

NAT WORSHIP IN TAUNGBYONE REGION

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Abstract

This paper deals with the sectors of *Nat* worship in Taungbyone Region through the successive periods starting from Bagan Period. The Sutaungpyae Pagoda Festival in Taungbyonegyi Village (the pagoda built by King Anawrahta) has been well known as the Festival of the Propitiation to the Two Brother *Nats*, Taungbyone *Min Nyi Naung*. With the support of the king and the people, the cult of the *Nat* became widespread. Various forms of the *Nat* worship took place in this region through following the traditional customs. It is a site showing the Myanmar customs and traditional heritage.

Introduction

Since the advent of Buddhism in the times of earliest city-states of Pyus, the people of Myanmar followed the teachings of Buddha. However the other faiths such as animism and spiritual worship intervened in the Buddhist faith. Then Buddha's preachings were aimed to be free from life circle to *Nirvāna* and *Buddha Sāsana* and *Tāvātimsa Nats* were mentioned in his preachings on the parallel line.

Buddhism had two great sects Northern *Mahāyāna* Buddhism and Southern *Theravāda* Buddhism. Northern *Mahāyāna* Buddhist believed in different faiths in comparison with Southern Buddhism. Northern Buddhism included belief in *Bodhisatta*, gods and goddesses to be worshipped. Northern *Mahāyāna* Buddhism flourished in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Korea, China and Japan.² According to *Theravāda* Buddhism one must save himself. No need to depend upon others. It held that life, spirit and body of living creature were not permanent. So Buddha taught *Anatta*. Southern *Theravāda* Buddhism flourished in Ceylon, Myanmar and Thailand.³

Northern *Mahāyāna* Buddhist believes were penetrating in *Theravada* Buddhism. Also it was penetrated by Indian Brahminism. *Nat* worshipping was found in Brahminism. That was why Myanmar worshipped *Nat* spirit of being Buddhists.

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² U Htwe Han, *Myanmar's Mi-yo-pha-la-da-le Tha-maing* (History of *Nat* in Myanmar's Culture), Rangun, Shwe-u-daung Press, 1991, p.20 (Henceforth: Htwe Han, 1991)

³ Htwe Han, 1991, 20

Myanmar Buddhists conceived that *Nat* was the creature to depend on. They believed that *Nat* worship provided current benefit. Some conceived that *Nats* worship is a secular act which serves the purpose of the present life, whereas Buddhism is a spiritual religion that promotes the well-being of life hereafter.

As to *Nats*, those mentioned in *Pitaka*, those in the 6 abodes of *Nats*, those in the 20 abodes of *Brahma*, those in Buddha's *Mahā Samaya Sutta* those mentioned in *Ātānatiya Sutta*, *Vasundhare* (Earth-god), *Yokegazoe* (Tree-god), *Akathasoe* (sky-god) were worshipped. So in Buddha's preachings those *Nats* in the abode of *Nats*, those in the abode of *Brahma* and those in the 31 abodes of living creatures were to be worshipped and merit should be shared with them.

Myanmar had the right of independent religious faith. Majority accepted the co-existence of Buddhism and *Nat*-worship. Among the Myanmar Buddhists there were worshippers of local *Nats*, traditional *Nats* and 37 *Nats*. As the traditional *Nat*-worshipping, Household-*Nat*, Town-*Nat*, Village-*Nat*, regional *Nat* and natural powers as *Nats* were worshipped. Natural powers as *Nats* were forest-*Nat*, Mountain-*Nat*, River-*Nat*, Creek-*Nat*, Lake-*Nat* and Tree-*Nat*. As the Tree-*Nats* Myanmar attached little building to the tree as *Nat*-home and offered flower, water, meal, fruit and candles.

Being led by Hindu-Brahmin *Ponnas* in the palace affairs of the Myanmar Kings, Brahmanism and traditional animism had been mixed. So it was confirmed that Buddhists worshipped *Nats* since the time of ancient kings. In addition to *Nat*-worship the Kings had erected pagodas and monasteries for *Buddha-Sasana* piously. Actually Buddhism and animism co-existed. Traditional animism and spiritual worship were not clearly abandoned.

In Taungbyone Region, the animistic spirit that pervades the cult of *Nats* were prevailed with Buddhism since King Anawrahta's reign (A.D1044-1077). It was said that the Sutaungpyae pagoda from Taungbyonegyi village, Kyaw-sin *Taik*, was built by King Anawrahta. It was built after returning from China and took Buddha's left side tooth relic by King Anawrahta.¹ At the southern terrace of this pagoda, there was a big shrine for two brother *Nats*, Shwephyingyi and Shwephyingnghe. In this way, *Nat* cult in Taungbyone Region had existed since Bagan Era. Though King Anawrahta

¹ *Hman-nan Ma-ha Ya-za-win-taw-gyi* (The Glass Palace Chronicle), 3 vols, First Printing, Yangon, Monywa Press, 2008, p. 14 (Henceforth: *Hman-nan*, 2008)

tried utmost effort for the propagation of Buddhism, syncretic ideas of Buddhism and animism had flourished in Taungbyone. One significant fact that showed that the king wanted to expose his hegemony over this region. It can be assumed that the king's aim and purpose was to embrace all faith for political purposes.

Two brothers of Taungbyone *Nat* were once the King Anawrahta's servicemen. According to traditional records, this two Taungbyone *Nats* concerned with the King's effort for the propagation of Buddhism. For the propagation of Buddhism, king demanded the set of *Tripitakas* and the Lord Buddha's relics from Thahton. However, King Manuha refused this demand. King Anawrahta himself, marched with the big troops to Thahton and attacked the whole city. With the help of this Shwephyin brothers, Bagan King won the battle. Finally King Anawrahta captured thirty sets of *Tripitakas* along with the Buddha's relics and thirty two white elephants.¹ Thus we took a lesson of history from this incident which may concern with the religious war. For longer perpetuation of Buddhism, king ordered to copy the *Tripitaka* from Mon alphabets to Myanmar alphabets. They were edited frequently by Venerable *Sayadaw* Shin Arahan and taught over Bagan Kingdom. In this way *Theravada* Buddhism had flourished in Myanmar for their joint efforts.

The most pious King Anawrahta led an expedition to China, to take the left side of holy tooth relic of Lord Buddha and Kyansitha and two Shwephyin brothers were accompanied with him.² It was due to the prophecy that the sacred tooth relic of Lord Buddha could not be taken from China. Instead of sacred tooth relic of Lord Buddha, one emerald image was to be given by Chinese Emperor. At present time, this emerald image was located in Shwe Kyee Myint Pagoda at Mandalay.

King Anawrahta had built a Sutaungpyae Pagoda at Taungbyonegyi Village after returning his journey from China.³ Taungbyone *Nat* festival is usually held in this pagoda site. The significant feature of this pagoda is two spaces of brick in interior facial top. It was recorded that these two spaces of brick was due to the two Shwephyin brothers. It was recorded that the King Anawrahta was wroth and killed these brother as the severe punishment. There still exist the Banyan tree in which the

¹ Mehtee *Sayadaw*, *Wun-tha Di-pa-ni* (Treatise on Alienage History), Yangon, Hantharwaddy Press, 1967, p.10 (Henceforth: Mhehtee, 1967)

² U Kala, *Ma-ha Ya-za-win-gyi* (The Great Chronicle), Vol.I, Yangon, Ya-pye Press, 2006, p.166-7 (Henceforth: Kala, 2006)

³ *Hman-nan*, 2008, 147-149

two Shwephyin brothers in “Kyut” Village. It was located one mile away from western side of Wayindoke Village. It was also recorded about this village during King Thibaw’s reign (A.D 1878-1885). At present this village was renamed as the Monywaee Village for the commemoration of Monywaee *Sayadaw*’s monastery.

After returning to Bagan the royal gem barge was stopped for a while by the disturbance of two Shwephyin brothers who clung the barge. Then King allowed them to govern Kyaw-sin *Taik* that lies by Taungbyone District.¹ Then, the *Nat* shrine was built near the Sutaungpyae Pagoda and worshipped by the people from adjacent places. At present *Nat* shrine was donated by King Mindon (A.D 1853-1878). It was built, due to its promise when they were in great needs during their rebellion against King Baganmin (A.D 1846-1853). Thus it can be said that this *Nat* shrine was lasted for over 140 years.

The hegemony of two Shwephyin brothers or Taungbyone brothers were same as the Taungbyone Area which was demarcated by Bagan jurisdiction. The right to accept the position in the line of reputation was already identified by this Taungbyone *Nat* brothers. The area of Kyaw-sin *Taik*, according to area limited by King Anawrahta was to the east Nwarlah-yoma mountain range, to the south Shwekyetyet Pagoda, and to the west, the Ayeyawaddy River.² It was assumed that the border of the northern land was excluded from this border demarcation. Singu Town, one part of the 12 border towns under Taungbyone District during the Bagan Era, the border of the northern land can be lied to Singu Town.

Taungbyone Sutaungpyae Pagoda festival was usually held between 8th waxing day of *Wakhaung* month³ till full moon day of *Wakhaung* month in every year. In reality, this pagoda festival was famous for the commemoration for famous two Taungbyone *Nat* brothers. The audiences comprises all sort of people like *Nat* believers from all over Myanmar, fulfillment for their wishes, *Nat* mediums, *Nat* wardens and stage show audiences. Special carriage was arranged by the Myanmar Railways. This Taungbyone special carriage was at least eleven times a day for the convirence of travellers. Every rail trip was crowded with full of people. In addition to the railway carriage, the travellers from every part of Myanmar could be travelled by

¹ *Hman-nan*, 2008, 149

² Min Si Thu, *Myanma Nat Koe-kwe-hmu Tha-maing Paung-chôck* (Collected Essays on History of *Nat* (god) Worship), Yangon, Pyinnya Shwe-taung Press, 2011, p.365 (Henceforth: Min Si Thu, 2011)

³ August

car, by boat, by bullock cart and on foot to the Taungbyone festival. Thus, this festival indicates that the preservative one for Buddhist tradition and *Nat* ritual ceremony.

The Taungbyone brothers *Nat* cult was continued till Nyaungyang Period. Famous poet U Aung Gyi's "Classical songs celebrating about twelve seasons" mentioned that two Taungbyone brothers *Nat* festival was held in every *Wahkhaung* month. Moreover, Minister Thiri U Zanar who was glorified by King Mahadhamarazadhipati(A.D1733-1752) and King Alaungphaya(A.D 1752-1760) wrote *Lawkabyuha Inyon Sa-tan*. It was mentioned that;

it was necessary to inspect Taungbyone festival for following the rules and regulations which forbid to kill chicks and pigs for *Nat* worship and not to drink liquor issued by *Hluttaw*. Interior office also appointed *A-twin-wun* and worshipped the *Nats* with *Kharthar Longyis*.¹

Thus throughout the Nyaungyang and Konbaung eras, the people from Taungbyone Area's belief system could be assumed. The king himself worshipped this two Taungbyone *Nat* brothers. King and his subjects relied upon *Nat* worships rather than the Lord Buddha. According to this record, the following offerings were used for the worship of Taungbyone brothers;

- (1) Chicken, pork and other meats were strictly forbidden for offering,
- (2) Liquor was also prohibited for offering,
- (3) Sweet, truffle snacks were only allowed for offering, and
- (4) Changing the new garment, *Longyis* were allowed for offering.

Thus, though Buddhism had already been flourished in Taungbyone and its adjacent, *Nat* worship was the most popular among them.

For the propagation of Buddhism, King Anawrahta built many cave temples in Taungbyone Region. However, *Nat* worship was still existing against Buddhism. Being a stand Buddhist, King Anawrahta himself had never abandoned his practice of *Nat* worship. In this way, the spirit cult of Taungbyone *Nat* brothers thrived from that time onward. In another way, these two *Nats* brothers were assigned to guard this Sutaungpyae Pagoda. It had two purposes: for piety for the pagoda and for the *Nat* worship. However, the people from later period were more interested in *Nat* worship.

¹ Thiri Uzana, *Law-ka-byu-ha-kyan* (Treatise on Court Etiquette), Yangon, Cultural Department, 2001, p.460 (Henceforth: Uzana, 2001)

Thus, King Anawrahta's effort on the propagation of Buddhism affected upon the great influence of *Nat* worship. In the Taungbyone *Nat* festival, two Taungbyone *Nat* brothers with other traditional 37 *Nats* and other regional *Nats* were worshipped by the people. In this way, Taungbyone *Nat* festival embraces all important *Nats* and it took the significant role in Myanmar *Nat* history.

In the history of Myanmar *Nat* belief system, Min-ma-ha-gi-ri *Nat* was the most senior *Nat* in ever most. Poppa was the real residential place for brother and sister of Min-ma-ha-gi-ri *Nat*. Traditionally, King Anawrahta believed this cult before the arrival of Buddhism. They were continuously worshipped by the people from Bagan Period till Ratanapon Period. Traditionally, Ma-ha-gi-ri *Nat* was acclaimed to be as the guardian spirit for mother land. It was rooted for its reputation and respected by the ruling class at least once or twice in a year. Min-ma-ha-gi-ri *Nat* belief system is still popular in Taungbyone Area. At present, Ma-ha-gi-ri *Nat* was described as the guardian *Nat* for every Myanmar houses. These formalities were made of coconut which wrapped with red cloth and hand in front of the *Nat* altar for homage of seven house guardian *Nats*. These seven house guardian *Nats* were the relatives of Poppa Min-ma-ha-gi-ri.

Traditionally, these seven house guardian *Nats* were mentioned as follows:

1. Min-ma-ha-gi-ri (Maung Tint Te)
2. Golden face *Nat* (sister, lord of the mountain, Ma Myat Hla),
3. Thone-pan-hla (sister Shin Htwe Hla),
4. Shwenape or Mother Dragon (wife of Maung Tint Te),
5. Shin Hnè Mi (or) Ma Hnè Lay (daughter of his sister),
6. Shin-nyo of great mountain (sun of Maung Tint Te and Shwenape)
and
7. Shin Phyu, lord of North side (son of Maung Tint Te and Shwenape)¹

In Taungbyone Area, the small *Nat* altar was made of gold gilded wood and hooked with cane or bamboo offering with coconut and put in the inside of the house. In this way, the house was well protected by these super Natural-beings from outside harmfulness. Traditionally, instead of 37 *Nats*, the house guardian *Nat* was represented as for the protection. It can be assumed this practice was derived from

¹ Min Si Thu, 2011, 300

King Mindon's Era. King Mindon made an effort for sending his men to Poppa and offered the *Nat* shrine and built many *Nat* shrine inside the golden palace. Gradually this practice was followed by the commoners.

Within the Taungbyone Area, King and his subjects already believed the Buddhism since Bagan Era but they never abandoned the *Nat* worship. *Nat* belief system was continued in every important aspects. King Mindon made *Nat* offerings in Taungbyone Area for establishing new town. After cleaning up the ground on 1st February, 1857 King Mindon paid homage to 37 *Nats* and their concerning mediums.¹ According to above mentioned list, Lord Indra was excluded from list of 37 *Nats* throughout Nyaungyang and Konbaung Periods. Instead of Indra (*Tha-kyar-min*), U Tharnoe, clerk of two brothers of Shwephyin brothers or donor of *Koe-gyaung Nat* was embraced in the list of 37 *Nats*. All other 37 *Nats* list was equalled to King Badon's compilation list. In the great series of 37 *Nats* were described on the interior wall of Shwezigon Pagoda. These 37 *Nats* were still worshipped by the people of Taungbyone Region.

King Mindon usually worshipped 37 *Nats* in Taungbyone Area. King also offered the *Nat* feast and requesting the *Nats* of the mountain and jungle to protect his men in ground cleaning work for building new palace. The king issued a royal order on 1st February 1857:

It appears that the king calling and offering *Nats* to perform their help; The king feasted Indra, religious guardian *Nat*, *Sattalokapāla*, *Thamardeva*, *Sadhithaparla*, *Yakkha* *Thaynarpati Nat*, *Rain Nat*, *Air Nat*, *Athurhein*, *Maṇṇimekhalā*, *Ahkarthasoe*, *Bhummasoe*, *Yokegasoe*, including with the guardian *Nats* of Taungbyone, Aung Pinle lake, Nandar lake, Yankin hill, Mandalay hill Bho-bho-gyi with 37 *Nats*²

Thus, King Mindon offered inner and outter 37 *Nats* which traditionally worshipped by people from Taungbyone Areas and the other *Nats* which were offered by King Mindon were as follow:

¹ Sithu Maung Maung Kyaw, *Man-da-le Myo-ti-nan-ti Sa-dan* (Record on founding of Mandalay City and founding of a Royal Capital), Mandalay, Yadanadipan Press, 1959, pp. 90-91 (Henceforth: Maung Maung Kyaw, 1959)

² *The Royal Orders of Burma (A.D 1598-1885)*, Edited and Translated by Dr Than Tun, Part IX (A.D 1853-1885), Kyoto, The Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1989, p. 641 (Henceforth: *ROB, IX*)

1. Rain *Nat*
2. Air *Nat*
3. Athurhein *Nat* (Sun god)
4. Manimaykhalar (Guardian Godden of the Ayeyawaddy River)
5. Ahkathasoe (guardian god of the sky)
6. Bhommasoe (guardian god of earth)
7. Yokekasoe (guardian god of tree)
8. Guardian god of Aung-pinle Lake
9. Guardian god of Nandar Lake
10. Guardian god of Yankin Hill
11. Bho-bho-gyi *Nat* (Guardian god of Mandalay Hill).

Nat belief system in Taungbyone Area was prospered by the supporting of king and his subjects. In addition to the traditional *Nat*, regional *Nat* like that the guardian *Nat* of the jungle, mountain, lake and dam were respectively worshipped by local populace.

The belief system of Taungbyone *Nat* worship was embraced all sort of strata: rulers and his subjects. Two Taungbyone *Nat* brothers were usually homaged at the Pagoda festival of Taungbyone Sutaungpyae. Dailies issued in lower Myanmar mentioned the great of Taungbyone festival which comprised many *Zat* show and *A-nyeint* show during King Mindon's Reign.¹ In this *Nat* homage festival, two Taungbyone brothers and their relatives were paid homage by devote persons. These *Nats* were:

1. Mother of Poppa *Nat* (mother two Shwephyin brother),
2. Khin Ma Thar *Nat* (the adopted daughter of mother of Poppa *Nat*),
3. Guardian Godden of mountain (Ma Shwe U),
4. Ma Saw Khin *Nat* (friend of Ma Shwe U),
5. Mg Yin Maung *Nat* (Ma Shwe U's husband),
6. Senior clerk *Nat* (donor of nine monasteries),
7. Mandalay Bhodaw (including 37 *Nats* list) and

¹ Ludu U Hla, *Tha-tin-sa-mya-thi Tha-maing-ko Pyaw-nay-kya-thi* (Dailies which tell the history), Mandalay, Ludu Kyeepwayae Press, 2011, pp.320-22 (Henceforth: Hla, 2011)

8. Guardian goddess of golden cave¹ (younger sister of Mandalay Bhodaw).

The feast of Taungbyone *Nat* offering ceremony was attended by customary employee who joined this task for their assign confined duties. Traditionally, there were 37 posts which were assigned for two Taungbyone brother *Nats*. There were: (1) Four *Thoe Saung* queens, (2) Betel box bearer (*Kwmm-it-taw-kaing*), (3) Water jug bearer (*Thaut-taw-ye-ta-kaung-kaing*), (4) Turban bearer (*Baung-taw-kaing*), (5) Small circular tray bearer (*Ka-lap-taw-kaing*), (6) Umbrella bearer (*Htee-taw-moe*), (7) Beribboned cane brandished by a lector (*Thaing-taw-kaing*), (8) Ceremonial mace bearer (*Kying-taw-kaing*), (9) Fan bearer (*Yat-taw-kaing*), (10) Shield bearer (*Die-taw-kaing*), (11) Lancer (*Hlan-taw-kaing*), (12) Personal golden sword bearer (*Lak-thone-taw Shwe-dar-swai*), (13) Night waiter (*Ate-fan-taw-saunt*), (14) Baby sitter (*A-chi-taw*), (15) Comforter (*A-chautt-taw*), (16) Van guard (*Shaye-taw-pyay*), (17) Follower sitter (*Nauk-taw-like*), (8) *Doeh toe* employee (*Doe-htoe-a-hmu-htam*), (19) Earing bearer (*Nar-pan-taw-sat*), (20) Cloth changer (*Wut-lai-taw-sat*), (21) Exhibition employee (*Pyaw-pwe-a-hmu-htam*), (22) Make-up employee (*Myak-hnar-pyin-a-hmu-htam*), (23) Chief Stewart (*Phaung-taw-u-sar-taw-sat*), (24) Raft rope binder (*Phaung-chi-a-hmu-htam*), (25) Raft lie employee (*Phaung-khai-a-hmu-htam*), (26) Raft employee (*Phaung-twe-a-hmu-htam*), (27) Palanquin bearer (*Waw-taw-htam*), (28) *Tetpwe Nat* offering employee (*Tak-pwe-a-hmu-htam*), (29) Residential employee (*Cap-saung-a-hmu-htam*), (30) Half dish (*Wak-pwe-sar-taw-sat*), (31) Rice dish (*Htap-pwe-sar-taw-sat*), (32) Pilan rice dish (*Dan-pauk-sar-taw-sat*), (33) Coconut breaker (*Ohne-kwe-a-hmu-htam*), (34) Htein tree planter (*Htein-pin-site-a-hmu-htam*), (35) *Nan-U* chef (*Nan-u-sar-taw-sat*), (36) Rabbit bearer (*Yon-taw-sat*), (37) Flower bearer (*Pan-taw-sat*).²

While the Taungbyone festival was celebrating, above mentioned servicemen assigned in various kinds of works due to their respective schedule. Moreover *Nan-htein* (chief of *Nat* shrine) and *Natkadaw* or *Nat-ôk* (*Nat* medium) had attended regularly to this *Nat* festival. In this way, *Nat* festival which tended to concentrate

¹ Maung Maung Kyaw, 1959, 377-79

² Nan Kyawt Shin, *Yoe-ya Koe-kwe-hmu Sai-ya-pai-ya Nat Phyt-thwa-thaw Thu-yè-kaung-mya* (Heroes which became traditional local gods), Yangon, Shwe Chi Thae Press, 2011, p.102 (Henceforth: Nan Kyawt Shin, 2011)

more on religious identity than on the practice of *Nat* worship and became the most famous *Nat* festival in Upper Myanmar.

Some *Nat* worshippers believed that it might have been a *Nat* meeting which was attended by *Nats* from all over Myanmar. This *Nat* meeting was started from the evening of 10th, waxing day of the month of *Wahkhaung* with the playing of musical instruments and began to pay homage. This *Nat* paying homage ceremony usually held till the 14th-waxing day of the month of *Wahkhaung*. A grand alms giving ceremony was held at Sutaungpyae Pagoda at the full moon day of *Wahkhaung*. The festival had also the favor of *Nat* concerning. The festival had also the favor of *Nat* concerning pilgrimage and usually held eight days in a year. Moreover from 14th to 15th waxing day of the month of *Nattaw* two Taungbyone *Nat* brothers' going to battlefield festival and from 10th to 11th waxing day of the month of *Tabaung*, ceremony of returning from battlefield were respectively held. It was dedicated for paying homage ceremony for two Taungbyone Brothers and it was quite a huge prosperous festival.

Taungbyone *Nat* festival being a *Nat* pay two Taungbyone Brothers assigned the duties of *Nat* meeting for 10th-waxing day of *Wahkhaung*, *Nat* bathing ceremony for 11th-waxing day of *Wahkhaung*, cutting the Kaim on 15th-waxing day of *Wahkhaung* respectively in accordance with the tradition. Two Taungbyone Brothers' water bathing ceremony was usually held brick lake near the two *Nat* Brothers' Shrine. Those to serve, the Two *Nats* Brothers of Taungbyone, identified by tradition, who have to present themselves unflinching to serve their duties on particular days of the propitiation ceremony. Moreover, the worshippers, the traditionalists, those whose wishes were fulfilled, the mediums of *Nats*, and assistants always come to this ceremony. It is festival highlighting the high culture and keeping of traditional heritage of the Myanmar. It is a traditional festival kept from Bagan Period to the present day. The *Nat* Shrine of Taungbyone has still been under the protection of those who descended from the *Nan-Htein*, or Incharge since the monarchial times. Twelve descended take turns as a duty to serve the Taungbyone *Nat* Shrine. So it is a site showing the Myanmar customs and traditional heritage.

Today, Taungbyonegyi Village has 600 households and the whole area is estimated about 178 acres. It was confined as land of the *Nat* since Bagan Period and majority of local populace are the descendants of traditional *Nat* worshippers. Today,

two Sutaungpyae Pagodas and six monasteries exist for the Buddhist devotees in the village. Inside the village, identified as the land of the *Nat*, the *Nat* Shrines are built everywhere in a grand manner. Including the Main Shrine, there are 47 Shrines of the *Nats* in the village, including the shrines for the new *Nat*. They were mentioned as follow: (1) Main Shrine, (2) Mhei-daw Nang (mother of Poppa), (3) Sukhar Mang Yin, (4) Dhan See Maung Shin, (5) U Phoe Tu, (6) Ma Ma U, (7) Ahlon Bhodaw (King Badon), (8) Myin Phyu Shin, (9) Ein Twin Nat, (10) Ahmay Gyan, (11) Mandalay Bhodaw, (12) Koe Myo Shin, (13) Kyun Pin (Brother and Sister), (14) Shwe Kayin, (15) Koe Thein Koe Than, (16) Mani Sithu, (17) Naga Mheidaw, (18) Ma Nghwe Taung, (19) Ma Ma Nhe, (20) Ahmay Ye Yin, (21) Ahmay Sekadaw, (22) Pyi Kandaw, (23) Ko Gyi Kyaw, (24) Thone Pan Hla, (25) Thar-paike Mhedaw, (26) Ahmay Shwe Na Pe, (27) Ywa-daw Shin, (28) Moe Khaung Kyaw Swar, (29) Ko Aung Naing, (30) Pyi Rakhine, (31) Pa Thi, (32) Amilay Thakhinma, (33) Tanin Bhoe Bhoe, (34) Nang Karaing Mhe-daw, (35) Sa-ye-daw-gyi, (36) Kyet Thaug Taung, (37) Talaing (U Min Kyaw), (38) Rama – Letkhana, (39) Thaike-choke Bhoe Bhoe, (40) Ma Kyar U, (41) Pyi Le Pyin, (42) Shwe Kaing Mhe-daw, (43) Ah May Baw and Shan Maung Hnitma, (44) Ko Gyi Kyaw and Ma Bo Mai, (45) Mogaung Mintaragyi, (46) Ye-ngan-paing U Shin Gyi, (47) Ahmadaw Saw Mon Hla. In addition to these above mentioned *Nats*, there were many regional *Nats*. It can be assumed that the influence of *Nat* worship was so immense in this area.

Conclusion

Some customary Buddhists still confused with the syncretic ideas between Buddhism and *Nat* belief system. For following the traditional custom, these *Nat* worship prevailed in Buddhist society and which widely covered the daily lives of Myanmar peoples. Now, 100 *Nat* worshipped rooms are increased to 3000 of *Nat* worshipped rooms in Taungbyone Festival. Mostly they were seen as the customary Buddhists and they usually followed the *Nat* belief system. Majority of the Buddhist peoples from Taungbyone Region paid homage of *Nat* worship for ill, economic breakdown, or other social problems, or success of the plans wishes, etc. Thus, many Buddhists followed the *Nat* worshipping system for the five fundamental things. They were mentioned as follows:

- (1) fear,
- (2) for expecting offerings,
- (3) for getting outside help,
- (4) for keeping traditional customs and
- (5) having little knowledge and experience.

With respect to the traditional pattern of *Nat* worship in Taungbyone Region, various forms of the *Nat* worship took place in this region. It is a site showing the Myanmar customs and traditional heritage. By studying the origin of the existence of the various *Nats* starting from Bagan Period, worship of successive periods, a Buddhist is free for worship: it is his or her right to decide whether *Nat* worship should be maintained or *Nat* worship should be abandoned.

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