

Some Popular Symbols in Myanmar Culture

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Abstract

Myanmar ethnic groups such as the Pyu, the Mon and the Myanmar have made the greatest contribution to the development of the arts and culture of ancient Myanmar. Myanmar was one of the first areas in Southeast Asia to receive Buddhism, and by the 11th century it had become the center of the *Theravāda* Buddhism. Myanmar Buddhist Culture develops through the basis of *Theravāda* Buddhism. This development of Myanmar Buddhist Culture contributes to establish the identity of Myanmar. In this development of Myanmar Buddhist Culture, there are many symbols in accordance with *Theravāda* Buddhism.

Keywords: 1. *Symbols* 2. *Myanmar Buddhist Culture*

Introduction

Myanmar is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in Southeast Asia having rounded about 135 indigenous languages spoken within its borders, although Myanmar is the common and official language. Myanmar ethnic groups such as the Pyu, the Mon and the Myanmar have made the greatest contribution to the development of the arts and culture of ancient Myanmar.

Myanmar was one of the first areas in Southeast Asia to receive Buddhism, and by the 11th century it became the center of the Theravada Buddhism. The religion was patronized by the country's leadership, and it became the ideological foundation of the Myanmar state that blossomed at Bagan on the dry central plains. Because of their greatest contribution to the development of the arts and culture, Myanmar identity has been well established since the time of ancient Myanmar. For this reason, Myanmar has owed to Theravada Buddhist culture.

All of Myanmar has ever seemed that when they stayed at the image of the Buddha, there is a vase with some of fresh flowers placed in front of the image of the Buddha which was very beautiful. Moreover, it gives us very important imaginations in a personal, spiritual way. That dynamic is worth keeping in mind at the quietly majestic exhibition. Offerings of flowers, hands-on, eyes-on, minds-on devotion are what much of the art is about. Even if someone interesting is strictly religious or aesthetics, the show is a find, because chances are there have been seen as much of this kind of art before.

Although the arts and culture of Myanmar is rich, there are a few readily available comprehensive surveys. Those studies that have been published are often not easily obtained. Therefore, this paper intends to offer a research about symbols in Myanmar Buddhist culture. Religious and cultural practices inspired and continue to inspire most of the arts of Myanmar Buddhist culture therefore; chapters describing symbols in Myanmar. This paper aims to contribute symbols in relation to Myanmar Buddhist Culture intelligibly to the novice as well as to the more advanced study.

Symbols in Myanmar Culture

In ancient Myanmar, three ethnic groups, the Pyu, the Mon, and the Myanmar have made the greatest contribution to the development of the arts and culture of Myanmar and they all settled in the central plains along the middle and lower reaches of the Irrawaddy or Thanlwin. This paper intends to offer a study of symbols in Myanmar culture that has been exemplified together with illustrations of major symbol in Myanmar culture.

There are many symbols in Myanmar culture which can be regarded as the representative of religion, and custom and belief. Religious and cultural practices inspired and

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continue to inspire most of the symbols of Myanmar Buddhist culture. These symbols can be generally divided into (a) Symbols in Myanmar Buddhist Culture and (b) Symbols in Myanmar Custom and Belief.

Symbols in Myanmar Buddhist Culture

Many Buddhist symbols need to be considered within the culture of the people who follow it. Many of the early Buddhist symbols are related to the people of ancient India. Therefore symbol in Myanmar Buddhist culture is related to, in somehow and some way, that of ancient India. The first archaeological evidence, mainly of ornamental stone carvings, comes from the time of the emperor Asoka (273- 232 BCE) who converted to Buddhism and made it a popular religion in India and beyond. In the second century BCE, people started to excavate Buddhist monasteries in rock, creating a large amount of artwork to withstand the ages. Probably the earliest typical Buddhist monument is the stupa, which was often specially decorated. The first actual Buddha images appeared around the first century BCE, so until then the artwork was largely symbolic in nature.

Myanmar scholar, Dr. Than Tun presents the arising of the Buddhist Iconography as follow:

“The Buddha is incomparable and in this sense human representation of his likeness is not permissible. This ideological prohibition held good for more than five hundred years after the death of the Buddha. On the other hand the Buddha discourages people to worship him. What he wants is that people should follow his way to end the chain of rebirths called samsara. Worshipping him would not help. People, however, want some kind of worship as they are so accustomed to it. They offer gifts to gods and pray for some rewards in return. This being the case they use symbols to worship and adore.”¹

Dr. Ranjana Rani Singhal and Pradeep Kumar explore that from the important and outstanding symbols of Buddhist culture. There are three earliest and most common symbols of Buddhist culture. They are the stupa, dhamma wheel and the lotus flower. Dr. Ranjana Rani Singhal and Pradeep Kumar said that

“Among the earliest and most common symbols of Buddhist culture are the stupa, Dharma wheel, and the lotus flower.”²

It is an appropriate way to present symbols in Myanmar Buddhist culture. Therefore, this paper will present first these three symbols, the Stupa, Dhamma Wheel and the Lotus Flower. And then there are many other auspicious symbols of Myanmar Buddhist Culture apart from the above the three most common symbols. Among them, the symbol of Bodhi Tree and the Throne, the Foot Prints, the Bowl and the Bell will be presented in this paper.

1. Dhamma Wheel

Dr. Than Tun explains the Dhamma Wheel as “The first sermon of the Buddha is best shown by a wheel of twenty four supports and two deer. This is also a popular symbol to represent the Buddha.”

According to R. K. Pruthi, S. Ram and Archana Chaturvedi, the *Dhammacakka* (Wheel of Dharma in Buddhism) refers to symbol of the Four Noble Truths which taught by the Buddha. To symbolize the Buddha in the very early art, it is used mainly the Eight Spoke Wheel and a Lion. It refers to the story that shortly after the Buddha achieved enlightenment; Brahma came down from heaven and requested the Buddha to teach *Dhammacakka*.

The *Dhammacakka* has eight spokes, symbolizing the Eight-fold Noble Path. The three swirling segments in center represent the Buddha, Dhamma (the teachings) and *Sangha* (the

¹ Than Tun, Dr, Buddhist Art and Architecture, Yangon Monywa Sarpay, 2002, P-8

² Ranjana Rani Singhal, Dr & Pradeep Kuma, Philosophical Roots in Buddhism, Delhi, Balaji Offset, 2012, p-22

spiritual community). The wheel can also be divided into three parts, each representing an aspect of Buddhist practice; the hub (discipline), the spokes (wisdom), and the rim (concentration).

According to these documents, Dhamma Wheel is one of the most common symbols of Buddhist culture. In Myanmar Buddhist Culture, Dhamma Wheel is composed of a wheel of twenty four supports and two deer and it is the symbol which represents The Buddha and Dhamma. Therefore, the symbol of Dhamma Wheel can be found at “Four faces pediment of the pagoda and Entrance of Buddhist building. Moreover, the symbol of Dhamma Wheel can also be seen as the book mark of the distribution of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and culture.

2. Stupa

U San Tha Aung introduces Stupa in his book, “The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan”. According to U San Tha Aung, to Buddhist the world over, the stupa is an emblem of Buddha’s parinirvana, for the stupa is a monument erected over relics of the Buddha. And because Buddhists revere the relics of the Blessed One, it naturally follows that the stupa should play a leading role in Buddhist architecture.

The oldest stupas extant are full hemispherical domes constructed of brick or stone, usually raised on a terrace. The stupa of Sanchi, Andher and Mankiala near Rawlpindi, in India and Pakistan, all belong to such a type. At a later period, a solid cylinder or drum was added beneath the hemisphere, thereby gradually raising it above the ground-level. Later still a square piece of acted as the support for the hti or finial. Still later on an architect added a niche to one side of the drum. Later architects developed this idea by adding four niches to the drum, each niche facing one of the cardinal points. Today these niches each contain an image of the Buddha.

Today almost every hillock in Arakan is crowned with a pagoda, but old stupas dating before 1000 A.D, are now extremely rare. They have either collapsed due to weathering, annual rainfall the Arakan State which is over 200 inches, or have been destroyed by vandalism or been encased in pagodas built by later kings. There is no doubt, however, that they were once plentiful. The inscription of Viracandra, a king of Candra dynasty states that a hundred stupas were constructed and dedicated by King Viracandra because of his love for the True Law.

Dr. ThanTun also discusses about Stupa in his book, “Ancient Myanmar Designs”. He introduces Bawbawgyi as ancient form of pagoda, the upper part of the original is ruined. Srikshetra, Pyu Period, Pyay.

Dr. ThanTun claims that:

“My aim here is to discuss the decorations found in the architectural achievements of the ancient Myanmars: the stucco and stone sculptures, the elaborate wood carvings and the murals. I have singled out certain pagodas and temples to emphasize the ‘**Myanmarness**’ of the design as distinct from those of the temples of other Buddhist countries. The decorations on the portals, stairways and brick sein daun, illustrate the imaginations of the artists.”³

Just as the stone sculptures of Bagan are of a very high standard, so are the wood carvings of mid-Konbaung or Amarapura and Yadanabon models of excellence. Only a few examples of the wood sculptures of the Bagan era can be found today. We can still admire the woodwork on the doorway at Shwesigon, the carvings on the beams at Nagayon cave temple, and some others. The stucco sculptures of the latter eras cannot be compared with those of the Bagan period.

³ Than Tun, Dr& U Aye Myint, Ancient Myanmar Design, Yangon Monywa Sarpay, 2003, p-225

3. Lotus Flower

The Lotus flower is a very important symbol in Buddhism. It refers to the complete purification of body, speech and mind, and the blossoming of wholesome deeds in liberation. The lotus refers to many aspects of the path, as it grows up from the mud (samsara), through clean water (purification), and arises as a beautiful flower (enlightenment). The white blossom represents purity; the stem stands for the practice of Buddhist teachings which raise the mind above the (mud of) worldly existence, and gives rise to purity of mind. An open blossom signifies full enlightenment; a closed blossom signifies the potential for enlightenment.

There are many other auspicious symbols of Myanmar Buddhist Culture apart from the above the three most common symbols. Among them, the symbol of Bodhi Tree and the Throne, the Foot Prints of the Buddha, the Bowl and the Bell will be presented in this paper.

4. The Bodhi Tree and the Throne

Tree worship was already part of the existing culture in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the development of the Bodhi tree and leaf as a devotional symbol which widespread in the culture of Myanmar. The Bodhi tree refers to the tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment. Before the Buddha achieves the enlightenment, the Buddha meditated beneath a fig tree at Bodh Gaya, India. After 49 days The Buddha stood from his meditative position. The Buddha thanks the tree for its shade and he found enlightenment. It was then that became the Buddha or the enlightenment one. After that the tree became the Bodhi tree or the tree of enlightenment. In Bodh Gaya, the Bodhi tree still stands. All around in Myanmar, Buddhist pagodas, temples and monastery have planted their own fig tree, some form clippings related to the original. In Shwedagon, "The 150 year old Bodhi Tree can be found at the southeast corner of the pagoda terrace.

5. The Buddha Foot Prints

The footprints of the Buddha (Buddhapada) are one of the early representations of the Buddha in the aniconic (no statues) stage of Buddhist art. The Buddhapada are highly revered in all Buddhist countries.

The Foot Prints of the Buddha symbolize the Buddha's presence, as they are believed to be the imprints where the Buddha actually touched the ground. At the same time, the Buddhapada signifies the Buddha's absence now that the Buddha has entered Nirvana, and thus are a reminder of the Buddha ideal of nonattachment. According to this, Myanmar Buddhists believe that there are the foot prints in Myanmar where the Buddha stepped. Traditionally, the Foot Prints of the Buddha symbolize the physical presence of the Enlightened One. This image was thoroughly demonstrated in the Buddha Foot Print, Bagan era (Sandstone) of Bagan Museum. In these Foot Prints, 108 facets of the enlightened One are thoroughly demonstrated. The two padas (Foot Prints) are also used to denote the Buddha.

The origin of the Buddha footprint was as an iconic symbol which represented the presence of the Buddha in the early narrative stone reliefs. The earliest evidence for honouring the Buddha with the making of footprints was found in Myanmar at the Bagan period. In Myanmar, the earliest so far discovered and finest Buddha footprint is found in Bagan, Lokananda Buddha footprint, scholarly dated about mid-11th or 12th century A.D. This is the left footprint of the Buddha which made by the brown-sandstone slab and the set of auspicious illustrations were based on the *Jinalankara* Pāli text.

The next type is the two padas, the example of this type can be seen at Shwe-zi-gon pagoda and Ananda temple. Both contain 108 auspicious symbols which come from the *Jinalankara* Pāli text like Lokananda Buddha footprint. It is deserved to be proud of Myanmar for the origin of the symbol of the Buddha Foot Prints. Dr. Than Tun explores it by referring to Dr. Waldemar C. Sailer as follow:

“After studying the Buddha Foot Prints in Srilanka, Thailand and Myanmar, Dr. Waldemar C. Sailer noted that the footprints were first found in Myanmar.”⁴

6. The Bowl

The Bowl refers to the story that shortly before the Buddha reached enlightenment, a young woman named Sujata offered him a bowl of milk-rice. At that moment, he was practicing austerity by eating extremely little. But he realized at that moment that he would need to have more strength for the final steps to enlightenment, further fasting would only reduce his energy. After he reached enlightenment, he is said to have thrown away what little was left in the bowl to signify his renunciation of all material possessions. Finding the middle way between extreme austerity and complete attachment to life is an important principle of Buddhism.

The bowl also points to the monk's way of life; going from the monastery into the village each morning and living off what is put into it by lay people. In Myanmar, the Bowl can be found at Bagan Manuhar Pagoda.

7. The Bell

In any pagodas in Myanmar, it can hear the peaceful sound of the pagoda bells come through the breeze. Bells are of two kinds. There are some small bells hanging with the shape of banyan leaf inside, that can be seen hanging under the Hti. Another kind is bigger one hung on the pagoda platform which the people can strike it. Buddhists people strike it mostly three times to share their merits.

Shwedagon once had the great bell of Dhammazedhi. It is the largest bell to have existed in the recorded history. However, it was the stolen by a Portuguese warlord. In Myanmar, Mingon Gaung long at Sagaing region is prominent. There are many big bells all around in Myanmar since the old days. One of these is Mingun bell which is nearly 90 tons. It is known as the largest bell in Myanmar and still rings from its pavilion near the temple base. During the Konbaung period, King Bodawpaya intended to build the most remarkable structure as the temple at Mingun, which is located across the river and it was approximately ten miles away from north of Amarapura, When King Bodawpaya began construction in 1790, he intended it to be the tallest Buddhist monument in the world and also the largest bell in the world as an intended fixture of the temple. Although it is by size the third largest bell in the world, Myanmar people can be proud of having Mingun bell as the largest ringing bell in this world.

Symbols in Myanmar Custom and Belief

As it is said above, there are many symbols in Myanmar culture which can be regarded as the representative of religion, custom and belief. However, there are many symbols apart from symbols of Myanmar Buddhist culture. These symbols are arising out of Buddhism as well as other customs and beliefs. The symbols of customs and beliefs arise in accordance with animism of Myanmar. The animist aesthetic places importance on the new and beautiful because the end goal is to please and attract the spirits. Animist art objects are created in almost any form. The images may be anthropomorphic, or just an uncut slab of rock. The object may be adorned or unadorned. In Myanmar, the major Animist spirits were transformed into the Pantheon of the 37 Nats during the Pagan Period. By introducing the animist aesthetics, Myanmar customs and beliefs created many auspicious symbols inspire and continue to inspire. This paper will present a few of them as examples, such as the symbol of

⁴ Than Tun, Dr & U Aye Myint, *Ancient Myanmar Design*, Yangon Monywa Sarpay, 2003, p-329

Peacock, Lion, Manussiha, the Kein-nari and Kein-nara, and Lokanat. Among them, the symbol of Peacock and Lion are the mark of the national symbols.

1. Peacock

Although it is said that the Peacock has been used since the days of Bagan, it is not earlier than Innwa that the Myanmar took the symbol seriously. In Bagan murals the sun is always represented by a horse. The use of the peacock as a symbol for the sun began in the Konbaung period. In the 108 signs of the Buddha's footprints, in 83 the peacock is used. In the Yadanabon period the peacock is used on the obverse side of the coin. During the days of the nationalistic movement the Peacock came to the forefront.

Peacock in circles or thazinkhwei patterns in the wood sculptures of the Princess' Monastery and the Queen Mother's Monastery from the late Amarapura period are witness to the mastery of the design artists. The wooden peacock in the monastery at Gangaw village on Bagan-Singu motorway is a wonderful work of art. The peacocks in the wood sculptures of Bagaya at Amarapura and ShweKyaung in Mandalay are graceful.

The peacock is also one of the national animals of Myanmar. It is strongly associated with the Konbaung monarchy and the anti-colonial nationalist movements and thus is popularly seen as the symbol of the Myanmar. The Dancing peacock, Ka-Daung was used as the symbol of the Burmese monarch and was stamped on the highest denominator coins minted by Burma's last dynasty. Upon independence, it was again featured on Burmese banknotes from 1948 till 1966. The 'Dancing Peacock' also appeared on certain flags of the Konbaung dynasty.

2. Lion

In Myanmar most of the pagodas, lion statues can be found. The lion of Buddha scriptures is called Kesaraja, king of Maned, stronger and mightier than the lion of the forest. It is number 68 in the 108 signs of the footprint of the Buddha. Tuesday is represented by a lion. The sign Leo of the zodiac is a lion too. In art and literature the lion seems to stand for strength, industry and courage. The Throne the king sat on when he had a royal audience was the lion-throne or Sihasana.

In Myanmar art the lion is greatly stylized with, a design with kanut patterns, no longer recognizable as the flesh and blood animal. But the Pyu lion in the Srikshetra museum is very much the natural lion. The stucco lion unearthed stone the lions have no ornamentation at all. Only in Hpaya-thonsu murals do we find kanote on the lions. The little lion in the western stairway of Shwesigon looks very Indian.

The stucco lions of Amarapura have different styles of kanoter designs on them. The lion at the top of the western stairway at Shwegugyi Pagoda, Amarapura, is remarkable for its size as well as graceful kanut patterns. There are very fine pieces of Chinthei of Amarapura type in Mandalay too.

Lion is the symbol of courage and valour. It has served as a basis for making metaphors. The main throne of the later Konbaung dynasty was the Golden Lion Throne and Many Buddhist temples, pagodas and other religious structures have fierce looking lions too deter intruders and trespassers. The lion has been used as a symbol of state, mainly as a supporting figure to the peacock, after independence, but it became more prominent only after 1988 - when it began to appear on almost all denominations of Myanmar banknotes and coins (1999). Moreover, having another name as the coat of arm, the state seal has two lions on it, facing the opposite one. With the map of Myanmar at the centre, the coat of arms has Myanmar flowers around and a big five-point star at the top. At the bottom of the seal is a line "The Union of Myanmar" written in Burmese language.

Dr. Richard M. Cooler wrote in "The Art and Culture of Burma": "In Buddhist cosmology, the thirty-seven most powerful gods of Hinduism and Buddhism live on the

highest peak of Mt. Meru. Mythical creatures inhabit the *Himavanta* Forest that grows on the lower slopes of Mount Meru. When these powerful beings entered the world of men, they were usually benevolent, if treated properly. These creatures include the Chinthe, a leonine creature with flaming mane and body, who is a guardian of Buddhism, and today is the national symbol of Myanmar. Chintres are ubiquitous in Burmese art and often appear in pairs as guardians on either side of the entrance to a Buddhist temple or stupa.

3. Manukthiha

The Manukthiha is a uniquely Myanmar creation that consists of the bodies of two lions with a single head. Often, in late examples, the torso and head is that of a human, not a lion. It is one of the best known symbols of Myanmar. Its name is a blend of two Pali words: the first *manussa*, meaning a human being, and the second *siha*, a lion. This creature can be found at each of the four corners of some stupas—a human head and torso on the top of the forked haunches of a lion in which there is the corner of a block like the plinth of a stupa. The human head of the modern manussiha can be seen wearing a crown finished with a motif of tier upon tier of upright lanceolate neem leaves tapering off to a pointed finial and ornamented earflaps. The face with regular features is composed in a benign.

The Manussiha is said to have originated more than two thousand years ago. According to traditional belief it is associated with the coming of Buddhist monks Sona and Uttara who brought Buddhism to Suvannabhumi. By creating the Manussiha, the Buddhist monk Sona and Uttara prevented the ogresses from snatching the royal infant. In this way, the Manussiha became the symbol of courage and guardianship. Like the Lion, the Manussiha can be found in front of many Buddhist temples, pagodas and other religious structures as a courageous safe guar.

4.Kein-nari, Kein-nara

Kein-nari, Kein-Nara is derived from Sanskrit. Kein means “what kind?” Nari, nara means female and male respectively. According to archaeologists, Kein-nari, Kein-nara figures in bas-relief is found at Sanchi-stupa which are believed to be about relief were about two millenniums old. The symbol of Kein=nari, Kein-nara are found in paintings and sculpture of Myanmar as well as that of India, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Kampuchea.

In the stories of the Buddha’s former births (The *Jātaka*), the history of the symbol of Kein-nari, Kein-nara can be traced back. In Bhallatiya *Jātaka* (No.504) describes the question and answer of King Bhallatila and Kein-nari, Kein-nara. Bhallatiya is a king who reigned in Benares. Once a day, the king went to Himalaya and climbed Mount *Gandhamadana* by taking the way along a river bank. On the bank of this beautiful mountain river, two fairies fondly embraced and kissed one another then fell a weeping and wailing pitifully. The King thought that “What can they be weeping about in this manner?” “I will question them.” Without letting his footsteps be heard stole gently up to the fairies, and asked them, “Why do you weep?” To the king’s question, the male fairy said nothing; but his mate answered as follows:“Malla, Three-peak, Yellow Hill. We traverse, following each cool rill. Human-like the wild things deem us:Huntsmen call us goblins still.”⁵

In the *Jātaka*, one couple of Kein-nari and Kein –nara got separated for one night due to flooding waters in the ravine; with Kein-nari on one bank and Kein-nara on the other. That one night separation hurt them so much that they went on weeping and crying for seven hundred years. Seven centuries of grief for just one-night-separation. So Kein-nari and Kein-nara may be regarded as the symbol of love.

⁵ . seasite.niu.edu/Burmese/Cooler/BurmaArt__TOC.htm,p-9

By introducing of *Bhallatiya Jātaka*, Kein-nari and Kein-nara are invariably depicted as tenderer, benevolent, happiest, and love. Most of the time, they may be found to be loving, usually loveable and occasionally lovely. They are usually shown to be offering flowers or some similar items to holy Bikkhus.

Dr. Richard M. Cooler said that another composite creature type that combines human with avian characteristics is the Kinnara (male) or Kinnari (female) who appear frequently in adoring pairs and are considered the "love birds" of the Himavanta Forest. It is these creatures that are used to adorn the walls of temples as well as the pulleys that are attached to Burmese looms, which are frequently operated by unmarried girls whose thoughts, when not on weaving, often turn to thoughts of love and their future family. Excellence in weaving is considered a desirable characteristic to attract a husband.

5. Lokanat

The Lokanat is for the Myanmar people a symbol of peace and prosperity and figures prominently in art and culture. The term Lokanat is in popular usage today. It is said to be derived from the name of a deity named Lokanahta, which is the combined form of two Pali root words "Loka" (meaning people in general) and Nahta (meaning refuge or haven). So the Lokanat was originally the title of the deity who is believed to keep an eternal watch over the world. Later the term also came to denote a prince or a ruler whose benevolence and wisdom protected the people of the kingdom and bestowed good fortune.

The Lokanat has become like a logo of the visual arts in Myanmar. The Lokanat stands for peace and harmony, happiness and joy and all that is good and right, the figure is often placed in a prayer chamber or throne room. A Lokanat figure has been placed in the foreground of the Thihathana Throne now on display at the National Museum.

The lotus leaf pedestal of the Lokanat represents a leaf struggling out of the grip of the murky depths of a pond to emerge fresh and green on the water's surface, and the entwining vines are like wavelets lapping at the edges. For the Myanmar people a lotus leaf signifies peace and purity, an escape from the frailty of mundane life into the sunlight of wisdom and truth. This is in complete harmony with the celestial figure which stands for peace and serenity. It is said that Mahayana Buddhists pay homage to the Lokanat as a deity who watches over the universe. Some others believe that if one takes refuge in the Lokanat one will be free of all dangers and will be rewarded with untold wealth and happiness.

One of the earliest portrayals of the Lokanat is part of the ancient murals on the walls of the Abeyatana Temple in Pagan. On the wall of the ambulatory corridor of this temple a portrait of Awalokitesvara also known as the Lokanahta or Lokanat can be seen. He is depicted sitting on a huge lotus with his left leg curved and upright and his right laid down on a smaller lotus blossom.

6. Kadaw-Pwe

One essential rite in the Myanmar Buddhist family is paying respects to the Five Revered Ones, namely the Buddha, His Teachings, His Order of Monks, Parents and Teachers. This paying of respects is done usually at the beginning of lent, the end of lent and at the beginning of a new year. The ceremony is called Kadaw ceremony.

It is essential to have a kadaw-pwe on these occasions; kadaw-pwe means a tray of gifts for the Revered Ones, but a real Kadaw-pwe is an arrangement of fruits and flowers on a tray or bowl. Two or three or five of the fruits turned upwards; a green coconut complete with stem sticking out is placed in the middle; it is filled with flowers and ferns. The banana and coconut are the basic of the Kadaw-pwe: a funnel of green banana leaf is stuck in the middle; it is filled with flowers and ferns. No family occasion is complete without the Kadaw-pwe,

weddings, betrothals, house-warming no vitiation and ear-boring ceremonies, alms-giving and wakes.

Moreover, the quantity of bunches of banana containing in the Kadaw-pwe signify the offering to whom intended. The containing five bunches of banana means “Offering to the Buddha”, the containing three bunches of banana means “Offering to the teaching of the Buddha as well as His Order of Monks, the containing two bunches of banana means “Offering to Nats”. Ritual offerings to Nats, as Buddhists make them, are but paying respect to those to whom, perhaps, Myanmar people owe gratitude for looking after their welfare.

Conclusion

Myanmar is the largest in mainland Southeast Asia. Close to ninety percent of people in Myanmar today are Buddhist, and virtually all of them practice Theravada Buddhism. This branch of Buddhism adheres most closely to the oldest texts in the Buddhist tradition and generally emphasizes a more rigorous observance of the monastic code than other schools of Buddhism.

The overwhelming majority of Myanmar’s population of approximately fifty five million people is Theravada Buddhist. Indeed, so closely aligned do Buddhists in the country see their religion and their identity that it is often said that “To be Myanmar is to be Buddhist.” Such a claim, even though it excludes significant and vibrant non-Buddhist minorities, captures the truth that Buddhism has long comprised the dominant, if shifting and evolving, worldview that has bound together disparate ethnic and cultural groups in the region.

Myanmar sources date the arrival of Buddhism to the time of the historical Buddha, but, even limited to historical evidence, the record suggests that the dynamic and powerful role of Buddhism in the region stretches back at least to the early centuries of the Common Era. Developments over this extensive period of time have been complex and multilinker, with many transformations in beliefs and practices at different moments and in different areas. Trade, cultural relationships, and conflicts with other kingdoms and countries, especially India, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, profoundly affected Myanmar’s forms of Buddhism. Nevertheless, Theravada Buddhism is developed in Myanmar and consequently, Myanmar Buddhist Culture developed. From this, it can be identified who is Myanmar and which Myanmar is.

As mentioned above, Dr. Than Tun uses the term, Myanmariness, by referring to Myanmar Buddhist Culture. Dr. Than Tun aimed at to explore the ‘Myanmariness’ of the design as distinct from those of the temples of other Buddhist countries and confirmed it from the imaginations of the artists in the decorations on the portals, stairways and brick sein daun. Myanmar is called “The Land of Pagodas”. These Pagodas show Myanmar Buddhist Architecture and Myanmar Buddhist Art, especially Painting. Of this architecture and painting Myanmariness can be seen clearly and distinctly. By studying Myanmar cultural symbols it may be seen that the distinctive creation of Myanmar and distinctive view of Myanmar thought.

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11. နန္ဒာသိန်းဇံ(၂၀၁၃)၊ *“ကြာ”*။ ရန်ကုန်၊ လှိုင်းသစ်စာပေ။
12. ဗိုကော ဦး၊ (၂၀၁၅)။ *“ပုဂံသုတေသနလမ်းညွှန်”*။ ရန်ကုန်၊ လွင်ဦးစာပေ ။
13. မျိုးညွှန်၊ ဦး၊ (၂၀၁၄)။ *“ပုဂံခေတ် နံရံဆေးရေးပန်းချီ”*။ ရန်ကုန်၊ Good Will Printing (8980)။
14. ယဉ်လှိုင်း၊ မောင် (ပျဉ်းမမြိုင်) ၊ (၂၀၁၄)။ *“မြန်မာမှုပန်းအလင်္ကာ”* ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေဗိမ္မာန် စာအုပ်တိုက်။
15. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ (၂၀၀၃)။ *“မြန်မာ့ထီးမှုနန်းရာ”*။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဦးထွန်းလင်း ဖိုးဝ ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
16. သန်းဖေ၊ ဦး ၊ (၂၀၀၉)။ *“မြန်မာ့ယဉ်ကျေးမှု၊ မြန်မာ့ဓလေ့နှင့် မြန်မာ့ရှုခင်း”* ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဆုစာပေတိုက်။
17. သိမ်၊ မောင်၊ (၂၀၁၃)။ *ရှပ်ပွားတော်ကိုးကွယ်မှုနှင့် အကျိုးအာနိသင်များ”* ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာနဒီပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
18. အောင်ညွန့်ဝင်း၊ ဦး၊ (၂၀၀၈)။ *“ငါးရွာငါးဆယ် အနှစ်ချုပ်”*။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ခင်ချိုထွန်း စာပေ။