to be mindful of their religion, and learn to organize and share responsibility. They will also enjoy the spirit of unity.

The Kahtein ceremony is for the monks and their essential offerings are the eight requisites needs for their daily life. For this meritorious deed, they pray that it will help them gain Nibbana. It all depends of course on our generosity. In celebrating the Kahtein, the Padethapin is put out on view about three days before the Kahtein. The single donor will have the Padethapin on view in front of his house. The school Kahtein will have the Padethapin in front of the school or in the school compound and the community Padethapin will be put up in the village Padetha Hall. Other people's charities are displayed to move viewers to generosity. Everybody is welcome to donate anything.



Photo (6) Preparation of Padethapins

The villagers value more the offering of Kahtein robe than the offering of the ordinary robe at any other time. Both are of the same size and stitched in the same way. But the ordinary robe just clothes for the monk. The Kahtein robe has special blessing that protects the monk who possesses it. They say in a monastery, the ordination hall is the most important, just as the Kahtein robe is the noblest robe. It gives five privileges which are blessing the rigidity of the monk's rules.

They are

- (1) One can go anywhere without permission.
- (2) One can go about without taking all the three robes.
- (3) One can eat the alms food, though improperly offered.
- (4) One can keep as many extra robes as one need.

(5) One can have a share of the robes owned by the monks.

Of the five blessings of Kahtein, except for the second blessing which concerns the monks, every monk gets the blessing whether he participated or not, during the Kahtein period of first waning of Thidingyut to the full moon day of Tazaungmone.

The Kahtein robe offering ceremony is done to spread the five blessing throughout the monastery so that the monks residing in it may enjoy its blessings. The donors only donate the robes generally to the monks and not to any particular monk. The Kahtein ritual is carried out by the monks only. Only one piece of the three robes is chosen and it is called "Natti thingan" on which the monks recite "Natti kammavaca sacred scriptures". This has to be done ahead, so that it could be given to the monks who will carry out the procedure for the Kahtein as soon as all the ritual for the Kahtein is done, the whole monastery and the monks residing in it enjoy the five blessings till the full moon day of Tabaung.

On the day the Kahtein ceremony is celebrated, people bring the Padethapin to the monastery on bullock carts or carried by people at about 8 o'clock in the morning. They offer the "nja thingan" and Padethapin to the abbot of the monastery and the other monks are offered the other requisites. Then the abbot administers gives the precepts to congregation and gives an appropriate sermon on the benefits of donating Kahtein robes. The donors do the libation for their charity and share their merits. Everybody says well done! Then all the monks at the monastery are offered their midday meal. Sometimes, a rich donor may give the villagers lunch or snack of vermicelli soup. After the monks have had their meal, the abbot of the monastery announced the start of the Kahtein robe ritual and proceeds with the ceremony.

Kahtein robe offering gives the monks five blessings that make their life less rigid. The donors also enjoy five blessings. They are

- (1) The donors can travel anywhere without harm and hindrance.
- (2) No enemy can destroy the donor's property.
- (3) Will have abundant good food without fear of poison etc.
- (4) Property may be long forgotten yet suffer no loss.
- (5) In earning a livelihood, he will get in heaps and bounds, more than other people.

These are the reason why Minywa villagers feel more eager to donate the Kahtein robe. The villagers are very proud about their ability to provide Kahtein robes to all the five monasteries in Minywa model village. The villagers take pride in discharging their religious duties of never forgetting to take refuge in the Three Gems

as a native trait, and the spirit of unity and harmony in all their activities, all in a way of preserving the Myanmar traditions.

(2) Mya Thein Tan Pagoda Festival

2.1 The history of Mya Thein Tan pagoda

Minywa model village has twelve well known pagodas and Mya Thein Tan Pagoda is one of the famous and oldest. It is estimated to be more than (400) years old. An ancient pagoda is in the south of the village. Mya Thein Tan pagoda is only getting permission to celebrate pagoda festival.

Mya Thein Tan pagoda history according to the oral tradition is the following. About (400) years ago, a woman Ma Phawt Pyu and Mg Shwe Oke (a spirit guarding his treasure trove) who transformed himself into a human being lived together. One day Mg Shwe Oke heard that treasure trove hunter were about to rob them. So he had to return to his place. Then he appeared in her dreams, because the evil treasure hunters are trying to rob him, he instructed her to come to the river bank on the east where he will appear as a snake. He told her to strike the snake dead which will turn the snake into precious gold and jewels. It will provide his beloved wife Ma Phawt Pyu for her whole life time. Also to do charity for him by building a pagoda erected in memory of a dear departed person. When she wake up the next morning, she put a shawl on her shoulder to go to the river bank, but she hesitated as it was just a dream, but she heard the celestial beings urging her to go and take the treasures meant for building a pagoda.

They ordered her to go at once. When Ma Phawt Pyu arrived at the river bank, she saw Ko Shwe Oke coming towards her as a snake. She felt very sad and did not have the heart to strike him. But the big snake said, "Do strike me; I'm no more the human being Ko Shwe Oke.

Please take the treasures from me and build a pagoda with an emerald worth Kyat 100,000. Please build the pagoda here in my memory. If you won't strike me the evil treasure hunters will surely get my treasures". Tears rolled down her cheeks and as she wipes them with one end of the shawl, the other end fell over the snake. The shawl at once became studded with emeralds worth a hundred thousand and the snake turned into a bundle of jewels. Later that Ma Phawt Pyu enshrined the emerald shawl in the pagoda build in the east side of the old Minywa village. It was donated to the memory of Ko Shwe Oke and named Mya Thein Tan pagoda. Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival is

celebrated grandly every year on the first and second winning moon of Tazaungmone. It takes for two days.

2.2 Preparation of Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival

The villagers have to make preparations two months ahead of the festival. The abbots of the village monasteries, the pagoda trustees, the village chairman and the villagers have to get together to make the festival a success. First of all they have to decide on the fee to be collected for the renovation of the pagoda. Next they have to fix the fees for hiring a music band, a theatrical Zat* troupe and an Anyeint Pwe* for entertainment. The village Peace and Development Chairman and the young men's leader have to discuss how much each family should contribute for both. Since it is a festival for the Pagoda, they feel the entertainment fee should not exceed the fee for the Pagoda. The villagers also felt more money should be spent for the Pagoda than mere entertainment for the young. They feel that people would contribute more generously for a charitable cause. Nearly every house in the village prepares ten days ahead of the festival. The village is noisy with the sound of rice ponders, making flour for the traditional rice delicacies of glutinous or ordinary rice flour and palm candy, steamed in leaf packets or deep fried in sheets thick and thin.

They try to make long lasting kind snacks like moantawza, moatpout, nyataya. The older woman usually does the frying while the younger girls do the pounding for the flour and kneading the dough. Sometimes, neighbors combining to make the same kinds of eatables. Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival is a festival most enjoyed by the young men and girls. They go to the town about one month before the festivals to buy clothes to show off at it.

*Zat – Perform a play or drama

*Anyeint Pwe – non-dramatic performance where a female artiste dances and sings to the accompaniment of light music and is usually supported by comedians.

2.3 Activities of first day

On the first waning day of Tazaungmone, at 7 o'clock in the morning, the village chairman and secretary, the pagoda trustees, take the duty of thabeikgaung*. "Thabeikgaungs" are heads of six to ten households, who have worked for generations, well to do men able to take charge in charitable affairs. There are (63) thabeikgaungs, in Minywa model village. They have collected the donations from the households for the festivals. They share duties of feeding and entertaining the visiting monks and the boy from the neighboring villages and the entertaining troupes. Next they have to compete for the Myathabeik, which is choosing the thabeikgaung with the largest amount of money. The relatives and friends dance with joy if their thabeikgaung is chosen. It is their way of showing their pride and joy as the most generous group. The onlookers also are happy at the site. The other groups who did not get the Myathabeik also make a resolution to get more donations next year and donate more to the pagoda. Every one is filled with generosity. The following table shows the Myathabelikgaung's funds.

Year	Cash household least donation	Thabeikgaung with least funds	Myathabeik winner Thabeikgaung
2008	Kat 500	Kyat 10,000	Kyat 7,60,000
2009	Kyat 1000	Kyat 25,000	Kyat 11,60,000

Table (6) Myathabeikgaung funds

The man, who became Myathabeik gaung in 2009, was also the winner in 2008. He hopes to keep up his record and is already working hard to achieve his aim. People who become "Myathabeikgaung" are usually very generous. By nature Myathabeikgaung have a successful business and a wide circle of well to do relatives and friends. Every native of Minywa has a right to compete for this title of Myathabeikgaung. The natives of Minywa village who have moved to other towns come back mostly at Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival time. This lovely behavior shows

*thabeikgaung – only Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival activities

that they never forget their native. The relatives in the village too welcome them heartily. They take pride in having a full house of far away relative's yearly visit. The visitors also distribute presents from the regions they stay in and the families return gifts are the traditional eatables of an Upper Myanmar pagoda festival. For some reason or another, for those who could not make it home, they still remember the festival and year for the native eatables. So, relatives and friends try to send them these delicacies by those returning to town. Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival is not just a religious celebration of refuge in the Triple Gems but also a family reunion of scattered homes. So it is a charitable occasion as well as a social engagement.

In the evening of the first waning moon of Tazaungmone, the abbots of the neighboring monasteries arrive with their monastery boys and stay at the monasteries which have invited them. If a dance troupe is hired, they arrive in the morning. There is also security duty and people of them are taken care of for lodging and food by the thabeikgaung. The visiting abbots also return the invitation to their villages when they have such a pagoda festival. Thus the monks also have the occasion to meet each other. Some visitors come to the pagoda festival from the first day, sleeping the night at the village, while some come on the second day only to participate in the Soon Gyi Laung. The pagoda festival in a way makes the social relationship more firm and chance for reciprocal trade. They can bring their wares for sale and buy what Minywa has to sell. The visitors also visit the houses of people they know and are welcomed to a good meal or traditional pagoda festival snacks.

The typical meal consists of a meat dish, fried chillies, and bean sprout pickle and soup. The non-native visitors are surprised to see that every house has the same menu and the same snacks. It is because there is no regular market like in town, but they have only the village butcher selling beef and pork.

They feel sad when a visitor goes away without eating their meal or snacks. Then they try to give their traditional snacks as a present to take home. They are happy that the visitors have visited their village and they want to do their utmost in hospitality with a pure and generous heart.

In the evening of the first day at 6 o'clock, people come to the village Padetha Hall to start the procession of Padethapin to display round the village. The Padethapin are hung with things from the north and south sided of the village and each house must contribute one person to carry them. Otherwise, they must do cleaning labour at the monasteries or at the pagoda.

The procession is led by the "Sidaw Aphwe" (Royal drum group), with the village young men and the elderly male musicians. This is followed by four village belles chosen by the ladies leader to carry. Each ladies carrier silver (money) Padethapin for the pagoda. The belles must be of the same stature to pair off. They are followed by twelve young ladies carrying flowers in vases filled with paddy. It is the symbol of plenty for the twelve seasons of the year.

In the fourth place is the Myathabeikgaung hold the emerald alms bowl. He is followed by the remaining (62) thabeikgaung each carrying his Padethapin in a silver bowl, helped by the village youths and ladies. The snacks to be offered to the pagoda are carried by the five to ten years old children of the village. The tail end of the procession is brought up by the village amateur song and dance troupe. This procession must not on any account be broken by people crossing it. The people in front cannot look back, so if the line is broken it would spoil the systematic arrangements would get out of place. It is the leader's duty that the procession is not disturbed by crossing. As the procession goes by the aged and the young who cannot join it comes out of their houses and crowd round the cross roads. The musical troupe slow down and dance and play a little longer.

When the procession reaches the Mya Thein Tan pagoda gate, the young men's leader and two members distribute lighted candles in each one in the procession. They have to carry the Padethapin with one hand and carry the lighted candle with the other to go round the pagoda clock- wise three times. It is a good gesture so that one may be forgiven of our evil mental, verbal and physical deeds. Then all the villagers and visitors who came to the Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival offer a thousand candle lights. The men climb up the upper terraces of the pagoda, while the women remain on the first terrace to offer candle lights.

At about 9 o'clock in the night, people take their places around the stage near by the Mya Thein Tan pagoda platform. Some people try to reserve a place one month ahead by striking down wooden sticks. In the festival bazaar even neighboring villages have come to sell things filled with people. The show starts at about 9 o'clock and goes on till break of dawn. The security is taken by the monks, the Peace and Development council members and the army. All liquor is forbidden and any peace breaker will be fined or locked up for the night. On the east side of the stage is a marked off place for young men to make merry. But they must not step out of it under any circumstances.

2.4 Activities of second day

On the second festival day at 5 o'clock in the morning, the Myathabeikgaung offers breakfast, dawn break meal at May Thein Tan pagoda. At the same time the other thabeikgaung have to go to their respective monasteries and invite the monks and boys and cart men to their houses for the dawn break meal at their houses.

The householders belonging to this thabeikgaung have to deliver the food and sweet meals to their thabeikgaung houses at 4 o'clock in the morning. At 8 o'clock in the morning the village monks and the invited guests' monks all go to the Mya Thein Tan pagoda for the Soon Gyi Laung. After it the pagoda trustees make the monks to draw lots for the remaining things. When the entire gift has been drawn, one monk administers give the precepts, the libation for the alms giving done. The pagoda trustee and the Myathabeikgaung officiated for everybody. Finally the merits accrued were shared with all the beings of the thirty one abodes. So ends the Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival.

Chapter (V)

Other Festivals

(1) Auspicious Novitiation Ceremony

Theravada Buddhist considers the novitiation of their sons as their bounden duty. If no son is born to a family, they can carry out the novitiation of other people's son. Myanmar Buddhist initiation into novice hood is celebrated in big cities as well as in every nook and corner of the country. The basic objectives and meaningfulness may be the same but practices may differ according to time and regional cultural beliefs. In Minywa village, novitiation ceremony is also hold in different style.

In Minywa model village, Buddhist families wish to have a least a son because they wish to be inheritors of Buddha Sasana, by initiating him into novice hood. They even consider that the woman who gives birth to a son is noble. The parents of the boy also grow in the spirit of charity in anticipation of their son entering novice hood. So they also gain merits by their spirit of charity. Nearly all the villagers of Minywa model village are Buddhist and all wish their sons to receive the heritage of Buddha. Their chief endeavor is to do the novitiation at least once in their lives.

The novitiation ceremony is usually done from January to April, the dry bright days after their harvest season. Their harvest is done and there is money to give away in charitable activities and novitiation of sons and grandchildren is a meritorious deed. Myanmar Buddhists are happy to be doing donation enthusiastically. They believe that if they can do charity one after another their wealth will also grow steadily.

1.1 Preparation for the Novitiation ceremony

The donors who have decided to celebrate the novitiation ceremony for their son must make plans a year ahead of it. If the novitiation is held the next year, they must work very hard this year for the alms giving. They must be very frugal in every matter to save for the expenses of the novitiation. One can see how much they value the success of their alms giving when they are willing to give up all luxuries so that they can give lavishly. Even the children try to earn for it. The children who have come of age work on their own farm as well as take on extra jobs like weeding and plucking pan leaf. The younger children try to save their pocket money to be able to toss them among people. There are the admirable customs of Minywa villagers' people how regardless of age hold the novitiation with reverence. In October or November, the

donors who will hold the novitiation ceremony go to the monastery where it is to be held and to fix a date for it. They bring “Soon” for the abbot of the monastery and request for a date. The abbot chooses auspicious day of the week and fix a day in the month that will not clash with another alms giving in the village.

The five abbots of the five monasteries have discussed and agreed on the choice of the day for each monastery. It is because the volunteers who cook the meals especially can cook for only alms giving at a time. Also the cooking utensils owned by the village can cater for only one at a time. When the day is fixed, they have to hire a musical troupe an Anyeint Pwe and dramatic troupe for entertainment. Next they must request a master of ceremony. Then they must get down to the basic work of the “Ahlu” pwe (Alms giving ceremony). They must be able to put their children as novices, they must have the means to feed the monks and relatives and friends and all who contribute their labor for the success of the alms giving. Usually the whole village is involved. The donors too must work in harmony. About two months before the Ahlu, the husband with a group of village youth must cut firewood for the Ahlu. The tree owners usually gladly allow their trees to be cut for firewood at the Ahlu. Nowadays they have to plant firewood trees in their own yard. In collecting firewood some help to cut down while others may give their bullock carts to bring them to the village.

The volunteers are served with a meal. Then the wood is cut into suitable size and stacked systematically near the cook house. The shopping for the Ahlu starts one month ahead. They have to store rice and dried fish. They need at (50) baskets (1 basket = 20viss) of rice which they usually buy from Shwebo Town. The dried fish is from Mandalay or Yangon, which may be bought personally or by someone going there. They need at (70-80) viss (1viss=3.6lbs). The well to do will buy dogfish but the less well to do will buy dried big fish. The offering for the monks, such as the prescribed articles for use by Buddhist monks and other things also have to be bought early so that there would be no last minute rush. When the Ahlu day draws near, they have to send out invitation to friends and relatives living elsewhere. In the past they used the hand written invitations but today they use the press is available for formed invitations. The whole village is invited with a loudspeaker.

1.2 Responsibility

The head-cook has to be consulted for how much to buy of each item needed to feed the whole village for day. The head-cook is usually an elderly man who has years of experience catering at all social affairs in both sad and joyous occasions. He cooks with big steamers and cauldrons and need strong young men to carry out him directions. He usually has a team of boys and men (15-65) years in age to help him. The cooking is all done by men at night since it must be ready by dawn.

To help the donors entertain the volunteer labor contributors in these five days she has to invite a group of five ladies ages (45-65) especially to take care of the catering. They are called “Laphet -hatin or Aindaw-htain” (An elderly accomplished woman of authority and management). The donor makes the requests to be “Laphet-htain” at her Ahlu by presenting a Laphet tray or a cheroot. Nowadays the well to do donor invites them with towels or steal plates.

1.3 Entertaining day (Activities of five day)

Five days before the Ahlu, the pavilion is erected. It is just the main scaffolding of posts and toddy-palm leaf roof. From the day the pavilion is erected to the actual Ahlu day is five days which are called “entertaining days” or prelude to the actual Ahlu day. Everyone who comes to help in these days is fed with a rice and curry meal, plain tea, pickled tea salad and snacks.

When one gives an Ahlu, one has to build a pavilion in front of the house. Then he has to prepare a place to cook rice, a place to cook curry, a place for his villagers to eat and a place for the guests from other villages. So to build these guests tents, he has to use permission from the neighbor to build tents to entertain guests with food a month before the Ahlu so the neighbors can also tidy up their compounds.

In building the pavilion, in expensive wooden post or bamboo is used. For those who cannot afford much toddy palm leaves are used for roofing and bamboo mats as walls. But for the rich they may use painted designs and decorations to resemble a palace. The size of the pavilion depends on the largeness of the Ahlu. The traditional rites have to be observed in building a pavilion. The first post raise must have its top tied with a branch of Eugenie shoots.



Photo (7) The Pavilion

Then the regional spirits have to be supplicated with an offering of a whole green coconut, three combs of bananas, laphet (pickled tea leaf), betel quid's beautifully arranged in a basin. This ritual must be done to avert any harm that might disturb the event. The basic structure of the pavilion is built by the volunteer youth of the village. At the head part of the pavilion is a raised platform for the monks to sit and to display the articles the donors are offering to the invited monks.

The old men of fifty years split bamboo to make bamboo mats or strings to tie up. The (10-15) years old boys carry toddy palm leaves for the roof, while above (15) years old have to dig holes for the posts and carry the posts. One can see everybody is busy giving voluntary labor in unisons.

1.4 Activities of four day

On the second evening of the five entertaining days, about thirty young men come to the Ahlu house. They brought hatchets and grubbing hoe etc of their own for the job. They have to dig at least (3-5) holes for cooking rice and at least five holes for cooking curries. Then they have to cut up the firewood to the right size to fit the hole-stoves they had dug. The split up firewood is then piled up near the stoves. One stove is to boil water for the plain tea.

There is no need for the donors to request the young men for digging stoves. They comes of their own though and reminding of their mothers or sisters. One can see

their loveable trait of contributing personal labor for the fulfillment of a charitable cause. The donors in gratitude feed them generously with a full meal, pickled-tea salad and plain tea.

1.5 Activities of third day

On the third day, known as just chewing betel quid day, elderly men accompanied by young men go to the place where the cooking utensils like huge rice steamers and cauldrons crockery owned by the village are stored. If the Ahlu house and store room are close; they just walk over and bring them. But if the two places are far apart they have to carry them by a bullock cart. In the afternoon, women and girls come with their own round bamboo trays and sieves to “pick rice” that is clean the rice of paddy seeds, stones etc to be ready for cooking.

Again they do not have to ask but they all come of their own accord as if it was their bounden duty to help. These troupes of women with their round bamboo trays work in the shade of the pavilion. They clean the rice making it ready to be worked. They work steadily chattering among themselves or breaking out into song, all having a good time. They also needed no invitation by the donor. They had to finish their own household chores early to be able to contribute their voluntary charitable labor. They also are entertained with plain tea and pickled laphet salad.

In the evening they roll the cheroots to give to the guests who come to the Ahlu. These cheroot rollers are usually about (40-60) years old. Nowadays some use the readily available Thanatphet (Leaf of the sebesten tree) rolled cheroots. On the third day of the Ahlu, the donor sends out a general invitation to the neighboring villages. The method is known as to “Byohit” (a public crier), that is to make the Ywa-Saw (village crier) announce the invitation by reading it in public. He has to be requested with an offer of a comb of bananas, a bundle of cheroots and a packet of laphet. He announces the names of the donors, novice to be sons, the day and time of the Ahlu and place. The whole family is invited so that they need not light the stove. So the Ywa-Saw is like the official village messenger. Today they use the village video studio owner to announce with his loudspeaker. In the evening the elderly women and young girls come to help with preparations for the two main meals they will serve. They bring their own kitchen knives and bamboo trays. They group into five each and start work sitting around the pile of onions. Some peel the onions while

others cut or shred them. Some as to the motor pounder to pound chilies. They are plied with plain tea and laphet salad.

1.6 Beginning of Ahlu (ceremony of entering monk hood)

The fourth day is known as Ahluwin day or beginning of Ahlu and the busiest day of the Ahlu. They decorate the pavilion so that people can stand in awe at its dazzling beauty. In the past they borrowed them from Ayardaw town, by now everything is available in Minywa village. The pavilion is decorated with thick cardboard sheets painted with shimmering gold and silver flowers and embossed designs which is a sight to wonder at.

The donor's family starts to go round paying obeisance to grandparents of both sides as a symbol that in their alms giving, both sides' elders are the chief donors. Usually the saing-wine (music band) arrives in the morning, but nowadays they come and start to entertain only in the evening. At about 8 o' clock, men from (40-80) year olds arrive at the pavilion and take their place on the Thangarsin (dais on which monks are seated while officiating at a charitable function). Their duty is to make cups with banana leaves to put laphet in. It is an art because they have to see the leaf cup is neat and round. They are filled with laphet and used as invitations or gifts for guests to take home. One can see here again the loveable gesture of even the old contributing his share to the village alms giving. In the past water for use on the Ahlu day has to be brought by water barrel carts. Those who are not free may send just the cart and bullock for anyone to use. Water is scarce and less rain than in lower Myanmar. Nowadays wells with overflowing water have been dug, so they can pipe up the water and also carry in the bamboo pole across the shoulder in 4 gallon tins. All these essentials are voluntary contributions that need no requests. The donors also gratefully serve them with bananas, cheroots, plain tea and Laphet salad.

At about 10 o' clock in the morning, they have to make preparations to go round the village to invite people. They are led by two leaders chosen by the village. She must be an active social worker, an able speaker and adept in managing the young girls and win their confidence in her. The elderly Laphet htains fill the banana leaf cups and are used as requests for certain responsibilities. The people who must be invited to the Ahlu are the elderly, the pavilion entrance sitters, the young ladies a pair of young ladies and a youth, the ladies to carry the novice to be paraphernalia on her head, the youth to carry him on his shoulders or lift him on to the Waw (palanquin).

The custom of inviting the young ladies is because they are not supposed to go about freely, without permission or a leaders .They must be “prim and proper” in their ways as walking dainty and speaking politely. They must be gentle and not rough in speech or behavior and be neat and tidy in appearance and everything. Where as the men needs no invitation as they are free to go about do things. They have the freedom of movement and should be like a tiger, swift in action.

The monks who are invited to the Ahlu from town or other villages have to be informed one month ahead. They come to the Ahlu on the evening before the actual day in bullock carts accompanied by his monastery boy. He puts up at the usual monastery he always visits. The responsibility of the two chaperons from the north and south chaung (the Deserted place) is to go round the village and invite people to the Ahlu. She selects (5-6) girls from the donor’s relatives and the volunteers. Then they divided into two groups and carrying baskets of Laphet packets and cheroots, give them as invitations to the Ahlu. The relatives are invited with a comb of bananas and snack. Nowadays, the well to do donors invites both the relatives and the villagers with plates of all sizes. In the past the chief cook and his group are invited with Laphet and cheroots, but nowadays, it is Pasoe (Nether garment of Myanmar male), shirt or basins. In the past, the pavilion entrance beauty and others are invited with laphet packed in Water lily leaves; nowadays it is a make-up pack, handkerchief etc that is something more suitable. The couples who will carry the novice’s paraphernalia are invited with a packet of Laphet and two cheroots. The strong youth who will carry the “Shin Laung” (would be novice) on his shoulder and take care of the angle cart is invited with a Laphet packet and Moat-si-kyaw.

People also contribute money to the Ahlu. They have to choose a person who can read and write and be of good character. This job usually falls on the village school teacher or the village midwife. They have to be requested with bananas, Laphet and cheroots. The two village leaders too have to be requested a day ahead with a present of plates and Moat-si-kyaw. During the Ahlu days on offering to Ashin Upagutta has to be made to present the evil spirit from disturbing the Ahlu with rain and storms. The offering consisting of three banana combs, one green coconut, one packet of Laphet, candles, incense sticks are arranged in a basin and placed near, the altar at the back of the Thangarsin. It is discarded only at the end of the Ahlu.

To serve dinner to the guests who will come in the evening, they have to start cooking by 9 o’clock in the morning. All the cooking and preparation of the vegetables

etc for the curry is done by men. The rice from the steamers is emptied into a prepared place surrounded by new bamboo rolls. The usual menu is soup, fried ngapi (fish preserve), and hot sour fried vegetables.



Photo (8) Cooking rice



Photo (9) Cooking rice

At midday, about (12) noon the musical troupe arrives and the village youth help to unload the drums etc into the pavilion. The orchestra starts to play at about 3 o’

clock and the spirits of the ladies and youth became alive with the sound of the music. Since they do not have entertainment and amusement places to go to like in the big towns, they are eager to take this opportunity to show off their beauty and enjoy it. In the village only at school festivities and Ahlus, they can be happy like this.



Photo (10) Shin Laung and Angel

That evening from (3-6) o'clock the whole village comes for dinner at the Ahlu house. There are snack vendors, ice-lolly, toys sellers near the pavilion and they also are welcome to the meal. The donors welcome with joy all that come from the four directions of the compass. This is truly a Buddhist feels in the joy of giving. The guests are fed in the pavilion too with plain teas, Laphet and cheroots, while they rest before or after dinner.



Photo (11) Entertaining with food

On the Ahluwin day they put up at least one of the Padethapin. On that Padethapin, they hang up, the robe and prescribed articles for use by Buddhist monks

and other items that the monastery needs. As the donor himself decorates the Padethapin the young boy and the youth go to the monastery at noon to carry out cleanliness chores there. It is done by old monastery boy who had stayed at the monastery in child hood. They go there now of their own accord or parents and relatives have urged them to remember the gratitude they owe the monastery. In every monastery there is a group of young women responsible for the chores of the monastery. In times alms giving and monastery occasions, the members of these women volunteer groups wear the same fashion clothes to show that they are members of such a group. The men work to make the monastery grounds clean and presentable. They make the beds for the guest monks to rest day and night. The women polish the floors, put new flowers on the altar and wash the plates and napkins.

1.7 Serving at the meals

Beginning of the Ahlu day one can see the full force of volunteers, each group responsible for one duty, working in harmony with others. For example, group for serving the meals, another group for washing the plates, welcoming the guest and a group of carts with barrels fetching water. In the meal serving group are donor's relatives as well as village youth who are experienced to catering to the masses. They are thirty in number, from (12-30) year olds. Those serving at the meals are usually relatives of the donors who know the guests more intimately. They are about (13-30) years of age. In the temporary tent for feeding the villagers, there are tables laid with rice and curry but no stools to sit on. The guests sit on their haunches as slippers and eat. When he finishes he picks up his dirty dish to give to the dish washers on his way to wash his hands. If he meets friends at the table, they just talk a while and move on, knowing shortage of space for on coming guests. As for those in charge (15-35) years old boys and men, they have no time to stare. They are busy replenishing the rice and curry bowls non-stop. These volunteer waiters must welcome cordially all the guests regardless of rich or poor. They must not tease anyone and serve politely. The old as the young pick up their plates after eating and drops them at the dish washers who smilingly wash them as many as they come. They are also men of (30-35) years

Here again one can see the generosity men to let the women enjoy their beauty parade and not tarnish it with dirty dish washing. The guest's dinner tent is better provided than their own villager's tent. The tables are well laid and may be an extra dish of dried fish is added. There are also seats to sit on. Myanmar custom of offering

the best to a guest who has traveled for to honor his Ahlu. The village dinner tent is closed by 6 o' clock in the evening. But the guest's dinner room goes on catering to late comers from far away places.

1.8 Offering of the Satumadu

The Satumadu is the electuary made of four ingredients (sesame oil, molasses, honey and butter). The invited monks from nearby villages also arrive about this time. The villagers go home for awhile after dinner. They come back to the pavilion at between (7- 8) o' clock to offer a Satumadu to the monks. At least one person from each house makes it a point to come. At 6 o' clock all the monks of the Minywa five monasteries and the guest monks queue in order of seniorority and led by the pagoda trustee walk to the pavilion. When they reach the head of the donor's road, the big long drum awaits them. Now the procession is led by the big long drum players joyously beating the auspicious drum, takes them to the Ahlu pavilion. As the monks walk in single file each is accompanied by a boy carrying the alms bowl. The drum stops and retires just as they reach the front of the pavilion. The husband and wife donors put the Satumadu on the monks bowl. The older women offer sweets to the monks outside the pavilion. The young sit on the Thangarsin admiring the pretty girl sitting inside the pavilion. When all the monks have gone away, some go home while some remain to hear the music.



Photo (12) Activities of Satumadu offering

1.9 Listening of the Ahlu drums orchestra

In listening to Ahlu drums orchestra, the young men sit on the Thangarsin and the girls sit on the mats in the pavilion. At the entrance of the pavilion, there are two benches and two tables. The tables are laid with plain tea, Laphet salad and cheroots. The village elderly men sit on the benches and listen to the orchestra while dipping into the tea and Laphet. Another lovable Anyar custom and trait is their appreciation of traditional music. They still love the traditional Myanmar orchestral music. In the villages it is at the festivals and the Ahlus. The donors provide not only the music but also refreshments. So the donor's relatives would mix a basin full of Laphet and fried assorted peas. Then they would go among the audience and pour a mouthful into the hands with a spoon. Some do not want to eat but they accept of politeness not to hurt the donor's generosity, but later would give it to a child sitting near by. Sitting and listening to the orchestra is a mixed crowd of rich and poor all in equality. There is no show of pomp and grandeur, but just a simple village Ahlu.

The orchestra starts to play about 6 o' clock in the evening and up to about 10 o' clock at night. They also play for the younger generation. They also play for requests and are rewarded with cash. The young girls and boy leave for home at 10 o' clock, so from (10-12) midnight they play the traditional music for the elderly people still remaining in the pavilion at 12 o' clock, the players take a break for dinner and rest. At 1 o'clock in the morning the orchestra starts to play again till about 2:30 in the morning. At about 10 o' clock in the night the orchestra listeners lessen, so some of the relatives go into the pavilion so that there would be more people listening to the orchestra. So to the person who sits throughout the night, the donors return this courtesy by doing the same at that person's Ahlu.

1.10 Activities of cooking

The cooking crew is hardest worked the night before actual Ahlu day. They start cooking the curries at 8 o' clock in the evening for the next day's Ahlu meal. The rice is steamed in huge steamers at 2 o' clock in the morning. Since they have to be working the whole night the donors stuff them with Laphet salad and salted damsons to keep them awake. They did not feel the job as strenuous work but are happy to be able to contribute this meritorious labor. They also cook better dishes than the previous days. In addition to the usual sour soup, there a meat and lentil dish or fried dried fish which is a delicacy for the villagers. Just as they are cooking for the guests, at the

lunch for the monks. The donor's family and relatives set out for the monastery at 4 o'clock. When they arrive the work crew at the monastery has laid out everything, the curries and down to the sweet desserts. Although they have lost a night's sleep, their faces shown with happiness for the merit work they have contributed.

1.11 Actual Ahlu Day

On the Ahlu morning the donor's family has to get up about 3 o'clock in the morning to prepare to go to the monastery for the dawn break meal. In the past beautifying one self is done by one's self, but nowadays, a beautician is hired from town. At 5 o'clock in the morning the abbot of the monastery and all the monks of the monastery and invited monks come in and seat themselves according to seniority.

Depending on the donor's invitations, there are (30-50) monks sitting down to breakfast. At 6 o'clock, the donors return to the pavilion after serving breakfast to the monks at the monastery. At home, at 6 o'clock in the morning they have started to serve meals to the guests. The menu today is fried dried fish, chick-peas curry, bean-sprout sour, sweet soup. The meal tent closes at 9 o'clock in the morning. But the other meal tent for other village guests remains open and serves meals to the last guests. The young men and the children after having the meal at 6 o'clock do not return home. They go to the pavilion and listen to the orchestra. The children buy ice-llollies and play with toy bought from the venders who have come to sell at the Ahlu pavilion. When they are hungry, they go to the meal tent for a second helping. They are happy with the new clothes their parents have dressed them in. The young men too dressed in their best, in twos and threes mill around the young beauties.

1.12 Preparation of the Shin Laung

The young boys and girls have to start dressing up at 6 o'clock in the morning. The young boy is dressed in princely clothes and the young girl whose ear in going to be bored is dressed like a little princess. At about 6.30 in the morning, the close relatives led by two elderly male relatives took the dressed up boys and girls to the Shrine. They have to take along on offering of three combs of bananas, one green coconut etc in a basin.

The novice to be is about to leave the human world and step onto the higher nobler world of the monks. So he is considered a noble person and in presenting him to a Spirit, it will guard him from harm. The Buddha preached that as people are all

a Spirit, it will guard him from harm. The Buddha preached that as people are all beings living in the (31) abodes of the universe. So, every person wishes someone well, pray for the well being of others and shares the merits. If someone follows the teaching of Buddha, he also can get good benefit.



Photo (13) Shin Laung

1.13 Activities of Soon Gyi Laung

The “Sangha-Dana” Soon Gyi Laung begins at 8 o’ clock in the morning. The Ahlu pavilion is packed with people. This is alive with a teeming crowd. One can see people of all ages here. The women who will take part in the Soon Gyi Laung return home after eating at the Ahlu. They have to make preparations for it. The donor’s relatives and elderly women of (50-70) years have fried traditional snacks of moat-si-kyaw, nyataya, moat-awza and moat-pout, two days before the Ahlu. The young girl’s choice is soap-powder packets, but the middle age women have more variety. They are onions, garlic, palm candy candles, incense sticks, soap cakes, bananas etc whatever is appropriate. The young girls and middle aged women take their place inside the pavilion and the donor’s family and elderly stand outside the pavilion. At about 8 o’ clock in the morning, a male relative of the donors goes to the monastery to invite the

monks and they come walking in signal file according to seniority. At the head of the road wait two young men shouldering a brass gong on a pole. As soon as they see the monks they beat the brass gong. It is a signal of the approaching monks to the people at the pavilion. They are stirred to take their places. The women sit on either side of the narrow mat path for the monks. Some women spread their shawls on the mats for the monks to walk over. Each monk is accompanied by a boy with a basket.

There are many young men who want to be monastery boys accompanying their monk because it gives them a chance to have a close look at his lady beauty when lady offer the things. The orchestra in the pavilion strikes up the joyous music of charity welcoming the monks to the Soon Gyi Laung with the big long drums. In front of the pavilion, the male donor offers the most senior monk the alms bowl filled with food and the female donor offers a comb of bananas. Then the rest of the people pile in their gifts or offerings. When the basket is overflowing another boy waiting at the side gives him a new basket. At about 9 o' clock in the morning the great alms giving is over. Most of the items for the Soon Gyi Laung are dry goods that can be kept for a long period, so that it would last a long time for use at the monastery. When the monks were returning to the monastery, the orchestra played the farewell music. When this drum-beat is heard in the village, everybody knows that the alms giving are finished. As soon as this signal is given, the young men of the village and the old monastery boy accompanying the monks rush back to the pavilion.



Photo (14) Activities of Soon Gyi Laung

1.14 Activities of Pavilion Entrance

The village belles will be sitting at the pavilion entrance. It is not only a desire to show off the beauty of these belles to the guests, but also to make the occasion perfect and complete by their charm. The girls are relatives of the donors and the village belles numbering about (15-25). The girls invited to sit at the pavilion entrance are the donor's relatives and village belles. If a relative is chosen, the parents and relatives all contribute to make her the most beautiful. They give her new clothes, jewellery and flowers. If she is not well off the relatives give or lend her the clothes and jewellery she would need to be seen at an Ahlu. They sit from 9 o' clock to 10 o' clock in the morning. At that time the young men of the village come and watch them from the opposite of the girls. They come to court a definite beauty or choose which beauty to court. The young (10-13) year olds too come to choose which beauty to imitate. The elderly women who love match-making also come to see whose daughter is the prettiest. Above all the family and the relatives of the sitting girls are happy and take pride in their daughter or niece's beauty. The leader seats the young belles according to their build. There is a table at the head of the girls. On it's a big tray of Laphet salad and cheroots and anyone can help him and gaze at the beauties. At the head of that table sits the leader keeping a watchful eye on her charges. The village belles who are chosen to sit at the pavilion take pride in themselves.



Photo (15) Village belles

They all do farm work whether they are rich or poor, if they are healthy and strong enough to do so. If they are students, they still have to help in the family farm work in their school holiday.

When they are working in the fields or farm, they wear suitable clothes to be able to stand the weather. Then they put Thanakha thick on their faces and body and wear homespun cotton woven with native cotton yarn. They usually wear wooden clog. The native young village girls wear good clothes only for festive occasions. Then their parents buy them new clothes and fancy shoes, so that they would be presentable in public society. Here again one can see the love and generosity of parents for their children whether they can afford it or not, if their daughter is invited to parade at the pavilion entrance, they do their utmost to make their daughter the most beautiful girl of the village. The orchestra too plays music in praise of beauty, making everything more glorious. They are given their dinner in the guest's meal tent when their vigil is over.



Photo (16) Lady with Thanakha thick on their face



Photo (17) Girl with Thanakha thick on their face



Photo (18) Activities at the Pavilion Entrance



Photo (19) Activities at Pavilion Entrance

1.15 Seven days born combination to the Ahlu

On the day of the Ahlu, relatives and friends come and donate money. Two persons are kept in charge of it. They sit on a mat between the house and the pavilion. They have a box on which to write the donors' name and amount of cash which is put into the box. The other person has two baskets one full of Laphet packets and the other contains cheroots. She hands out the Laphet and cheroots as a return present from the Ahlu. She would give two cheroots and a packet of Laphet to a Kyat 500 donor and four cheroots and a packet of Laphet to a Kyat 1000 donor. Sometimes if the Ahlu donors are rich they would give plates or soap powder packets to the guests.

The chief donors accept these small donations so that all seven days born could contribute to the alms giving. Besides cash donations, in Minywa village some may contribute in kind, such as rice, dried fish, things for the pavilion and the orchestra. Especially close relatives feel they must heap to make the Ahlu a success and also show unity and kinship duties and customs. Some dance with joy when they return after parading the Shin Laung. They are not professionals but just village amateurs. The children and the old people join in too. So one has to return this too when it is their turn to do the alms giving.



Photo (20) Contribution to the alms giving

1.16 Shin Laung procession

At about 11 o' clock, the donors and the Shin Laung go to the monastery to offer the midday meal to the monks. The Shin Laung waits for the procession from the pavilion. The Shin Laung carrier (Waw) and angel cart are already waiting in the monastery compound. At the same time the procession to parade the Shin Laung round



Photo (21) The Angel Cart



Photo (22) Procession of Angel Cart

the town starts out from the pavilion to the monastery. It is led and directed by the leader. They have to follow the strict tradition in picking up the Shin Laung at the monastery. The big long-drum is beaten at this start of the procession. It informs the people of the approach of the Shin Laung parade. They flock to the cross-roads and the streets to watch it, when everything is ready the big drum leads the procession. Behind him are (4-6) men of (30-60) year olds carrying cylindrical pennants followed by (6-10) men of (20-30) year olds carrying another kind of pennants. Two young men carrying the pagoda ceiling follow them.



Photo (23) Carrying pagoda ceiling and cylindrical pennants



Photo (24) Carrying the pagoda's gold robe

Then four youths, close relatives of the donors follow, carrying the pagoda's gold robe. They are all carried by men because the articles are for the pagoda. They are followed by (10-30) young men just for show. Then (2-10) elderly women of (40-60) years old join the procession with pots of Eugenie, palm flowers and a kind of creeper grass on their head. Then about twenty women of (30-40) years old walk with altar flower pots. They are followed by (4-8) women carrying the cylindrical pennant. They are followed by (10-20) young girls (15-30) years old carrying the ornamental betel box on a short stem ornamental tray. The betel boxes and stands are made of wood and painted with gold leaf and studded with colored glass. The ornamental betel boxes are made of wood and Hintha bird (Brahminy duck) and cock are painted with gold and inlaid with colored glass to look like precious jewels.



Photo (25) Donars



Photo (26) Carrying the Brahminy duck and the ornamental betel box

The girls who carry these traditional things must have a blameless reputation be religious, courteous and dainty and above all the beautiful following them are the male and female donors of the Ahlu. Then (5-20) couples, relatives of the donors, carry the paraphernalia of the Shin Laung, robes umbrella, slippers etc and padathapins join the procession. Then (20-40) persons of all ages from (10-40) year olds displaying the items donated in the Ahlu. Finally, the Shin Laung carried on a “Waw” with four bearers, two in front and two behind. The angel cart follows carrying the little angels who will bore their ears.

The big royal drum and the dancers bring up the rear. When this procession reaches the monastery, they are jointed by the donors and the Shin Laungs and the angels. There they begin their parade into the village by first circling the monastery thrice going clockwise. This is to pay respect to the Three Gems (Buddha, Precept, Monk) an object thrice is done on all auspicious occasions. All the women wear the traditional Jacket and Longyi (Nether garment worn by Myanmar woman or man) and the men must wear the top jacket too. Since the year 2000, they made it a rule for each house to contribute one person to the procession. So when they arrive they have to report to their hundred house officer. Those who cannot join the procession are made to do other civic duties. It is to make the Ahlu, a crowded affair and to develop a spirit of unity and reciprocal help among the villagers.

The procession goes round the village clockwise and returns to the pavilion. The procession line must not be broken by anyone crossing through it. Children (5-10) years old run along the procession near the Shin Laung who showers

down money and sweets from the silver bowl in his hands. The children jostle with each other to pick them up. This is a lovable custom of Myanmar. Sometimes the children may hurt themselves but they are very happy. When the showers stop, the children shout noisily and the bearers also shout a verse teasing and irritating the boy to make him throw down the money and sweets.



Photo (27) Shin Laung carried on a "Waw"



Photo (28) Procession of Shin Laung

The leaders look after their young girls all along the procession because young men crowd along it, all eyes on the pretty girls. When their particular girl has passed them at this corner, they would rush ahead to another function to get another look at

her. Unlike the town's folk, village young men and women do not have many occasions to meet each other except at festivals and alms giving. The girls too try to look their prettiest at this time. They work separately as their occupations are different. So religious and social work are often coupled together.

The last group of entertainers to win the peoples love is the "Doepat" (Short drum) troupe which stirs up the young and old. Another custom in a Myanmar Ahlu is to hide or kidnap the Shin Laung. When the procession is nearing the pavilion from its processional parade, some people make him get down from the 'Waw" and they carry him away just for fun. So when the procession arrives back at the pavilion without the Shin Laung it makes the old people worried. The young men admit their joke and are paid off with bananas and coconuts and all are happy. There is also another custom of barring the procession with a gold chain stretched across the street in front of the big long drum. Again it is negotiated with payment of bananas and the procession arrive the pavilion. The donors are not offended by them because it is done in the spirit of fun.

When the procession arrives at the head of the street near the pavilion, the donor's relatives distributes presents of cheroots to everybody in the procession. Nowadays, well to do donors distribute hair shampoo, soap powder packets, China bowls etc. To the bearers of the Shin Laung and angel cart are given the traditional combs of banana as in the past. When they arrive at the pavilion, the donor's shower the crowd with cash and the orchestra strikes up a rousing tone, the donor's faces are filled with joy and people dance happily for about (15) minutes. Parading the Shin Laung is not a meaningless thing. It is to increase the meritorious work by sharing with others, who are old and cannot participate in it. Also the mother with young child and others are too busy to come to the Ahlu.

On seeing the Shin Laung procession, the person may be happy and utter well done for the Ahlu. New comers or strangers to Minywa model village cannot join the procession. Only after three year's residence in their village is they considered and accepted as natives of Minywa village. Although they cannot join the village, they are welcome to the Ahlu. So new comer lives peacefully and happily await (3) years to be accepted natives of Minywa.



Photo (29) Donars dance

1.17 Consecration Ceremony

At about 2 o' clock in the afternoon they have a consecration ceremony in the pandal. They have to prepare three offertories in a procedure tray and a comb of bananas and in a bamboo round tray with a stand are rice, fried chick peas, sour soup fried chilies and white moat-si kyaw. The Shin Laung has to sit opposite the master of ceremonies and the ear boring girl is seated to his right and the donors and relatives on his left.



Photo (30) Consecration ceremony

When the consecration ceremony starts the master of ceremonies asks the Shin Laung and angels to pay obeisance to the Three Gems. The master of ceremonies then

recites words in praise of the Three Gems. The orchestra plays the Htoomacharna (a famous Myanmar classic song). Next he instructs them to pay obeisance to the parents and grand parents, while he recites words in praise of them. Next the master of ceremonies recites mantras to increase their glory and wealth. Next according to tanbulabutta tradition, the master of ceremonies feeds the Shin Laungs and angels with rice. Next he puts the blessed threads on them to guard them from harm.

Finally the master of ceremonies took the Eugenie spring from the silver conches shell and sprinkled the Shin Laung and angels and the donor parents. The orchestra begins to play again as soon as the ceremony is over. They call on the donors and relatives by name and beg for gifts. The donors and relatives to in a joyous mood of alms giving reward them generously. After resting for about half an hour the Shin Laung are given a throughout washing from head to toe to rid their bodies of all human smells of scent and powders before they enter the Sasana world (Buddha's World). If they smell of any scents, they break the vow of Malagandha (wearing flowers, putting on scented make up, ornamentation). They wear ordinary new shirt and longyi after the bath. If the parents are rich it may be a matching suit of shirt and longyi.

1.18 Becoming the novice

Later the donor's relatives and the novice to be go to the abbot to let their son become a novice. The donors say thrice "Reverend Sir, you know our child will enter the Sasana today, so may he be permitted to shave his head. The abbot will then make some young monks shave the heads of the novices to be. While the head is begin shaved they recite back and front the tasapyinsaka meditation that is in

Pali - Kesa, Loma, Nakha, Danta, Taso

Taso, Danta, Nakha, Loma, Kesa

English- Hair (head), Hair (body), Nails (fingers and toe), Tooth, Skin (thick, thin)

Skin (thick, thin), Tooth, Nails (fingers and toe), Hair (body), Hair (head).



Photo (31) Shaving head of Shin Laung

In other words one must meditate on the worth lessens of the human body. There is nothing to be attached to this body. When one dies this body is useless and must be discarded like a tree stump. It must be thrown away as it swells and decays. There is no “I” and it is not my body. Thus one must think and meditate says the abbot to the young novices. When the young boy sits and bows down to be shaved parents and relatives hold a piece of cloth on either side or the shaved hair falls into the cloth. Tears of joy fall for the alms giving; tears of sadness are shed of loved ones absent now.

After shaving their heads the young boys sit on their haunches in front the abbot, holding the robes in both their hands, beg to the abbot “Ashinaya, Please take the robes from my hands and ordain me as a monk, so that I all be free from the woes of Samsara and enter Nibbana”. The abbot takes the robes and dons the young boy with the robes. If there is more than one boy, other monks help them. Again they have to sit on their haunches and big thrice, “Ashinaya, Please ordain us into monks, so that we may be free from the woes of samsara”. Again, “Please give us refuge in the Three Gems and the Ten precepts of the monks. In one great compassion for us, please give us the Ten precepts”, thrice. Then the abbots says,” I will utter the words, repeat after me”.

The abbot says “Namo tassa Bhagavata, Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa” (Honor to Him, the Blessed one, the Worthy One, the fully Enlightened One.) It is very important to pronounce the words of taking refuge in the Three Gems correctly with the right intonation. The abbot recites thrice; Buddham Saranam Gacchami

Dhammam Saranam Gacchami

Sangham Saranam Gacchami



Photo (32) Beginning of novitation

The ordination is not accomplished if it is not done properly. Then the ordained novices are given the ten precepts. They are;

- (1) I take the precept to abstain from killing.
- (2) I take the precept to abstain from stealing.
- (3) I take the precept to abstain from sexual indulgence.
- (4) I take the precept to abstain from lying.
- (5) I take the precept to abstain from anything that causes intoxication and heedlessness.
- (6) I take the precept to abstain from taking afternoon.
- (7) I take the precept to abstain from personally dancing, singing, listening and watching shows.
- (8) I take the precept to abstain from personally wearing flowers, perfumes, make-up.
- (9) I take the precept to abstain from high and luxurious steals and beds.
- (10) I take the precept to abstain from handling money.

The abbot ends the precept administering with “May one keep the Three Gems and the Ten precepts carefully with unforgotten mindfulness”? The new novices say, “I/We shall”. The novices having taken the Ten precepts of a monk now beg the abbot to be their mentor. The mentor abbot then blesses them by say “May one be fulfilled with Sila , Samadhi , Panna ”.

The young novices are given names according to the day they are born and they are Pali. While they are at the monastery, they are taught Buddhist scriptures and rules of conduct of a Buddhist monk. They have to stay at least a week at the monastery. If they should stay for life, then it will be of infinite benefit to both the

parents and the son who has entered the Sasana life. The parents and relatives return to the pavilion leaving the novices at the monastery.



Photo (33) Young novice learning to wear the robe

1.19 The end of the ceremony

At about 5 o' clock in the evening, someone goes to the monastery to request the abbot to come to the pavilion and recite the Paritta Suttas and offer the offertories (cash, robes, blankets, towels etc). So the raised platform at the pavilion is for the monks to sit and give the sermon. So it is prepared with carpets for the monks to sit and the items for offering to the monks are displayed there.

When the invited monks arrive at the pavilion they are seat on the Thangarsin and offered first of all cold drinks. The donors and relatives and friends sit in the pavilion facing the monks. They are given the five precepts. Then the monk recites the Paritta Suttas for the welfare and prosperity of the donors and the audience present. Afterwards one monk gives a sermon Dana, Sila, Bawana, as a way to gain Nibbana.

When the sermon is over the donors personally offer their donations into the hands of each invited monk. Then the monk who gave the sermon conducts the libation ceremony finally, the donors and all present share the merits of their thanks giving with all being in the thirty-one abodes. The monk leaves the pavilion as soon as the sharing of merits is over. The orchestra now plays light joyous music and many

people get up to dance with joy over the final successful ending of the alms giving. After half an hour of noisy celebration, they stop to rest. Then the orchestra grandly strikes up the song of victory and blessing for health, wealth and happiness. Everybody understands the alms giving as come to the end.

Then a group of (40-55) year old men are ready to dismantle the pavilion, while some return the huge cooking utensils and crockery to the store house. The young girls carry the ornamental betel boxes, pennants and flower vases to the monastery. All these volunteers who helped from the beginning to the end are given dinner in the evening. This lovable custom of Anyar, the spirit of community can still be seen today. The Minywa villagers give the alms giving freely and lavishly without any feeling of miserliness. They are full of generosity. In rural village novitiation alms giving there is no question of hiring people or property. Every villager from the children to the aged feel they have to volunteer to do something. This admirable custom is among the traits of Myanmar's subtle, gentle meaningful culture.

Minywa village live in unity like brothers, which makes it culture have a deep meaning. In religious customs or practice also the thought for self and for others is coupled together. It benefits the donor as well as the recipient and the merits shared with every being. They strongly believe that good deeds will surely lead them to enter Nibbana.

An extra ordinary sight in the wedding ceremonies and novitiation ceremonies and other ceremony is the presence of many children. It is the custom of inviting the whole family. It makes the children accustomed to witnessing these religious and social practices from young, so that they will come to understand and appreciate their meaningfulness when they become adults. That is why one can see many children in Myanmar traditional festivals.

In doing any alms giving one must have pure generosity a clear and clean mind, free from greed, anger and pride and steer clear of all evil. A novitiation is a noble, wonderful happy traditional family cultural event that must be preserved.

(2) Ordination ceremony

The ordination ceremonies are done mostly in the months of July, August and September. It is as important and revered as novitiation ceremony. When sons are born to a Buddhist family, parents feel that it is their bounder duty to enter them into the

Sasana. So when they come of age at (19-20) years, they try to make them enter the "Order", just for a few days. These short term periodical monks are known as 'Dullabha' monks. Even if they cannot be permanent monks for life they wishing to gain at least as such as they can in the short time, they could keep the strict code of conduct of a monk. For this reason the aged monks have permitted this 'Dullabha' ordination and a man can be a short-term monk many times in his life time.

In Minywa model village same families have no sons and there are also young men whose parents can not afford the money or time. Again there are also or plans that need sponsors for them to enter the order. The men who cannot enter the order are usually the deformed and the sick.

The people who wish to become donors of the young monk have to search in the monasteries for young novices who have come of age to join the order. When they find one, they must approach the abbot for permission to be the donors for the young novice. Some parents wish to be the donors for their son, but if circumstances do not permit, they let other's do so for the benefit of their son. The abbot too welcomes the early offers as the sooner the novice is ordained the sooner he will mature. The parents can later repeat the ordination with the "Theikhahtat" (reordain) ceremony many times. Having found a suitable novice for ordination, they would be donors have to request for permission to ordain the novice and also fix a date for it. They have to buy the things needed for the new monk such as the eight requisites bowl, robe and so on.

Most ordinations into the order are not so grandly celebrated as the Auspicious Novitation Ceremony. They may just display the things for the new monk on a Padethapin at the monastery. Well to do donors may give rice and curry or vermicelli soup to whole village or just, cheroots, betel quid and plain tea. The young novice may discard his robes for a day or two and be an ordinary human being. This change is called "Shinlainpyan" (Leave the order of a novice). It is to purify himself of all evil he may have done as a novice. So now he must go round the visit and pay obeisance to the aged people, his parents and teachers with what ever he can afford as a gift. This is the only time he can do if he intends to be a monk for life.

On the day of the ordination, at about 8 o' clock in the morning, friends and relatives come with gifts for the new monk. The village monks also donate robes, umbrellas, slippers etc. The new monk has already resumed his novice robes at 6 o' clock in the morning. The village monks and invited monks are offered the midday meal. In the ordination hall, the young men have laid down mats in a square at the

head of the hall for the monks who will help in the ordination to sit. A mat is also set down for the mentor monk to sit, behind the helping monks. There must be at least five monks in the ordination ritual. The new monk must sit face to face with the monks.

At about 8 o' clock in the morning the monks file into the ordination hall, followed last by the novice and his donors carrying the big upper robe and his paraphernalia. Then a young man carrying a three-golden legged stand with the Kammavaca and note book and pen and a table clock. It is to record the exact time and date and name of the monk exact ordained. The donors then hands over all the articles to be used at the ceremony and donates verbally. The donors and the guest wait and watch the ceremony from outside the hall. There are two young men who will carry the gold umbrella when the new monk comes out and the big long drum group to signal the end of the ceremony and joyous welcome to the new monk. The guest will offer small gifts of cash, soap, towels, medicine, etc to the all the monks filing out of the ordination hall. The ritual in the hall begins with a monk reading out from the Kammavaca in Pali and explanation in Myanmar. The monk to be ordained sits on his haunches and his palms of hands face to face. The monk first asked him to request for a mentor (Upajjhaya) The novice then turns to the most senior monk and utters
"Upajjhayo me bhante hoti

Thrice meaning; "Reverend Monk, please be my mentor".

The monk says, "Pasadikena Sampadehi"

Meaning; "Try to become a good monk with noble morality".

The novice promises and answers.

"Amabhante" "I promise your worship".

One monk entrust the novice with the bowl robes etc as his own property.

Next the novice with his palms still together and his robe etc on his body , stands up and leaves the group of monks around him, stepping out back words until he is about four feet from then away from the other monks. Then a monk briefed him on how to answer the questions asked of him and to tell the truth. Also he is to take the name "Naga" and his mentor's name as "Tissa" to avoid complications because of many repetitions of the monks and asks permission for the novice to return to them. Then the novice beg to be ordained "I beg to be ordained a monk. In your great compassion for me, please raise me from this evil lowly world, to the noble pure world of the monks". Then the responsible monk says; "Ashin Naga, listen carefully! Ashin

Naga, listen carefully! At this time you must tell the truth of what is on your body, clearly and what is not on your body”.

After the questioning is finished and the novice is found to be fit and free from harm to be ordained they begin the ordination. There must be at least five monks present in the ordination ritual. The Natticatuttha kammavaca may be recited by the mentor monk or his assisting monk. It is usually recited by the remaining monks. The Natticatuttha kammavaca must be recited with the correct intonation. As soon as the recitation ceases, the novice becomes a full fledged monk. The date, time and place of the ordination hall, is recorded exactly in the note book. The name of the new monk, his mentor and assisting monk's names are also recorded. The donor's names also recorded. From now on the new monk's life as a monk will be counted when they want to know seniority in rank among the monks.

When the ritual is over a senior monk helps the new monk to put on the big robe neatly. The long drum beat signals the procession of the monks leaving the ordination hall. The awaiting crowd outside also take their places to offer gifts to the monks lead by the mentor monk. The new monk appears last in the line and two young men rush to hold the golden umbrella over him. It is a joyful heart warming sight and the donors may shed tears of remembrance for their deceased loved ones.

In the life time of a monk, this is his greatest moment of purely and the parents and relatives want to give their fullest. All the monks and people go to the monastery. The new monk is seated on the Thangarsin with the other monks for the first time in his life. The donors again offer gifts to all the monks. Then the abbot of the monastery delivers a sermon and the libation ceremony and sharing of merits. Thus the ordination ceremony comes to a successful end. The donors and relatives consider the new monk as part of their family if he should remain in the order for life. They regard him like their own son and see to his needs till death. He is even given a share of their legacy when the donors die. The surviving children continue to support him and bury him.

(3) Meditation Center

In Minywa model village a meditation centre was conducted by the abbot of Oatpho monastery since 2005. It is from first waxing moon of Tabaung to the seven waxing day. Any healthy person of the village can join the meditation. The villagers donate the meals, so there is no need to worry about the meals and can meditate in peace. The family members to share the work of the participant so that she may

meditate light heartedly. The meditation starts at 8 o' clock in the morning. The monk gives the precepts and every person meditates for one hour. Then there is a break to eat the middy meal donated by the villagers. After one hour's rest, a monk gives a sermon after which a rest period of half an hour. Next follows an hour of meditation. At 3 o' clock in the afternoon a monk gives a sermon, followed by half an hours rest and one hour of meditation. At 6 o' clock in the evening the monks and the meditators recite the metta-sutta pray for the well being of others all beings in the ten directions of the Universe. So ends a day of the meditation centre.

(4) Htamane Festival

February on the month of Tabodwe is the season for glutinous rice pudding, Htamane festival. It is celebrated at new harvest time from first waxing moon of Tabodwe to full moon day; the whole of Myanmar is stirring this pudding with ladles like oars in huge cauldrons. It is done by a family helped by village volunteers, because it needs strength to stir the oar like ladles. It needs the concerted off efforts of young men. So they come to help, especially if the donor's house is where his lady love is. The girls help to soak the glutinous rice in water roast the sesame and ground nuts pound ginger and scrap or shred the coconut and garlic. The rice is stirred into a gooey mess in oil and through by mixed with the other ingredients, so that it is a tasty delicacy. It is a back breaking job. With sweat flowing from head to toe and stirrers have to change hands for a break. It is also a seasonal food for the cold season and so it is also medicinal, all the ingredients helping health, giving warmth in the cold season. The next morning it is served for dawn break meal at the five monasteries at 4 o' clock. Next it is distributed to the neighbors and passers by are invited to partake of it. Thus a simple gesture of Dana or alms giving is accomplished.

Conclusion

The nationals living in Myanmar celebrate the seasonal festivals of each month grandly with alms giving and funfairs. It is celebrated all over Myanmar but the traditional customs and habits vary according to the region and the people. In Minywa model village, the twelve seasonal festivals of the month are celebrated according to Myanmar traditions.

Tangu is the New Year month and they have the traditional Thingyan of pouring water on each other to clean away all the evil of the past year with the cool, clean water. During the Thingyan period the old people and young girls go to the monastery and keep the Sabbath. There is goodwill and loving kindness all around, an auspicious way to start the New Year with. The young men and women meet at the aged people's homes to pay homage to the aged as well as wash and cut their nails and present them with gifts of cash and clothes etc. There are also alms giving mantels where food and drinks are given to all comers rich or poor. On New Year day evening, there is recitation of the Parittas and alms giving, because the Myanmar Buddhist believes that such acts would guard them from harm and be lucky throughout the year.

In Kason, is the festival of pouring water on the sacred Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha gained Enlightenment. So they value by keeping the Bodhi tree alive they was showing the gratitude they owe to the Buddha. The incessantly recitation benefits are one could overcome the misfortunes one is facing, one could be freed form catastrophes about to happen, one could accomplish works that are blameless and beneficial, one can avoid committing blameless but unbeneficial work, one can accomplish all good works one do, in one last existence, one will enter Nibbana.

Waso, the farmers have to work very hard in the fields, they have to find the time and means to serve the needs of the monks, so that they can carry on their work of learning and teaching the scriptures. The villagers individually as well as collectively donate very generously money, foodstuffs and labor. The young children are taken along to make them hear the teaching of the Buddha and become good in behavior and character. It is good enough if they can keep the "Sila" just for a sitting, if not the whole day and to make the children become familiar with Buddhist religious practices from young.

The villagers honor and revere the monks not only for religious purposes but also depend on them for advice in their social, economic, health matters. Waso is the time when villagers do meritorious deeds and practice contemplation and self-denial.

Waso Lent period, "Soon" offering ends on the full moon day of Thidingyut. In the evening of Thidingyut full moon day the villagers go to the twelve pagodas they had gone to during the Waso Lent for offering of lights. Minywa model village, the younger know that when they come of age, they must earn their own living. They are hard-working and take pride in the fact that they can give in charity and wear clothes with their own hard earned honest labor. One can observe the spirit of harmony among them. One can see the same religious fervor in the villagers regardless of begin poor or rich. Of full moon night of Thidingyut it is the festival of lights and the whole village and the pagodas are lighted. They go to the lighted pagodas in groups to enjoy themselves. They also light candles at the loom, the barn, cow shed, cow tying post, cow through, cattle farm. Their livelihood depends on them, and it is their way of thanking them.

The Kahtein robe offering has more benefits to the donor as well as the receiver. Offering of robes and other things, in this season are made not to any individual monk, but to the order as a whole so that the needy ones shall get the robe. A Kahtein ceremony celebrated by the community is a joyous affair where everybody can participate regardless of class, rich or poor, young or old. It is given with a pure heart, as a religious duty, a meritorious act, a social function and a cultural heritage. The villagers of Minywa model village try their best to provide the five monasteries with the Padethapin every year. No monastery has ever been without a Padethapin.

These activities teach the children to be mindful of their religion, and learn to organize and share responsibility. They will also enjoy the spirit of unity. Everybody is welcome to donate anything. They are Khatein things and anyone is welcome to hang whatever he wishes to contribute, no matter however small. The villagers value more the offering of Kahtein robe than the offering of the ordinary robe at any other time. The Kahtein robe has special blessing that protects the monk who possesses it.

The donors also enjoy five blessings. They are the donors can travel anywhere without harm and hindrance, no enemy can destroy the donor's property, will have abundant good food without fear of poison etc, property may belong yet suffer no loss, in earning a livelihood, he will get in heaps and bounds, more than other people. These are the reasons why Minywa villagers feel more eager to donate

the Kahtein robe. The villagers value about their ability to provide Kahtein robes to all the five monasteries in Minywa model village. The villagers take pride in discharging their religious duties of never forgetting to take refuge in the Three Gems as a native trait, and the spirit of unity and harmony in all their activities, all in a way of preserving the Myanmar traditions. The community Kahtein also helps the unity and harmony of the people where everybody is welcome regardless of class distinction.

Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival, the villagers also felt more money should be spent for the Pagoda than mere entertainment for the young. They feel that people would contribute more generously for a charitable cause. Myathabeikgaung hopes to keep up his record and is already working hard to achieve his aim. People who become "Myathabeikgaung" are usually very generous. Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival is not just a religious celebration of refuge in the Triple Gems but also a family reunion of scattered homes. So it is a charitable occasion as well as a social engagement. The monks also have the occasion to meet each other. Villagers have to carry the Padethapin with one hand and carry the lighted candle with the other to go round the pagoda clock-wise three times. It is a good gesture so that one may be forgiven of our evil mental, verbal and physical deeds. By celebrating Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival, the villagers can maintain traditional the Mya Thein Tan pagoda. Besides, in this ceremony the villagers' families can get reunion and they can make merit for themselves. Moreover, the monks also have the occasions to meet. Therefore Mya Thein Tan pagoda festival brings advantages for Minywa villagers religiously as well as socially and culturally.

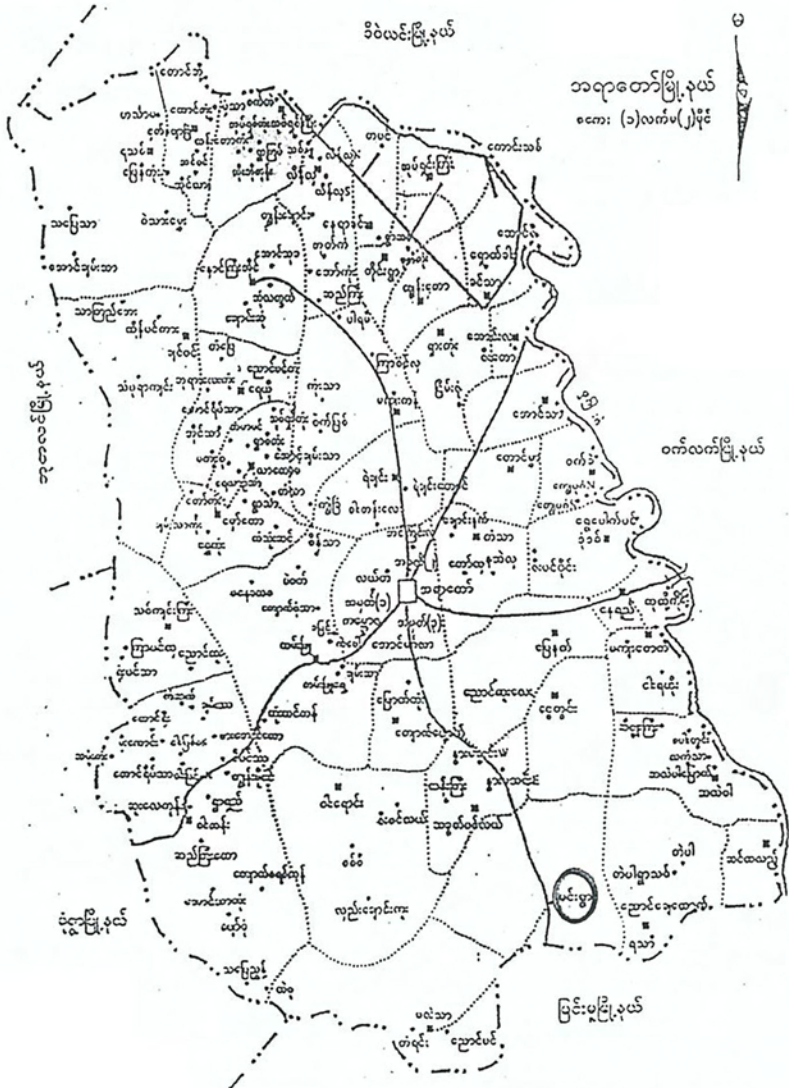
In Minywa Buddhist families wish to have at least a son because they wish to be inheritors of Buddha Sasana, by initiating him into monk hood. Villagers are happy to be doing alms giving enthusiastically. They believe that if they can do charity one after another their wealth will also grow steadily. One can see how much they value the success of their alms giving when they are willing to give up all luxuries so that they can give lavishly. The donors must be able to put their children as novices, they must have the means to feed the monks and relatives and friends and all who contribute their labor for the success of the alms giving. Usually the whole village is involved. One can see everybody is busy giving voluntary labor in unisons. Again one can see their loveable trait of contributing personal labor for the fulfillment of a charitable cause. One can see here again the loveable gesture of even the old contributing his share to the village alms giving. Also one can see the full force of volunteers, each group

responsible for one duty, working in harmony with others. Here again one can see the generosity men to let the women enjoy their beauty parade and not tarnish it with dirty dish washing. Especially close relatives feel they must heap to make the Ahlu a success and also show unity and kinship duties and customs. Since the year 2000, they made it a rule for each house to contribute one person to the procession. It is to make the Ahlu a crowded affair and to develop a spirit of unity and reciprocal help among the villagers. So religious and social work are often coupled together. Minywa villagers live in unity like brothers, which make it culture have a deep meaning. In religious customs or practice also one can see the thought for self and for others is coupled together. It benefits the donor as well as the recipient and the merits shared with every being. It is as important and revered as novitiation ceremony. The donors and relatives consider the new monk as part of their family if he should remain in the order for life. They regard him like their own son and see to his needs till death.

In Minywa model village a meditation centre was conducted by the abbot of Oatpho monastery since 2005. The family members to share the work of the participant so that she may meditate light heartedly. Htamane festival is either celebrated communally or done in the private circle of family and friends. But with the villagers whose way of includes extended families it is always a fairly large gathering. The nature of the feast is such that it needs lots of helping hands.

References

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4. သာသနာရေး(၁၉၆၆)ဆဋ္ဌသံဂါယနာတင်ပိဋကတ်တော်မဟာဝဂ်ပါဠိတော်မြန်မာပြန်၊
မြန်မာနိုင်ငံဗုဒ္ဓသာသနာအဖွဲ့.ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
5. စန်းငွေ.ဦး-ဒဂုံ(၁၉၇၂)တဆယ့်နှစ်လမိုး၊စာပေဗိမာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
6. နတ်ရှင်.ဒဂုံ(၁၉၆၆)စာပေဝတ်ဆံဆယ်နှစ်ရာသီစာပန်းချီ၊စာပေဗိမာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
7. အေးနိုင်.ဦး(ဘီအေ)(၁၉၈၀)ဆယ့်နှစ်ရာသီမြန်မာ့ရိုးရာရာသီပွဲတော်များ၊
သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန
8. သာသနာရေး(၁၉၉၇)ပါဠိတော်မြန်မာပြန်ကျမ်းများ၏ကျမ်းဦးမှတ်ဖွယ်ရာ၊သာသနာရေး
ဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
9. မာန်တသိရီဘိဝံသ.ဥး(၂၀၀၂)ဝိသုဒ္ဓါရုံ-ရှင်ကျင့်ဝတ်အဖွင့်၊ သာသနာရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊
သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
10. အမာ.ဒေါ်.လူထု(၂၀၀၂)၁၂ပွဲဈေးသည်နှင့်ကျွန်မတို့အညာ၊ ကြီးပွားရေးစာအုပ်တိုက်၊
မန္တလေး
11. ဂျူနီယာဝင်း(မြန်မာပြန်)(၂၀၀၄)ဆယ့်နှစ်လရာသီပန်းများနှင့်ပွဲတော်များ (ခင်မျိုးချစ်)
ဒေါင်းစာပေ၊ ရန်ကုန်
12. နီငြိမ်း(အညာတက္ကသိုလ်)(၂၀၀၆)အညာကျေးလက်စာပေဥယျာဉ်စာသဘင်၊စာပေဗိမာန်
ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်



ရည်ညွှန်းချက်	
သစ်မြို့နယ်ခြား	---
နယ်နိမိတ်	---
ဥက္ကဋ္ဌအုပ်ချုပ်ရေး	---
နယ်နိမိတ်	---
ရေကြီး	□
ဥက္ကဋ္ဌအုပ်ချုပ်ရေး	■
ဌာနကားလမ်း	—
မြစ်/ချောင်း	~
ရေကြီးတည်ရှိမှု	▭

Ayardaw Township Map

List of Informants

No	Name	Age	Occupation	Village
1	U Kaw Din Nya	70	Monk	Thakhutpinle
2	U Thaw Par Ka	63	Monk	Minywa
3	U Ba Maung	75	Farmer	Minywa
4	Daw Ye	73	Dependent	Minywa
5	U Aung Chit	70	Farmer	Minywa
6	U Ba Aung	70	Farmer	Minywa
7	Daw Ka Lar Mi	70	Dependent	Minywa
8	U Pan	70	Farmer	Minywa
9	U Wa	70	Farmer	Minywa
10	U Tin Maung	70	Farmer	Minywa
11	Daw Kyat Tin	69	Shopkeeper	Minywa
12	U Tin Aung	67	Farmer	Minywa
13	Daw War Mee	65	Farmer	Minywa
14	Daw Tin Mi	65	Farmer	Minywa
15	U Pho Pyaw	63	Trader	Minywa
16	Daw Tin Sint	62	Shopkeeper	Minywa
17	U Chit Thein	61	Farmer	Minywa
18	U Kan Shwe	61	Farmer	Minywa
19	Daw Kyaw	60	Framer	Minywa
20	Daw Nyo Pyar	60	Framer	Minywa
21	U Su Yin	60	Framer	Minywa
22	U Kan Sa	60	Framer	Minywa
23	U San Ngwe	60	Framer	Minywa
24	U Win Kyi	60	Framer	Minywa
25	U Thaung Tin	58	Framer	Minywa
26	U Pyawt Ching	58	Framer	Minywa
27	U Thaung Hlaing	58	Teacher	Minywa
28	U Win Si	58	Framer	Minywa
29	U Su Tin	58	Framer	Minywa
30	Daw Gwat Si	56	Framer	Minywa
31	Daw Mu Mu	55	Farmer	Minywa
32	U Kyaw	55	Farmer	Minywa
33	U Win Ye	53	Trader	Minywa

No	Name	Age	Occupation	Village
34	Daw Khin Hla	52	Trader	Minywa
35	U Nyut Phay	52	Framer	Minywa
36	Daw Gwat Ei	52	Shopkeeper	Minywa
37	U Myut Tar	52	Trader	Minywa
38	U Nat Kyi	52	Framer	Minywa
39	U Pyawt Yin	52	Trader	Minywa
40	U Thaug Htay	52	Framer	Minywa
41	Daw Mya Mya Win	52	Shopkeeper	Minywa
42	U Kan Mya	51	Trader	Minywa
43	Daw Than	50	Framer	Minywa
44	U Ba Tun	43	Trader	Minywa
45	Daw Mar Si	42	Shopkeeper	Minywa
46	Daw Ma Gyi	41	Shopkeeper	Minywa
47	U Ko Gyi	40	Framer	Minywa
48	U Ko Lay	40	Dependent	Minywa
49	Daw The The	35	Shopkeeper	Minywa
50	Mg Pho Pain	25	Framer	Minywa
51	Ma Htet Htet	25	Teacher	Minywa
52	Ma Htwe Htwe Hlaing	23	Teacher	Minywa
53	Ma Tin Tin Aye	23	Framer	Minywa
54	Ma Tin Tin Htay	22	Student	Minywa
55	Ma Tin Tin Hmwe	20	Framer	Minywa