

Irene Moilanen

Last of the Great Masters?

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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Woodcarving Traditions in Myanmar
- Past and Present

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"It is only by a change of viewpoint, psychologically equivalent to such a formal desecration, that the worshipper, who naturally regards the icon as a devotional utility, comes to regard it as a mere work of art to be sensationally regarded as such. Conversely, the modern aesthete and Kunsthistoriker, who is interested only in aesthetic surfaces and sensations, fails to conceive of the work as the necessary product of a given determination, that is, as having purpose and utility. Of these two, the worshipper, for whom the object was made, is nearer to the root of the matter than the aesthete who endeavors to isolate beauty from function."

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy 1933 (1989)

ABSTRACT

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Finnish summary

Diss.

The study examines the surviving woodcarving tradition in Myanmar. Myanmar is a devoutly Buddhist country in South-East Asia following the Theravada school. Wooden architecture and sculpture are ancient skills closely connected with the religion. During the end of the nineteenth century the traditional Myanmar society faced a change, in the form of foreign rule of the kingdom. When the support for religion and traditional arts from the generous kings of Myanmar ended with the annexation of the country to the British India in 1886, artists, craftsmen, actors, puppeteers, musicians, Buddhist scholars and other professionals who had been directly dependent on the traditional order of values had to find new reasons to continue their work.

Artists and craftsmen have always been respected members of the Myanmar society. In royal time sons followed their father's profession. Members of the same guild lived near each other in quarters or specializing villages. This feature of the old Myanmar is still followed today to certain extent. Religious and racial minorities as well as representatives of a certain professional groups live together even in modern capital Yangon. Father's profession is no longer followed faithfully, but it is common to have the same professionals among relatives. For example art student's uncle or grandfather may be an artist.

The field material for the study has been collected with Myanmar language questionnaires, personal interviews and observation in the workshops. The questions enquired the working methods, raw materials, tools, typical motifs and belief system connected with the carving work. Since majority of the woodcarving work is still manufactured for religious purposes, popular legends and explanations of the particular motifs are included to the text. Religious woodcarving includes Buddhist and popular animistic art traditions, and they are here referred as "traditional arts".

Commercial arts developed in colonial times when a new customer group, the foreigner looking for exotic decorations, came to the market. Last decades have been relatively quiet, but at the moment tourism is a growing business enterprise. Some woodcarving workshops specialize in decorative arts, which in this study are grouped under topic "commercial arts". Commercial arts differ in motifs and finishing techniques from the traditional artifacts.

Lastly comes the third artist group of contemporary Myanmar, the "modern artists". The modern artists have graduated from the State School of Fine Arts in Yangon or Mandalay. They are mostly painters, but also woodcarvers or sculptors. Western painting techniques and artistic ideals came to Myanmar in 1910s' and 1920s'. The national artist U Ba Nyan (1897-1945) introduced modern ideas of his time to Myanmar. Modern sculpture in wood is more rare.

Keywords: Myanmar, Buddhist art, woodcarving, traditional art, religious art, Burma

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1 INTRODUCTION

"Those things that are immediately necessary to know while we are looking at an object made by another man are: its purpose, its manner of making and materials, and its formal image in the maker's mind. Now, the last one of these is hard to come by when that mind is another's and he a foreigner long dead. Only by knowing something of the sculptor's purpose, his manner of making and the particular ideas that limit or set free his imagination can we appreciate the perfection he makes ... But, and this is of prime importance, we are interested solely in his success in achieving his own ends (not ours) with his own materials (not our choice) on his own plan. Any other basis for judgement or attempted appreciation would manifestly be useless."¹

These words by Langdon Warner written about the craft of Buddhist sculptors in Japan serve well as an introduction to the thesis at hand. Woodcarving tradition in Myanmar is a long one, and still very much alive. This thesis will try to find out the purpose of the wooden sculpture, present its techniques and materials and investigate the maker's mind - as was requested by Warner above. My aim has been to collect and document information about woodcarving as an ancient and modern art and craft for both Western and Myanmar reader.

Myanmar art has always been Buddhist in a particularly Myanmar syncretic way, apart from the very recent stratum of Western origin techniques and motifs. As in other Buddhist countries, the Holy Image found its colourful framework from older beliefs of animistic folk religion. The venerated Buddha tamed fearful spirits and demons to be his servants and guardians of religion. The tasks and duties of different ranks of beings as well as religious prestige are clearly divided between the two groups. The place of their sculpted images in the shrine indicates and underlines the symbolic hierarchy. The interior of the religious building is dedicated to Buddha and his followers, the monks. Other beings and creatures of the densely populated Myanmar universe guard the peace of the holy place from outside,

1 Warner 1976, 3-4.

in the wall reliefs, enclosing fences and carved gateways. When a devout mind is occupied with questions of religious merit and matters concerning life in the next existence, the natural centre of his thoughts is Buddha and his teaching. The spirits are of interest when everyday problems trouble his mind. The two worlds are not in conflict with each other, but bound together inseparably just like the interior and exterior of a building cannot be separated from each other. This "seeing both sides of the same coin" is truly a Myanmar way of understanding, thinking and valuing things, whether concerning life, religion or arts.

My personal interest in Myanmar art history was awakened during my two short visits to this enchanting country in 1987. The unique arts of Myanmar are barely known in the West. The few art historical research pieces written thus far have concentrated on the breathtaking monumental architecture of classical *Bagan* from 11th to 13th century. Later art is often - quite unjustly - classified as dull, stereotypical or even unaesthetic. The warlike history of Myanmar with its many ethnical groups battling for superiority and the often moving capitals of the kingdom banish the dreams of those who imagine writing a chronological history: there simply is not enough authentic evidence of woodcarving art from 1300 to 1700's to draw logical development lines for art styles.

Almost seven months of fieldwork in Myanmar, several months in Thailand during 1989-1993 and a visit to Xishuangbanna, Myanmar's Chinese side neighbour in 1988 attracted me to contemporary Buddhist woodcarving and especially to the artists and craftsmen who continue these centuries old traditions. What did they think about their work and art? How does the young generation of art students who learn their profession in state run art schools see the future of traditions? Tradition lives in the minds and imagination of the artists. When the mind changes so too does tradition.

The other theme of this study is the artworks inspired by Myanmar and Buddhist legends. Artworks end up in shrines, altars, collections and museums. They live independently in the eyes of the devout worshipper and lover of art, or they are just forgotten in some dusty corner. The images imply the ideals that have inspired the artist and through which his talent found form. Artistic formulae and symbols are easily recognized and understood by all members of the Buddhist society. Buddha's words "he who hears my words sees me" can in the visual art's case be turned around: "he who sees me can hear my words"². What happens to the woodcarving tradition when the artist explores an unknown land - the tourist's idea of an exotic souvenir?

The general aim of this study as noted above already is to collect important information about Myanmar woodcarving tradition - past and present - in one volume. Contemporary art is emphasized but since it is seen as a continuum from the classical period, the society and arts of Myanmar kings have also been examined in the following pages. The important history of the *Pyu* and *Mon* peoples which preceded *Bagan's* glory are also introduced albeit briefly. I have tried to draw the history of Myanmar's

2 Coomaswamy 1986, 163.

woodcarving tradition by tracking down the surviving sculptures, reliefs in shrines and monasteries, and letting them speak for themselves as witnesses of the religious fervour of past centuries. In one contemporary artist's words:

"Nobody can live without arts, and that is why I think the artist's profession is so respected in my country. I expect young people of Myanmar will wish to learn this work also in the future. As long as there is culture in my country there will be the tradition."³

3 Woodcarver student Ko Maung Da in Yangon January 1993.

2 CAN A TRADITION DISAPPEAR?

Tradition - Modern

In order to find an answer to the question of the title, we have to start by the definition of "*tradition*" and its opposite "*modern*". In everyday thought traditions link with words like museum, past times, distant memories, constancy. "Modern" on the other hand seems to be alive, incessantly on the move, colourful, noisy and ever-changing. When we intend to use these two words in connection with a culture foreign to us, we should be very careful to clarify that all parties speak of the same thing.

Tradition is really a dynamic process of handing down, and like history, it is constantly being recreated and remodelled in the present. Modernization and the idea of the modern have worldwide become almost inseparable from colonial and postcolonial Western influences.⁴ In Western historical writing, societies are seen as changing. Change is equated with progress, which in turn is highly valued. Originality and newness therefore become important goals. Despite general acceptance of the Buddha's doctrine of *Anicca*, Impermanence in Myanmar, change is seldom if at all associated with progress. Traditions from a "purer past" are the models for monarchs and governments to rule by, monks to teach, subjects and citizens to live and believe, and artists to create their works of art.⁵

In this study *woodcarving tradition* in Myanmar is defined as the continuum of those working methods, pictorial motifs and learning of professional skills, which can be traced down to the classical Bagan period 11th to 13th century but have their roots even deeper in history. "*Modern*" labels those working methods, pictorial motifs and learning of professional

4 Waterson 1991, 232-234.

5 Aung-Thwin 1985, 200.

skills, which have developed from some other source than the traditional motives of making a work of art. For example, a Buddha image which is carved to be a sacred icon in a pagoda or family shrine is understood as "traditional" even though its outer appearance might greatly differ from earlier classical styles of Bagan, Inwa or Mandalay periods. On the other hand a Buddha image in perfect classical style but carved as souvenir or decoration for a foreign home is considered "modern". Further - learning of professional skills are defined as "traditional" when a young student learns them gradually by working under a mastercarver's direct guidance in a workshop. "Modern" learning of professional skills takes place in an art school, where students are formally provided with international knowhow of the artist's profession.

Every field of traditional Myanmar art has a name of its own. Together these ten arts are called in Myanmar language "*pan*", flowers. The "Ten Flowers" of Myanmar arts are:

1. pan pae - iron smith
2. pan tain - gold and silver smith
3. pan tin - brassware
4. pan tawt - floral design with stucco
5. pan yan - masonry
6. pan pu - wood carving
7. pan tamawt - stone carving
8. pan put - craft of wood turners lathe
9. pan chi - painting
10. pan yun - lacquerware⁶.

Note that of these, only painting and wood carving are taught in the country's two state run art schools, in Yangon and in Mandalay. There is one government school for lacquer work in Bagan. All other professional skills have to be learned in the traditional way, by practising and working under a master's guidance.

"Art" is understood in a remarkably broad manner - but traditionally never as "l'art pour l'art". Myanmar arts, even though they naturally aim also to please the aesthetic eye, cannot be properly appraised if disconnected from their true backgrounds: a sculpture is carved to beautify a religious shrine. Meritorious presents are homage to Buddha and his living followers, the monks who are not at all interested in the outer appearance of their dwelling. The artwork donated to a monastery follow liberally the Buddhist view of a multistoreyed universe. The motif for a certain sculpture is chosen by a layman, a donor following his personal affections and wealth. "*Beauty*" is closely connected to the value of the donation, not to art. A Buddha image that follows iconographic rules is considered "beautiful". An ugly or dislikable image of a Nat would most certainly insult the spirit, and even Balu, the demons are pictured as monstrous only ex officio. The artist can always rely on the centuries old tradition when modelling the fabulous sunbird Galon (Garuda) or graceful celestial nymph Keinnayee (Kinnari). This fact never prevented

Myanmar artists from accomplishing incomparable mastery over their art with vividness of imagination and their national sense of humour.

Since "art" is a very contradictory concept, not only between different cultural and religious traditions but also within society, it should be here noted that I have tried my best to use and understand the word as the Myanmar would use and understand it. I have not drawn any line of value or status hierarchy between artist and craftsman, for I see them both as followers of the changing Myanmar tradition. I do not write about art work in a Western sense when I am describing the manyfold forms of sacred image of the Lord Buddha. This by all means does not prove that I should remain unmoved in front of the many magnificent sculptures in monasteries, pagodas and temples of the country. This simply means, that the Myanmar artist and woodcarver master *did not* carve the image to be valued as an art work, but to be worshipped in a shrine. As a Western art historian I could examine his work for its artistic value, material sense, form, mastery over material and technique, or as a unique part of Buddhist art in general - but I chose not to do so. I see both points of view as important and essential for a true appreciation of Myanmar - or any other art tradition, but here I will present the sculptures as they were meant to be presented, as images for worship.

Change - Progress

Change is an essential part of art - in fact it is a precondition and a sign of creative art. For centuries Myanmar artists have concentrated their efforts in praising the truths of Buddhism. Originally Indian iconography described general features of the Lord Buddha in detail, but did it in a poetic way leaving plenty of space for creative imagination.

"The chin of the image must be like that of a king lion, which is round and not pointed. The cheeks must be thick and round like a full moon; they should be extended from chin to ears. The neck must have three sections. The chest must be thick like a lion. In carving the Buddha image, it should have a well-filled appearance when one looks at it from every corner"⁷.

Artistic interpretations of the canons have produced distinctive art styles characteristic to each Buddhist nation. Changes in national and international style emphasize the parts of Buddha's teaching each century, which a ruling dynasty or Buddhist nation wishes to underline. It is interesting to note that even though iconographic rules do not bound minor deities of national origin or mythical creatures and animals, they are nevertheless represented in an extremely conservative way throughout the centuries. Even the placing of these images in shrines has stayed the same for a thousand years. This of course does not mean that the artists were mere craftsmen copying classical

works. Each generation of anonymous masters remodelled the motifs according to fashion and views of beauty. Variations of the traditional themes were subtle expressions of an artist or an age accumulated over a long time. Contemporary Buddhist art is also a part of this thousand years old evolutionary process.

The concept of *progress* is more difficult to define because it inevitably includes valuation. In art, progress can only be measured in quality. Technical and material novelties have many times in the history of art proved to be disastrous for the completed artwork itself. For example industrially produced paints or lacquer can react unexpectedly on traditional surfaces and spoil the work. Despite this, hopes for economic profit have also encouraged shortcuts in arts and crafts in Myanmar.

If we accept the fact that culture and tradition change all the time with the introduction of new materials, techniques, ideas and tastes, we note that there are certain factors that the persistence of arts and crafts depend on. There must be continued demand for the items, more importantly for items supporting belief systems and rituals. Myanmar Buddhism and belief in Nats and other supernatural beings holds strong in the hearts of the people. Even the educated elite of the capital and other big cities has not estranged itself from this basis of Myanmar national feeling. Other factors for survival of art tradition are the availability of traditional raw materials, knowledge of the skills and aesthetic formulae of the arts, and time to work without competing attractions. Myanmar woodcarvers grow up among the traditional raw materials which they learn to work and handle already as small boys studying in a master's workshop. Until recently time has been a flexible concept for the Myanmar. Many workers live in the workshop - they work during the day as customers come and go. The social atmosphere of the workshop strenghtens the unity of the professional group. Finally there comes the rewards and prestige from the peer-group members that keeps the tradition alive.⁸

Functional religious art exists today along side commercial and tourist art. Commercial fine arts provide status objects for people who do not have to understand its symbolism but who find it aesthetically acceptable. These objects are characterized by closeness to what is believed to be tradition. Thus the artists are trying to come up with some historical recorded model of what the "real thing" is.⁹ The most popular souvenir sculpture in wood is nowadays the "Bagan princess", a fair lady carrying food container or playing a harp. The models for these many times excellent-quality sculptures can be found in the mural paintings of Bagan temples. Tourists' requests to reproduce sacred items have been met half way: Buddha images have not been finished with the usual gold leaf or painting, but rather polished and stained. The image is many times a mixture of Japanese, Chinese, Indian and Myanmar features. Copies of Mandalay style Buddhas, with lacquer and gold leaf finish can be obtained from Thailand's souvenir shops.

In this study "change" is considered a part of living art tradition.

8 Grabum 1979, 13.

9 Grabum 1979, 14.

Change is "progress" when, and if, it promotes the survival of a genuinely living and independently developing artistic tradition of the highest quality.

Will the Tradition Survive?

Historically, the total disappearance of an art tradition is not big news. The revival of a forgotten tradition is difficult and they tend to become estranged from the people who originally created them. Art works end up in museums and ancient dance theatres in established theatres, where they only entertain the higher, educated classes of society and foreign visitors. What can we do? The world is changing fast. New ideas, ideals and ways of life invade every corner of the world. Traditional professions find new students only if they can provide a means of living. Artist's and craftsmen's professions have traditionally had high status in Myanmar society, but new, material considerations might change the situation.

In the future Myanmar artists will divide in three professional groups. These groups have existed already since the beginning of the century, but only now are they clearly dividing into distinctive groups: Traditional Buddhist artists, artists and craftsmen employed by tourism and the export business and modern artists with a Western style individualistic artist's identity.

3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

Fieldwork

This study is based on the argument that traditional Myanmar society has been conservative, preservation and stability seeking. Its values, basic structures and institutions were built during the Bagan period, but they continued past the fall of the dynasty that created them. Dynasties fought for power, won, built new royal cities, lost battles and vanished, but their social basis and unshaken respect for Buddhism stayed. The dramatic change came only in 1885 when the British occupied the Mandalay kingdom and abolished its monarchy. The society changed radically and there was no way back even after independence in 1948.

The study begins with a thorough introduction of classical Myanmar society, which aims at drawing an outline of a conservative tradition. I have purposely left out any deeper analyses about pre-Bagan cities and kingdoms, since there are no examples of surviving woodcarvings or -sculpture from that era. Few notes of these highly civilized *Pyu* and *Mon* peoples have been written down to show the long continuum of Buddhist art tradition. Myanmar society continued much unchanged from Bagan times until the British conquest - and many of its traditional values still survive. What were the ingredients; the backgrounds of classical Myanmar culture? Who were the artists? What was their status in society? Who were their customers? What were the motives for creating art, or for sponsoring it?

The same questions were asked from contemporary artists, craftsmen and art school students. How do their thoughts differ from ideas a thousand years ago? The values and art styles of past dynasties build the backbone for the present day views of art and beauty. The interviews were collected mainly during January, February and December 1993. The Myanmar language questionnaire was divided in nine question groups. Certain technical and professional words belonging to academic art history like "motif" or "proto-

type" were simplified in Myanmar translation in order to make the questions readily understandable. Concepts of "tradition" and "modern" were not explained since one of the interests was to find out how they are defined.

Questions 1-3 of the questionnaire (see Appendix 2 for Myanmar and Appendix 3 for English) collect data about the artist. 4 and 5 inquire the working methods and studies necessary for the profession. Numbers 6-8 ask about traditional and modern motifs of art, and finally, number 9 questions the future of the artist's profession. In addition there were some detailed questions about tradition, legends, images and beliefs connected with them, and raw materials, which were asked from a smaller selected group of carvers in personal interviews. The belief system was also investigated by interviewing Natkadaws, Nat spirit mediums, and astrologers. Personal interviews were also collected in December 1989, February, March and December 1991 and October 1992. Observing the artists and craftsmen at work and many non-formal talks with them also comprises an important part of the field material.

The third part is divided in to two chapters. First, in chapter six the traditional images and motifs are presented as they have travelled through the centuries in the thousands of shrines of Myanmar. The field material comprises of most of the important public and private collections of traditional art and includes eight surviving wooden monasteries in the country. Both are listed in Appendix 5. Most important artworks which have survived since Bagan times are introduced in the sub-chapters Wooden Sculpture in Bagan and Art in Inwa and Konbaung Periods. Also, the models for present day Buddha are investigated. Chapter nine, Modern Arts and Crafts concentrates on those motifs which are in accordance with the definition of "modern" above. Modern motifs include Buddhist, historical, romantic and Chinese motif groups. Chinese motifs are discussed here because they are considered "foreign" to Myanmar tradition, despite the fact that many Myanmar Buddhists home altars carry images of Bodhisatta Kwan-yin, for example. Traditional sculpture was studied in pagodas, monasteries, temples, woodcarver's workshops, some private collections and major museums of the country. Modern sculpture was studied in carver's workshops, artshops, art galleries and exhibitions, mainly in Yangon.

The fourth theme of the study introduces the working methods, tools and raw materials of a woodcarver. Interesting beliefs are still today connected with different raw materials and the astrologer plays an important role in ordering a specific image. Traditional and modern motifs are carved basically using the same working methods, but the differences are clear in the finishing of the sculpture. Material and information for this chapter was collected from the carvers in their workshops and by interviewing astrologers and Natkadaws.

Interviews - Discourse Analysis

Variability and semantic connotations of language have to be taken under careful consideration when collecting information through interviews and formulated questionnaires. Here, the questions were given in the Myanmar language, translated into English and analysed by a Finnish speaking person. Even if translation errors are counted to minimum, differences in the *cultural* meanings of words and concepts have to be examined. Another variable factor is the *psychological stress* of the interview. The interviewer is a foreigner making a university thesis which will be published. The interview as such grew into a somewhat of an event since it attracted the curiosity and interest of the passers-by. The chosen woodcarver represents his professional group and further his national culture and no doubt feels his duty to do so as well as he can. This, evidently has an effect on his answers, and has been noted. I have not tried to guess how much and in which direction the answers would have changed if the interviewer would have been a Myanmar alone, a Myanmar language questionnaire alone without mentioning the thesis or, if the interviewer had been a Western man. At all times the atmosphere of the interviews was pleasant and amiable, with the artists' air of natural pride for their country and culture.

The presence of the interviewer and her interpreter provided better answers in quantity since some questions would have remained unanswered if the woodcarver had filled the form by himself. Possibly they had not understood the meaning of the question or had no time to concentrate on them. Assistance and encouragement from the interpreter was valuable for the results. The main concepts, tradition - modern and change - progress have been defined in the second chapter of this study. They were not explained to the informants because one of the interests was to find out how they are understood by the contemporary Myanmar artist.

In discourse analysis the interest concentrates on the everyday language of the informants. Spoken language, words and their meanings form *functions*, which include both conscious and unconscious connotations. Variations of language can be interpreted in relation to the semantic system of the informant and also to the changing reciprocal action between the interviewer and the informant. Spoken language can reveal the social structure and values of the society and explain the informant's role and identity in it. In this study answers have been examined with objectivity in mind and compared to each other. Most interestingly, notes which have been given unnoticed - as if in subordinate clause - prove to support to what is argued in the beginning of the study: Myanmar society is a conservative, stability-seeking, deeply religious community. Any answer, explanation or even negation includes the meaning of words (explicit meaning) and the meaning of meanings (implicit meaning). The answers of the artists and craftsmen as well as all other informants contributing to this study have been analysed accordingly.¹⁰

10 Jokinen-Juhila-Suoninen 1993, 48-49.

The questionnaire was answered by nine traditional woodcarvers from Yangon, mostly from small workshops surrounding the famous Shwedagon Pagoda, and 14 traditional woodcarvers from Mandalay, from Thampawaddy artist's quarter, and workshop area near Mahamuni, sometimes also called the Mahamyamuni Pagoda. The first informants were chosen according to the quality of their work shown in their shops. Later they were asked to recommend other masters for interview. Usually they named their teachers or talented students if they worked in the area. In the chosen workshop the owner of the shop or the oldest carver was advanced by the other workers. In workshops where there were many carvers and students, the master was asked to recommend one of his employees for interview. Often the questions attracted interest and were, at least from technical work's part, answered collectively.

24 art students and one teacher from the State School of Fine Arts in Yangon and 12 art students and art teachers from the State School of Fine Arts in Mandalay answered the questionnaire. The students were chosen by their teachers to represent all three courses of the school. In Yangon, one third of the schools about 60 students answered the questions. In Mandalay, all visual arts students present on the interview day answered. The art student's questionnaire was formulated slightly differently from the traditional woodcarver's version. Principal U Soe Tint from the State School of Fine Arts, Yangon, who is himself a well known sculptor and Principal U Zaw Win from the State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay - one of the country's very few graphic artists - kindly gave personal interviews and showed their work.

Questionnaires were further answered by six artists or craftsmen, who are listed here as "miscellaneous": two puppet masters, two marble sculptors, a carpenter and a medical doctor, who actively studies woodcarving, traditional painting, music and old scriptures.

Personal interviews are also included from several persons, who can be counted in this miscellaneous group: dance teachers from the State School of Fine Arts, bronze casters, tapestry shop workers, astrologers, Nat-mediums and performing artists from pwe and puppet theatre. The questions in the personal interviews were the same as in the questionnaires.

The reason why so much of the material and information about modern art has been collected from painters is simply that in the State School of Fine Arts most students have chosen painting as their special field of study. Further there are very few *modern* woodcarving artists, who according to the definition above would use wood as the material for their artistic expression. There are many traditional masters and many fine professionals for commercial art, but usually the modern artists are to be found among painters. Also, the career of national artist U Ba Nyan and the history of art schools in Myanmar are based on introducing Western painting to Myanmar.

In discourse analysis *function* means everything that the informant actually means with his speech, and also everything which it is possible to mean. Interpretation of an interview can give many functions to a single

answer¹¹. The following functions can be gathered from the interview material:

1. *Professional function*
The informant sees himself as a member of a group of skilled woodcarving specialists. He is proud of his professional talent and a respected member of the guild.
Answer type: "I find the motifs for artworks from my professional experience" or "When I see a piece of wood I immediately know what kind of image I am going to carve from it, how much room the sitting image needs and how much I leave for the throne".
Informant: traditional woodcarver artist.
2. *Artist's function*
The informant sees himself as a individual, creative artist. His relation to the artwork is personal.
Answer type: "I wish to express the feelings that the beautiful nature of my country arouse in me with my paintings".
Informant: artists and art teachers from art schools.
3. *Student's function*
Informant emphasizes his/her student's role and openly shows gratitude to teachers/master.
Answer type: "I'm still studying" and "I rely on my teacher's advice".
Informant: students in art schools.
4. *Buddhist function*
Informant expressly underlines the importance of Buddhism in his life and work. Socially valued role of "good Buddhist".
Answer type: "I wish to show the truths of our Buddhism in my art".
Informant: all

The professional function became active in situations where curious on-lookers gathered to listen the interview. In the carving student's case, the presence of the master naturally had some effect on the answers. The artist's and student's function had clearly effected the answers from the Mandalay School of Fine Arts. Probably teachers, tutor and students discussed the questions. Without doubt some students had filled the questionnaires together since the answers were similar for some questions. This was particularly the case in the group of first year students. In Yangon the fact that the teachers saw the answers before they were returned to the interviewer might have had some effect on some answers. On the other hand, respect for teachers is a general rule in Myanmar society. The Buddhist function was common to all informants and here interaction with interviewer was most active. As Gotama Buddha's person and teachings are universally respected among Myanmar Buddhists, the answering was also certainly affected by unconscious, socially accepted values. Answers like "I don't care about the religion, I just want to make money with the sculptures" would be quite impossible to give or even, I believe, to think in the deepest thoughts of a traditional Myanmar woodcarver.

These analyses about the informants and their motives do not seek to

reveal the informants as insincere in their answers. On the contrary, they emphasize the profound importance of Buddhism in Myanmar culture and the natural pride of professional artists for their heritage.

Iconological Method

Images included in this thesis are arranged, studied and analysed for the text by applying *Erwin Panofsky's* methodology in suitable form. Panofsky presented his philosophy of art in his "*Meaning in the Visual Arts*" published in 1955. The *Iconological method*, as he named it, is useful when studying art works bearing narrative motifs. Although often criticized as outdated and superficial I find the method quite practical when arranging information on new sculpture types and motifs in the field. Traditional sculpture in Myanmar combines sophisticated Buddhism and colourful popular beliefs of an animistic folk religion. Although their primary purpose is not to propagate Buddhist doctrine, they mediate the ideology implicitly. Every detail, whether it be Deva or Nat in royal regalia, monstrous ogre, mythical animal or rich floral decoration on the wall of a monastery or massive wooden door of a temple, combine effortlessly to a flexible and tolerant Buddhist context. When asked for an explanation, any Myanmar Buddhist would be able to repeat a version of the ancient legend connecting the decoration to Buddha's teaching.

The starting point of Panofsky's method is the study of motifs, their meaning, origin and development. By iconology Panofsky means iconographical interpretation of the artworks basing on analysis of the central motif and examination of the ideology behind it. The method follows three stages, which are introduced below as Panofsky used it. For clarity's sake I include here a short, simplified example of my application of the method.

1. *Interpretation of primary or natural motif.*
Wooden image of a long-haired standing woman wearing a long court dress of past Myanmar royals. Lady is holding her hair in her hands.
2. *Iconographical analysis: interpretation of secondary or conventional motif.*
Image is Earth Goddess *Withoudaya* witnessing Gotama's Enlightenment during Demon *Man's* attack.
3. *Iconographical interpretation: interpretation of the contents, the meaning of artwork, which includes symbolical values.*¹²
Withoudaya symbolizes the amount of merit attained by Gotama in his countless past lives. When Myanmar's give a donation or present to pagoda, image of Buddha or to a member of *Sangha*, they ask *Withoudaya* to count the deed for their merit by pouring water on the Buddha image.

Each traditional motif was, when documented in the field, arranged and analysed and noted down according to this method. Panofsky has not been referred to in chapter six where traditional motifs have been introduced and

12 Panofsky 1965, 3-16.

explained since his method has been merely a tool for organizing the material in logical form. The three steps of the method proved valuable in doing this. Modern images have also been examined through the same stages, but usually they lack deeper symbolical values. As Panofsky developed his iconology by examining and comparing paintings of Renaissance to those of Baroque, his method has certain restrictions when applied to decorative artworks without narrative contents. Modern motifs have therefore been explained and described in documentary form intending to help identification. I have not tried to *explain* or translate the Buddhist motifs to anything else except what they are. A tiny elephant kneeling at Buddha's feet or carved in bas-relief on the side of his throne *means* the legend of the taming of Nalagiri, a fact obvious to every Buddhist. I try not to be guilty of altering or rewriting the symbolic motifs, but rather simply to introduce them to the reader. The information about popular beliefs connected to some images is collected from interviews and personal conversations with my Myanmar informants. There, the explanations of symbols are not mine.

Finally, the last chapter tries to foretell the future of woodcarving and other art traditions in Myanmar. The country is entering a market economy. There is not a culture in the modern world, where artists and craftsmen would be considered as major assets. Survival of tradition depends on the values of the nation. An outsider can only document it.

The name of the country and sites have been changed in 1989 to correspond properly with the original Myanmar language names. The official name of the country is *the Republic of Union of Myanmar*, the old name Burma was given by colonial British rulers. The capital *Yangon* was known before as Rangoon, *Bago* as Pegu, *Bagan* as Pagan and *Inwa* as Ava. Buddhist concepts are mentioned in *Pali*, the holy language of *Theravada Buddhism*. For some readers possibly more familiar Sanskrit words like Karma for *Kamma* (*Kan*) or Nirvana for *Nibbana* (*Neiban*), would incorrectly point to Mahayana Buddhism. The transliteration of the Myanmar language is rather mixed and varies from one literary source to another. I have, quite arbitrarily chosen forms which I think should be easily recognizable. There is a glossary (Appendix 6) included in the end of the study for checking some of the Myanmar and Pali language words.

My main literal reference for writing the chapter on classical society in Myanmar is Michael Aung-Thwin's *Pagan, the Origins of Modern Burma* (1985). Nina Oshegowa's and Sergei Oshegow's *Kunst in Burma* (1988), Paul Strachan's *Pagan. Art & Architecture of Old Burma* and few recent catalogues of Myanmar arts in foreign collections - Otto Karow's, *Burmese Buddhist Sculpture* (1991) and Haskia Hasson's, *Ancient Buddhist Art from Burma* (1993) were important in sketching the outlines of historical sculpture. Distinguished monographs and articles on Myanmar arts by Sylvia Fraser-Lu and Noel F. Singer are valuable publications which until recently have solely defended Myanmar's well deserved place in the history of world art. The ever enchanting classics Shway Yoe's alias Sir James George Scott's *The Burman, His Life and Notions* originally published 1882 and Scott O'Connor's *Mandalay and Other Cities of the Past in Burma* (1907) not to forget John Crawford's detailed and colourful *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the*

Court of Ava (1834) have painted the life of past Myanmar with vivid but I'm afraid somewhat romantic colours in my imagination and should therefore be mentioned.

The study at hand aims to bring the history of Buddhist woodcarving art in Myanmar up to date by introducing the trends of modern and contemporary arts and crafts and setting them in their proper place in a continuum of a long, living tradition.

4 CLASSICAL MYANMAR SOCIETY

From Chronicle Myths to Historical Bagan

"Now we shall tell the story of Pagan Arimaddana. When the Lord revealed himself, he passed in his journeyings from the Middle Country and came to the site of that kingdom. He stood on the summit of Mt. Tangyi, and looked and saw a white heron and a black crow alight on the top of a Butea tree on a steep bank; moreover, he saw a preta in the form of a monitor with a double tongue abiding within the fork of the Butea tree, and a small frog crouching at its base. And he smiled. His cousin Shin Ananda entreated him saying, 'Why smilest thou?' And the Lord prophesied and said, 'Beloved Ananda! In the 651st year after my parinirvana there shall be a great kingdom in this place. The alighting of the white heron and black crow on the top of the Butea tree signifies that there shall be many persons practising charity and virtue in that kingdom; there shall also be many wicked persons without virtue. The preta in the form of monitor with a double tongue abiding within the fork of the Butea tree, signifies that the people of that kingdom shall not till the land but shall live by merchandise, selling and buying, and their speech shall not be the words of truth but falsehood. The small frog crouching at the base of the Butea tree signifies that the people shall be cool-bellied as the frog, and happy."¹³

National chronicles of the *Pyu*, *Mon*, *Myanmar*, *Shan* and *Arakanese* begin their proud histories way back into the mythical past. In the Arakanese list of rulers, the first kings of *Dinnyawaddy* ruled the area already in 2666 BC. The first Pyu capital *Tagaung* is mentioned to have been founded in the 9th century BC. Further, the hero kings claim descent from union of a Sun prince and Naga princess. Detailed and colourful accounts do not help the historian much in his work - all the other evidence is lacking.¹⁴

All that is known with present historical and archaeological certainty about the people who inhabited Myanmar before the 6th century is that on

13 The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, 29-30.

14 See for the story of king Pyusawhti in The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, 30-34.

the rich plains of the north, around Kyaukse and Bagan, rice was cultivated by the *Pyu*. The *Hmannan Yazawin* or the Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma, begun in 1829 states that there were three major tribes, the *Pyus*, the *Kanyans* and the *Thaks*, of which the *Pyus* were leaders. According to Myanmar scholars the *Myanmars* were a sub-tribe of the *Pyu* and already lived in the Ayeyarwady area this time. When the *Pyu* lost their power the *Myanmars* were ready to take charge.¹⁵ This opinion differs greatly from the usually accepted Western conclusion, that the *Myanmars* came to the Ayeyarwady valley after conquest of the area by *Ko-lo-feng*, ruler of Nanchao, Yunnanese kingdom. Since these historical events happened in the beginning of the ninth century and the period after has been the rule of *Myanmars*, it would be remarkable indeed if a semi-nomadic people could in a century build a great empire like Bagan¹⁶.

The origin of the *Pyu* and the *Myanmars* is unknown, but they adopted Buddhism from North India. Lower Myanmar had a colony of *Indian immigrants* from Madras and Orissa, and settlements of *Mon*, also of uncertain origin. The *Pyu* and the *Mon* whoever they were and where ever they came from, built the basis for Myanmar culture that was to evolve by the turn of 8th and 9th century.¹⁷

Pyu culture is better known than *Mon*. *Pyu* cities are fairly well preserved for study since the *Pyu* deserted their old dwellings when the capital was moved to another place. Later the *Myanmars* followed this practise. *Mon* cities like Bago are still inhabited, so the traces and clues of *Mon* history disappear under the layers of centuries of everyday life. Three *Pyu* cities are known at the moment: *Peikthano*, "City of Visnu" from the 1st to 5th century, *Thayekhetaya* (Sriksettra) from the 5th to 9th century and *Halin* from the 2nd to 6th century. Descriptions of the glories of these cities are written down by Chinese pilgrims and embassies, the example following below from about 9th century *Thayekhetaya*. Note the remarkable similarity with the royal city of Mandalay built a thousand years later.

"The wall of the capital, measuring 160 li in length, is made of green glazed brick and is protected by a moat lined with bricks; it is pierced by twelve gates and armed with towers at the corners. Its population includes several tens of thousands of families. The houses are roofed with lead and tin shingles. There are more than a hundred Buddhist monasteries, decorated with gold, silver, and many colors of paint and hung with embroidered cloth. (...) Near the palace there is a statue of a large white elephant 100 feet high, in front of which all those who have grievances kneel, reflecting inwardly about the justice or injustice of their own cause. In case of public misfortunes, the king himself bows down before the elephant, burning incense and blaming for himself the offences he had committed. (...) Young boys and girls have their heads completely shaven at seven years of age and are then placed in the temples and convents. They live there until their twentieth year, studying the religion of the Buddha. (...) The inhabitants of the country profess a love of life and horror of killing.

15 Maung Htin Aung 1970, 11-14. Personal information from Director General U Thawda Sein, Department of Archaeology and Lecturer U Khin Kyaw October 1992, Yangon.

16 Maung Htin Aung 1970, 14.

17 Hall 1987, 151.

Neither shackles, manacles, nor any instruments of torture are used on accused persons, who are simply tied up. Only murder is punished with death."¹⁸

Admiring reports like this testify that the Pyu must have had a long, highly civilized cultural tradition behind them.

Only few sculptures survive from early Peikthano, but the city of Thayekhataya from the 5th to 9th centuries provides more examples. The central motif for pictorial art was Buddha and his legendary life. An interesting, and revealing group of sculptures are the miniature bronze dancers and musicians, who obviously borrow their positions and gestures from Indian dance tradition. Also, other surviving examples of Pyu sculpture and relief show a strong Indian influence. The Pyu mastered the *cire perdue* method for bronze casting. Cylindrical stupas culminating in a pointed or hemispherical dome were favoured Buddhist monuments by Pyu architects.¹⁹ National Museum in Yangon houses a small collection of Pyu votive sculptures and copies of the miniature dancers.

The Mon developed one of the most advanced cultures in the whole of South-East Asia. Menam Chao Phya delta was their political and cultural centre. The Buddhist kingdom of Dvaravati with its capital Nakom Pathom in present day Thailand flourished from the sixth century onwards. The best examples of Mon art have in fact survived in Thailand. The Mons of Myanmar inhabited the Irrawaddy delta in Lower Myanmar. They were the pioneers in rice and bean cultivation in Myanmar and they also invented the irrigation system which is vital to the dry plateau of Central Myanmar. Very little is known about the origins and early history of the Mon people. There could be a clue in names of places and people: Bago was earlier named Ussa - Odra, that is Orissa, or the name Sriksettra, that is Puri given to Prome. Myanmars called their southern neighbours by the slightly degrading name *Talaing*, which points to Teligana in Madras. Indian immigration to South-East Asia was intensive during the second and third centuries AD. Their cultural influences flourished in all royal courts of the area from the 4th to 13th centuries. The influence of Indian culture is still evident even most of its original features have been rewritten to suit the national taste.²⁰

Myanmar chronicles date the founding of *Bagan* back to the second century AD and give a long list of chiefs and rulers as evidence. Other historical proof cannot be found, but one of the kings mentioned, *Popa Sorahan* is supposed to be the founder of the Myanmar era in 638.²¹

Bagan or *Arimaddanapura* as the city also was known, was according

18 One li is about 0,25 km. 160 li corresponds thus about 40 km, which is clearly overestimated by the traveller. The city wall was about 14 km. Oshegowa 1988, 23. Coedes 1971, 104-105.

19 Oshegowa 1988, 19-30. Coedes 1971, 87.

20 Hall 1987, 155-156. Coedes 1971, 17, 23-24, 30.

21 Myanmar era is still followed. For example some of the traditional woodcarvers interviewed for the present study gave their date of birth in the Myanmar era with explanation that they did not know the Western year. The calendar is lunar and thus the new year doesn't begin on certain date regularly as in our Western calendar. The year 1994 is 1355/1356 the New Year being on the 17th April. In addition, the Myanmars and especially the Thai follow the Buddhist era, also a lunar calendar. 1994 is year 2537.

to tradition founded by *Thamoddarit* in 107 AD. Historically the capital was formed by the union of 19 villages in 849 after king *Pyinpya* ordered a wall to be built around the city. Political union was strengthened in a way that proved its worth many times in later Myanmar history: by rationalizing religious cults. In the past every village had their own guardian spirits. The new capital needed more powerful protectors than the old village Nats. Mighty *Min Mahagiri* Nat and his sister *Taunggyi Shin* Nat were chosen for the task. Their images are still respected in the ancient *Sarabha* gate of old Bagan now leading to the archaeological city. Mahagiri Nats are also guardians of almost every Myanmar home even today.²²

In this period of history several factors were preparing the ground for rise of classical Myanmar culture. *Mahayana* and probably also tantristic *Vajrayana* Buddhism in the form of esoteric practises of Ari monks, were strongly present along with age-old animistic folk religion. The Indian population must have been active since the features of their arts and architecture show clearly in cultural life. In the South *Hamsavati*, later Bago was founded in 825. Buddhism and *Brahmanism* coexisted. Lower Myanmar was one of the first regions in Southeast Asia to be converted to Buddhism. The Mon maintained spiritual contacts with South India and Sri Lanka, the holy land of Theravada Buddhism.

A dramatic turning point both for the history of Myanmar and the development of Myanmar Buddhism was year 1044, when the legendary *Anawrahta* ascended the throne of Bagan. Another date to remember is 1056. The venerable monk *Shin Arahan*, a brahmin's son from Thaton came to Anawrahta's court and persuaded the powerful king to follow Theravada Buddhism. Bagan was now ready for its Golden Age. Only the final, religious emblem of Anawrahta's rule over the Buddhist world was lacking.

Soon after Anawrahta's succession, war against Thaton took place in 1057. Anawrahta demanded the surrendering of the holy *Tipitaka*, a collection of valuable Theravada manuscripts from king *Manuha* of Thaton. Resistance was broken in a short battle and Manuha had to follow the victorious Anawrahta with his family, court, learned monks and artists as prisoners of war to Bagan. Mon prisoners were admired and respected for their sophisticated culture. The artists and architects were challenged to build an incomparable capital in honour of their victors. Monks were occupied with organizing religious life and education. Old contacts with India, the homeland of Buddhism and also to Sri Lanka were revived. The kingdom extended further by Anawrahta's army conquering Northern Arakan, Cittagong and marching towards the Khmer kingdom. Myanmar adapted Mon culture with great enthusiasm. For example the first inscriptions in Myanmar language, written in Mon characters follow only one year after the conquest, in 1058. To the oldest surviving monuments of Bagan must be counted Nan-paya and Manuha dating from 1060, both of which were built by the prisoner king Manuha of Thaton.²³

22 Legend of Mahagiri Nats in *The Glass Palace Chronicle* 1960, 45-46. More about Nat spirits in chapter *Tribe of Nats* p. 59ff.

23 Ray 1946, 76, 79. Rawson 1967, 162-168. Coedes 1971, 149.

Anawrahta's powerful Bagan mixed together the early advanced civilizations of Pyu and Mon with energetic Myanmar seasoned by a strong Indian influence. The Bagan period chose the best from each people's culture and arts, melted the features together and shaped the classical Myanmar ideals of society, religion and arts. The classical Golden Age ended in the Mongol conquest and the fall of Bagan in 1287, but the ideals then founded have survived centuries.

Artist in Classical Society

According to Michael Aung-Thwin, the classical Myanmar society was based on five fundamental components. *Theravada Buddhism* was, and continues to be the main element of the culture. Bagan's *economy of redistribution* was deeply embedded in its religion, but also in politics, social status and law. The kingdom's administration was based on an *agrarian environment*. The greatest problem to be solved by the administration was a limited and constantly low supply of labour. Bagan's society was of a *cellular* and *hierarchic* organization. Members of the society were bound together with institutional ties on the other hand and divided into horizontal classes on the other. Finally, *codified laws*, which principally reflected the values of social institutions were founded on hierarchy and communalism, and crowned by ideal kingship. According to the originally Indian concept of *Kammaraja*, the king is the guardian and supporter of the Buddhist faith. Buddhist argumentation and phraseology was actively used for justification of certain political acts or the legitimization of power. All these components were as significant in the kingdom of Bagan as they were a thousand years later in the Konbaung dynasty of Mandalay.²⁴

In Bagan, society and organizations were controlled by an autocratic king. On the other hand there was an independent monastic order, the *Sangha* acting outside the king's immediate power. The society divided itself into four major groups according to their relationship towards the ruling institutions. An individual was always a part of one of these groups and therefore committed and responsible that institution. Commitment, *kywan relationship*, did not mean "slavery" as it is understood in the West. In Myanmar history the word "kywan" obtained the connotation of slave only shortly before the British invasion. In practise, *kywan relationship* meant a situation where an individual is a legal subject of the ruling institution. Commitment guaranteed safety, stability, social and political status - and in some cases, a better rebirth. *Kywan relationship* was actively sought after - especially during restless times. General social, political and economic reasoning influenced the choice of a master. *Sangha* and the Crown were the most attractive employers: they offered the best salaries, possibilities for climbing the social ladders and a chance to prove one's personal abilities in public. Involuntary

24 Aung-Thwin 1985, 199-200.

kywan status was caused by debts, war imprisonment or birth.²⁵

The subjects of Bagan king who belonged to the first social group, *asan*, were not as strictly bound by institutional commitment as other groups. The word *asan* does not imply "freeborn man" in the feudal sense. *Asan* is rather quite a neutral, descriptive word, generally meaning "a doer". *A* is substantive, *-san* its suffix belongs to names of professions. For example *panpu san* - woodcarver, *pankli san* - artist, *ut san* - brickmaker, *panphay san* - blacksmith or *pura san* - sculptor, or literally "maker of *pura*" the Buddha image. Sometimes the professional title had a suffix *-sma*, "an expert" instead of the usual *san*. *Asan* craftsmen and artisans were independent, working on contract and paid well in cash and kind. They were in no way forced labour, but rather respected professionals who were treated accordingly.²⁶ One translated inscription from 1236 for example enumerates the expenses of a monastery. The long list mentions several groups of artesans, like sculptors, painters and smiths. Relatively large payments were offered to woodcarvers and sculptors:

"... given to the imagemakers for ten standing Buddhas 10 ticals of silver... given to image makers 1 fine black cloth and waist band ... and one horse ²⁷".

Part of the salary was also paid in food, clothing and sometimes valuable animals, as in example, horses. The decorators, sculptors and painters of magnificent Bagan temples were held in very high esteem. They were considered equally important to the construction work as the actual builders, the masons, smiths and carpenters.²⁸ Naturally a strict social status hierarchy prevailed also inside the *asan* group. Not all *asans* were artists. Merchants, washermen, boatmen, farmers etc. also belonged to the group. Artists enjoyed relatively good income and high status inside the *asan* group, but socially they were not necessarily higher than groups that were "not free" or were bonded to an institution. Groups holding *kywan* status to the Crown, especially military, stood on a higher social ladder than the more independent *asan*.²⁹

The origin of the word *kywan* is possibly "a subject" or "a captive". In Bagan times *kywan* most probably meant a servant. *Kywan* served a private patron, but he was still understood as being bonded to an institution since his patron was a part of it. A feudal order where independent landowners controlled large areas of kingdom never developed in Bagan.³⁰

Kywan relationship was either voluntary, a redemption of debts or determined by birth. Usually *kywans* worked as household servants or bodyguards. The status was not always hereditary. For example the children of the

25 Aung-Thwin 1985, 75-77.

26 Aung-Thwin 1985, 79-81. Than Tun 1988, 49-51.

27 Imagemaker means accurately a sculptor of Buddha image. Tical is an Indian weight: 100 ticals is appx 1,6 kg. Fraser-Lu 1989, 23. For more detailed lists for expenditure used in religious buildings of Bagan see Than Tun 1988, 63-66.

28 Than Tun 1959, 77-79.

29 Aung-Thwin 1985, 79-81.

30 Aung-Thwin 1985, 81. Than Tun 1988, 51-53.

debtor were not responsible for the obligations made by their parents. Although a patron could sell, change to another property or give his kywans as presents like anything else he owned, the bondage of a kywan was not permanent. A kywan servant was worth about 30 ticals of silver or alternately 50 kywans could be accepted in trade for one elephant. On the other hand a kywan could redeem himself for as little as five viss of copper. In the case of an insolvent debtor who became a kywan the price of redemption would be enormous.³¹

The prices of kywans also suggest some sort of "human trade" in Bagan. Later centuries saw violent slave raids executed by the *feringhi*, Portuguese adventurers and soldiers of fortune, and by some neighbouring states on Myanmar soil. Scarce labour was the main reason for the demand of prisoners from this barbarous warfare. The estimated population of the pre-colonial kingdom right up until the end of the 18th century is only about one to two and half million.³²

It seems that some of the patrons took care of their servants following the best Buddhist ideals. An inscription dated in 1291 testifies that Queen Saw dedicated kywans to a monastery and urged that when they became old and sick, the monks must provide proper treatment and care for them. Sometimes also representatives of asan group were dedicated - in their case sponsored for assignment - in religious purposes. In 1269 a donor dedicated a laksma, master carpenter and a panphay san, blacksmith, to a ruined monastery to carry out necessary repairs.³³

The status of *pura kywan*, Buddha's servant was permanent and hereditary. The descendants of the so called "pagoda slaves" are still today doing their duties by cleaning the pagoda and monastery compounds and taking care of the needs of Sangha. The social and spiritual status of pura kywan was very high in Bagan times, although they did not hold any political position. The members of the asan, especially the artist, could work temporarily as hired pura kywans. Some of the pura kywans were also former kywans donated to a pagoda or monastery by their patron. Unlike the asan, pura kywans were free from taxation. The status of pura kywan was attractive also during wartime - many escaped military service to the safety of a monastery. A king could also get rid of annoying ministers by donating them to the service of the Sangha.³⁴

In fact all people belonged to the fourth group, *kywan-to*, which means "the royal subject". As a social group, kywan-to included soldiers, artists, clerks and servants employed by the Crown. Most of the prisoners of war got the status of kywan-to or pura kywan. Although the captive artists and artesans from 11th century Thaton and 18th century Ayutthaya were prisoners of war and therefore held rather low social position, their descendants were already highly respected members of Myanmar society. There are probably also instances where rebelling princes were made kywans. They

31 Aung-Thwin 1985, 81-85. Than Tun 1988, 53.

32 Hall 1956, 93. Aung-Thwin 1985, 95.

33 Aung-Thwin 1985, 81-85. Than Tun 1988, 52-55.

34 Aung-Thwin 1985, 85-87.

could win back their freedom by redemption or by simply running away.³⁵

As stability has always been the most respected value in Myanmar society, the role of an individual would be to find his place and position in a social organization. The main interest was to preserve the group - not to develop a society consisting of individuals. Social control was strengthened by forming localized groups of different professionals and specialists. Groups with the same occupations resided in villages or sections of the city named after their particular field of work. The asans lived in one village, pura kywans and kywan-tos in another. From inscriptions we know that, for example the Panthyan village was for masons and Pumna for the ever active brahmins. Domestic servants lived in Kyon Rwalum, the village of servants. Musicians, artists and artesans were settled each in their respective sections of town in Cakuin (Sagaing). The different nationalities living within Bagan kingdom were scattered among the groups. Inscriptions mention for example Rakhuins, Arakanese, both among the donors and as pura kywans being donated.³⁶

The custom of living together in quarters or villages according to profession is deeply rooted and lives on in present day Myanmar. In Mandalay, the center of traditional Myanmar culture, the artists and artesans occupy the same streets and quarters of the city where their forefathers settled down when the last royal city was founded in 1857. The most famous example would be *Thampawaddy*, "the city of bronzecasters". Narrow streets of the quarter are lined with family run workshops of woodcarvers, bronzecasters, *hti*-makers and more. Some of the workshops have been there for generations. Other streets of the old capital are home to pwe theatre actors, gold leaf makers or tapestry workshops. Certain villages are famous for their long tradition of special workmanship. For example *Kyaukka* and old Bagan are known for their lacquerware. Even in modern Yangon there are streets occupied almost solely by slipper maker's home factories, tailor's or dressmaker's shops. Further, different national and religious minorities tend to live among their own groups: Indians, Chinese or Kayin (Karen) in their known quarters, Hindu, Muslim and Christians in other parts of the city.

Traditionally, work and special skills were handed down from father to son inside the rather closed professional group. Social movement was not possible. Pura kywan or kywan-to could not become asan, although the contrary was possible. Inherited professions and restricted location limited the choices. For the kingdom these actions were necessary because of the limited resource of man power needed in building and keeping a powerful state. For an individual, social rules provided much valued safety and stability.

Hierarchy and conservatism still flavour the social life of present day Myanmar. Urbanization and wider possibilities for higher education have offered more choice for young people in cities. The father's profession is not necessarily followed. Interviews of artists and art students in Yangon and Mandalay show that although many of the informants have artists or craftsmen in their families or among close relatives, only relatively few follow their

35 Aung-Thwin 1985, 87-91. Than Tun 1988, 53.

36 Aung-Thwin 1985, 91. Than Tun 1988, 47-48.

father's occupation. Nevertheless, marriages between different ranking social groups are rather unusual. The situation would be more traditional for much of the countryside, where 80 % of Myanmars live in small farming communities³⁷.

Kan Ame, Kan Aphe

In the cycle of rebirth, a human being creates himself. He is a child of his past and a parent for his future. Kan ame, Kan aphe - *Kamma* is our mother and father.

"This new being which is the present manifestation of the stream of Kamma energy is not the same as, and has no identity with, the previous one in its line; the aggregate that makes up its composition being different from, and having no identity with, those that make up the being of its predecessor. And yet it is not an entirely different being, since it has the same stream of Kamma energy, though modified perchance just by having shown itself in that last manifestation, which is now making its presence known in the sense-perceptible world as the new being"³⁸

The Pali word *Kamma* (Myanmar *Kan*) means action, or more accurately action and its result. Kamma is the universal law of cause and effect. A person is responsible for his actions: good merit (*punna*) flows from positive action and from life according to a moral and religious code follows. Negative action - breaking the rules of Buddhism, causes bad merit (*apunna*). Each action is volitional and gathers up a person's cosmic outcome, which affects his next existence by determining the conditions and circumstances where he is born.

Canonical Theravada Buddhism teaches total freedom of mental and physical attachment in *Nibbana* (*Neiban*). When Nibbana is concerned both good and bad merit are equally harmful, since they both lead to rebirth. Nibbana is an extremely high and difficult goal for most people. Ordinary Myanmars have for generations struggled to maximize the amount of good merit thus ensuring a better rebirth. The greatest amount of positive merit falls naturally on *Pongyis* ("Great Glory"), the venerable monks. They have not only chosen the best possible way of living, but they also are able to avoid the inevitable bad merit that follows the layman in his everyday life and work.

According to Buddhist doctrine, Kamma is personal. It refers to all intentional actions whether mental, verbal or physical. According to canonical texts it cannot be shared. Since Kamma is not a reason for determinism nor even distantly related to fatalism, the Myanmars have taken the word "*intentional*" under interpretation. The unselfish wish of sharing the merit, the most

37 Statistics estimated in Burma - Maakatsaus 1985, 11.

38 Bhikkhu Silacana. U Thittila 1986, 97.

valuable of all treasures in our human world is itself a meritorious act. Also it enables the invisible Devas and Nats to participate in the deed by approving it by saying "Thadu. Thadu. Thadu", well done. The king, guardian and generous sponsor of the religion was expected to share the merit of his pagoda and temple construction:

"By this abundant merit I desire
 Here nor hereafter no angelic pomp
 Of Brahmas, Suras, Maras; nor the state
 And splendour of a monarch; nay, not even
 To be the pupil of the Conqueror.
 But I would build a causeway sheer athwart
 The river of samsara, and all folk
 Would speed across thereby until they reach
 The Blessed City"³⁹

The ordinary layman is also doing his best. Popular interpretation of sharing merit presents the possibility to transfer merit even to deceased relatives. This is of course contrary to the doctrine of *Anatta*, a living being cannot have a soul - but still it has lived centuries alongside flexible canonical Buddhism.

"May all creatures suffering torment in the four states of punishment reach the happy abodes of the Deva. May all my relatives, friends and all other beings inhabiting this earth and the ten thousand worlds, share the benefits of this meritorious act."⁴⁰

The Myanmar name generosity (*dana*) as the most important action for collecting positive merit. Moral conduct and following the Buddhist rules keeps a layman's Kamma in balance, but occasional errings from the middle path weighs the scale to the negative side. Generosity not only stabilizes the situation, but it also confirms possibilities for better rebirth. All the more - the amount of generosity can be accurately measured.⁴¹ Sometimes donations are expected to bring real and concrete results in this or future lives: a girl arranging flowers in front of the Buddha might hope to have an even more attractive appearance in next life. A person adding gold leaf to a famous and powerful image of Buddha or donating a *hti* to crown a pagoda could wish to be born to a wealthy family. Ordering certain specific images of Buddha are believed to have a positive effect on donor's private enterprises, bringing success and good luck. A Buddha sitting on elephants ensures success for one's children for example.⁴² The hopes and wishes attached to donations are human, but in fact opposite to the actual teaching of Buddha.

Originally *dana* meant expressly ensuring the daily livelihood for members of Sangha. Already during Gotama Buddha's lifetime this extended

39 King Alaungsithu of Bagan at the dedication of Shwegugyi Pagoda in 1131. The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, xi-xii. Conqueror points to Buddha, Samsara is the cycle of rebirth, and Blessed City symbolizes peace in Nibbana.

40 Spiro 1982, 124.

41 Spiro 1982, 103-104.

42 These examples are only few of wishes expressed in non-formal talks in pagodas and homes.

to donating monasteries and gardens for the use of the monks during the rainy lent season. Soon, however, dana covered all the needs of large monastery complexes and hundreds of monks. In addition to land and buildings the devout laymen and laywomen donated buffaloes, horses, books, manuscripts, boats, rice, gold, silver, jewelry, betel - and the most important of all, able craftsmen, workers of different fields and servants to build, repair and take care of the whole. Sometimes the donor dedicated himself together with his family as servants of the Sangha.⁴³

Donations and generosity aim towards the Buddhist ideal of abandoning and destroying the illusion of Self. By giving, sacrifice, concentrating one's whole mind in something beyond one's own personal interest, selfish greed and desire are suppressed and finally won over.⁴⁴ Lavish donations to Sangha could help in bringing peace to struggling mind also in this life. Popular Myanmar legend tells a story about the great king Anawrahta of Bagan, who ascended to the throne after killing his brother Sokkate in a duel. Nightmare and guilt tormented the king until one night he dreamed that *Thagya Min*, the benevolent king of gods descended from heavens to meet him. Thagya Min advised the troubled king to build pagodas, temples and monasteries to regain his peace of mind.

There is no better testimonial to the relationship between the desire to gain merit and its material consequences than the 2200 religious building still in situ in the archaeological city of old Bagan. 25 square miles of the capital were once filled with an estimated 3000 to 5000 temples. Bagan apparently built about 5000 temples in its zenith, the period of 100 to 150 years between 1100-1250, when most temples were constructed. This amazing achievement was conceived by hundreds of skilled professionals, masons, craftsmen and artist, who were paid - not forced labour in Bagan's monumental building projects. Buddhism was patronized by royalty and supported enthusiastically by the public. Times were marked with economical opportunity and cultural excitement. Artists, religious figures, pilgrims and scholars flocked into the magnificent capital of the kingdom.

The close relationship between religious endowments and economical success continued only as long as royalty supported it. *Shwesandaw Pagoda* in Prome was built in the 11th century. Kings of Myanmar had through centuries supported the shrine and nearby village population, who had traditionally been taking care of the monument. When British rule reached Prome by the mid 19th century, the rents were appropriated by the new government. As a result, the temple complex almost immediately fell into decay. Also the population of the area which had depended on royal endowments had to move away and find new jobs and means of livelihood. The most vulnerable groups of people in these economical changes were professionals directly connected to religious institutions, such as craftsmen, scribes, scholars and monks.⁴⁵

Apart from famous historical monuments, most of the donations were

43 Ray 1946, 160-161.

44 Nash 1973, 115.

45 Aung-Thwin 1985, 169, 174, 179-181.

and still are, anonymous votives of private devotion. Naturally great donations which affect the whole community also bring noteworthy social prestige to the donor. The highest respect and value both religiously and socially falls to the sponsor of the building of a pagoda. Graceful bell-shaped pagodas are distinctive landmarks in the Myanmar scenery everywhere. Their large, ever-growing number witnesses the great esteem Buddhism still holds in the hearts of people in Myanmar. The second highest place in the merit hierarchy is occupied by the sponsor of *Shinbyu*. *Shinbyu* is a novitiate for boys to Buddhist Sangha, and it is the most important of family celebrations. Third ranks the monastery builder, then a layman donating a well or a bronze bell to the monastery. *Hsungywe*, a special banquet for monks, daily food presents and taking care of everyday needs of venerable monks follow in line. Generosity and hospitality, which meets the visitor everywhere in the country are also considered as natural parts of the Buddhist way of life.⁴⁶

46 Nash 1973, 116.

5 WOODEN SCULPTURE IN TRADITIONAL MYANMAR

Art About Buddhism

"The Buddha image came into being because a need was felt for it, not because a need had been felt for "art"⁴⁷."

The ascetic and intellectual striving of early Buddhism is truly and faithfully followed by the builders of the first stupas. The simple, monumental shape, plain walls and undecorated surrounding fences underline aniconic symbolism. The invisible presence of Buddha and the suggestive symbols of certain well known dogmas or incidents of his life are genuine Buddhist art. Everything that came later, is art about Buddhism.⁴⁸

Although Buddhism was from the very beginning a missionary religion and was actively promoted by Indian king *Asoka* already in the second century BC, Southeast Asia is totally lacking a counterpart for symbolical art expression, which Indian artists had mastered for two centuries. When the Indian immigrants brought their culture and artifacts to the peoples of Southeast Asia in the second and third century AD, time had passed symbolical representation long before. Buddhist iconography had reached its full maturity and it has later been changed only by distinct racial features and details, which pleased the Southeast Asian eye for beauty. The most important symbols of early aniconic art, the Bodhitree, Dhammacakka - wheel of Law, stupa - pagoda, lotus and elephant were adapted as parts of the narrative. The birth of the personal Buddha image (Buddha rupa) around the beginning of the Christian era is associated with a change of contentual emphasis in

47 Coomaraswamy 1986, 164.

48 Coomaraswamy 1985, 48-49.

Buddhism. Sangha had divided into several schools. Devotion developed from simple meditation and personal homage to Buddha's symbols into popular *bhakti* with many of its characteristic features inherited from an older folk religion.⁴⁹

In India, Myanmar and other Buddhist countries, tradition cherishes the legend of the very first Buddha image being sculpted during the actual lifetime of the Teacher and argues that *Gotama* himself had been the model. The legend is told in different versions: in one the artist experiences a miraculous journey to *Tavatimsa* heaven to finish his work, or in another, the sculptor models the image from the shadow of meditating Buddha. All "Great beings" of Indian philosophical and religious schools carry 32 great and 80 minor distinctive marks (*laksana*). Long earlobes, *usnisa*, the protuberance of head, *urna* between the eyebrows on the forehead, *cakka* the symbols on soles and flat, straight back had established their place in formal artistic expression long before the first Buddha image was even sketched.

Myanmar artists were enthusiastically attracted to the legend of the first Buddha image being sculpted from a live model. The art work is usually connected to the legendary histories of Gotamas visit to Myanmar. Several sites claim to have hosted the respected guest. The royal city of Mandalay was built at the foot of the sacred Mandalay Hill after Buddha's prophesy two thousand years after the visit. National affection for magic and respect of images claimed to possess superhuman powers combined with conservative Theravada have preserved the Myanmar Buddha image almost unchanged for a thousand years. According to Myanmar belief, the original first portrait of Buddha would contain a small part of Gotama's enormous amount of superhuman powers collected during hundreds of meritorious previous existences. Thus, if an image is sculpted (or painted) as accurately as possible to resemble the original, then the new image would also possess a tiny piece of his magical being. This idea is of course opposed to canonical Buddhism and Buddha's actual teaching, but typical for syncretic Myanmar Buddhism. Sakyamuni Buddha often warned his followers from using the superior powers acquired in meditation for practising magic and miracles. Despite this obvious contradiction, the Myanmar continue their pilgrimage to Mahamuni pagoda in Mandalay, where one of the original portraits, a crowned Jambhupati Buddha, is believed to be sheltered.⁵⁰

It could be easily assumed that the thousands of sacral images which travelled with pilgrims and immigrants from India to Myanmar and other kingdoms of Southeast Asia had been taken as models for a large scale copying industry. Copies, however, have been found only from Java in certain time frame. The oldest Buddha images discovered from Southeast Asia are originally *Indian* or *Sinhalese*. The examination of the earliest local made

49 Moore 1977, 142-145, 147.

50 King Bodawpaya brought the Mahamuni, also known as Mahamyamuni image from Arakan as war booty in 1784. The sculpture is also mentioned along with Anawrahta of Bagan. Anawrahta tried unsuccessfully to take the famous image to his capital. At present the original shape of the huge bronze image is unrecognizable due to the generous donations of gold leaf growing thicker and thicker every day on the surface of the sculpture. The historical origin of the image is not known.

sculptures and reliefs from the 5th and 6th century reveal, that the Buddha at that time is already quite individual in style and easily distinguishable from the Indian prototype.⁵¹

The oldest surviving images and reliefs in Myanmar are naturally of stone or bronze with few examples of terracotta. Some wooden sculptures have however escaped destruction, and document the superior skills of artists in the Bagan era. Lacquer techniques are also mentioned in Bagan inscriptions, but time, tropical climate and insects have over centuries destroyed most of them. The majority of the surviving lacquer as well as wood artworks date from the Konbaung period 1752-1885.

Wooden Sculpture in Bagan

One of the most beautiful sculptures in all Myanmar art history is without doubt the 80 cm high gilt wooden relief of *Gotama Buddha descending from Tavatimsa* on display in the Archaeological Museum of Bagan. The teak sculpture is dated rather loosely to the 11th-13th century⁵². According to the popular legend, Buddha visited the Heaven of the Gods in order to teach the doctrine to his mother Mayadevi and the gods. The event is still celebrated in the *Tazaungmon* festival of light every year at the close of Lent at the full moon in October and November at least in Myanmar and Thailand⁵³. Thousands of candles, oil lamps and graceful lanterns are placed in pagodas and shrines to show the way for the descending Buddha on his way back to the human world.

In the Bagan teak relief, the three ladders, which according to legend were of gold, silver and crystal, can be seen behind the standing image of Buddha. Buddha's figure bends slightly to *tribhanga* familiar from Indian art. Treatment of the figure and the almost transparent robe are close to the artistic ideals of *Pala* India. Buddha's face however is clearly Myanmar. In true Bagan style the neck is carved as rather short and heavy. At Buddha's feet on the left, portrayed in smaller size stands the king of the gods *Thagya Min* or Sakka (Indra) holding an alms bowl. *Moggallana*, one of the most important disciples of Buddha kneels down depicted in still smaller scale at Thagya Min's feet. On the right side of Buddha is the four-headed *Brahma*, with three of his heads visible in profile carrying an honorary umbrella. All four images stand on an architectural platform. Gotama is carved in a most beautiful high relief. The other three figures are a little lower.⁵⁴

51 Brown 1984, 159-160.

52 Oshegowa 1988, 147.

53 In Thailand the Loi Kratong festival at the height of the best tourist season has added modern commercial attractions like beauty contests. The tradition of sending candles in small boats on rivers and putting lights in Buddhist shrines still continues.

54 In this relief Buddha is standing at the end of the heavenly ladder. In some murals in Bagan and also from later periods a suggestion of movement is achieved by

King *Kyanzittha* (1084-1113) is remembered as one of the great builders of Bagan. The *Ananda* temple (1091-1105) which imitates the snowy white peaks of the mythical Himalayan mountain Gandhamadana is a masterpiece built by the conquered Mon architects. Two of the originally four gigantic wooden Buddha images portraying the four *Buddhas of the present world era* (kalpa) have survived in the shelter of Ananda's brick vaults. The statues are placed around the solid center of the temple following the points of the compass. The northern *Kakusanda* and southern *Kassapa* date from the time of the temple's construction. *Konagamana* of the east and *Gotama* of the west were replaced by copies after the originals were destroyed in a fire. The statues were repaired at the end of 18th century when Konbaung kings actively renovated several Bagan monuments.⁵⁵

The gilt wooden images of the standing *Kassapa* and *Kakusanda* Buddha are 9,8 m - together with lotus pedestal 12 m, high. They fall something between a statue and a deep relief: the back of the sculpture is straight and flat. The figure is stiff, standing in a rather clumsy position. Hands held across the chest forming *dhammacakka mudra* quite unplastically. The robe follows the shape of the body closely as if wet. The hem of the robe falls down from the elbows forming a stiff plate-like background for the lower part of the body. The borderline is softened with decorative wave-like folds.

The magic of these monumental statues reveals itself to the viewer when they are studied from various distances. The natural position for observation is kneeling in front of the images. The anonymous master architect of *Ananda* temple placed the sources of natural light, the roof windows, ingeniously so that facial features of Buddha seem to change their expression according to the distance of the viewer. From afar, the Buddha smiles gently, but doesn't look at the kneeling person. Somewhat nearer the viewer finds herself sitting under the kindly smiling eyes of the majestic statue. Kneeling just in front, it seems that Buddha is examining the humble viewer seriously. In Bagan, the front part of the temple was reserved for monks, the middle for royals and the back for ordinary laymen - for each group the Buddha had a distinct message.

The sculptures are standing on a lotus, *padma*. At the beginning of the 12th century, the lotus had established its place as a throne or pedestal of the Buddha image, but in fact its origin is very much older. Lotus pedestals can be found in early Indian reliefs picturing *Padma-Laksmi*, the fertility goddess of earth, and *Brahma*, the dynamic creator of the universe. Early Buddhism emphasized the realistic, this-worldly aspect of Buddha by placing him simply on the ground. Later *Mahayana* centered interest on his miraculous and transcendental being. The lotus symbol in its original *Padma-Laksmi* association means the divine physical energy which maintains life; a transcendental, but still present substance of the primeval sea. In *Mahayana*, the lotus pointed to the superhuman (*Lokuttara*) qualities of the many Buddhas and

placing the feet side by side as if walking. The 13th century Sukhothai period of Thai art created a free standing image of Buddha descending from *Tavatimsa*, which actually is walking. This type of Buddha image was never adopted in other Theravada countries in Southeast Asia.

Bodhisattas, who are representations of innumerable divine and worldly states of being.⁵⁶

In Myanmar art the lotus was interpreted in the Theravada way: a plant growing through mud and water, bursting into a beautiful flower above is understood as a symbol of an individual search for the Truth which finally leads to the blossom of Enlightenment. Indian Mahayana symbolism was not known or was simply ignored. Also guardian Nat spirits at monastery doors and gates were sculpted standing on lotus pedestal and holding a budding lotus stem in their hands. The prototype for these motifs is found in Bodhisattva images popular in the arts of Mahayana.

Indian influences are clearly visible in images representing the standing *Lokesvara*, guardian of the world or possibly a *Bodhisatta* in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Bagan. Life size wooden statues of this type have been found in several Bagan temples. Bodhisatta images were sculpted from a single block of wood. The slender body bends in slight a tribhanga. The head is crowned with high *mukuta* familiar in Indian art, and it is often rather large compared to the rest of the body. The hand gesture is the emphatic boon granting *varada mudra* suitable for the ideology of benevolent Bodhisattas. The faces of the images bear typical Bagan style features. It is likely that the carvers were local craftsmen. Statues are dated to the 12th and 13th century.

Lokesvara is not a originally Myanmar figure but a loan from Mahayana India. He is one of the many forms of Bodhisatta *Avalokitesvara*, the personification of love and compassion. Avalokitesvara is the most popular of the Bodhisattas in Mahayana. His cult was already established in India in the 3rd century BC. Avalokitesvara was known to the Pyu and his Lokesvara form is embossed in votive tablets signed by Anawrahta himself. In mythology he acts as healer and protector from illnesses. Mahayana connections are nowadays not known and the image is classified as a Nat.⁵⁷

Few colossal *temple doors* have survived as witness to the art of Bagan woodcarvers. The oldest of the three examples is a heavy door exhibited in the *Shwezigon Pagoda* compound in present day Nyaung-Oo about 5 km outside the Bagan Archaeological city. The construction of the pagoda began in the late period of *Anawrahta's* rule but it was finished by *Kyanziththa* (1084-1113). The massive teak door dates to year 1089 in king *Kyanziththa's* reign. The door is divided in simple cassette panels. Dancers and musicians in bas relief in crossings of the door are reminiscent of the earlier Pyu miniatures with their open, Indian-style dance postures. In December 1993 the door protected by an iron fence in one of the *tazaungs* on the platform, had just been treated with protecting mineral oil which tends to make details rather indistinct before it is, in its due time fully absorbed to the wood material.

From the original four massive double doors of the *Ananda* temple (built by king *Kyanziththa* in 1113) three pairs have survived. Two of the doors are identical. One bears a different animal motif. Relief on the curved upper part of the roughly 10 m tall door is rather unclear in the dim light of the

56 Zimmer 1984, 173-175, 193.

57 Gupte 1980, 112-113. Strachan 1989, 33. Oshegowa 1988, 315.

interior. Two of the doors have *hintha* birds and the one door has a leaping *chinthe* lion motifs. *Hintha* the goose (Brahma's vehicle *hamsa*) is an important motif in Myanmar art at least from the 7th century onwards⁵⁸. *Hintha* was the emblem of *Mon* dynasties. It travelled to Bagan with the captive court artist of king Manuha after the conquest of *Thaton* in 1057. In low corners of the two similar doors a crowned Nat holding a sword is guarding the entrance sitting in a multi-roofed pavillion, the familiar *pyatthat* characteristic to Myanmar architecture. In the one door the same place is occupied by a grinning plump cheeked, round bellied *Yakkha* gnome holding two clubs and sitting on his heels under foliage. The lattice at the center of the door is surrounded by lines of simplified formal lotuses and angular foliage typical of the Bagan period. The doorways were originally painted with cinnabar, the favourite vermilion colour of Myanmars imported from China. Some remnants of the original colour are still visible in corners of the reliefs protected from sun and rain by the heavy vaults of the temple. In December 1993 renovation work was under way and the doors were partly painted with red paint.

From the original four double doors of the *Shwegugyi* temple (built by king *Alaungsithu* in 1131) only one is in relatively good condition. In one door only the other half has survived, the remaining two are badly broken and damaged. Delicately carved upper panels depict two *hintha* birds sitting opposite each other with a leaf in their beak. (Fig. 3). The birds are surrounded by blooming foliage. The lower part of the door is decorated with simplified lotus and leaf ornament bordering the doors. The beautiful wooden doors of *Shwegugyi*, "Great Golden Cave" have attracted less attention and therefore also get less care than the original doors of the famous *Shwezigon* and *Ananda*. Since the doors are not inside the temple construction as is the case in *Ananda*, but rather open to the damages of weather and possible vandalism, they are in urgent need of conservation and protection.

The collections of the *Archaeological Museum of Bagan* include also some interesting examples of later wooden sculpture developed from Bagan's golden age. The standing Buddha image in protective *abhaya mudra* dates to the end of the 13th century closely resembling the classical face of the many sitting sandstone Buddhas. The body and robe are represented in similar stiff and formal style to the *Kassapa Buddha* of *Ananda* introduced earlier.

In another sculpted panel (Fig. 1) dating from the 14th century, a rather heavily built Buddha is standing in compassionate *varada mudra* on a double lotus. Again the monk's robe follows closely the shape of the figure, falling down behind the arms and forming a plate-like background to the lower body. The upper body from the arms to shoulders and head is surrounded by a halo with simplified flames rising off it. On both sides of the Buddha, two much smaller monks are standing at his service. On the left side *Moggallana* and on the right *Sariputta* are standing on lotus flowers their hands in reverent *shikko* greeting. *Moggallana* and *Sariputta* are the best known and most frequently portrayed of the eight principal disciples of Gotama Buddha. According to popular tradition *Moggallana* was known for

58 Lowry 1974, pl. 29.

his many superhuman powers. Sariputta was closest to the Great Teacher in wisdom.⁵⁹

The monks were attached to the Buddha image only during the late Bagan period, but since then they have held their position as Buddha's attendants until the present. The predecessors of the monks were Lokanat and the future Buddha Metteya, or Sakka and Brahma. The idea of two attendants with the central image is another loan from Indian Mahayana art. Sympathetic Bodhisattas are near at hand when help is needed in this-worldly trouble. In Ananda, the two great reformers and promoters of religion of their time, venerable monk *Shin Arahan* and king *Kyanzittha* are seen respectfully kneeling in front of the Buddha.⁶⁰ Kyanzittha's image is the closest attempt at realistical portraiture in Bagan era.

The pedestal of the wooden panel with its Buddha and two disciples is quite remarkable. Buddha himself is standing on the usual lotus. There is an architectonic structure first under the flower, supported by *chinthe* lions⁶¹. The lions in their turn stand on the head of *kirttimukha*, a grinning lion face familiar from Indian art. The lotus stems carrying the two monks grow from the jaws of the monster. Kirttimukha or "the face of glory" was developed from the natural image of a lion. The earliest kirttimukha ornaments date from second century AD. The legend behind the motif tells a story of a demon, who disrespectfully insulted the mighty god Siva. From the third eye on the forehead of the furious god a monster appeared. The creature had a frightful face, but only a skinny weak body. The hungry monster ate his own body and so only the lion face remained. Kirttimukha is also interpreted as symbol of *Kala*, Time devouring life - an aspect of the god *Yama* of Death. Kirttimukha became an extremely popular decorative motif of architecture throughout Asia. It is repeated in ornamentation and details of sculpture endlessly in India, Myanmar, Java, Bali and Sri Lanka. The lion, a royal animal is also suggestive of Gotama's person: Buddha is the *Sakyasimha*, the lion of the Sakya clan.⁶²

Art in Inwa and Konbaung Periods

Wooden sculpture did not stand much chance of surviving through the turmoil following the fall of Bagan. The *Inwa* period (1364-1752) left little or nothing authentic for later art historians. (Fig 2). According to age-long Myanmar custom it is not regarded proper to leave a sacred object damaged whether it be the smallest Buddha image or a pagoda reaching to the skies. Most of what was saved from the hands of occupying armies lays buried under several layers of devout renovations and repair. The tendency of the monks and pious laymen occupied in this religiously meritorious, but art-

59 Maung Htin Aung 1962, 9.

60 Strachan 1989, 33.

61 Chinthe will be discussed on page 67.

62 Iyer 1977, 66, 68-69. Dowson 1987, 140.

historically-fatal work is to refurbish the images in prevailing style, not to that of the original art period. Thus Konbaung kings renovating Bagan temples did so in their own style, and marble workshops today repairing broken Buddha images from Amarapura, in early part of 19th century, paint the polished face with bright colours after the beauty ideals of 1990's.⁶³

The Myanmar kingdom united for the last time in 1752 under the leadership of a great warrior king and the builder of *Yangon* king *Alaungpaya* (1752-1760). The decades towards the end of the century were period of war but also of flourishing arts. Victorious Myanmar kings brought back home valuable war booty - the artists of the fallen court of rivalling neighbour *Ayutthaya* in 1767. Sophisticated Thai culture revived Myanmar arts. New innovations stimulated national genius. Court dance and puppet theatre benefited especially.

Theatrical arts, the all time favourites of the Myanmar also had significant influence on wooden sculpture. The heroes and heroines of puppet theatre are most certainly seen in the exterior reliefs and images of the wooden monasteries. Angular movements of Myanmar marionettes have had an indelible impression on both human dance and carved images. Court dance inspired the positions and dresses of the sculptures. Formal fighting scenes from *Yama Zatdaw*, the celebrated Ramakian of the *Yodaya* or people from *Ayutthaya* soon found their way in to the abundantly carved gates of wooden monasteries donated by some pious lover of theatre. (Fig. 12, 17). Complicated, heavy dresses with many decorative flame-like "wings" and rich jewelry were borrowed from court to stage and again carved on the slim bodies of guardian Nats. (Fig. 22).

Wooden and lacquer images from the *Konbaung* period 1752-1885 have survived in large numbers. Excellent examples can be studied in the Buddhist Art Museum in the International Institute of Advanced Buddhist Studies in Yangon and in many monasteries like Myoma Kyaung in Inwa, Thone Htat Kyaung in Sale or Nat Thoun Kyaung in Bagan, where the monks have collected fine quality Buddha images from different materials and art periods. The change from the 1700's to the 1800's brought up a new, more naturalistic style in art which is named after the last royal capital as *Mandalay* or *Yatanabon* style.

The Mandalay Buddha is dressed in loosely folded Chinese style robe decorated with an ornamented lappet falling over the left shoulder. Buddha's head has a newly developed detail; a fillet band remotely reminiscent of the magnificent complicated head dresses of the Khmer above his forehead. Usnisa is round, without the flaming addition on top, and covered with natural short curls of hair. In some images the eyes are made in intarsia with mother of pearl. The effect in the red lacquered face is amazingly real. The head dress and abundant folds of robe offered excellent base for glass mosaic

63 There are very few bronze or stone images of Buddha in Western art collections dated to the 17th century, and still fewer dated to the 14th-16th centuries. In some monasteries where the venerable monks have been collecting and keeping large amounts of ancient Buddha images one might find some examples from the 17th century also, but as explained in the text the sacred images are usually repaired in monasteries and shrines according to the time's style. See for example catalogues by Hasson 1993 and Karow 1991 or Oshegowa 1988.

inlay (hman-zi shwe-cha) which became a permanently popular decoration of the serene Buddha image.

Local styles of art developed in relative freedom outside the capitals. *Shan State* in neighbouring Thailand has produced many beautiful wooden Buddha images in their own characteristic style. (Fig. 5). General features of Shan Buddha follow naturally the all-Asian iconography. The face is slimmer when compared with Myanmar images. The chin and nose are distinctly sharp. The slanting eyes of the image are quite far from each other and they are framed by high curving eyebrows. The head is often crowned with a tall flame-, pyatthat- or crown-like protuberance. The monk's robe or jewelled regalia of the popular *Jambhupati* Buddha are grooved into the smooth surface of the image. The prototypes for these wooden sculptures may have been bronze images. The *Pindaya Caves* near Taunggyi in Shan State offer good examples for the study of typical Shan style sculpture executed in wood, bronze and stone. The caves have been a popular target for pilgrimage for centuries and the dimly lit galleries are full of pious donations.

The Buddha sitting in full regalia, the so called *Jambhupati* images became popular during the 17th century. (Fig. 4). The most beautiful of them were cast in bronze in the kingdom of *Arakan* in Western Myanmar. Royal Buddha images had a special importance in the history of the kingdom. According to tradition, the rulers of Arakan swore an oath, kneeling in front of a royal Buddha to rule the kingdom wisely and to follow Buddhism. The images are known as *mahakyain phara* - the Buddhas of royal oath.⁶⁴ Wooden copies of expensive bronze images were carved in large numbers. Some examples of the late 18th - early 19th century have survived. Characteristic details of the type, the "flying" ribbons which decorate the royal helmet were a challenge to master artists of the time who proved their talent with extremely skilled workmanship.

The beautifully decorated crowned Buddha image is a popular motif all over Southeast Asia. It originates from the *Pala* art of Bengal about 750-1150.⁶⁵ In the legend of the royal image, the Buddha makes proud king Jambhupati understand the illusion and vanity of worldly wealth and power by transforming his simple outfit of a monk into a king in his full glory. The legend of king Jambhupati is not known in India and Sri Lanka but only in the Theravada Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia. In Mahayana art of the Pala dynasty the royal Buddha was interpreted as the next Buddha *Metteya* (Maitreya). Theravada also waits for the coming of the future Buddha, who is until his time sitting in Tusita heaven dressed in formal court dress. Jambhupati can be identified from *Metteya* by details of the monk's robe slightly visible under the heavy jewelry of Gotama. *Metteya* is sometimes holding a bottle of *Amata*, the mythical ambrosia of immortal Gods in his lap. In Buddhism *Amata* is interpreted as the symbol of Nibbana, conquering the cycle of rebirth. Jambhupati was again one of the many Mahayana motifs modified to suit the purposes of Theravada's teaching.

The peaceful image of the sitting, standing and reclining Buddha

64 Fraser-Lu 1981 I, 78-79. Oshegowa 1988, 222.

65 Fraser-Lu 1981 II, 65.

appears in thousands and thousands of copies all over Myanmar. Not all of them are great works of art - how could they be. The Buddha image is not intended to be a work of art. It is a medium for private meditation, and, filled with symbolism, an ultimate lesson of philosophy. The features of a noble Indian prince have over centuries changed to a gentle Myanmar face. Indian masters concentrated on picturing physical, sensual beauty. The meditating Buddha was surrounded by voluptuous maidens symbolizing the tempting world of senses or describing the divine bliss of higher abodes. The same ideas of philosophy and cosmology inspired their Myanmar colleagues but the results are totally different. In Myanmar art, the Buddha and the superhuman beings from other levels of the universe are refined and sophisticated, but high above the human world. Many typical and characteristic features familiar from the thousand years of Myanmar arts, like the flame-like pinnacles of architecture or flying folds and ribbons in the regalia of Buddha and court dresses of enchanting nymphs guarding doorways to monasteries, point clearly more to the transcendental world of magic than to the sensual pleasures of the Indian court.

6 MOTIFS OF BUDDHIST WOODCARVING

The motifs of the traditional woodcarving master have lived in the imagination of generations of artist and craftsmen in Myanmar. They share this treasury of legends and myths with other artists of their country. Most of the images, cast, carved or weaved, are well known to all Asian people. Although somewhat modified according to local taste, they still tell the same story to all Buddhists alike. The following pages introduce the most common motifs of the Myanmar woodcarver as they are presented in sacred precincts of the older monasteries or pagodas, and also in shops lining the way to them. Well known legends and beliefs link the images to Buddhism.

Nari Pan - Images of the Sage

"When a carver masters the image of Lord Buddha, all other images, famous Yahans, Bodaws or Nats, are easy for him."⁶⁶

Artists specializing in *nari pan* are masters of the Buddha image in various attitudes, human beings and Nat spirits in human form. Some of the woodcarvers interviewed made secular images in their spare time like chin lone or football players and villagers carrying baskets for their own amusement. Usually, traditional woodcarver's workshops work according to customers wishes and sculpt motifs which they can certainly sell. Workshops still follow the ancient tradition of specializing into one motif group.⁶⁷

The most important subclass of *nari pan* motifs are sculptures inspired by life, or rather the lives of Buddha. Myanmar tradition counts 550

66 Woodcarvers in Mahamyamuni Pagoda, Mandalay.

67 Groups will be introduced in detail p. 80.

Jatakas, the *Zat Nibat* or legends of Buddha's previous existences. Their number in original Indian tradition is 547. In his teaching Buddha often told metaphorical stories of his many lives in animal, spirit or human forms. Some of the stories date certainly from earlier times than his actual lifetime in the 5th century BC India. Story versions can be found for example in *Panchatantra*, collection of Indian fables and South and Central Asian folk tradition.⁶⁸ (Fig. 14, 15).

The Myanmars generally know many of the Jataka stories. Most commonly remembered are the last ten, the so called Desajati (Mahanipata): Mugapakkha Jataka (no 538), Mahajanaka (no 539), Sama (no 540), Nimi (no 541), Khandahala (no 542), Bhuridatta (no 543), Mahanaradakassapa (no 544), Vidhurapandita (no 545), Maha-Ummagga (no 546) and Vessantara (no 547). Every legend describes one of the ten Paramitas or virtues of Buddhism: Generosity (dana), morality (sila), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (panna), energy (viriya), forbearance (khanti), truthfulness (sacca), resoluteness (adhitthana), loving kindness (metta) and equanimity (upekkha).⁶⁹

The Myanmars love most the story of prince *Vessantara* (*Waythandaya*) whose exemplary life is the respected ideal for every Buddhist. Following the virtue of unselfish generosity (dana) the prince renounced first the emblem of his royal power, the invaluable white elephant, then his throne and finally his wife and children. Vessantara was the second last birth of Gotama before attaining Buddhahood. The inspiring story is pictured in thousands of artworks in different materials, wood, lacquer, stucco, shwegyidaw - tapestries. Vessantara Jataka was also staged in puppet theatre in royal times when human actors could not play the sacred roles. There are also profane versions written later for human theatre.

The most magnificent Jataka sculptures in situ in present day Myanmar are in *Yokeson Kyaung* in *Sale*, built by *U Po Kyi* in 1878. The walls of the monastery are covered with bold reliefs, full of life and movement. The sculpture is almost plastic - only a small part of the back is left flat for nailing them to the exterior walls of the monastery. The anonymous master of *Sale* has executed his work with dramatic sense. The horses seem to gallop out from the walls and houses, caves and even weaving stools are carved in three-dimensional detail. (Fig. 20, 21). Narrative carvings are scenes from several Jatakas. Most of the carvings are relatively well preserved thanks to the low hanging roof of the building. The *kyaung* itself is in rather bad condition, but it was under reconstruction in December 1993. (Fig. 19).

Shwedagon pagoda in Yangon is surrounded with hundreds of smaller shrines. Many of them are decorated with narrative Jataka reliefs. Since the pagoda is the most important place for pilgrimage in Myanmar, the carvings have been renovated many times even within the last century. Southern Myanmar was already influenced by European models from the early part of the 19th century, and at the same time lacking the strong con-

68 Zimmer 1984, 2. Cotterell 1986, 76. See for example the *Panchatantra* 1987.

69 Luce 1956, 291. Brown 1984, 163. The Jatakas I-VI 1973. List of virtues does not follow the numbers of Jatakas. Spiro 1982, 33.

trolling authority of the Mandalay court.⁷⁰ At present Jataka motifs are usually carved in much more modest scale than a century ago. Square or sometimes oval decorative perforated wall panels are sometimes donated to a monastery, but usually they are carved for export. The Myanmars usually identify the Jatakas in question and the virtues they symbolize without hesitation from a few simple features.

In plastic sculpture the legend of *Buddha Dipankara meeting Sumedha*, the future Buddha Gotama often belongs to the repertoire of present day woodcarvers. Dipankara was the first of the 24 Buddhas preceding the historical Gotama. In carvings Dipankara is seen standing on a lotus. Sumedha lies at his feet spreading his hair for the Buddha to walk on. Sumedha is the model for persistent striving towards Buddhahood and Nibbana, the goal of every Buddhist.

In addition to legends, Gotama Buddha's historical life presents many inspiring episodes for the artist. Early Myanmar artists carved *andagu* - plates in stone after the prototypes of Pala India. The "*Eight Great Events*" of Buddha's life were chosen for reliefs as a reminder of his meritorious life. Seven motifs surround the central Buddha sitting in *bhumisparsa* (read clockwise): birth, first sermon, taming of the Nalagiri elephant, Parinibbana, descent from Tavatimsa, double miracle of Sravasti and monkey presenting honey alm in Parileyyaka forest.⁷¹ *Andagu* plates were not carved in wood, but the episodes repeatedly occur in narrative wooden sculpture. Other popular themes are cutting the hair and escape from the royal palace. Most commonly the chosen part of the legend is suggested in some small symbol, like a tiny animal or human figure in the pedestal or side of the sculpture, and naturally the all-important hand gesture of the image.

The sitting Buddha in familiar *bhumisparsa mudra* or the earth touching gesture is overwhelmingly the most popular religious image of all times in Myanmar. The idea of winning the temptations of demon *Mara (Man)* and his seductive daughters appeals to the Myanmar mind. *Bhumisparsa mudra* is one of the loans from Mahayana iconography of the Pala art of Bengal. In India the mudra was interpreted as *Aksoba*, one of the five *Dhyani Buddhas*⁷² and no longer represented Gotama. Theravada Buddhist Myanmar held to the original meaning and context of the mudra. If the Mahayana interpretation was known, it was just ignored.⁷³

Nowadays carvers seem to prefer *Labamuni Buddha*, Buddha in the boon granting *varada mudra* or a version of it where the thumb and forefin-

70 Tilly 1903, 9-10. See also photographs by Klier. Tilly's book has rare photographs of beautiful the Salin monastery, built in 1876 by the Salin princess. The pictures prove the remarkable skill of Mandalay woodcarvers from a time when European influence had not yet reached the kingdom. The Salin monastery was destroyed during British occupation before the Second World War. Tilly 1903, 7-9. Oshegowa 1988, 298.

71 Fraser-Lu 1981 I, 74.

72 Dhyani Buddhas or Jinas are meditation Buddhas of Mahayana Buddhism. Each transcendental Dhyani Buddha is represented by a Manusi Buddha, a human Buddha, one or more active Bodhisattvas and his/their feminine energy Sakti. Luce 1969, 196.

73 Strachan 1989, 24.

ger touch each other. When asked for a reason, the carvers just said that it looks more graceful. Labamuni Buddha is popularly believed to bring wealth and material good to its donor. Other mudras, meditative *dhyana*, protective *abhaya* or teaching *dhammacakka* are also carved at request the of customers. Dhammacakka was generally regarded as the most difficult by the carvers because of the challenging gesture of the hands and fingers. Many of the younger artists especially needed consulting from their teachers. (Fig. 6).

The contemporary Buddha follows the iconographic rules of ancient canons. The face, hair style and robe of images echo distantly the ideals of Early Buddhist *Gandhara* school in India two thousand years ago. Surprisingly, one of the carvers mentioned Gandhara Buddhas as his models. Articles of Myanmar and Asian culture and art history appear frequently in local magazines. The face of the Buddha is more realistic than the formal images of Mandalay and earlier periods. His hair is carved in soft waves in contrast to the short shell-like curls or smooth black lacquer before. Also the robe is realistic, falling in natural folds down and following the bodylines. Many of the delicate, excellently carved details like the features of face are covered under the gilding. When novelties occur and prove popular, they are quickly copied in all workshops of the area. Inexpensive popular Buddhist prints and religious calendar covers picturing the above mentioned famous and well known episodes from Gotama Buddha's life are at the moment noticeably influencing the art of woodcarving. (Fig. 7).

The other popular sitting images are Buddha and the snake king *Muchalinda*, *Dakkhina Sakkha* or "Lotus Buddha" and *Sinkanpaya*, Buddha sitting on elephants. Mucalinda, the king of cobras was according to well known legend sheltering the meditating Buddha from storm raised by the spells of demon *Mara*. The meditating Buddha hold his hands in *dhyana mudra* or in few cases in *bhumisparsa*. The head of the snake king is handsomely carved in the smallest detail. Gaping jaws resemble more the head of a lion than of a natural cobra. The head is often decorated with flaming bristles. The snake, the Asian symbol of wisdom spreads his hood or in some sculptures many heads for protection of a man, who had broken the cycle of rebirths and conquered the fear of death symbolized by *Mara*. In Asia death and its master god *Yama* are not dreadful but seen as a natural part of the life cycle. Victory and freedom from fear of death was the final challenge in Gotama's way to Buddhahood. Both *bhumisparsa* and *Mucalinda* images underline this central idea of Buddhism. In canonical art the proper mudra in connection with *Mucalinda* would be meditative *dhyana*. Many of the contemporary images are, however, carved in *bhumisparsa*. The reason could be the technical familiarity to *bhumisparsa mudra* - and unfamiliarity with the iconography of the legend in question.⁷⁴

The motif where a snake is protecting a human being is very ancient in origin. It is already found in the seals of Babylonians and from Mohenjodaro about 2000 BC, and further in the early Buddhist Indian art of Bharhut

74 Swedish scholar Klemens Karlsson has discussed the problem in his unpublished article "Finns det felaktiga Buddhabilder?" Personal information in Conference on Arts in Religions in Turku, Finland in August 1994.

c. 200 BC. The tribe of snakes (naga) are believed to be devout Buddhists. According to Mahayana history Buddha even preferred snakes to men as disciples for certain esoteric teachings.⁷⁵

Popular Buddhism in Myanmar has made certain compromises with magic. Some of the Mucalinda images are concretely believed to contain powers which can protect against snake bite or even save the victim after biting⁷⁶.

"When pious king Bimbisara of Magadha after the Mahaparinibbana of Lord Buddha divided the relics of the Teacher for all to respect, the Lankans also travelled from their island kingdom. At the time of their arrival all the relics were already taken away, and only the southern branch of the Bodhi tree was left. In great fear for the anger of their king the Lankans took the branch and carved an image out of it with the few tools they happened to carry with them. The image became plump and clumsy in their unexperienced hands, but the king of Lanka was pleased."⁷⁷

The popular image is called *Dakkhina Sakkha* or "Buddha of the Southern Branch". A short bodied, neckless and round-faced image in *bhumisparsa*, it differs clearly from the slim and smooth canonical Buddhas. Another characteristic feature is the lotus flower "cap" on his head. He also sits on a lotus throne. The lotus is a symbol of success for present day Myanmar. The image ordered by the customer always carries the symbols of his hopes, and the donation is expected to fulfill the wish in a magical way. *Dakkhina Sakkha* images were already known in the Pyu period (2nd to 8th century) and it most probably had Sinhalese prototypes. The motif is also known in Thailand as *Bua Khem*⁷⁸.

Nowadays another popular wishfulfilling Buddha image is the *Sinkanpaya* or Buddha riding elephants. (Fig. 34). Usually there are three elephants and two horses under the lotus seat of the Buddha in boon granting *varada mudra*. "Let my children ride with a white elephant surrounded by good horses" is the wish uttered by parents when donating this image. In royal Myanmar the king rode with the auspicious white elephant followed by attendants on horseback. The elephant was the symbol and guarantee of the king's power and might. Now they embody the wishes for success in any chosen field of life. The Buddha image is the usual iconographical type on the lotus throne. The elephants are carved only from the front with heads and front legs visible. They give the impression of sharing a common body. On both sides the horses are carved in profile. Many times the back of the sculpture is left rather unfinished since the image is anyway seen from the front only. Sometimes the two horses are left out or there is only one elephant. The younger carvers confess to having some difficulties with this image because of the many details of the animals.

The Buddha in pagoda and home altar needs a worthy background. *Shwepalin*, or Golden Throne is carved in the same workshop as the icon

75 Zimmer 1984, 59-60. Iyer 1977, 58.

76 See Spiro 1982, 261-262.

77 Woodcarver U Maung Soe in *Shwedagon* December 1993.

78 Karow 1991, 96.

itself. Shwepalin is an exact copy of the royal thrones of Myanmar kings. The gilt architectural seat was in royal times decorated with gems inlaid in thayo lacquer. Both the Buddha and the king sat on tiered, "small-waisted" platforms which were framed with pilasters or low pilaster-like reliefs. The pilasters are decorated with Nats, symbolical animals, like the hare, peacock, lion or elephant. Borders are enlivened with formal lotus foliage. In the lower part a mythical *naya* stands on his front paws. Above the head of the Buddha image or live king a bird-like motif *tu-yin* forms the background spreading its tail decorated with lotuses and tiny Nat images. The whole is gilt. The only surviving royal throne from the Mandalay Palace is in the National Museum, Yangon.

Great Yahans

Since the Bagan Buddha image was completed with two attendants paying respect to the Teacher. *Sakka* and *Brahma* of early art were superceded by *Moggallana* and *Sariputta*, two of his chief disciples. Famous monks were typically carved in a formal idealistic manner, often kneeling down in front of the Buddha, their hands in respectful *shikko* greeting. Shikko, holding palms together at the level of one's chest, is a polite and respectful gesture taken by most Myanmar when they are listening a monk. Most of the gilt wooden images of the two monks sold in Thailand are copies of Konbaung style sculpture. Original images are seen only in a few private collections in Myanmar and for example in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Thai copies have become popular exotic decoration for foreign homes. They are sold everywhere in Thailand and also in furnishing and decoration shops in the West. In Myanmar woodcarvers' workshops do not sell these images.

On Myanmar altars Moggallana and Sariputta have been followed by two *Yahans* or *Arahats*, monks who have won Enlightenment. Arahatship is the ideal goal of a man in Theravada Buddhism. Sculpted, gilt images of two Arahans, *Shin U Pagot* and *Shin Siwali* in various sizes are extremely popular among Myanmar Buddhists, not only in respect of their spiritual achievement but also because of their magical powers to protect the worshipper. Shin U Pagot is the monk sitting crosslegged in *padmasana*, holding an almsbowl in his lap and looking up to the skies. The folds of Shin U Pagot's robe are carved in natural style. Popular legend gives also an explanation for this exceptional position: the monk was late for his lunch and he is checking the time from the sun before he eats. Monks are not allowed to take food after noon. Another story tells about the duel between the venerable monk and demon Mara. The demon tried to hinder his meditation and enlightenment in the usual ways, by sending her seductive daughters to disturb the monk and, when that proved unsuccessful, by filling his mind with the horrors of ghosts and demons. Shin U Pagot threw his belt around Mara's neck. The belt magically turned into the dead body of a dog and the demon king Mara had to surrender. Donating an image or carrying an amulet picturing Shin U Pagot

is expected to safeguard the wearer from any dangers, to make the believer strong and powerful and to bring him success. Most Myanmarers argue that the great monk "is still alive", living in the sea, waiting for the coming of the future Buddha. In pagodas his image is often seen in the middle of the small pond where tame fish and turtles enjoy the generosity of the visitors.

The other venerated monk frequently seen in woodcarvings is *Shin Siwali*, standing on a lotus or some animal figure, holding a long walking staff and covering his head with a round bamboo fan. The robe is often beautifully carved in natural folds. His almsbowl hangs on a strap over his left shoulder. Around the right hand with the staff is a rosary. The monk's face is illuminated by a gentle smile. The animal is chosen under the image according to the weekday horoscope of the donor. Shin Siwali is famous for his enormous amount of merit. His image is a very popular magic amulet carved in miniature size, gilt and carried with the believer for safety and success in life. When the two images are set on a home altar or pagoda as a group it is important to place the monks in proper order: on the right side of Buddha stands Shin Siwali, on the left sits Shin U Pagot.

Portraits of famous Sayadaws in life size are sculpted after photographs. Usually the image is made in respect the deceased monk of some well known monastery. As in the case of Buddha icon, certain superhuman qualities are expected to be transmitted to the portrait of a contemporary monk. Thus the venerable Sayadaw Bame of Bagaya Kyaung in Inwa, a specialist in the magical *Ein*, was famous for his supernatural powers. Ein is a charm compiled of the Myanmar alphabet, often in figurative form. It can be used both in white or black magic. Sayadaw Bame was believed to be 460 years old when he passed away. His life-size portrait is situated in a glass cabinet on the left side of the Buddha in the central *Maraphin* hall. Visitors worship the image and give donations of money. The image and its kind in workshops are painted in a realistic, even naturalistic way, much resembling the monk portraits of Chinese and Japanese art tradition. (Fig. 39).

Monks are respected for their ascetic way of life. They are *Punnakhetta*, "Field of Merit" to the lay Buddhist. Donations to a monastery and provision of daily needs to members of Sangha is within easy reach for even the less well-off. The age of the monk is not as important as the number of years he has been carrying the yellow robe. Meditation practised in monasteries is also taught to laymen by the monks. To laymen following the way of the Buddha is seen as meritorious, since the stay in a monastery or meditation centre also requires following strict daily routines and the ten rules of conduct. Certain superhuman abilities like clairvoyance, develop with the constant practise of meditation. Monks who meditate for years can acquire magical powers, which although contradictory to Buddha's teaching are greatly admired by Myanmar Buddhists.

Myanmarers explain that the Yahans Shin U Pagot, Shin Siwali or Sayadaw Bame for example, are "enlightened, but in a different way than Buddha". This would point to the direction of *Bodhisatta*; an ideal familiar from Mahayana: the monk's life full of miracles and Buddhist virtue ends in a mysterious disappearance. He is believed to continue his life in another abode, or in invisible form, helping and assisting the pious layman on his

way to Enlightenment. Like Bodhisatta, the great Yahan can also be contacted with prayer. The reason why Myanmar substituted Sakka and Brahma first with Moggallana and Sariputta, and later with Shin U Pagot and Shin Siwali could also be found from their accessibility. High Devas in their abodes or Buddha's disciples from history were felt distant. More human Yahans are expected to show interest in the struggle and troubles of life. The connotations are expressed in artistic image. Yahans are pictured in a more human almost humorous way whereas the Devas and disciples are presented in a very formal, impersonal form.

Guardians of Life and Religion

Magic and the hope for a better material life are prevalent in contemporary art works donated by Myanmar Buddhists. Buddha warned his followers not to use the superhuman powers achieved through meditation for magic. Canonical Buddhism also deprecates using ritual or text formula as spells for obtaining material benefit. In popular Buddhism, donation of a Buddha icon or other sacred image is, however, loaded with expectations and human hopes.

The Myanmar's faith is divided between *Vipassana* and *Thammadat* Buddhism. *Vipassana*, literally meaning *Insight*, is more the valued of the two, but considered more difficult to follow. It includes meditation, a more ascetic style of life and obedience to five to ten rules for lay people. *Vipassana* emphasizes personal effort in overcoming the obstacles on path to the Enlightenment and finally Nibbana.

Thammadat Buddhism encourages a virtuous life, making merit and donations. It teaches that a person can collect *punna*, good merit and balance his bad deeds by big donations. The idea was already familiar with the kings of Bagan. According to *Thammadat*, Buddhahood is difficult to attain and therefore this final goal can be postponed for future lives. At present it is possible to collect good merit for a favourable rebirth, to a wealthy family. Since collecting material goods is a waste of time in the everturning wheel of life and death, the reasoning follows that the riches enable the person to make more merit. *Thammadat* ideas have given room for popular speculation arguing that the results of good deeds can be expected already in this present life. Very few Myanmar would say they wished wealth for their own personal luxury. The question "what would you do if you were rich" always gets the same answer no matter if it is asked from young or old: "I would help the poor."⁷⁹

Thammadat also believes that there are supernatural beings who can protect and help a person in his everyday life. The ideals, duties and rituals associated with these superior beings resemble the compassionate Bodhisattas

79 Note "Buddhist function" in analysis of the interviews in chapter Interviews - Discourse Analysis page 23.

of Mahayana, but their life histories are closer to heroic folktales and Nat legends.

Thammadat heroes are the two famous *Bodaws* or "Great Fathers" *Bo Bo Aung* and *Bo Min Gaung*. Both of them were historical personalities. Today the Bodaws have their own national cult and they are widely worshipped along with the central Saints of international Buddhism.

Bo Bo Aung or U Aung lived in the time of the Konbaung king *Bagyidaw* (1819-1838). According to legend, the chief monk of the monastery where he was studying had a powerful palmleaf with a magic syllable *Ein*. *Bo Bo Aung* learned the wisdom and knowledge about the *ein* from the old monk. He practised meditation and became famous for his superhuman powers. He was, for example, able to fly. The king worried about his throne and let soldiers arrest the monk. *Bo Bo Aung* miraculously escaped his captors and lived until final Enlightenment on *Mt Popa*, the mountain home of Myanmar spirits. *Bo Bo Aung* does not need food, but food is often offered to the image with prayers. Other gifts for *Bo Bo Aung* are cigarettes, flowers and water. Bodaws can fulfill wishes or give advice by appearing in dreams. Many Natkadaws consider Bodaws as guardians against possibly evil-minded spirits. *Bo Bo Aung's* legend has many common features with age old Nat histories: for example a king fearing for his usurper, mystical disappearances and attainment of powers. Even the presents donated to the images are same.

Bo Bo Aung's image is usually carved sitting or sometimes standing. The dress is white if painted, or gilt. It is not a monk's robe, but an ordinary jacket and *pasoe* (longyi) with a long scarf wrapped around his other shoulder. Dress is usually not carved in detail but only with a few outlines showing the sleeve of the jacket etc. *Bo Bo Aung's* hat is a peculiar round turban resembling the cap of *Zawgyi*. In his hands he counts the rosary.

Bo Min Gaung or Bodaw Aung Min Gaung is an interesting figure since quite a lot is known about his life. There are even a few photos. The date and place of his birth are unknown but he died in 1952. He lived the last fourteen years of his life 1938-1952 on Mt. Popa. During British occupation, his main concern was the future of the Buddhist religion in the country. He organized pagoda constructions and other occasions for making merit. *Bo Min Gaung*, like *Bo Bo Aung* before him was capable of miracles: Legend tells of his visit to a restaurant kept by *Kala*, an Indian Muslim. The cook was just preparing chicken and ignoring *Bo Min Gaung's* request to save the animal's life, killed it in his presence. *Bo Min Gaung* took the head of the bird and joined it to its lifeless body. The chicken came back to life again. Today he is believed to guard and give instructions to pagoda builders through mediums (Natkadaws) or by appearing in dreams. The devout believer can reach him by telepathy. One of *Bo Min Gaung's* pupils, Venerable Sayadaw Bathanda Thilawunta resides in the monastery of Dat Pon Zon Aung Min Gaung Pagoda off Thanlwin road in Yangon. Also in the monastery precincts is a room where *Bo Min Gaung's* bed is situated. This corner of the monastery hall is respected and worshipped by pilgrims and visitors of

the pagoda.⁸⁰

Since there are at least two popularly copied photographs of Bo Min Gaung, the woodcarvers can portray him quite accurately in a realistic style. Of the two photos the younger image is more popularly carved. Bo Min Gaung sits on his other knee holding the other leg crossed over the lap. His other hand reaches the foot while the other hangs relaxed over the knee. Bodaws hair is long, combed back and his face shows serene features. The dress is a common jacket and pasoe with the long scarf like that of Bo Bo Aung's. Bo Min Gaung's image is usually painted realistically. It should be mentioned that although Bo Min Gaung's photos are available for the carvers, the images are not true portraits of a historical man as in Sayadaws case, but rather ideal icons for a religious cult.

Still yet another powerful image capable of granting boons is *Maheindaya*, which has been added to the woodcarver's repertoire only in the past few years. The original Maheindaya image is in the home of famous author *U Yan Aung* in Yangon and can be seen on request. Until recently, the image could not be copied because the owner opposed the idea. Hundreds of small colour photos are however on sale in every pagoda, and the sculptures available today are carved after this rather unclear model.

The history of the original image starts from the days of Second World War. *U Yan Aung*, then a soldier, got hold of the originally Indian image somewhere on the Indian side of the border. The author was a practical man and did not much care about the possible magical powers of the image. Strangely, however, he started to dream peculiar dreams, and finally acted according to the advice given in them. From there on all his work was a success. Prayers dedicated to the great spirit of the image are thus expected to come true. The original Maheindaya is a heavily gilt image of an Indian hermit or sage. He is sitting on the ground, without the usual lotus throne cross legged holding his hands in his lap. He has a small pot next to his right knee. His face is foreign to Myanmar, long and oval with a big hook nose. The hermit has a long pointed beard and moustache - most unusual in Myanmar art or everyday life for that matter. His hair is coiled in a tall turban-like coiffure resembling the hair-do of the followers of Siva in India. Further, he has a large urna between his eyebrows. A gilt Indian *Vina*, the favourite musical instrument of the goddess Saraswati leans against his left shoulder. The instrument is separate from the image. The image is not very old, probably from the time of the purchase. It is a simple work of an Indian craftsman without any connections to images of Hindu gods or iconography.⁸¹

80 Conversation with Venerable Sayadaw Bathanda Thilawunta in Dat Pon Zon Aung Min Gaung Kyaung in December 1993. Venerable Sayadaw is well known promoter of Buddhism in Western countries.

81 Information about the Bodaws and Maheindaya from Natkadaw Veda Sandi (Daw Mi Su Ngwe), *U Min Nyan Shein* and *Ma Moe Moe Aung* in Yangon, December 1993.

Tribe of Nats

According to Buddhism, non-material beings cannot exist. If the *Nats*, the ancient gods of animistic folkreligion are non-material, they cannot exist. If on the other hand they exist, they have to be material. From the worldly (Lokiya) point of view, the Nats appear material - they can be seen and heard: therefore they do exist. In reality (Lokuttara), material beings are an illusion, and thus the Nats do not exist.⁸²

Nat spirits loved and respected by Myanmar people for a thousand years are common assignments for woodcarvers all over the country. Every *nari pan* carver is familiar with the iconography of the most important of the 37 *Lords*. According to the usually accepted theory the Nats followed the Myanmar tribes from the Kansu region to the Ayeyarwady plains. If, on the other hand the Myanmars and the Pyus are closely related, and shared the plains together with other groups, the Nats are the old gods of also the Pyu. The Pyu seem to have rejected the nature spirits early, and followed the Buddhism introduced by early missionaries and settlers.

The oldest gods from their animistic religion were the Lords (nath - lord) of trees, water, mountains and rice fields. The highly civilized Pyu, the leading cultural group before the rise of Bagan era, introduced sophisticated Buddhism to Myanmars who later gave up many bloody rituals connected with original animism. The Nats as well as *Nagas*, snake spirits, are frequently mentioned in Myanmar chronicles⁸³ in connection with the Pyu royals. Until now, no anthropomorphic images of Nats have been found from ancient Pyu sites⁸⁴. It could be possible that Pyus in big cities developed figurative art to serve the needs of Buddhism and the royal court. Myanmar tribes living outside cultured centres worshipped their age old gods in the same way that present day minority people in Myanmar's and Thailand's remote mountain area have kept their animistic beliefs and rituals. When the Pyu lost control some time in the beginning of the 9th century and the Myanmars took power, they had accepted Buddhism, but kept the Nats in their hearts.

Anawrahta of Bagan (1044-1077) rationalized the Nat cult by establishing the Pantheon of 37 Royal Nats. *Thagya Min* or Sakka (Indra) familiar from Indian mythology was crowned as king of the Nats. Thagya Min is a devout Buddhist and hence his election for leader of the Nat tribe by Buddhist ruler was well argued. The rest of the 36 Royal Nats are all genuine Myanmars, if the probable Indian forefather of the popular Taungbyon brothers, Shwebyingyin Nat and Shwebyinle Nat is not counted as an exception.⁸⁵ Although absorbed by Buddhism, the Nats do not have a specific place in Buddhist cosmogony. They do not live in the *Tavatimsa* heaven of gods, nor do they abode in the inferior regions of ghosts and demons. Obviously then, they have to live among humans even if most of us cannot see or hear them.

82 Spiro 1967, 225.

83 See Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, for example p. 30-33 or 45-46.

84 Moore - San San Maw in unpublished article.

85 Spiro 1967, 113.

(Fig. 8). They have a special role in the country's history. The Nats have fought next to Myanmar soldiers against the invading armies of Kublai Khan and helped in fighting the flames destroying the Mandalay Palace at the end of the Second World War. The popular "Lord of the White Horse" or *Myinbyushin Nat* is often associated with patriotism and the courage of soldiers in action.⁸⁶

Names aside, the appearance and duties also life histories, favourite foods and special tunes of music of the Nats are exactly known by most Myanmar. Nat legends are still today part of a living folk tradition and the most popular of them are performed on stage by the pwe troupes. Most of the Nats are legendary persons, either of royal blood or somehow connected to them, who have met sudden or tragic death by order of a king jealously protecting his authority. One historical person is the Manuha, the conquered king of Thaton, known as *Nyaung Gyin Nat*. He died of leprosy and is now the guardian spirit of the Banyan tree.⁸⁷ Myanmar history is full of true and fictional *minlaungs*, saviour princes who were outsiders of the ruling dynasty, but who seized power with their talent and ability, and started a new rule, so making the kings worry often understandable. The best known Nat legend is the story of *Mahagiri Nats*. Min Mahagiri, Ein Zaung Nat is the guardian Nat of every Myanmar home. He lives with his sister Taunggyi Nat on holy Mt. Popa near Bagan.⁸⁸

In addition to the Royal Nats, there are numerous local Nats who sometimes are more popular and better known than the 37 Lords. The cults of green ogress *Popa Medaw* (or *Mai Wunna Nat*) and buffalo headed *Bago Medaw*, Royal Mother Nat have surpassed many now almost forgotten legends of the past. Further, there are many more or less anonymous spirits, protectors or tormentors according to the amount and quality of attention paid to them. The surrounding world is full of invisible neighbours, like Bomazo, the guardian of earth, Ashingyi, protector of rice fields or Yokkhazo, powerful spirit of old trees.⁸⁹ Urbanization has also forced Nats to adapt to new style of life. One of them for example has taken on the duties of protecting motorised vehicles.

Executed people or those who accidentally died tend to haunt the place where they met their fate. Nat status turns the possibly evil intentions of the spirit to good use by employing the Nat as a protector. Human sacrifices buried alive under the gates and surrounding walls of the capital of the kingdom has been practised in many countries not excluding Europe. In Myanmar Buddhist Sangha and a Buddhist king could naturally not officially accept this violent practise, but most likely, these sacrifices were very common until very recent times.⁹⁰ However only Nats who are well established are carved in wood for the obvious reason of customer's request.

86 Rodrigues 1992, 20-21, 38.

87 Rodrigues 1992, 35.

88 Nash J.C. 1966, 118. See the story for example in Khin Myo Chit 1984, 109-111.

89 Nash J.C. 1966, 118.

90 See for example Maung Htin Aung 1962, 61-79 and 83-109. Maha-sutasoma Jataka no 537 and Takkariya Jataka no 481 in Jatakas 1973. Shway Yoe 1989, 240, 481-484. O'Connor 1987, 6.

One figure type can be considered as a case between the borderlines: the images of *Bo Bo Gyi*, guardians of town. He is usually represented in large scale, standing rather stiffly dressed in traditional *pahsoe* and jacket. The head is covered with the typical *gaung baung* headdress of Myanmar men. Across the chest is sometimes added a princely ornament. Interestingly, the *Bo Bo Gyi* figure does not have a legend to support his role and status in Nat hierarchy. He seems to be a transitional figure between invisible guardian spirits and historical Nats. Without doubt the *Bo Bo Gyi* cult carries the most ancient stratum of animistic beliefs in Myanmar.⁹¹

Nat images are sold in arcades in every big pagoda compound. Sculptures vary in size from small *Natsin* home altar-sizes to natural human sizes. Carving follows the traditional features, dress and emblems of the Nat in question. Images in their graceful court dresses, helmets and weapons are carved in careful detail. Costumes of Nats and of Thagya Min, in particular, copy the elaborate, heavy court dresses of the Konbaung kings and queens.⁹² (Fig. 25, 26, 27). British envoy John Crawford gives a lively description of the royal outfit in kingdom of Inwa in 1834:

"The king made his appearance in about ten minutes. His appearance was announced by the sound of music, shortly after which a sliding door behind the throne opened with a quick and sharp noise. He mounted a flight of steps which led to the throne from behind with apparent difficulty, and as if tottering under the load of his dress and ornament on his person. His dress consisted of a tunic of gold tissue, ornamented with jewels. The crown was a helmet with a high peak, in form not unlike the spire of a Burman pagoda, which it was probably intended to resemble. I was told that it was of entire gold, and it had all the appearance of being studded with an abundance of rubies and sapphires. In his right hand His Majesty held what is called in India a chowrie, which, as far as we could see, was the white tail of a Thibet cow. It is one of the five established ensigns of Burman royalty, the other being a certain ornament for the forehead, a sword of a peculiar form, a certain description of shoes and a white umbrella."⁹³

Few costumes and crowns belonging to the last king of Myanmar *Thibaw*, his chief queen *Supayalat* and members of the court are exhibited in the National Museum in Yangon. Part of the regalia and Lion throne which once stood in the "Center of the Universe" under the seven-storeyed *pyatthat* of the Great Audience Hall are also in the Museum.

Wooden images are usually painted with bright colours in a naivistic style. (Fig. 33). Sometimes they are partly gilt. Workmanship is good quality in most cases but the extremely popular guardian Nat of towns, *Myinbyushin Nat* (also known as *Myodawshin Nat*) riding a white horse proves to be difficult to carve in lively way. After the purchase the sculpture is situated on a home altar or donated to a shrine. The most important Buddhist pagodas have a special shrine for Nat images. In Sule pagoda, the busy center of Yangon and the sacred Mandalay Hill, the Nats live in peaceful co-existence

91 Rodrigues 1992, 9.

92 For special interest see Noel F. Singer's beautiful paintings of 37 Lords in Rodrigues 1992.

93 Crawford 1834, 230.

with Buddhist icons.

Sir Richard Temple ordered copies of the 37 Lords carved in teak around the change of the century. The sculptures were not painted or gilt - probably because in Western eyes the naive style would diminish the artistic value of excellent workmanship of the carvers. Myanmar however would not consider the carvings finished if they lack the painting. Naturally they would also not purchase the Nat images solely for decoration. Sir Temple's collection is today in Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and, it should be noted, it does not represent typical Myanmar imagery of the Nats.

Almost all woodcarvers confessed to having difficulties in carving *Lokanat*, the guardian of the world and peace. Lokanat is a crowned figure in court dress sitting in *lalitasana* on a cloud throne with small cymbals between his feet. His arms touch the knees. Lokanat's wrists are bent up and he holds cymbals or bells around his hands. The thumb and the forefinger touch each other. The Deva's slim body bends in *tribhanga*. Sometimes a winged elephant and a flying maned lion are pictured at his feet. The Myanmar legend explains that the lion and elephant were once quarreling. On seeing the animals in fight Lokanat started to play the cymbals and sing and dance. The animals were enchanted by the sweet music and forgot their quarrel.

The Lokanat image symbolizes the end of strife, and in this meaning, reminding the duties of a king, they were situated in front of the royal throne. Lokanats are also carved in the laced back and under the tu yin of the Lion throne in National Museum. Woodcarvers meet problems with the delicate *tribhanga* posture, complicated gesture of hands and natural position of the head. This image together with *dhammacakka* Buddha requires an eye for plastic composition.⁹⁴

Unpredictable Nats, ghosts, witches and demons threaten the everyday life of most Myanmar as they have done for the past thousand years. A person who lives according to Buddhist moral code can easily escape the attacks of evil spirits. In case of an emergency a man can always join the *Sangha* - the yellow robe expels the invisible tormentors and also works as "medicine" if the spirits have already taken a good hold of the victim.⁹⁵ If a person despite all good intentions and precautions falls ill in caused by supernatural reasons he has to turn to *ahtelan saya* "Master of the Upper Path" for help. *Ahtelan saya* is an exorcist, who controls both good and evil spirits. Every *ahtelan saya* is a member in one of the many quasi-Buddhist orders (*gaing*). He practises occultism and alchemy, but also follows strictly the ethical conduct, devotions and meditation taught in Buddhism.⁹⁶ *Ahtelan sayas* have their active consulting offices also in modern Yangon today.

Ahtelan saya's predecessor and colleague from the historical past is *Zawgyi*, an alchemist, magician and sooth-sayer. Alchemy came to Myanmar from India during the fifth century. The usual aim of alchemy, in Myanmar

94 A beautiful teakwood Lokanat belongs today to the excellent collection of Myanmar artifacts of Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. The image has not been painted, gilt or lacquered in the traditional Myanmar way but only polished and finished with thin outlines drawn in details of the face.

95 Spiro 1982, 263.

96 Spiro 1967, 230-232.

language *aggiya*, "work with fire" is to find means of transforming metals like silver or brass into gold. The Myanmar alchemists were more anxious to find "a stone of living metal" in their experiments. The magic stone would provide the alchemist with a superhuman body and eternal youth. With the help of the stone, the wizard can fly, travel through earth underground and dive under the waters. The power however belongs to the stone - the magician would still be but a man. Thus he continues his study and search with the invaluable help of the magic stone until he finally finds the right mixture of metals which would turn him into superman. Only by going through a dangerous and complicated process will he become a true Zawgyi. The influence of Buddhism made Zawgyi give up their search for eternal life and be satisfied to live only 1000 years. The basic Buddhist argument for extending life is that the alchemist and Zawgyis wish to be present when the future Buddha appears to the human world. Everyone who hears Metteyas sermon will at once reach Enlightenment.⁹⁷

Zawgyi images, dancing reliefs on monastery walls, pediments and doorways were among the most popular motifs of traditional woodcarving. (Fig. 18). Today only few people can afford private donations to Sangha on a grand scale. Mostly the Zawgyis carved in workshops are part of a renovation project of older monasteries. Free standing Zawgyi images are rare, since the image itself is not considered sacred and there is no cult to support it. (Fig. 41). Zawgyi marionettes on the other hand have a place in *Nat Pwe* ritual as decorations of the shrine and as reminders of the superior powers that the Natkadaw is supposed to master.

Tolerant Myanmar Buddhists have accepted a few foreigners as their protectors. Hindu goddesses *Saraswati*, *Laksmi*, *Kali* and *Chandi*, both terrible aspects of Siva's consort *Devi* are portrayed with their emblems familiar from Indian iconography but in a true Myanmar naivistic Nat style. The bloody details of Indian representations of Kali and Chandi have disappeared from the smiling Myanmar version. The gods *Siva*, *Visnu* and *Ganesa* were already venerated by the Pyu. Only *Saraswati*, *Thurathati* is portrayed frequently in the wooden sculpture of pagoda workshops and also in calendar cover paintings. The lady is dressed in Myanmar style and she wears a *naga* helmet shaped as a snake's head. She sits on the back of a *hintha* bird holding a salver with books. *Saraswati* is the Nat of knowledge and learning as she is in Indian mythology. The rest of the Hindu gods are carved with several pairs of hands and they are usually seen only in a professional Natkadaw's or Ponna's home altar.

The Hare and the Peacock

Sasa Jataka tells the story of four animals, a hare, a monkey, an otter and a jackal. The hare trying to fulfill the Buddhist virtue of generous giving (*dana*)

97 Maung Htin Aung 1962, 41-44. Spiro 1982, 168.

offers himself as food for *Sakka*, the king of gods disguised as a wandering hermit. The fire of the pyre does not burn the self-sacrificing hare. Sakka reveals his true identity and rewards the hare's virtue by drawing his picture on the orb of the moon.⁹⁸

The hare on the moon is the emblem of calm and temperate Buddhism. The legend explains the number of hares carved on wooden reliefs in monasteries. Usually the animal is placed in a lotus medallion and seen in profile. Sometimes it resembles more a long-eared dog than a natural hare. The false impression is caused by the very strong front paws of the leaping hare.

The hare as well as other natural or fabulous animals and beings are decorative elements supporting the central Buddhist image. All of them however also symbolize certain important parts of the teaching. Most Myanmar Buddhists recognize the symbols instantly and are able to recollect the legend and explain it in detail. Animal and mythological beings were traditionally, as they still are today, carved in *kapi pan* workshops specializing in architectural details, like the lotus roof for a monastery interior, gates, doors and window frames, picture frames and furniture. Souvenir craftsmen make use of some of the motifs but often in a very different spirit.

The Myanmar kings saw themselves as descendants of the two mighty Indian dynasties, the *Suryavamsa* or the Sun dynasty or *Chandravamsa*, the Moon dynasty. Certain contacts are also drawn with the *Sakya* clan of historical Gotama Buddha, also from the Sun dynasty. The emblems of the ancient ancestors, the *peacock* for sun and the *hare* for the moon are carved again and again in decorations of both royal and sacred buildings and art works.⁹⁹ (Fig. 25). The present day interpretation of the two animals represented side by side in carving is that the hare refers to Buddhism while the peacock symbolizes Myanmar kings. In Indian mythology, the peacock is the vehicle of *Karttikeya*, the god of war. The symbol of a victorious conqueror must have appealed to the warrior kings of Myanmar. Actually, the peacock was established as a royal emblem only during the Konbaung era.

The peacock is also often carved sitting inside a lotus medallion. The two animals make a perfect match in style and scale as part of wall decoration, door frame or in *Shwepalin*, golden throne. The bird's body is seen in half profile or straight from the front so that its magnificent spread tail forms the background for the bas relief. Presently peacock images are carved in monastery railings or other renovations of older buildings. The Mandalay Palace building project also offers plenty of work for local traditional workshops.

The peacock has given its form to a typical detail of wooden architecture namely the *tu yin*. Tu yin is the central part of pediment or window and door frame, or it crowns the multiple rooftops of the sacred building. It is

98 See Jataka no 316, The Jatakas 1973. Also Horner 1974, 2-9. In Japanese version the hare dies in fire and gets his reward, portrait in moon as memorial of the exemplary virtue.

99 Mandalay Palace 1963, 25. The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, 1-6. Maung Htin Aung 1970, 4-5.

carved with a short base which connects the detail to the structure. Tu yin's likeness to the peacock comes from the beautifully curving crop of the bird which is further decorated with floral designs in bas relief. The head and beak of the bird turn flatly down without any details. The tail of the peacock comes from panels on both sides of the tu yin modelled like lotus garlands, sometimes with tiny Nat images sitting on flowers. Similar architectural details are popular also in Thailand both in royal and sacred building, but the image there is interpreted in simplified form of the mythological sunbird *Garuda* - the national emblem of Thai king.

Garuda is known as *Galon* in Myanmar. It is the horoscope animal of the Sunday born. Galon is usually carved in his crowned mythical form resembling an eagle in monastery interiors. In Bagaya Kyaung dating from the end of the 19th century in Inwa there are Galons carved in bold relief in huge columns. The four roughly one metre tall birds stand in the corners of the interior's enclosure. They are dressed in formal court dresses and wear the high helmet crowns of Myanmar royalty. In their human hands the birds hold two *nagas*, snakes, the age-old enemies of the sunbird. Nagas are the personification of water and rain. Their feet have the sharp talons of birds of prey. The long tail of the bird is divided equally on both sides of the corner fence. These handsome Galons are believed to wake up and fly around the majestically tall interior if the visitors or young novices make too much noise in the sacred place. According to popular legend, venerable *Sayadaw Bame*, the late chief monk of the kyaung possessed supernatural powers and was able to bring the images of Galon guardians alive. Today Galon images are mostly carved in smaller scale, in protective amulets or as parts of furniture decoration.

Hintha the goose, the royal emblem of *Mon* kings has travelled a thousand years journey from 9th century *Hamsavati*, present day *Bago* to 19th century Mandalay and further to modern Myanmar, remaining unchanged. *Hintha* is one of the many proofs of deep rooted conservatism typical of the Myanmar arts. The bird is seen ruffling its feathers in reliefs carved on the wooden doors of Bagan temples in the early 12th century and almost identically in cornices of *Shwenandaw Kyaung* in Mandalay rebuilt in the 1850's. *Hintha* is the vehicle of *Thurathati*, *Saraswati*, the Nat of learning, and she is carved in wooden images as riding the bird. In Indian mythology *Saraswati* is the consort of *Brahma* and they both have *hamsa* or *hintha* vehicles. In India *hamsa* is usually identified as a swan. *Hintha*s are more often sculpted as Nat vehicles than alone as souvenirs. They are also carved in bas reliefs in furniture or as architectural details.¹⁰⁰ An interesting role for *hintha* are the prayer posts (*dagondaing*) in pagoda precincts. Often beautifully carved and decorated bird on the top of a tall, thin post reminds one of the wisdom of *Javana Hamsa Jataka*, where Lord Buddha as king of *hintha*s teaches a king about the impermanence of life. *Hintha* are present in many other *Jatakas* as well and later, in the Konbaung period, the bird became a symbol of royal rank in

100 *Hintha* is a popular motif for metal cast weights sold as "opium weights" for tourists. In fact the weights were originally used in weighing gold. Opium cultivation and trade did not belong to Myanmar but to Shan tradition.

wood and lacquer betel boxes.¹⁰¹

Another water bird *Karaweik* is similar in form. In fact the two birds are almost impossible to distinguish from each other, except for differing beaks. *Karaweik* is better known as the royal barge, nowadays copied in concrete and used as restaurants in Yangon and Mandalay. Both *Hintha* and *Karaweik* images were borrowed for graceful golden *betel (kon)* containers which were part of the royal regalia of the Mandalay kings.

Keinnayas and *Keinnayees*, the Kinnara and Kinnari couples familiar from Indian mythology have been popular in traditional Myanmar arts for centuries. They are mythical beings, half human-half bird, living in Himalayan forests and are the romantic hero couples of many legends. *Keinnayas* live their life in the happy world of minor deities, filled with music and dance. They are sometimes carved in monastery reliefs as guardians, like in the magnificent double door of *Thone Htat Kyaung* in Sale built in 1870 (Fig. 23) or the fragile *Nat Thoun Kyaung* in Bagan from the end of 19th century. (Fig. 11). *Keinnaya* couples can be found also in *Jatakas*. There they usually represent loyalty and love. Myanmar *Keinnayees* differ from their sensual Indian counterparts - they are more bird spirits than court ladies. Coquettish *Keinnayees* on monastery doors can be explained by arguing that they represent the world of the senses, but most likely they were carved there because they are beautiful and pleased the eye of the donor.

Nagas or the family of snakes are other important motifs in Buddhist art. As mentioned earlier the *Nagas* play a central role in Buddha legend. They are symbols of protecting the Enlightenment and keeping the secrets of esoteric teaching. *Naga* worship is of ancient origin. In India the snakes are symbols of fertility. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* mentions a rite which is still practised in India today. The *naga* holes were considered sacred. If a couple wished to have a son they would pray and make an offering to the snake daily. The founder of the *Pyu* kingdom of *Tagaung* prince *Pyusawthi* son of Sun prince and *Naga* princess *Zanthi*, was according to legend born from a *naga* egg. The cult seems to have disappeared from Myanmar, probably with the fading of the *Ari* sect.¹⁰²

The natural form of snake has been modified to a mythical, fabulous animal more resembling a dragon than a cobra. Highly simplified *nagas* decorate the eaves of wooden monastery roofs like delicate pinnacles. In doorways and window frames the head, or the heads, of the snake rise up, spreading the hood and opening the jaws with long teeth in a frightening grin. Sometimes the mighty beast is presented only as crawling ornament or huge masonry volutes more resembling the plump water monster *makara*, at the end of staircases leading to the monastery platform. In wooden sculpture *Naga* spirits are sometimes carved in the form of a charming lady. The snake can change her animal form to a seductive woman by using her magical powers. The image has a human body dressed in the usual royal costume, but the helmet or crown shaped as a snake's head reveals her true nature. Both male and female *Naga* spirits are often featured in popular Myanmar

101 Moore - San San Maw in unpublished article, *Flight of Fancy*.

102 The *Glass Palace Chronicle* 1960, 30, 33-36.

romances.

Naya (or *to-naya*), the nagas cousin, is a genuine Myanmar mythical animal. It is a mixture of naga on four legs and a dragon with features of horse, bull and lion. *Naya* standing on his two front paws is favoured on the legs of furniture, as a decorative element in door frames and staircases or as part of complicated floral ornament in wall reliefs. (Fig. 38). *Nayas* support the beautifully carved chairs with the glass inlay decoration of royals, honoured monks and naturally the gilt throne of the Buddha. In furniture design, floral motifs have displaced animals, but in wooden thrones of the Buddha they have maintained their position. The body and maned hood of *naya* is mostly similar with that of *naga*, except for the four legs with talons characteristic of the *naya*.

Pinsayupa, the "animal of five beauties" is another product of Myanmar genius. It is a wild looking hybrid with the scaly body of a snake, wings of a bird, antlers and hooves of a deer, trunk and tusks of an elephant and the tail of a fish. *Pyinsayupa* is the vehicle of *Ketu*, the king of planets ruling in the zenith of the skies.¹⁰³ *Pinsayupa* is not known in Indian mythology. Probably the different parts of the animals symbolize certain valued qualities collected in the body of the fabulous creature. Handsomely carved and decorated *Pinsayupas* can be seen holding the *patma* drum of the traditional Myanmar orchestra. Wooden images, sometimes gilt and decorated with glass inlay, have also found their way to souvenir shops in easily portable miniature size.

Chinthe, the lion holds unchallenged place in traditional woodcarving and architecture. The noble animal represents the Buddha himself as *Sakyasimha*, the Lion of the Sakya clan. His preaching of the doctrine is compared to the roar of a lion which awakens the sleeping mind and sends false teachers into hiding.¹⁰⁴ *Chinthe* is a typically Myanmar vision of a natural lion. A large head without mane is connected to a rather clumsy body. The big-eyed roaring beast is usually pictured sitting. In wooden bas reliefs in monasteries, the animal is often seen in profile. *Chinthe* images are also carved in small and medium size in wood to be donated to pagodas or monasteries. The lion is the protective animal of Tuesday born and thus sculpted under the feet of Buddhist Saints in amulets or votive images. It is also a favourite souvenir.

Myanmars have entrusted the guardianship of the most important Buddhist shrines to *chinthe*. The basic structure for monumental images, the Buddha as well as others, is masonry. The heavy material explains the often stiff and lifeless general appearance of formal sculptures. The surface is covered with stucco and finished by painting. The Myanmar style *chinthe* has spread widely over the border areas to Xishuangbanna in Southwest China and Northern Thailand. Otherwise the Thai and Chinese mythical guardian lions differ clearly from the *chinthe*. The natural lion with mane and without the fearful features of the mythical *chinthe* has gained popularity in souvenir workshops. The images are often carved on a large scale for interior decora-

103 Fraser-Lu 1985, 45.

104 Iyer 1977, 64.

tion of hotels and other public businesses and, of course for export.

Manoukthiha is another familiar fabulous creature from the legends. Manoukthiha is a guardian of the monastery with a lion's body but a human head. Its sadly smiling face is crowned with the high pagoda shaped helmet of Myanmar kings. Manoukthiha is preferably placed on monastery roof corners or bases of columns in the interior. Because of this, his body is sculpted in profile in both sides of the corner so that he has actually two bodies in one head. (Fig. 13). Its traditional place in architecture has inspired the woodcarvers to create a small scale free-standing sculpture with two perfect plastical bodies of lions united in one human head. Manoukthiha sculptures are also carved with one body only. The body of the Manoukthiha lion is much slimmer and more sophisticated than that of the muscular, often rather clumsy chinthe even when the image is built in large scale masonry.

The legend tells a tragic love story between a lion and a human lady. When the lion was with his wife he transformed himself into human form, but when hunting he took his natural lion form. After some time the wife gave birth to a human son, who, escaping his lion father killed him. The story concludes that the first Manoukthiha statue was erected by the son, then a king in his father's memory. The story and its slightly different versions are commonly known like so many other Myanmar romances. Manoukthiha like Keinnayee and other romantic monastery decorations are donations from wealthy lay people who loved music and theatre. Their presence on sacred ground does not offend the religion because they can be explained as allegories of teachings of Buddhist doctrine, suffering and impermanence.

The *Elephant*, especially a white one was the priceless, highly esteemed vehicle of Southeast Asian kings. Light colour, however was not enough to make the animal sacred - it had to possess a number of other qualities, like for example, five toes instead of the usual four. The white elephant symbolizes the Buddha. According to the legend Buddha's mother queen *Mayadevi* dreamed of a white elephant descending from *Tusita* heaven, the abode of Bodhisattas and entering her womb. In several *Jatakas* a white elephant, wise leader of the flock is a metaphorical representation of the Buddha himself. Southeast Asian kings were eager to collect as many more or less white elephants as possible to their royal herds as tokens of their superior power. The names like Lord of the White Elephants (one of the titles of the king) or the Land of Four Million White Elephants (meaning Laos) refers to this prestige.

The health and well-being of the sacred animal meant also the wealth and prosperity for the kingdom. In *Vessantara Jataka* the king presents the invaluable animal to the neighbouring kingdom and is sent into exile by his people for this unforgivable neglect of kingly duties. The elephant had a staff of servants lead by ministers and it was entertained by dancers and musicians. It enjoyed human milk for its nourishment - the privilege for the service was contested among the ladies of the court. The white elephant was also the only living being besides the king with the right to use the white umbrella. King *Bodawpaya* (1781-1819) believed that he was the incarnated *Metteya*, the coming Buddha. He was possessed by the white elephant myth.

During his rule white elephant worship was carried to extremes.¹⁰⁵

White elephants were also, quite contrary to the peaceful teaching of Buddhism, a reason for waging war. All white elephants of the kingdom were naturally the property of the king. War booty always included the elephants of the conquered king. *Bayinnaung* (1551-1581) requested the king of Ayutthaya to present him with a white elephant but was refused. The king of Myanmar attacked Ayutthaya, captured four of the seven sacred animals in the garrison and marched back to his kingdom.¹⁰⁶ The kings also made use of the universally accepted sanctity of the animal in their very secular desire to expand their rule across the borders. The monarch declared his pious wish to build a pagoda in Buddha's honour. The elephants duty was to show the appropriate place for the sacred monument. It was let loose to wander around. The site where it finally stopped was to be the place for the future pagoda. Sometimes the animal wandered freely, or helped by his staff across the kingdom's border - and naturally the Myanmar king was obliged to take possession of the area. A similar ideology of a sacred animal leading the way to religious activities was used for political purposes already in India. Indian kings chose the horse for this important role in *Asvamedha* sacrifices.¹⁰⁷

Sometimes the elephant is carved with wings. The idea of a flying giant is based on Indian mythology. Elephants are associated with gray monsoon clouds and rain which fertilizes the earth. How they lost their wings is explained in a rather humorous legend. The famous sage *Dirghatapas* was teaching his disciples under a tree in the Himalayas. A group of elephants flew to the peaceful spot and alighted on a branch of the tree. The branch, unable to hold the weight of the elephants broke and the whole load fell upon the pupils' heads. A number were killed but the elephants just caught themselves in flight and settled on another branch. The angry Saint cursed them to lose forever their freedom to fly.¹⁰⁸ In Myanmar winged elephants can be found in the relief carvings of older wooden monasteries. The modern version is to embroider them in kalagas. The legend of the flying elephants and sage *Dirghatapas* is not commonly known in present day Myanmar.

Airawata, the royal elephant and vehicle of god *Indra* is one of the 16 elephants supporting the heavens above. According to another myth the elephant king *Airawata* was born together with his wife *Abhramu* when the gods were churning the cosmic milk sea. The life vein of Myanmar, the river *Ayeyarwady* is named after the elephant king *Airawata*.¹⁰⁹

Elephant images are always true to the natural form of an elephant. In some Nat images from the beginning of this century some elephants had several heads. The beautifully carved 37 Nats of Sir Richard Temple now in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford include fine examples of these. Today this is exceptional. Elephants with or without tusks are carved

105 Iyer 1977, 46-47. Hall 1956, 94-95. See details in Shway Yoe 1989,485-489.

106 Majupuria 1991, 100.

107 Royal *Asvamedha* sacrifices were known in India already in later Vedic era 900-500 BC. See more in Basham 1985, 43, and Campbell 1991, 190-197.

108 Zimmer 1965, 106.

109 Zimmer 1984, 160.

both in traditional and souvenir workshops. Tuskless elephants are considered more powerful. They are the protective and lucky amulet animals of Wednesday born, and are very often pictured supporting Buddha or monk images. A kneeling miniature elephants at Buddha's feet suggests a miracle performed by the Teacher. His jealous cousin *Devadatta* had sent a wild elephant *Nalagiri* loose in order to murder Gotama. Buddha lifted his hand in front of the furious animal and it calmly kneeled down in peace.

Monumental masonry elephants built with technique similar to the huge Buddhas and chinthes introduced earlier are rather rare. Excellent examples of giant white elephants guard the entrance of *Thanboddhay Pagoda* in *Monywa*. These images are only decades old but the idea itself originates from early on. Chinese records from the 9th century Pyu capital *Thayekhetaya*, Sriksetra mention that a 30 m tall white elephant was one of the sacred images of the city.¹¹⁰

Note on Sacrilege

"Who favours and upholds like me the gift of faith which I thus offer with all my heart - be he my son, grandson, or any future king who comes after me, queens, princes, royal ministers, high or low, men of wealth and substance, bailiffs, headmen, persons of good family hereafter, yea, all who bountifully support - may such, like me, be favoured above others with the Wheel of treasure; may he be endowed like king Mandhata with glory, majesty, and power; may he receive the full fruition of the boon of Buddhahood, silent Buddhahood, the boon of apostleship, or the boon of saintship. But whoever spoils even so much as an oil-lamp out of the glebe I have offered to the end that religion may last five thousand years, may he be oppressed with eight dangers, the ten punishments, the thirty-two results of *karma*, the eight calamities, the ninety-six diseases. May he be suddenly overtaken with great affliction which a thousand doctors may not avail to cure. Having suffered thus for long, generation after generation, when his bodily elements dissolve, may he suffer by going in and out among the eight chief hells, (Sanjiva) Kalasutta, Sanghata, Roruva, Maharoruva, Tapanna, Mahatapanna, and the Avici, and likewise the twelve minor Ussaddarek hells and the forty limbos of Yama and Lokika; may he suffer with the hosts of pretas, Asuras, and Lokantareks. Even if he survive all these sufferings, may he revisit five thousand times these glebelands in the form of a boneless and miserable creature, a Preta, a worm, a water-leech. If he survive this, may he be born times without number as a mad dog, a mad pig, a mad fowl, a mad man. Thus I denounce, pouring waterdrops from this golden kettle."¹¹¹

Terrible curses upon the violators of Buddhist shrines have not kept the monuments safe. After the fall of the Bagan dynasty in the 13th century, wild *Shan* hordes raided pagodas believed to be the source of Myanmar power. Valuable votives and relics were stolen and destroyed. Later, during anarchic phases in the 14th, 17th and 18th centuries, armies of both Mon and

110 Coedes 1971, 104.

111 Bagan Patodaw inscription. The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, xii-xiii.

Myanmars pillaged pagodas on their way to war fields. The victorious troops of *Hsinbyuhsin* (1763-1776) did not hesitate to raze *Ayutthaya*, a kingdom of fellow Buddhists to the ground. Many times the reasons for devastation was the wish to gain the powerful images or relics which had made the enemy strong.

Another chapter in the sad chronicle of sacrilege starts with the arrival of Western "archaeologists". In 1855 *Henry Yule* was the first foreign visitor to recognize Bagan's importance. A few decades later German archaeologist *Dr Emil Forchhammer* wrote a brief study of one of the temples. After their reports, interested - and greedy parties, rose to collect valuable items of Myanmar's national pride for their foreign collections. 1899 another German *Th. Thomann* came with a group of his countrymen to Bagan and systematically dismantled some of the Bagan's finest mural paintings.¹¹²

The Mandalay Golden Palace fell victim to British arrogance. After annexation of Upper Myanmar in 1886 *Shwenandaw* of Myanmar kings was taken over by British for a garrison, churches and offices. The total demolition of the Palace had also been seriously contemplated. One of the wooden throne rooms the Queen's Palace, was occupied by the Upper Burma Club and it was used as a bar and smoking room. Thrones, valuable furniture and the whole regalia was taken to the museums of British India. Many of the smaller valuables found their way into colonial homes.¹¹³

Nowadays the export of antiquities is banned, but still too many packages pass unchecked through the customs control. Thieving from the monuments and monasteries continues for so long as dealers collect handsome profits from wealthy collectors of Buddhist art. The chances of getting caught is small both for the tourist and for the thief. The Myanmars who steal from themselves get naturally only a small amount of the real profit of the art deal. Antique shops in Thailand are full of all kinds of Myanmar (and Cambodian) artworks from different periods.

All Myanmars today are well aware of the ancient curses placed upon the holy votives. Belief in magic and supernatural powers is very wide and mostly the thieves are more afraid of the revenge from the spirit world than from the official side. Thieves try to balance their bad *Kan* in very traditional way - by giving more donations to the religion.

112 Strachan 1989, 3-4.

113 The Mandalay Palace 1963, 11-12. O'Connor 1987, 72-73, also 417-419. Strachan 1989, 4.

7 THE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST AND CRAFTSMAN

Colonial Effect

"British conquest and rule in 1800's made our artists craftsmen. Most of the carvers only copied old masterpieces - it is easier and also sells well. Of present day artists only few are interested in renewing traditional arts. The State School of Fine Arts accepts 20-30 new students yearly. Only few of them study traditional arts while the majority concentrates on modern art. I never copy old art or make my art work after a photo. I do however study art history constantly - archaeology is my hobby. My art is based on traditional symbols and visual language, but my motifs and expression are new."¹¹⁴ (Fig. 40).

Unlike the other conquerors and invaders of the Myanmar kingdom, the Shans of the 13th and 14th centuries and the Mons of the 18th, the *British* had a totally different view of the modern world and progress, which they were determined to plant in colonial Myanmar. They abolished the institution of kingship, which the previous conquerors had never done. The turbulent history and violent changes of dynasties did not reflect the institutional continuity of pre-colonial kingdoms. They were based on same assumptions and beliefs concerning man, salvation, time, order and disorder, justice, authority and legitimacy. Now, the British eliminated the fundamental institution that had held the society together.¹¹⁵

The other fundamental change was the role of the respected Sangha. Monasteries were largely autonomous. During many times of disorder, when

114 Thampawaddy U Win Maung in interview 1991. U Win Maung is one of the leading artists of the country. The information for this chapter has been collected from interviews of woodcarvers, artists and artstudents during two months intensive period in January-February and December 1993.

115 Aung-Thwin 1985, 201-202, 207. Hall 1956, 131.

civil government broke down, it was the Buddhist organization, loose though it was, which held society together. The venerable monks had for centuries acted as cultural leaders of Myanmar society. Monastic schools had provided basic education for generations of Myanmar men. After the Second Anglo-Myanmar War and annexation of Bago in 1852 the monastic establishment of Lower Myanmar was cut off from its headquarters in the capital of the kingdom, at that time in *Amarapura*. Sangha suffered both in discipline and cohesion. At first there was a considerable exodus to Upper Myanmar and many monasteries were deserted. Later, when ordinary people returned to their homes, the monks stayed behind. The census of 1891 shows that whereas under Myanmar kings every village had its monastery, after annexation there was only one monastery for every three or four villages. The main reason for the confusing situation in a deeply Buddhist country was the British refusal to give official recognition to the Buddhist's ecclesiastical code. In practise this meant that Buddhist authorities almost totally lost their power to maintain discipline.¹¹⁶ Thus, the Myanmar lost both two upholders of their traditional culture.

British annexation resulted in a new customer group; a growing prosperous merchant and official class, although it soon fell in the hands of rather unpopular Indian immigrants. Before the 1885 annexation of *Mandalay* there were two art traditions in Myanmar: In the royal kingdom thousand years old canons and rules provided the frame for artistic creativity, and they were strictly observed. In British Myanmar, artists did not necessarily follow the rules very carefully although they were obviously known. The new market invited experiments.

The British wished to have something exotic but still familiar to their colonial homes. The mastery of Myanmar silversmiths and unrivalled skills of woodcarvers won well-deserved admiration. Western artistic ideals were introduced already during the rule of far-sighted *Mindon Min* (1853-1878), whose envoy *Kin Wun Mingyi* built the remarkable and most surprising wooden monastery in Mandalay, *U Kyaung* also known as *Kin Wun Kyaung*, with classical ionian pilasters and frontispieces at the height of Late Konbaung period. (Fig. 10). *Kin Wun Mingyi* travelled to Europe and built the monastery after the ideals he saw in his trip. Also from this and the colonial period date the fine examples of heavy teak cabinets and bookcases with a taste of European Baroque.

Collections of valuable, heavy furniture are often found in older monasteries, where venerable Sayadaws have received them as donations. Thone Htat Kyaung in Sale has especially good collections. Also Nat Thoun Kyaung in Bagan has noteworthy examples. Naturally the National Museum in Yangon and the Mandalay Museum in Shwenandaw, Golden Palace have beautiful carved furniture from the court. Artists travelled in both directions from British Myanmar to the royal capital in Mandalay with new ideas and novelties in their minds. The presentation of one's skills or performing in royal Mandalay was considered as true proof of talent. In Mandalay the visitors were looked upon with patronizing curiosity. The situation changed

116 Hall 1956, 137, 145.

fundamentally with the annexation of Mandalay.

Changes were most dramatic in the performing arts. Court dance theatre was the first to lose: *nandwin thabinthee*, celebrated court dancers performed classical *Yama Zatdaw* for the last time on the royal ground of Golden Palace in Mandalay on February 15th 1886. The dancers gradually dispersed, some to seek employment at the courts of Shan princes, some to form troupes of their own. Another all time favourite of Myanmar kings and ordinary audiences as well, *Yokthe Pwe*, the puppet theatre also showed soon signs of new trends. Already in 1776 in Mandalay, *Thabin Wun*, a minister for performing arts had formulated strict rules on puppet performance already in 1776. British Myanmar puppeteers did not have to obey these, and they were free to modernise both the plays and stage setting, as well as to introduce new puppet figures. After the Third Anglo-Myanmar War 1885 there was a general exodus of craftsmen and entertainers from North to the economically lucrative, wealthy South. The artists, especially performing artists who clung to tradition and were incapable of adapting to the changing times, fell by the wayside.¹¹⁷

U Ba Nyan and The Burma Art Club

Colonial time fathered the birth of modern art and western style art schools in Myanmar. The greatest name of modern painting in Myanmar is without doubt the distinguished national artist *U Ba Nyan* (1897-1945). He was not the only one who studied western art and travelled widely in Europe, but he most certainly is the best known and admired among young art students of today. His studies and artist's career could not have been possible without the help of the *Burma Art Club*, the early precursor of *State School of Fine Arts*.

U Ba Nyan was born on 3.12.1897 in Pantanaw, in Southern Ayeyarwady Division, the fifth son of a merchant family of U Ba Ao and Daw Nyo. He started drawing on slateboards when he was four years old. He went to school but since he wasn't interested in studies, he passed only four standards. Seeing the child's enthusiasm for drawing, his parents sent him to *U Bo Maung*, well known artist famed for his skills in ancient Myanmar style painting and sculpture.

In 1915 when the artist was 18 years old he joined the Mawlamyaing Norman School headed by English principal Mr Marks. Mawlamyaing is in Mon State. Ba Nyan passed his seventh standard here and was able to concentrate on his art studies. His special talent had already been noticed. He studied European painting further under the guidance of *E.G.N. Kinch*. Mawlamyaing could have been Ba Nyan's fate unless by good luck he was introduced to *Sir Harcourt Butler*, representative of the British government who helped the young artist to Yangon in 1918. There he was student of *K.M. Ward*, professor of Physics in Yangon University and founder of the Burma

117 Singer 1989, 90, 97. Singer 1992, 7, 74-76.

Art Club.

The Burma Art Club was founded in 1913 by European amateur artists. From 1918 it gave regular weekly art lessons headed by *Mr Kinch*, *Mr Ward* and *Mr Martin Jones*. The Club's most talented student Ba Nyan travelled around Myanmar for painting lessons and excursions with Mr Ward. His paintings were shown for the first time in a Club exhibition in 1915 and from that time on, he became well known among the European audiences residing in Myanmar.

The Club members Mr Kinch, Mr Ward and *Professor Luce* started to plan Ba Nyan's further study in Europe. The plan was finally carried out in 24.8.1921 when S.S. Amarapura sailed to England with Ba Nyan on board. He studied in the *Royal College of Art* in London and visited also Paris. In Paris he found *Impressionism* which has clearly influenced his art. In 1925 Ba Nyan returned to Myanmar together with an excellent certificate from the Royal College of Art and 300 of his own paintings.

In 1927, Ba Nyan travelled back to Europe. This time his studies lead him to Holland where he was greatly impressed by paintings of *Rembrandt*. The journey continued to Paris, Berlin, Geneva, Rome, Venice and Florence. Ba Nyan visited also Spain and Czechoslovakia and travelled in Arabia. He funded his trips with a small scholarship and by selling his paintings. In 1928 Ba Nyan returned to London where he stayed until 1930. He got the chance to meet King George V in person after saving one of his relatives from drowning. After his eventful travels Ba Nyan returned back to his native country in June 1930.

In 1935 U Ba Nyan got married to Ma Sein Khaing. In 1939 he became the principal of the *Art School* for Myanmar students. The school was teaching commercial arts, modern art and Myanmar traditional arts much like the State School of Fine Arts today. The school started with 30 male and 2 female students who were all granted with a small scholarship as well as the necessary materials for study. Artistic activities came to a sudden end with the outbreak of the Second World War. U Ba Nyan moved to his wife's Mon State for safety. His health was not good but he still continued painting. U Ba Nyan's last masterpiece "*Sound of Pagoda Bells*" picturing his life long favourite scene Shwedagon Pagoda this time at night is now in Japan. U Ba Nyan died on 12th October 1945.¹¹⁸

The Burma Art Club had an important role in supporting and encouraging U Ba Nyan's artistic career and introducing Western painting in Myanmar. The Club was also a meeting place for European and Myanmar amateur artists for mutual exchange of influences. The Burma Art Club was founded in 1913 and was first situated in the Rangoon Government High School compound at the corner of present day Shwedagon Pagoda Road and Bogyoke Street. The Club had regular meetings and lessons every Sunday. Later the national members included most of the famous names of modern art in Myanmar: *U Ba Nyan*, *U Ba Zaw*, who mastered water colour, *Saya*

118 U Ba Nyan's life history has been collected from English translation of U Min Naing's *U Ba Nyan Ba Wa Nit Thu Ei Alout Akaing* 1974. Translation by Ma Moe Moe Aung.

Saung, U Tha Htun, U Ba Nyan's talented student U Ngwe Gaing, U Ba Kyi, U Maung Maung Mya, U Thet Win, U San Win and others.

In 1924 distinguished painters *U Ba Lon* and *U San Lwin* both founded private Schools for Fine Arts. By the end of the 1920's the Burma Art Club had transformed itself into the *Burma Art Association* headed by the famous professor Gordon H. Luce. The ladies *Daw Ma Ma Khin* and *Ma Mya Kywe* also belonged to the association. Art schools with national leaders came to the field in 1930's. The *Myanma Artists Association* was founded in 1930 to rival the English lead Association. The *Burma Arts and Crafts School* was founded in 1936-37. The school teaching programme included woodcarving, clay sculpture, drawing and painting. Teachers were famous Myanmar artists like *Saya Saung* and *U Ba Kyi*. The *School of Painting, Arts and Musical Instruments* was founded in 1931 headed by principal *U San Lwin*. *The Art School* where *U Ba Nyan* was the principal was opened in 1939. Schools had to be closed down at the outbreak of War.

After the war and winning Independence, the State School of Fine Arts was again established in 1952. Painting and sculpture were added with music and dance to the teaching programme. The first principal was *U Khin Maung*. The school was placed in Jubilee Hall in Yangon in the beginning but soon, in 1963-1964 it was changed to University Avenue Road. Paintings and plaster were packed one more time in 1968-1969 and the school moved to its present place in Bahan. The building used to be the Museum of Archaeology. The succeeding principals were *U Myat Kyaw, U Lun Kywe, U Maung Tin Aye, U Thukha* and at present *U Soe Tint*.

The State School of Fine Arts Mandalay branch was founded already in 1953. The State School of Music and Drama was later separated from the main institution into an independent unit, but in Mandalay the school is clearly concentrates on music and dance today. The principals of the Mandalay State School of Fine Arts are *U Thein Nyunt, U Ba Thein, U Win Pe, U Kan Nyunt, U Maung Lay* and at present *U Zaw Win*. *U Maung Lay* is now the principal of the State School of Music and Drama in Mandalay.¹¹⁹

Artists Today - Traditional

Present day Myanmar society is basically much the same as in the classical kingdom. *Theravada Buddhism* is still the starting point for any study or attempt to understand the country. The role of the leading king has been adapted by a civil government since Independence in 1948. Difficult political reality has only strengthened the importance of religion in people's minds. Also the legitimation of political power has always been attempted through accepted Buddhist practises, by building pagodas, by supporting Sangha and repairing ancient monuments of national pride. In fact religious traditionalism has become closely identified with nationalistic sentiment. Even the most

119 Information collected from Myanmar sources by Ma Moe Moe Aung.

Westernized individual, however sophisticated, retains an attachment to the older order and its manifold social expressions. Today the Myanmar, especially in big cities have to cope with dynamic cultural influences originating from the outside world. Until now the powerful, glittering attractions of the West have only superficially scratched the surface.¹²⁰

The woodcarver's profession is one of the traditions which has survived from classical Bagan to the artistic culmination of the period of the Konbaung kings, through British rule and wartime to Independent Myanmar. In a Buddhist country there are always customers for a skilful carving master, who sculpts the familiar features of Gotama Buddha in teak. Animistic Nat religion has also kept the traditional carving profession alive. The demand for images of mighty spirits is as great as for Buddhist icons. After the 1960's tourism has not been encouraged. For a very long time in the 1980's travellers were welcomed for one week's trip only. The souvenir industry has until recent years been modest and has generally followed the tradition. Arts which are closely connected with Buddhism, like woodcarving, bronze casting or marble sculpture are very much alive and upheld by tradition. On the other hand *Shwegyidaw* tapestry (Southeast Asian *Kalagas*), which enjoyed royal support in Mindon's court (1853-1878), lacquerware and marionette carving have experienced a true renaissance and become favourite souvenirs.

Woodcarvers' workshops are commonly situated near famous pagodas, like *Shwedagon* in Yangon or *Mahamuni* in Mandalay, or along certain streets or in parts of the city. The best known example of artists' quarter is the famous *Thampawaddy* in Mandalay. In the countryside Buddhist or Nat religion images are carved by village craftsmen, whose original profession might be smith or farmer, but not woodcarver. Buddhist icons are of course purchased by pilgrims visiting important Buddhist shrines. Souvenir carver's shops are often on the same ground, since foreign visitors come to see national monuments as well. Still, very few workshops carve both traditional religious motifs and modern souvenirs. In Yangon and Mandalay where practically all tourists visit, souvenir industry has established co-operational or private run workshops specializing only on export and souvenir crafts. (Fig. 30). The shops are not near Buddhist shrines. The third group of Myanmar artists is also not seen near pagodas. Art works of modern painters and sculptors with formal art studies are exhibited in private art galleries.

Usually woodcarving workshops are family run enterprises. The age of professional carvers varies from under twenty to mid 40's.¹²¹ Obviously older carvers, if they are family members or close relatives, participate in work by giving much valued advice. In well known artist's workshop the master himself visits the shop only occasionally, for example when the customer is a high ranking guest or if the work needs his expertise and advice.

120 Cady 1961, 17, 23.

121 Interestingly altogether eleven of the trad.informants gave their date of birth in Myanmar era like 1325 which equivalent 1963. When questioned in detail, the answer was "I only know the Myanmar year". Since many of the informants were in their 30's we have to conclude that the tradition holds strong at least where astrology is concerned. Myanmar era, weekday of birth and time of birth are important basis for astrologer who are frequently consulted for any action planned or taken.

Usually the oldest carver under him is responsible for daily routines. In traditional workshops carving is men's work. Ladies of the family often help their sons or brothers by gilding the carvings or polishing the wooden images.

Most of the 23 traditional carvers interviewed had begun their profession by studying in some master's workshop. Basic studies take about two to three years. More responsibility is given gradually to a student when he shows progress. Half of the carvers had worked over ten, three over twenty years. Only two had worked in other professions before becoming a woodcarver. Basic studies of artists vary from first year university student to second standard. The reason the informants gave for choosing a woodcarver's profession was unanimous: their personal interest in the work. Many of them told how they had admired artists at work in pagodas already when they were children. They also claimed that they wish to do the work the rest of their life, so for the artists interviewed woodcarving certainly seemed to be a vocation. Most of the carvers had artists - mostly woodcarvers but also for example goldsmiths, marble sculptors or bronze casters in their family. Very few followed their father's profession, however. All said that their families encouraged and helped them in the work which is quite typical in Myanmar society where family ties are close and respected. Also the carvers were usually born in the city they worked. Only six of the 23 originally came from another area. The answers suggest that stability - the basic value of classical Myanmar - is still considered high above the risky enterprising and mobility which modern society could offer.¹²²

Artists today - Modern

*The State School of Fine Arts, Yangon*¹²³ has about 60 students. They come to the school which lasts three years from all parts of Myanmar. The other State School of Fine Arts situated in *Mandalay* concentrates on traditional dance and music, but also has a visual arts department with about 30 students. Students come mostly from around the northern part of Myanmar. The state provides the art students with a small scholarship. Young students have to pass eighth standard in school, but 23 of the total 37 informants in art school passed the tenth and the rest the ninth standard. Further, three of the art students were also first year students at university. The artist's profession in its modern sense interests also women students: five questionnaires returned were from women. 13 informants had artists in their family or near relatives. About a third of the art school students come from middle class families. They are the sons of clerks, businessmen and military officers. One third comes from farmer families and in last third's case, their fathers were also

122 Personal data statistics from the questionnaires is presented in Appendix 4.

123 Information about art schools and their study programmes were kindly given by Principal U Soe Tint of State School of Fine Arts in Yangon and Principal U Zaw Win of State School of Fine Arts in Mandalay in interviews in January 1993 and December 1993.

artists. Relative proportions are the same with traditional artists.

First year students learn the fundamentals of drawing and painting. In the second year they choose their speciality from either the *Commercial Arts* or the *Fine Arts* department. The Commercial Arts means illustration, poster and advertisement paintings etc. The Fine Arts section specializes in still life and scenery in water colour and oilpainting. Portraits also come into the programme, but nudes which are invariably studied in every art school in Europe and America, do not belong to the Myanmar study tradition. Graphic art is not taught in art schools either.

Sculpture classes use wood, clay and plaster materials. Marble and bronze are not taught in either of the two art schools. Most marble sculptures in the country are products of Mandalay workshops. Raw material for typical Buddha images is easily available in the nearby Sagaing hills. The students learn to picture both traditional motifs, like decorative mythological animals (Fig. 38) and ideals of Western art, flowers and fruits in still life composition, scenery or historical themes. Apart from majestic pagodas in scenery, their motifs are not religious. Some of the students said they "wished to paint according to Buddha's teaching", but did not specify if this meant religious motifs like the *Jatakas*, or the ideas of Buddhism as their source of inspiration. Most art school students named the great masters of Renaissance, Michaelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci and the Impressionists as their favourite foreign models. Still far more popular were the Myanmar artists like the famous *U Ba Nyan*, *U Ba Kyi*, *U Myint Sann*, *U Ngwe Gaing* and others. Many of the teachers of the Yangon and Mandalay art schools are also well known artists. Third year studies are mainly for specializing and refining the students' skills. After each year the students have to take an examination and prove their progress in order to continue to the next class.

Art schools are quite popular despite the fact that it is rather a hard way to make one's living. This, is of course true also in other countries of the world. Most students aim to produce commercial work after the school. Some stay in the school and work as assistant tutors or teachers. The art galleries of Yangon are little by little organizing themselves and they will undoubtedly have an important role in general art education in future. The possibility to exhibit and also sell artworks will encourage young artists to take the public challenge. Until now, no women artist's work has been seen in local galleries.¹²⁴

124 Names and addresses of active art galleries in Yangon are given in Appendix 5.

8 WOODCARVING WORK AND MATERIALS

Traditional Tools and Techniques

A traditional Myanmar artist divides his motifs into three categories. An artist specializes in one of them - masters who can command all themes are truly rare. The first group, which is called *nari pan*, includes Buddha images, human beings and Nats in human form. *Kapi pan* - carvers concentrate on animals, birds, monsters and Nats in various lively settings. *Gaza pan* means the same motif group but produced in large scale solemn compositions. The demanding skill of carving *kanote pan*, floral design is especially highly valued and respected. Early examples of floral sculpture have survived already from the *Pyu* era, which can be studied from large bronze bells. *Bagan*, *Inwa* and *Mandalay* periods developed their own, easily distinguishable styles which have been copied for centuries. (Fig. 24). Different designs and forms have special terms and names which are handed down traditionally from master to his apprentice. For instance, the three-forked leaf is called "*thonsaywet*", a five-forked leaf "*ngasaywet*" and "modern style foliage" is "*ywetsann*".¹²⁵

The carving stroke is always the same whether the tool be adze or chisel: a *stop cut* and a *crosscut*. The stop cut establishes the depth of the cut. The crosscut cuts out a wedge-shaped chip stopping where the stop cut defines the depth. This prevents too much wood from being chopped away and also helps to control cutting. Small slivers of wood are cut or almost peeled away. The chosen woodblock is held firmly between the feet while the

125 Pyi Phone Myint 1988, 18-20. Artist U Win Maung has collected examples of the stylistic development of floral motifs to his home and workshop in Thampawaddy, Mandalay.

carver sits on the floor. (Fig. 32). The carvers, who are devout Buddhists were quick to explain that the working position is not at all disrespectful to holy Buddha, since the carving is here considered only as a piece of wood¹²⁶. Naturally big and heavy size images need to be supported by other blocks of wood to enable a comfortable working position. Big images are usually carved in open air sometimes with two to three carvers sharing the work. (Fig. 31).

The carving process is divided into four principal phases. First the *general shape* is drawn on the chosen woodblock. Most masters who specialized in three-dimensional Buddha images made the helping sketch only if the carver was their student. For themselves marks are not necessary. When planning the dimensions of scale and general shape of the figure, the carver has always the measurement with him: hand and forearm are the traditional tools for this work. The origins of these ancient measurements are in Indian *Silpa Sastras* manuals for sculptors. The ideal proportions for various images were expressed in terms of basic unit, *tala* or "face" from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin. Each *tala* is further divided into twelve *angulas*, which in their turn are again divided into still smaller units. An ordinary human being, is measured into eight talas, major gods are ten talas and minor divinities measure nine talas.¹²⁷ Myanmar artists are very familiar with the *tala* system as well as also other details of the Indian canons. Some of the older masters can quote the classical texts fluently by heart. Note that the same proportional measuring is used in classical dance. Accurate dance positions are learned from the beginning by stretching the arms and legs according to *tala* measure. Dance positions are important motifs in decorative art.¹²⁸

Cardboard patterns are used in sketching large symmetrical motifs in relief. The master designs the motif, usually abundant foliage with birds or Keinnayee nymphs and draws it on cardboard, which is then pierced accordingly. The cardboard is then spread on carefully smoothed wood and the picture is chalked through. Patterns are also copied from one workshop to another. The cardboards are necessary in furniture, frame and wall decoration designs, which need exact repetition of the motif. (Fig. 35).

126 In making *shwegyidaw* tapestry there are certain rather strict rules concerning sacred motifs. The holy footprint of Buddha with its 108 symbols is a demanding task for the embroideress. She has to fast, meditate and give offering to Buddha before beginning the work. No mistakes are allowed in the sacred textile or else she and her family are in risk of some misfortune. This kind of mental preparation is not needed in sculpting the Buddha image, though many carvers say they meditate. Probably the reason is the traditionally lower religious status of women in Buddhism. Only a man can be a monk and therefore has the potential to reach Enlightenment. In all fields of life women are more vulnerable to the attacks of evil spirits or witches. They also need to pay their respect to guardian Nats more regularly. Information from Daw Tin Myint, keeper of tapestry workshop in Mandalay, October 1992.

127 Coomaraswamy 1989, 135. Gupte 1980, 21.

128 Familiarity with *tala* system became clear in many conversations in artists' workshops. When asked about the tools the carvers laughingly showed their hand and explained the measurements with the ancient Indian system. They were also aware that the system is originally "Kala" - Indian. Dance lessons were followed in Mandalay State School of Fine Arts with an introduction to the art by leading dance teachers U Toe Lin and Daw Nyunt Nyunt Win of the school in December 1993.

After preliminary preparations follows the *rough cut* of the image and its position. Hollow parts like the under arms or legs are cut out. Next the *details*, hand gesture and possible side figures, like supporting animals are carved. Lastly, the smallest details, smile, eyes, hairstyle, clothing etc. are added. The sculpture is then *polished* carefully, and handed over to be gilded or painted. Several students can participate in the carving process of an image. The young student starts first in carving the rough model, and after showing improvement in his work, he is allowed to continue towards details. The beginner usually starts with easy motifs like the elephant. Also tiny miniature amulets are favoured as practice, since they require concentration and a skillful hand. They are also finished quickly and give satisfaction and reward to the carver. His next step would be to proceed to the rough part of Buddha or Nat images until his master finally trusts him also in the carving of the details.

A woodcarver's selection of tools typically include a wooden *latyaik*, mallet preferably made of hard *magyi* or tamarind tree (*Tamarix Indica*) Edged tools are plentiful - usually 24-30 different sizes and blades - but in a well equipped workshop there can be as many as 50. The straight edged chisel, *sauk pei*, the tool used for the rough beginning, can be 4 cm broad. *Sauk kon*, the gouge and v-edged *hmin kyaung sau* are also found both with several sized blades. *Let the zaung* is a chisel with an oblique blade for cutting details. For even smaller details and the carving of popular miniature amulets the woodcarver uses *let phauk suu*, an oblique blade without the wooden handle. The magical protective amulets are 1,5-2 cm high and a handle on the tool would make the detailed work difficult.

The carvers usually make their mallets themselves, but chisels are bought from blacksmiths. Special grinders go around the workshops regularly to take care of the sharpening and repairing of the handles of chisels. Naturally chisels need constant sharpening and the students in the woodcarver's workshop have to start practising for their future profession in this work also.

The motif for the artwork is usually chosen by the customer. He also decides its style whether it is to copy classical *Bagan*, *Inwa* or *Mandalay*, or should it be in *modern* style. Nowadays customers often come with a Buddhist calendar picture or a photo of a famous image with them. Popular painted calendar pictures have had a strong influence on the contemporary Buddha image. Myanmar calendars or printed Buddhist posters copy the style of romantic Indian religious posters. In Myanmar the paintings are made by local artists who have finished art school and sign their work. Signing is not the custom in traditional Buddhist art. The pictures are painted in true Myanmar Buddhist spirit. The costumes are the ancient court dresses of Myanmar kings and the architecture in the background is Myanmar but the style, imagery and romantic visual language is borrowed from popular Indian made prints favoured by the local Hindu minority. (Fig. 7).

Raw Materials for Carving

A common delusion is that Southeast Asian woodcarvers use only or at least mostly teak, ebony, ironwood or some other rare and expensive raw materials. The artists give altogether 28 different woods more or less commonly in use. (Fig. 34). A carver's workshop usually keeps a selection of woods at hand. A customer may already bring the needed block, or, after successful negotiations on the price of the carving work, the customer and carver together inspect the nearby wood shops.

As stated before donating or ordering a Buddha image is considered an important and meritorious activity. Myanmar Buddhists always consult an *astrologer* before any such act. An astrologer's advice is needed in fact in all enterprises involving risk like building a house, getting married, taking a journey etc. The astrologer's demanding profession has for centuries been the speciality of Indian brahmins, the *ponnas*, who were already active in the Bagan court. The Buddhist Sangha is not supposed to be interested in such worldly rituals, but some monks are known to practise soothsaying. Also the ever active *Natkadaws* offer their services as mediums.

When a Buddha image is being made, the raw material and the motif for the future image have to be chosen by the astrologer. Usually the choice follows the weekday of the person's date of birth together with his or her special wishes or expectations for the donation. Also, other details have to be taken in consideration in consultation with the supernatural. The astrological map follows the ancient Indian model, but has been adapted to Buddhist culture. Hindu astrology has played a major role in all Asian cultures. For example the city planning of many ancient Asian capitals, which followed a square plan where the mystical planets and deities of the points of the compass affected human life, continued at least from the first century until the 19th.¹²⁹

The magic square contained also the unique Myanmar eight day week. The explanation for the city-square is protection: each point of the compass has powerful guardians. The eight-day horoscope places the person in a certain cosmological sector. Myanmar borrowed the planets and symbol animals from the Hindu astrology, but placed eight chief disciples of Buddha instead of the Indian gods.¹³⁰

7	8	1
6	9	2
5	4	3

129 Oshegowa 1988, 208.

130 See details of ceremony of the Nine Gods in Maung Htin Aung 1962, 7-22.

After the number the planet, comes the point of the compass, weekday, animal symbol and Buddha's disciple. Wednesday is divided into two at noon. The afternoon - evening part is ruled by the mystical dark planet Rahu of Hindu astrology.

- 1 Sun - northeast - Sunday - *Galon - Rahula*
- 2 Moon - east - Monday - tiger - *Kodanna*
- 3 Mars - southeast - Tuesday - *Chinthe - Revata*
- 4 Mercury - south - Wednesday before noon - elephant with tusks - *Sariputta*
- 5 Saturn - southwest - Saturday - *Naga - Upali*
- 6 Jupiter - west - Thursday - rat - *Ananda*
- 7 *Rahu* - northwest - Wednesday after noon - elephant without tusks - *Gawampati*
- 8 Venus - north - Friday - guineapig - *Moggallana*
- 9 *Ketu* - zenith - *Pyinsayupa - Gotama Buddha*¹³¹

Suitable wood for each weekday would be:

- 1 Sunday - *In* (*Dipterocarpus obtusifolius*), hard, red-brownish wood
- 2 Monday - *Kyun*, the celebrated Teak (*Tectona grandis*), hard, dark brown favourite of the carvers.
Hardwoods are easier to carve when they are in their green state. Wood is seasoned when it is intended for furniture material, since it tends to crack when dry.
- 3 Tuesday - *Zeebin* or also *Zee-daw*, the Chinese Date or Jujabe tree (*Zizuphus jujuba*), hard, cream coloured wood.
- 4 Wednesday - *Sein-ban* or Flame tree (*Delonix Regia*), light weight, soft and white wood. *Yinmar*, *Lun*, *Sha* and *Wa* trees, all unidentified, are also named suitable materials for a Wednesday born person's donations.
- 5 Thursday - *Pauk*, Bastard Teak or Bengal Kino (*Butea Frondosa*), light weight, soft, light brown wood
- 6 Friday - *Thee*, Elephant or Wood Apple (*Feronia Elephantum*), light weight, soft, almost white or cream colour wood.
- 7 Saturday - *Htein* (*Mitragyna parviflora*), very hard, rosy cream colour.

If the image is intended for example, as a protective amulet for personal use the astrologer chants *Paritta*, chapters from Buddhist Sutta scriptures. When the image is the Buddha to be donated to a pagoda or monastery the Holy Texts are recited by monks. The astrologers are well versed in Buddhist text and nothing prohibits them or any other layman in reading the magical formula.

The donation of a Buddha image is so important that venerated monks are invited to sanctify the icon. Monks cannot refuse in chanting the *Paritta* when requested. The monks are representatives of Buddha himself and thus their presence increases the holiness of the donation ceremony.¹³²

Consecrating a Nat image is performed by a professional Natkadaw. If the statue is intended to be kept at a sponsor's home altar the ceremony is rather simple consisting of certain rituals and offerings. A Nat for the professional use of a spirit medium requires a more elaborate ceremony and take

131 Maung Thin Aung 1962, 8-13. More about the mythical animals Galon, Chinthe, Naga and Pyinsayupa on Chapter The Hare and the Peacock p.63ff.

132 See translations of protective Parittas for example in Spiro 1982, 263-271.

place in a *Nat pwe*.¹³³

Other commonly used materials are *Nanthaphyu* (*Millettia Piscidia*), hard, red-brown wood, *Pyintha*, Myanmar Ironwood (*Xylia Dolabriformis*), hard, light-coloured, grayish wood, *Ingyin* (*Pentacme Siamensis*), soft, light rosy-brown colour, *Thikanet* (*Hopea Helferi Brandis*), expensive black wood, *Gati* (scientifically unidentified) is very hard, beautiful dark red coloured wood and *Mashu* (unidentified). *Teak* is naturally also used, but nowadays it is getting more expensive. Also its export is prohibited on ecological grounds. Instead of teak, massive decorative sculptures, like life-size elephants for export and almost all larger carvings in souvenir shops are carved out of *Kokko*, the common raintree (*Pithecolobium Saman*). It has nearly the same colour as teak, but it is easy to recognize by growth rings which are large and show clearly, sometimes in the lighter colour in texture of the wood.

The carvers also mention *Nyaung*, the figs (*Moraceae* family), but did not specify which species of the family is. It would be rather doubtful to conclude that they used *Pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*), the sacred tree of Buddha's enlightenment. The *Bodhi tree* is considered sacred all over Asia. *Nyaung* is rather light weight, soft and creamy in colour. The same problem of identification meets with the *Awza*, custard apple tree (*Annonaceae* family), which also has several species. *Awza* is soft and light coloured. *Thit-e*, the Chestnut tree (*Castanopsis Indica*) is slightly red-brownish wood. Red *Yin-daik* (*Dalbergia Cultrata*) is one of the most beautiful of all raw materials. Its cutting surface resembles a bird's feather with delicate darker stripes. *Yin-daik* has also a very pleasant scent. *Ma-u*, the Wild Cinchona (*Anthocephalus Cadamba*), is a hard yellow wood. *Khaye* or the Star-flower tree (Indian Medlar, *Mimusops Elerigi*) belongs among the more expensive materials. It is a hard, pink wood. Surprisingly *Padauk*, Indian Kino (*Fterocarpus Marsupinum*) has two very different colours. The centre of the tree is dark red, but outside it is light yellow. *Magyi*, the Tamarind (*Tamarix Indica*) was already mentioned as the preferred raw material for mallets, but it is also used in sculpture. Expensive *Sandagu Nantha*, Sandalwood (*Santalum Album*) is used in very valuable, meritorious small Buddha images. Fragrant sandalwood is considered very auspicious. The Glass Palace Chronicle tells the story of two merchant brothers building a monastery of sandalwood for the Buddha in his legendary visit to Myanmar. Building a monastery as valuable as this would certainly bring large amounts of merit to the donors. In legend it symbolizes the establishment of Buddhism in Myanmar.¹³⁴ Finally there is *Tharakan* (scientifically unidentified), an expensive and very hard wood, which has a notably strong, sweet and pleasant scent resembling juniper. *Tharakan* is specially favoured in rosaries.¹³⁵

133 See details in Rodrigues 1992, 54.

134 The Glass Palace Chronicle 1960, 6.

135 Information about the wood is collected from an interview of U Han Htin in his Mandalay workshop December 1993. Scientific identification from U San Khin, Seywa Nit Athone Win Thaw Aphin Myar translated by Ma Moe Moe Aung.

Finishing the Sculpture - Lacquer and Gold Leaf

"The Buddha image is considered finished, when donations of fruit and flowers are brought in front of Him."¹³⁶

As with the raw material, size and attitude of a religious image, its finishing also depends on the customer's wishes and wealth. Most Buddha icons are gilt with real or artificial gold leaf. Nats are traditionally painted in a popular naive style. Sometimes their clothing is gilt as a special favour to honor the spirit. Gilding of religious object adds the amount of merit which will fall on the donor. The more expensive and valuable donation, the better positive effect on *Kan*. Reliefs and architectural details are finished with lacquer techniques. Nowadays a shiny dark brown stain is used in sculptures offered to tourism market and export, but this method has not become popular with Myanmar customers ordering religious artworks.

Traditional gold leaf making takes place in the *Myet-payut* quarter in *Mandalay*. The gold is about 0,6 cm wide, 15 cm long and 2-3 mm thick stick to begin with. It is first heated, stretched and beaten until it reaches the size of about 30 cm x 150 cm. The fine sheet of gold is then cut into one centimeter squares. Each of the pieces is placed between waxed paper. About four hundred of them are piled up and wrapped in deer skin. The package is then beaten with a wooden hammer for about half an hour. After the first beating the sheets are carefully cut further into six pieces. The pieces are once again placed on paper, wrapped in skin and beaten. The work takes around two hours to finish. When the correct size is finally achieved, lady workers continue to trim the gold into small squares of certain size.¹³⁷ Many carving shops and customers settle nowadays for artificial gold leaf, which is sold in rolls. Genuine gold is however donated to important national shrines like Mahamyamuni and Shwedagon. Both kinds of gold leaf are attached to the image's or object's surface after it is first coated with lacquer.

The painting of a wooden Buddha icon is not common. Sandstone images in Bagan were painted as were later stone, marble or plaster-covered monumental masonry images. Other Buddhist images, portraits of *Yahans*, monks and *Bodaws*, "Great Fathers" or figures from *Nat mythology* are willingly painted. Narrative reliefs telling the Buddhist *Jataka* legends on the walls and roofs of *tazaungs* in pagoda compounds are also painted, but today big scale artworks are very seldom ordered. New religious buildings usually have decorative eaves with familiar flamboyant floral designs typical of Myanmar architecture. The painting of Buddhist images has traditionally been moderate. The bright colours, red, green and yellow familiar from Chinese art have nowadays gained popularity, especially in painting marble images of Buddha and Bodhisatta Kwan-yin in marble workshops along Mandalay-Amarapura road in Mandalay.¹³⁸

136 Woodcarvers in Mahamyamuni Pagoda, Mandalay and Shwedagon Pagoda Yangon.

137 Fraser-Lu 1985, 13-14.

138 Bodhisatta Kwan-yin and her role in Myanmar is discussed later in detail p. 91.

In the repairing and reconstruction of older wooden buildings, crude petroleum or mineral oil has long been used to protect them against insects and weather. If the original exterior sculpture or essential part of the building has deteriorated or been ruined, and a copy is decided to replace the item, it is also usually stained and not painted even if it is known, that the originals were painted and / or gilt. Examples of conservation at its best can be seen for example in Shwenandaw Kyaung in Mandalay, rebuilt in Mandalay in 1857 from older pieces carved in Amarapura (Fig. 16), Bagaya Kyaung in Inwa (Fig. 9) from the end of 19th century, and Yokeson Kyaung in Sale, built in 1878. (Fig. 19).

Lacquer techniques travelled to Myanmar most probably from China, where they is already 3000 years of history. The exact route and the date of arrival are not known, although there are many historical documents on active cultural exchanges between the two countries. It is unlikely the methods came directly from China to the Myanmars or the Pyu, but rather were transmitted and transformed by some neighbouring tribe.¹³⁹

The raw material for lacquer is the sap of a certain tree, *thi'se pin* (melanorrhoea usitatissima), which grows wild in the mountain area. In China and Japan lacquer is also produced from the sap of a tree. Chinese *ch'i-shu* and Japanese *urushi ni ki* (*rhus vernicifera*), is not the same species of tree with Myanmar *thi'se ping*.¹⁴⁰ Fresh sap is a light coloured liquid when tapped from the tree trunk, but in contact with air it hardens quickly and the colour turns black. Tapping does not damage the tree.

Lacquerware is manufactured in small family run workshops. *Kyaukka* village near Monywa in Upper Myanmar and *Bagan* are best known for their good quality items. The ancient capital *Inwa* is nowadays a quiet village where some workshops specialize in black *thabeiks* or monk's simple alms bowls. Lacquerwork is taught in the *Government Lacquer School* in Bagan. Usually all family members participate in the work and children learn the methods and techniques by practical work under the guidance of the older generation.

Traditional lacquerwork is a time-consuming art where patience is rewarded with the best results. Thin layers of liquid lacquer are spread over the base of the object, which can be either wood, bamboo or metal. In some of the finest ware woven horse hair can also be applied. The surface is polished and often decorated with etching. The whole process takes about five to six months, or in the case of especially fine examples, as long as two years to finish.¹⁴¹

Lacquerware also had to face the changes brought with colonial rule and later challenges from the modern world. The British added Indian style octagonal tables, Chinese tiffin baskets, square trays and more to the worker's repertoire. Tourism has introduced wall plaques, cigarette holders, wine

139 Fraser-Lu 1985, 2.

140 The lacquer used in the countries mentioned is not related to the material used in India and Europe, where lacquer is produced from a mixture of an insect and certain tree species. Prunner 1966, 21.

141 See details of lacquerware work process in Prunner 1966, 21-31, or Fraser-Lu 1985, 8-13.

glasses and complete coffee sets with cups and saucers etc. Original soft colours, red, yellow and black were added first with green, later with blue and white. Nowadays bright greens and blues favoured by tourists are in majority in the shops lining the way to the famous Ananda temple or Shwezigon pagoda in Bagan. The so called "Japanese style", abstract brown and gold decoration is a popular wedding gift among Myanmar. Also lacquerboxes with painted decorations are nowadays sold in all main tourist attraction sites. The bamboo base is lacquered, but time-consuming etchings are replaced by painted flowers, hearts and birds. Bright, romantic motifs seem also to interest Myanmar customers. Myanmar lacquerware is widely copied in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand and sold on a large scale to the tourist market. Copies are not of particularly good quality and unfortunately most tourists do not even realize, that their souvenirs are of Myanmar origin.

In woodcarving lacquer is used as a base for gilding. Relief moulded lacquer, *thayo* used to be a popular technique for producing small architectural details, floral and foliage ornamentation and the particulars of an image. The outlines of the planned decoration are drawn with a thin line of lacquer over the carefully polished surface. Thayo is fashioned with the help of a small horn-shaped knife called a *than let*. For larger scale work, metal moulds or stamps can be used. When a detail is finished it is lacquered on the back and pressed into the design. On completion, the decorated area is painted once more with a thin coat of lacquer to make sure all particulars are firmly adhered to the object. At its best, thayo resembles very closely a carved relief in wood.¹⁴² Presently when monasteries, *tazaungs* and public secular buildings are mostly made of brick, thayo has been abandoned in favour of cement in architectural ornamentation.

Another favourite method of decorating images and architecture is *hman-zi shwe-cha*, or glass inlay mosaic. The technique is comparatively new - probably a war booty from conquest of *Ayutthaya* in 1767. Glass inlay is produced by arranging geometrically cut mirrors and pieces of coloured glass into a thick lacquer base. The surface is gilt with goldleaf, which only fixes on the lacquer.¹⁴³ In classical *Konbaung* period sculpture the robe of the Buddha image was beautifully ornamented with lines of coloured glass. Copies of these images are widely sold in Thailand, but in the pagoda workshops of Myanmar they are not available. Mirror mosaic is at the moment enormously popular in decorating and renovating pagoda platform constructions. The workmanship is however quite formal, stiff and often bombastically grand lacking the delicate sophistication of older architectural details¹⁴⁴. The most amazing example in Yangon is the interior of *Botataung Pagoda* near the jetty on the river side.

Still in the beginning of this century thayo mixture was commonly used in modelling plastic objects using the dry lacquer technique, *man hpaya*. The rough model of the image was first sculpted in clay. Features and details were added by placing one thin layer of lacquer over the other until the figure was finished. The clay was carefully washed away from inside, cutting

142 Fraser-Lu 1985, 27.

143 Fraser-Lu 1985, 31. Tilly 1901, 3, 9-12.

144 See photographs by P. Klier in Tilly 1901.

the flexible image open from the less accessible areas such as the head and arms. The image was then finished with goldleaf. The dry lacquer technique is no longer used in making Buddha images, although some masters still remember the technical process.¹⁴⁵

The dry lacquer image is extremely light weight and there are some examples where the technique has been applied on a very large scale. In the small village of *Sale*, south from Bagan is a true treasury of Buddhist art with three carved wooden monasteries, as well as pagodas and shrines built by Konbaung kings. Popular history tells how two monks *Khin Gyi Tha* and *Khin Gyi Sa* found a huge image of Buddha floating in the Ayeyarwady river outside the village in 1823. The origin of the image is not known. The giant lacquer image was rescued and brought to its present place. This nearly-10 meter-tall sitting image in bhumisparsa is known as *Shin Pin Mahalaba Man Yunhni Payagyi*. When found it was red-brown - the typical colour of traditional lacquer, but it was later gilt by Japan Expo Ltd, who also built the modern style mirror mosaic platform for the image.¹⁴⁶

During late Konbaung times, dry lacquer was centered in small villages around the *Monywa* district in Upper Myanmar. The craft seems to have died out in the 1920's, probably due to competition from marble images made on a mass production scale in nearby Mandalay.¹⁴⁷

After the technical finishing of a Buddha icon there is a consecration ceremony lead by the monks. The ceremony takes place in *vihara*, the assembly hall of the monastery. Monks chant holy text in Pali or sometimes in Myanmar while holding a sacred thread attached to the image. The magical powers of the image are released by the chant. Offerings of flowers, incense and candles are placed in front of the Buddha. All images installed in monasteries must be formally consecrated. Until then the statue is just an empty wooden image without any religious and spiritual significance. The ceremony may be a part of some other Buddhist festival. It usually lasts one night. Venerable monks are lastly invited to *hsungywe*, a generous lunch next day, which finishes the festivities.¹⁴⁸

The origin of the consecration ceremony is explained by the legend of the *Mahamuni* image. King *Canda Suriya* of *Dinnyavati*, Arakan enthusiastic to hear the teachings of the Great Sage in person, invited Gotama Buddha to his kingdom. The visit took place and the king served Buddha and his disciples himself. When the date of departure for his respected guests came close, the king did not wish to let Buddha go. So as a compromise life-like statue of him was cast in bronze. When Lord Buddha came to see the image, he embraced it seven times to give it the breath of life. Since then the Mahamuni image and thousands of its kind have been respected as true representatives of Buddha and his teachings.¹⁴⁹

145 Fraser-Lu 1985, 35.

146 The history of the image is gathered from the venerable monks of Thone Htat Ky-aung and the keeper of the Buddha tazaung in Sale. The Monastery houses a collection of antiques like so many other older monasteries elsewhere in the country. Among the treasures is an approximately 50 cm tall dry lacquer Buddha image.

147 Fraser-Lu 1985, 35-36.

148 Swearer 1981, 15.

149 Khin Myo Chit 1984, 74-77.

9 MODERN ARTS AND CRAFT

Modernization means here the process of changing functions of art work or handicraft. As stated before the changes took place simultaneously with the introduction of Western culture in the form of British colonial rule. The collapse of the basis of classical Myanmar, the national monarchy, which also had been the primus motor of arts and Buddhist culture lead to fundamental changes in society. The flourishing arts and craft of *Konbaung* kings needed new support. In order to get it the artists and craftsmen had to adapt to the taste and ideals of beauty of their new customers. In commercial art the carver meets the obvious problem of what the tourist considers "typically Myanmar". An object's familiarity, even when it is considered "exotic" sells better since very few travellers study the art history of the country before their trip. When a present day traditionalist woodcarver is asked why he doesn't carve modern sculpture, he usually explains his choices with economic reasons: There are always buyers for Buddha images, Nats and amulets, but who knows about the tourists. Some years they come and buy. What if they don't come next year? Myanmar do not buy modern images, because they are very expensive.

Buddhist Motifs

The most obvious difference between a traditional Buddha icon and souvenir Buddha image is that the latter is stained dark brown and not gilt or painted. Brown stain is very common and so much favoured among the foreign customers that everything, even the hanging marionette puppets sold in pagodas in Yangon and Mandalay sometimes have a brown skin instead the traditionally admired white. Modern Buddhas are usually of the *bhumisparsa* and *Dakkhina Sakka* type, but all other mudras are also available. The face and

body of these images are often robust or even stout. Influences come from certain famous Chinese and Japanese images. For example many Buddhas wear a robe which is open in the front leaving the chest and a round belly uncovered. The type is familiar from Chinese *Mi-Lo-Fu* images, but would be out of question in the traditional Myanmar Buddha. It is also the style of the very famous and well known *Daibutsu of Kamakura* in Japan (original bronze dated 1252). Printed pictures in calendars and magazines provide the necessary models. Facial features of these Buddha images also follow the Chinese and Japanese prototypes. For example some crowned Bodhisattas have strikingly slanting eyes very unlike any Myanmar images. Souvenir workshops also carve more traditional Myanmar style Buddhas with the robe covering the slim body in soft folds.

Laughing *Mi-Lo-Fu*, the Chinese fat monk sitting or standing with his hands stretched up above his bold head also belongs to repertoire of modern woodcarving workshops. *Mi-Lo-Fu* is Chinese version of the future *Metteya Buddha* who is at present waiting for his time in Tusita heaven. His jovial image is most probably based on legends surrounding the life of a 10th century Chinese monk living in K'ai Feng village.¹⁵⁰ *Mi-Lo-Fu* is a popular souvenir favoured by Western tourists. Chinese customers purchase *Mi-Lo-Fu* images in order to bring good luck in business. Another clearly Chinese idea is the miniature pagoda in the typical multistoreyed characteristic of Chinese Buddhist architecture carried in the lap of the meditating Buddha.

Another Bodhisatta image growing in popularity both among the tourists but also with Myanmar customers is also Chinese. *Kwan-yin* or Kannon in Japan, is the Goddess of Mercy. She is the benevolent female form of the original Indian Bodhisatta *Avalokitesvara*, "the Lord who looks down in pity". According to Buddhist legend he did not enter Nibbana in order to help and relieve the suffering of living beings. *Kwan-yin* is usually carved standing in slightly curving form covering her high coiffure with the border of her thin robe. Her face is typically Chinese. The goddess of Mercy has been tolerantly accepted as a member of the all-powerful *Nat* family of the Myanmars, able and willing to listen to the prayers of a devout person in distress. Like other wooden souvenir images *Kwan-yin* is also stained brown. Marble sculptures for Myanmar and Chinese customers are painted with bright Chinese style colours, red, green, yellow and gold.

Sometimes foreign customers, usually those who live and work in the country, bring a picture of a deity they wish to order. The image may well be a Tibetan Bodhisatta with several pairs of hands sitting in the middle of curling, snake-like foliage. The artist carves the image according to the model, but since the workshop is often in a pagoda compound it is also open to curious onlookers who are particularly interested in foreign visitors. The finished art work collects deserved admiration and invites wealthy customers to order similar or a national modification of the foreign motif. Ideals of beauty are adapted in details and carved in suitable form for local icons. In some cases like the *Mi-Lo-Fu* for example, it is already sometimes difficult to determine whether the wooden image sold in a Thai bazaar is made in

Myanmar, Thailand or China. Little by little the national features are lost to serve the taste for the exotic of international tourists.

Historical and Mythological Images

The Myanmar people are very proud of their glorious past. Some historical persons are overwhelmingly popular heroes of Myanmar people. King *Kyanzittha* (1084-1113) of Bagan was a great warrior and also supporter of Buddhist Sangha. His reign was an important building period in Bagan. Many of the magnificent shrines like the famous Ananda temple (1113) and Shwezigon (1089) the prototype of later Myanmar pagodas, are dedicated by the great king. King *Bayinnaung* (1551-1581) of Toungoo dynasty united the country divided into rivaling principalities, conquered large areas of Thai states, the Shan states, Chiang Mai, Laos kingdom and Ayutthaya under Myanmar rule. King *Alaungpaya* (1752-1760) of Shwebo, founder of the Konbaung dynasty was another warrior hero of Myanmar. He led the victorious war against the Mons who occupied much of Lower Myanmar. He renamed the ancient village of Dagon as Yangon, "the end of strife". The fourth hero of Myanmar is General *Mahabandoola*, the brilliant commander of the armies of king Bagyidaw (1819-1838) against the British in the first Anglo-Myanmar War 1824-1826. All four are portrayed in modern wooden sculpture, though *Kyanzittha* and *Mahabandoola* more often than the other two.

Kyanzittha is sculpted as a muscular warrior, quite different from his ancient pious portrait in the Ananda temple. He is carrying a bow or other weapon and sometimes holds a falcon on his arm. His upper body is unclothed except for the heavy jewelry showing his royal position. Huge earrings belong to his royal outfit. Lower garment is a loose and knee-long *pasoe* or dhoti falling in soft folds. The king's crown is a typical multi-pointed crown of Bagan times familiar in many murals and reliefs. Most images of the hero king are rather stiff and clumsy. Myanmar artists do not have the tradition of picturing the undressed human body and therefore the failings of anatomy are quite understandable. This is especially clear in some sculptures of a strong man inspired by Atlas of the Greeks, who supported the skies above with his bare hands. The carvers stand on much firmer ground when sculpting the ideal beauty of mythological beings than portraying realistic human bodies.

General *Mahabandoola* died in action while leading his troops against the invading British in 1825. He is preserved in paintings, wooden and metal cast sculpture riding a horse standing up on its hind legs. The general wears the red dress of *Konbaung* military officials. His high helmet has a broad brim and a sharp peak on the top. In his uplifted hand *Mahabandoola* holds a sword. *Mahabandoola*, or any other famous personality of Myanmar history is not familiar to most Western visitors. Hero images are occasionally bought as souvenirs but as a whole they tend to be more popular among the wealthy Myanmar customers for the decoration of business office.

The images of Bagan *minthamee*, princesses are the most popular of all souvenir woodcarvings. The ladies of ancient court are dressed in a scanty upper dress which leaves the round belly uncovered, and the long traditional lower garment *longyi*. The typical pointed crown of the Bagan dynasty and high, complicated coiffure finishes the royal lady's dress. Standing images are usually in the middle of some activity, playing a flute or carrying a food offering or betel container. (Fig. 29). Many of the stained sculptures are smooth and well-proportioned but lifeless compared to the sparkling, vivid female *Nats*, *Balu* ogresses or *Keinnayee* nymphs of older monasteries. (Fig. 28).

The same description can be given to other souvenir images, damsels playing *saun*, the Myanmar harp, princes and princesses or Keinnaya couples dancing, villagers carrying their baskets to market or musicians playing the long *baun* drums. (Fig. 30). Most carvings are technically good or medium class handicraft, but the treatment of the motif is formal, lacking any personal touch from the carver's side. Whatever artistic ideas lay behind the original prototypes for these sculptures, they have been completely lost in hundreds and hundreds of copies carved quickly in large amounts for export and tourist market. Unfortunately now, lower quality carving is also being accepted to be shown and sold. Economic realities together with loose quality requirements, even a lack of understanding and knowledge from the customer's side, provide temptation to choose quantity over quality.

The tourism of the last decade although restricted, added a group of souvenir motifs which unlike the images introduced above are very strange to Myanmar tradition. Examples of these are busts of Red Indian chiefs or little mermaids sitting on stone. The models have been taken from advertisements in foreign magazines - the Indian chief for example is promoting the sale of an international cigarette label. The group is clearly designed for those tourists who willingly choose the more familiar motifs from the exotic souvenir selection.

Animal sculptures are still one popular group among tourists, export businessmen and Myanmars alike. The important symbolism connected with many animals, mythical or natural has been explained before. Mostly the animals sculpted in modern style are stained brown and not painted or decorated in the traditional way. The selection naturally includes elephants in sizes varying from life-size to miniature, galloping horses, prowling male lions, sitting *chinthas*, roaring tiger heads and even small frogs. Galloping horses are reminiscent of the well-known Chinese ink paintings by *Xu Beihang* (1895-1953), but are generally very international in style. The master of the workshop specializing in elephants, horses and lions in Mandalay explained, that his ideas and inspiration come from real animals. Similar sculptures are however seen in every modern woodcarving workshop in the big cities. The roaring tiger head is reminiscent of another advertisement in a foreign magazine-model and the humorous frogs are common souvenirs at least in Thailand and Bali.

Contemporary Trends in Art Schools and Galleries

There are very few sculptors of Western style in Myanmar. Of them even fewer have chosen wood for the material of their art. Most public artworks like portraits of national leader *Bogyoke Aung San* or other historical persons are bronze. The monumental equestrian statue of Aung San was sculpted by *U Soe Tint* in the 1950's. He is nowadays the principal of the State School of Fine Arts. *U Soe Tint* studied monumental art in Germany. Historical leaders of the nation grouped around an obelisk in the Golden Palace compound in Mandalay were on the other hand sculpted by local masters, who have not studied in art school but learned their skills in traditional workshops. The natural size *Kyanzittha* for example is a work of *U Tin Htwe*, student of master *U Toe Maung* from Thampawaddy, Mandalay. The statues were placed in the Palace compound in 1993. Oil and water colour paintings are the tools of artistic expression among most Western style artists.

The artist's identity which in the West usually grows and develops in art school, is not yet clear to most Myanmar artists. If we take a quick look back into European art history there is a precise period when the master craftsman became an artist. The change can be seen in signature - a craftsman seldom signs his work. Artists and craftsmen were only one of the many professional groups who experienced the changes of society in Southern Europe during the Renaissance and in the slow North like Finland, much later. The builders of cathedrals and palaces became architects, painters and carvers were called artists - they were professionals, guilds of people with special talent and abilities.

Art studies in Myanmar are relatively new. Western style painting was introduced only in 1920's and state art schools were founded only after independence in 1948. Most students aim for commercial professions, as painters of posters, designers of advertisements, and illustrators of books, magazines or cartoons. Only few confess a desire to become famous artists. The change will come with the opening of the society to Western ideas as has already happened in Thailand. Economically advanced Thailand has many excellent art schools and the modern art of the country is internationally of very high quality. The artists see themselves as a social closure group. They have developed a certain culture, way of life, thinking and behaviour which connects them to international artists groups and separates them from other, say traditional artists and craftsmen. In modern societies the criteria for being accepted as member of the professional group, is above all education, studies in an art school, and a formal certificate which proves the professional skill or individual talent.¹⁵¹ Side by side exists the anonymous Buddhist art tradition and the mass production of crafts for tourist markets. The three groups have established themselves in Thai society. The artists with formal studies in Western techniques in Myanmar have not yet found their identity and place in Myanmar society.

Yangon is so far the only city in Myanmar which has art galleries in

151 Kottinen 1993, 8-9.

the Western sense of the word. For many artists, who have studied in either two of the State School of Fine Arts' these are the only forums to show their talent in public. For example in the second largest city, economically thriving Mandalay, there are not yet art galleries for the local artists and art students. To purchase a landscape painting or a modern sculpture for home decoration is still a very new idea even for educated and wealthy Myanmar. A portrait of the head of the family, except in photos, would be considered a sign of strange self-esteem. In short - the artists do not have a buying audience. In the traditional Myanmar home, a wooden or bamboo house, the interior is quite dark. Windows which open inside, are low near to floor level, and for the hot daytime they are kept closed or left slightly open. Furniture is rare consisting usually of a low table, chests for keeping things and an occasional chair or two. In a modern Myanmar home whether it be a house or a urban flat, furniture is still basic. Buddhist homes have the home altar for the Buddha and sometimes a *Natsin*, an altar for the spirits. Other wall decorations are calendars, posters of famous Buddhist sites in Myanmar and abroad or popular photo prints of babies, filmstars etc. Christian homes have naturally printed pictures of Christ and English language Bible quotations on their walls.

Yangon will certainly be the center of modern art while Mandalay holds the leading place in upkeeping the traditions. The *Gallery Guide* to Yangon was published in January 1993. It gives the names and addresses of 13 art galleries of which, one is located in Monywa in Upper Myanmar. Three of the capital's galleries are in downtown, three in Golden Valley which is the favoured residential area of foreigners working in Myanmar, three near Inya Lake with its many exclusive restaurants nearby, and two in Bogyoke Market. Finally, there are the excellent collections of paintings from the first half of this century in the National Museum.

A tour around Yangon's art galleries should start from the *National Museum* exhibitions of paintings. Art works are oil and water colour paintings, mostly in the style of romantic realism. Sceneries, traditional festivals, people in their daily work, maidens returning from the monastery and still life with fruit and flowers are the motifs for the painting by Myanmar's most respected artists. The interesting collection of master artist *U Ba Nyan's* (1897-1945) paintings, sketches and drawings from his European experiences at the beginning of the century introduce glimpses of Impressionism in Myanmar art. His oil paintings reveal his admiration of the great Dutch masters Rembrandt and Rubens. The National Museum art gallery also exhibits a number of beautiful copies of traditional mural paintings from the Bagan, Inwa and Konbaung periods.

Art galleries around the city have collected the artworks from several local artists including a few visitors from Mandalay. The selection of oil and water colour paintings are usually wide, but sculptures are also sometimes on show. Mostly they are made of stone and very experimental compared to the paintings. These art works picture the beautiful romantic scenery of Myanmar with white pagodas in golden sunset, boats on the river Ayeyarwady or portraits of young ladies in colourful national dress. Some artists have copied the murals of the early Konbaung period. There are also few experimentalists on

abstract art. Myanmar artists are especially talented water colour painters. Perhaps the air quivering with heat, misty mornings or ripples of the rivers' cool water in their beautiful country inspires the mastery of this demanding tool.

Another, clearly commercial group of painting are the scenes from dance theatre. Dancers are depicted without any personality, in a manner of sugary poster prints in bright colours. In the same group there are sunsets over Shwedagon, portraits of national minorities and so on. Typically these paintings can be purchased in art shops in the tourist areas like Bogyoke market, but also and not surprisingly in Thailand. The minority portraits are especially popular. They are painted or drawn after postcards in mass production for example in the Night Bazaar of Chiang Mai. The same postcards have obviously found their way to Myanmar.

10 WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME A WOODCARVING ARTIST?

"I have wanted to be an artist my whole life. It is a peaceful profession and it doesn't bring trouble to anyone. I wish that I will be an artist also in my next life."¹⁵²

There is no clear distinction between fine art and craft in the traditional arts of Myanmar. Contemporary Buddhist art, its forms and designs are the result of thousands of years development. Although styles have differed over the centuries, motifs have remained consistent. Any variation was the expression of genius of an artist or an age and was essentially a part of cumulative effort and inspiration. The artist was often an anonymous master. His personal identity was sublimated to the greater meaning of the art work. Every image of the Buddha is a copy, or a copy of a copy of a copy... of the legendary portrait of the great Teacher. The carvers do not explore experimental arts or try to shock their audiences with novelties. Commercial artists and carvers find their motifs in the history or myths of their country. They also hold to realistic and romantic imagery.

When traditional Buddhist woodcarvers were asked why they wanted to become professional artist, they usually gave realistic answers. They got interested in the work when they saw woodcarvers at work in pagoda workshops. After a few years of studies they founded their own workshops, often with family or relatives. All of the interviewed woodcarvers were certain that the tradition will continue because the profession is still respected among young people. The carvers also expressed their wish to become better in their work and to show their talent in public. They are proud of the long art tradition of their country and see themselves as members of a long line of any-

152 Artist U Myint Kyaw (b. 1964) in Mandalay State School of Fine Arts, December 1993.

mous masters (*professional function*¹⁵³). The same idea prevails among the craftsmen who made their living by carving modern images for export and tourists.

Most carvers in the two groups concluded that their work is both their interest and means of living. "I want to carve a lot of statues. Even before I became an artist I was very interested in this profession." "I want to be a woodcarver because it is an ancient art. Also I want to do this work for my living." "I want to become a famous and skilled artist one day. I would like my artworks to be shown in exhibitions." "I wish to keep our tradition. I hope the new generation also would admire this kind of art."¹⁵⁴

Artists and artschool students in Yangon and Mandalay emphasized the creative part of their profession (*artist's function*). "When I see something beautiful, I wish to express my feelings about it. I start sketching my ideas on paper. I know that I have to master the techniques before I can make a satisfactory work of art. I came to study in Mandalay State School of Art because I want to learn how to show my feelings through art." "Our Buddhism teaches us that nothing is permanent. I know that even if I live until 90 year, I still have to give up my life and die. My artworks will remain after me and perhaps they will keep our Myanmar tradition alive." "Sometimes I feel hurt or tired, but I try to express also these feelings in my art. People find pleasure in different things. I find pleasure in painting. When I finish a painting that I find satisfactory I feel the bliss of celestials in heaven. Painting can give freedom of mind and the feeling that nobody can restrict you. It is pure happiness."¹⁵⁵ The answers show a distinct difference to that of traditional woodcarvers: the artists and art students show clearly the wish for individual expression of their personality, feelings and views of life. All students agreed that the artist's profession is respected, even though some doubted the Myanmar audience's ability to value modern art. The respect for the teachers of the art schools, old master artists of the country and the long tradition was absolute. The critical voices typical of young artists and art students in the West do not belong to Myanmar culture. For the young Myanmar artist becoming famous means reaching the technical and artistic skills approved and appreciated by audiences. Very few would wish to fame for shaking the established values of conservative society. There are some non-figurative paintings and sculptures in Yangon's art galleries but nothing of the kind that would upset or cause debate.

Traditional Buddhist artists carve what the customers wish. "I carve whatever my customers like to order. I find models and examples for carvings from the Shwedagon pagoda museum and also from history books telling about arts in ancient Bagan. Mostly I carve images for pagodas." "Mostly I make traditional Buddha and Nat images. If I have problems I get advice

153 Function is a concept applied in discourse analysis of spoken language. Analysis was explained in chapter 3 Interviews - Discourse Analysis p. 22ff. Here they point to specific identity roles of the artists.

154 Traditional woodcarvers in Shwedagon, Yangon and Thampawaddy, Mahamyamuni pagoda and export carving shop specializing in life-size elephants in Mandalay December 1993.

155 Art students in State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay December 1993.

from my teacher who is also working here at the Shwedagon pagoda stairs." "I mix tradition and modern ideas. I find my inspiration for Buddha images from ancient statues, but I also carve souvenirs." "I carve traditional art. I get my motifs from ancient pagodas near Amarapura and some from Buddhist books. I copy the pictures and sometimes I use photos as models. I specialize in floral motifs."¹⁵⁶ The motifs and their designs are familiar from Myanmar history. Famous artworks or the pictures of them are commonly used. Professional envy seemed to be absent: the carvers recommended each other generously. Respect for old masters and teachers of the skills is unquestionable.

Modern artists and art students respect Myanmar tradition, but prefer modern painting when designing their motifs. "I try to keep the traditional culture from ancient dynasties time. I use traditional motifs mixed with modern realistic painting." "I am interested in the mixture of tradition and modern. I paint the scenery, the beauty of rivers, mountains and forests." "I like modern designs but I prefer traditional arts". Mostly "tradition" was understood as picturing pagodas, mythological animals, scenes from Buddhist or historical legends, not as traditional painting style seen in the ancient murals of many shrines. Murals do not use, for example, perspective or plastic painting where light from a certain source makes shadow. Only two of the informants made difference between traditional and modern painting: "I don't paint traditional art. I use academic way. I find my models from books, paintings and original pictures. I copy them just to learn how the painting was done. Mostly I paint portrait and scenery." "The academic way of painting is far from traditional art. I find my inspiration from my surroundings and ordinary life."¹⁵⁷

The traditional Buddhist woodcarver artist can be fairly sure of his future. In Myanmar they will surely have customers also in the future. Export and tourism seem to be fast-growing businesses in a country which has so much to offer for a visitor. Artists graduating from their three years of art school have yet to wait for their time. Most of them continue in the commercial field. Some stay in the school as tutors or teachers of new students. So many of the students are eager to show their talent that the near future will certainly see new galleries and art exhibitions opening also in other cities beyond the capital. Active support for the young artists' public performances should come from the schools. Another interesting question is the role of women in arts. The Gallery Guide to Yangon listed tens of artist names, but all of them were men. Still, there are young, talented and enthusiastic women artists in both art schools of the country.

Classical Myanmar society changed when the British occupied the kingdom and abolished the supporter of the culture, the king. Buddhism, the other of the central pillars of Myanmar culture has kept the traditions of old Myanmar. Now profound, inevitable changes are shaking the fundamental

156 Traditional woodcarvers in Shwedagon, Yangon and in Thampawaddy Mandalay, December 1993.

157 Art students from State School of Fine Arts in Mandalay December 1993 and Yangon January 1993.

base of this traditional society. The artists paint picturesque landscapes, monks on their morning rounds and smiling beauties returning from the monastery. These are pictures of a traditional, disappearing Myanmar.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to study the woodcarving tradition in Myanmar. Arts have for centuries been serving religion, the unique Myanmar Buddhism and have been supported by mighty kings. Conservative society where stability has been valued has kept artistic expression within the established limits of Buddhist iconography, but never suppressed the freedom of imagination of individual master artists. Two classical art periods rise to the class of world art history, namely the era of great temple building in Bagan (1044-1287) and the time of the Konbaung kings (1752-1885).

Traditional arts and culture have survived a thousand years. After British annexation of the last royal city of Mandalay in 1886 many skills and old professions were forgotten. Contact with European views of beauty and concepts of art have changed the tradition. New ideas and ideals influence the artists and craftsmen. New motifs become popular when first the British rulers and later tourists commission decoration for their homes. Also, art schools where Western techniques are taught add to the artist's repertoire. Tradition is a living process where the changes of society, time and fashion are a natural part of art history.

Artists and craftsmen have always been respected professionals in Myanmar society. Today there are three clearly distinguishable groups of artists: Firstly, *traditional artists*, who represent the continuing Buddhist art tradition. They learn their skills from a well-known master and choose their motifs from the colourful imagery of Buddhist and animistic legends. Secondly, *commercial artists* carve for the customer usually looking for decorative or souvenir art works. They can study their art in traditional ways as in the previous group, or they might be art school graduates. Usually their motifs are considered "exotic and typically representing Myanmar" by the foreign customer. A commercial artist may find his inspiration from the ancient history of his country as well as from a foreign magazine. The third group are *modern artists* usually graduating from an art school, who use Western techniques like oil and water colour painting in scenery or portrait paintings.

The study of an art work consists of iconography and expression of the motif, iconology of the narrative contents and meaning of the artwork in a certain context. The Buddhist art of Myanmar does not carry only religious and historical functions. It also has social and psychological functions since the donation of a sculpture has an accepted social value. Buddhist art naturally has also artistic and aesthetic functions, but traditionally, they are not the main factor of the object. Buddha images or sculptures of important monks, popular Nats and animals are traditionally not carved as objects of art, but solely for religious purposes. This fact does not limit their artistic value and appeal in the eyes of the Western art historian.

Woodcarving methods and raw materials today do not differ very much from the work of the ancient masters. Usually woodcarvers specialize in one of the traditional motif groups, Buddha and anthropomorphic Nat images, animals and monsters or floral designs. The motif, raw material and finishing of the sculpture are all decided by the customer - often after consulting an astrologer. Old beliefs hold strong in Myanmar and ordering an sacral image is an important task never taken lightly.

Woodcarving tradition will undoubtedly survive in devoutly Buddhist Myanmar. Some of the older finishing methods have changed and a few features of the holy images have developed. The new customer group, the foreigner, adds to the traditional repertoire of the artists. In a few years time modern, experimental art with international visual language, will conquer a corner in art galleries. Myanmar society is near a period of fast modernization. Novelties introduced now will need time to mature, also in cultural life. Carved wooden monasteries are no longer built, but evidently the woodcarving art will find its place in modern art tradition of Myanmar.

"All images have a signifying and significative function that is prior to institutionalization by means of consecration or any other act or rite. ... Images work *because* they are consecrated, but at the same time they work *before* they are consecrated. They may do so in different ways and on different levels, and response to them may depend in the first instance on the perception of purely aesthetic qualities and in second instance an apparently supernatural ones. In either event, the phenomenon of consecration fully demonstrates the fact of the potentiality of all images; it dramatically activates that potentiality and realizes it."¹⁵⁸

YHTEENVETO

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan kaakkoisaasian Myanmarin puuveistotraditi-
on historiaa ja nykypäivää. Vuosisatojen ajan taide palveli uskontoa, Myan-
marin omaleimaista buddhalaisuutta, tukijanaan yksinvaltaiset hallitsijat. Kon-
servatiivinen yhteiskunta rajasi taiteellisen ilmaisun kieleksi buddhalaisen
ikonografian, mutta se ei koskaan pyrkinyt vangitsemaan mestari- taiteilijoi-
den mielikuvitusta. Maan klassisista taidekausista kaksi yltää maailman taide-
historian kultakausien joukkoon: temppeliarkkitehtuurin Bagan (1044-1287) ja
Konbaung-dynastian kuninkaiden hallitusaika (1752-1885).

Puu on myanmarilaisten taiteilijoiden tyypillisin materiaali, jonka
käsittelyssä he ovat yltäneet parhaimpaansa. Tämän tutkimuksen historial-
lisena materiaalina ovat säilyneet veistokset ja reliefit 1000-luvulta 1800-1900-
luvun vaihteeseen. Veistokset sijoittuvat aina uskonnollisiin rakennuksiin,
temppeleihin ja tärkeimpänä, kokonaan veistokoristettuihin puuluostareihin.
1900-luvun taidetta on tutkittu museoiden ja buddhalaisten luostareiden ko-
koelmista. Nykypäivää käsittelevä aineisto on koottu seitsemän kuukauden
kenttätöön aikana 1989-1993, lähinnä haastattelemalla perinteisiä taiteilijoita ja
heidän oppilaitaan, sekä tutustumalla heidän työskentelytapoihinsa. Moder-
niin taiteeseen ja taidekouluihin liittyvät tiedot on koottu haastattelemalla
taidekoulujen rehtoreita, opettajia ja opiskelijoita sekä vieraillemalla taidegalle-
rioissa.

Traditionaalinen taide ja kulttuuri säilyivät lähes muuttumattomine
tuhannen vuoden ajan. Kun britit liittivät viimeisen kuninkaallisen kaupun-
gin, Mandalayn siirtomaa-Intian maakunnaksi 1886, monet perinteiset ammat-
tikunnat kävivät tarpeettomiksi, kannattamattomiksi - ja hävisivät. Yhteydet
eurooppalaisten taide- ja kauneuskäsityksiin muuttivat käsityötraditiota. Uu-
det aatteet ja ihanteet vaikuttivat taiteilijoiden ja käsityöläismestareiden näke-
myksiin työstään ja sen tavoitteista. Motiivivalikoima uusiutui, kun aluksi
siirtomaaisännät ja myöhemmin turistit tilasivat koriste-esineitä kotiensa kau-
nistukseksi. Toisaalta 1910- ja 1920-luvuilla kehittynyt, länsimaalaisille tekni-
koille perustuva taidekoulutus on osaltaan muuttanut käsityksiä taiteesta.

Traditio on elävä, muuttuva prosessi, johon yhteiskunnan, historian ja muodin muutokset kuuluvat luonnollisena osana.

Taiteilijat ja käsityöläiset ovat aina kuuluneet Myanmarissa erittäin arvostettujen ammattikuntien joukkoon. Tänäa maassa on kolme toisistaan selkeästi erottuvaa taiteilijaryhmää:

1. *Perinteiset taiteilijat* jatkavat buddhalaista taidetraditiota. He hankkivat ammattitaitonsa tunnetuilta mestareilta, ja valitsevat motiivinsa rikkaasta buddhalaisesta ja animistisesta legenda-aineuksesta.
2. *Kaupalliset taiteilijat* työskentelevät tavallisesti koriste-esineisiin ja matkamuistoihin erikoistuneissa työpajoissa. Jotkut heistä ovat saaneet oppinsa edellisen ryhmän taiteilijoiden tavoin mestareilta työskentelemällä heidän oppilainaan, tai he ovat valmistuneet taidekoulusta. Kaupallisten taiteilijoiden motiivisto edustaa yleensä ulkomaalaisen asiakkaan käsitystä "eksoottisesta" tai "tyypillisesti myanmarilaisesta" esineestä. Aihevalikoiman esikuvina ovat yhtä hyvin oman maan menneisyyden sankarilegendat kuin länsimaisten lehtien kuva-aiheet.
3. *Modernit taiteilijat* valmistuvat ammattiinsa maan kahdesta taidekoulusta pääkaupunki Yangonin tai Mandalayn State School of Fine Art'sta (valtion taidekoulu). Taidekoulujen kolmivuotiseen opetusohjelmaan kuuluvat vesi- ja öljyväritekniikat, piirustus ja kuvanveisto. Pronssi- ja marmoriveisto sekä taidegrafiikan menetelmät eivät kuulu koulujen opetukseen. Traditionaalisen taiteen suuntautumisvaihtoehdon valinneita opiskelijoita maan taidekouluissa on erittäin vähän. Öljyvärimaalauksia kiinnostaa myös useampia tämän ryhmän taiteilijoita kuin puuveisto. Modernien taiteilijoiden teoksia voi nähdä pääkaupungin lukuisissa yksityisissä taidegallerioissa.

Taideteoksen tutkimiseen kuuluu sen tekniikan, materiaalien ja aiheen lisäksi teoksen tarkastelu siinä kontekstissa, jossa taiteilija on sen tuottanut. Myanmarin buddhalainen taide ei kiinnosta vain uskonnollisena taiteena tiettyssä historiallisessa jatkumossa. Sillä on myös suuri sosiaalinen ja psykologinen merkitys. Taideteoksen, veistoksen sponsoroinnilla on yhteisön traditionaalisesti korkeaksi asettama status. Buddhalaisella taiteella on luonnollisesti myös taiteellisia ja esteettisiä funktioita, mutta perinteisesti teosta tarkasteltaessa, niistä ei löydy objektin keskeinen merkitys. Buddhan, kuuluisien munkkien tai suosittujen Nat-henkien kuvien ja eläinveistosten tarkoituksena ei ole olla olemassa taideteoksina. Ne veistetään vain uskonnollisiin tarkoituksiin. Siitä huolimatta länsimainen taidehistorian tutkija voi tarkastella niitä myös esteettisinä objekteina.

Puuveiston työmenetelmät ja raaka-aineet eivät juuri poikkea muihin mestareiden käyttämisestä. Tavallisesti puuveistäjä erikoistuu yhteen traditionaalisista motiiviryhmistä: Buddhan ja antropomorfisten Natien hahmoihin, eläimiin ja hirviöihin tai kasviornamentiikkaan. Teoksen motiivin, raaka-aineen ja viimeistelytekniikan valitsee aina asiakas - tavallisesti konsultoituaan astrologia. Perinteiset uskomukset elävät voimakkaana myös nykypäivän Myanmarissa. Pyhän veistoksen tilaaminen on tärkeä tehtävä, johon suhtaudutaan vakavasti.

Puuveistotraditio säilyy varmasti tulevaisuudessakin syvästi buddhalaisessa Myanmarissa. Jotkut vanhoista, aikaavievistä ja työläistä viimeistelymenetelmistä ovat vaihtuneet ja muutamat pyhän ikonin yksityiskohdat ovat

kehittyneet edelleen. Uusi asiakasryhmä, ulkomaalaiset muokkaa myanmari-laisten taiteilijoiden perinteistä repertuaaria. Lähivuosina modernin taiteen kansainvälinen visuaalinen kieli valtaa alaa pääkaupungin taidegallerioiden seinillä. Myanmarilainen yhteiskunta tuhat vuotta säilyneine arvoineen on avautumassa ja nopean muutoksen kynnyksellä. Uutuudet tarvitsevat aikaa kypsyäkseen myös kulttuurielämässä. Veistoksiin koristettuja puuluostareita ei ehkä enää rakenneta, mutta Myanmarin taiteilijoiden ominpana materiaalina puuveistotaide löytää varmasti paikkansa maan modernissa taidetraditiossa.

PERSONAL AND UNPUBLISHED INFORMATION

- U Aung Aung, Natkadaw. Mandalay.
Ko Aung Mying, Pwe Dancer. Mandalay
U Aung Kyaing, Assistant Director, Department of Archaeology, Bagan;
Archaeological Museum, Bagan.
Ko Cho Lwin Aung, Pwe Dancer, Mandalay.
U Hla Aung, Woodcarver. Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
U Hla Kyu, Woodcarver. Shwedagon archade. Yangon.
Karlsson, Klemens, Finns det felaktiga Buddhabilder? Unpublished article.
Klemens Karlsson is a Scholar in Theological Institute, Uppsala University, Sweden.
U Khin Kyaw, Lecturer. Myanmar Travels and Tours. Yangon.
U Kin Maung Nyunt, English Teacher and Freelance Guide. Mandalay.
U Ko Ko, Research Officer. Mandalay Palace reconstruction project. Department of Archaeology, Mandalay.
U Kyaw Nyunt, Research Officer. Department of Archaeology, Bagan.
U Kyaw Way, Assistant Director (retired). Department of Archaeology, Yangon.
Daw Ma Ma Naing, Puppeteer, Director of Puppet Theatre. Mandalay Marionettes, Mandalay.
U Maung Cho, Guide, Mandalay.
U Maung Maung Lay, Curator. Buddhist Art Museum, Yangon.
U Min Nyan Shein, Officer (retired). Expert on Buddhism.
Daw Mi Su Ngwe (Veda Sandi), Natkadaw.
Moore, Elizabeth and Daw San San Maw, Flights of Fancy. Avian Inspiration, the Hintha and Kinnaya in Myanmar Art - draft paper. Dr Moore is a lecturer of Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology in School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. Daw San San Maw, see below.
U Myat Thit, Astrologer. Mandalay.
Daw Naing Yee Mar, Director of Puppet Theatre, Mandalay Marionettes, Mandalay.
U Nyunt Han, Assistant Director. Department of Archaeology, Yangon.
Daw Nyunt Nyunt Win, Dance Teacher. State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay.
Pichard Pierre, Architect. UNESCO-UNDP.
Daw San San Maw, Research Officer. Library, Department of Archaeology, Yangon.
U Sein Win, Sculptor/plaster. Project in Mahamuni, Mandalay.
U Soe Tint, Principal of the State School of Fine Arts, Yangon.
Daw Taik Kyi Thu Zar, Pwe Dancer, Mandalay.
U Than Shwe, Assistant Director (retired). Department of Archaeology, Yangon.
U Thawda Sein, Director General of the Department of Archaeology, Yangon.
U Tin Htwe, Sculptor/bronze. Thampawaddy, Mandalay.
Daw Tin Myint, Keeper of tapestry workshop, Mandalay.
U Toe Lin, Dance teacher. The State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay.
U Toe Maung, Sculptor/bronze. Thampawaddy, Mandalay.
Topsfield Andrew, Curator. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
U Zaw Win, Principal of the State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay.

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HISTORICAL DATES OF UNION OF MYANMAR

Pyusawthi founds ruling dynasty of *Tagaung* according to Chronicles in 167 AD. Arakanese list their rulers starting from the first mythical king in 2666 BC. Legendary Mon king *Thimala* founds *Bago* in 825.

King *Pyinbya* founds *Bagan* in 849.

Bagan dynasty 1044-1287

- . Anawrahta 1044-1077
- . Kyanzittha 1084-1113
- . Alaungsithu 1113-1165
- . Fall of Bagan, invasion of Kublai Khan 1287

Shan rulers of Myinsaing and Pyinbya 1298-1364

Rulers of Sagaing 1315-1364

Inwa is founded in 1364 by king *Thadominbya* (1364-1368)

Inwa dynasty 1364-1555

Toungoo dynasty 1486-1752

- . Bayinnaung 1551-1581

Konbaung dynasty 1752-1885

- . Alaungpaya 1752-1760
- . Bodawpaya 1781-1819

Amarapura founded as capital 1783 until 1823, changed back to Inwa 1823-1837 and again to *Amarapura* 1837-1857.

- . Bagyidaw 1819-1838
- . Mindon Min 1853-1878

Mandalay is founded as capital in 1857.

- . Thibaw 1878-1885

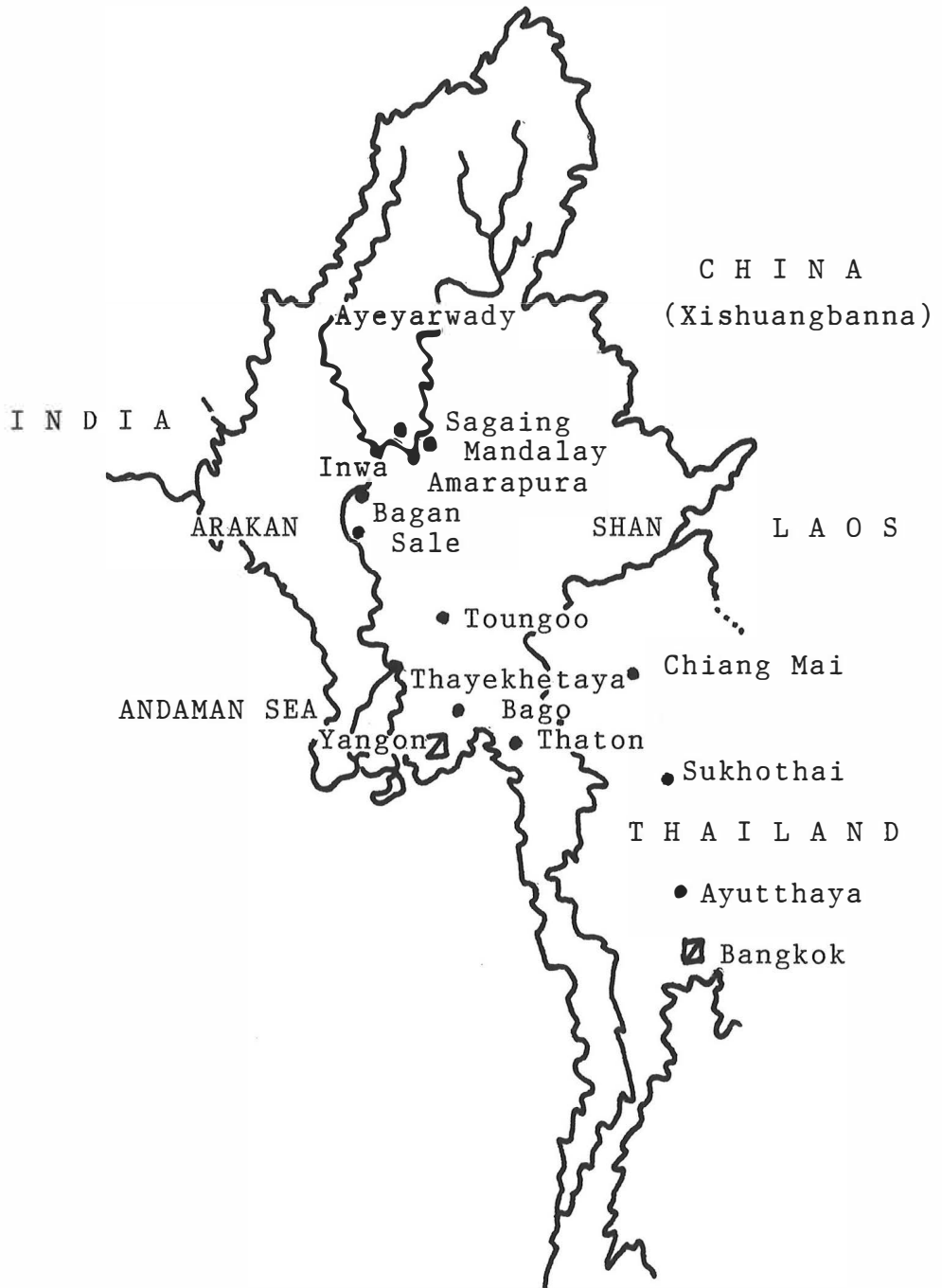
The British invade Arakan and Tenasserim in First Anglo-Myanmar War 1824-1826. Legendary General *Mahabandoola* dies in action 1825.

The British conquer the Yangon area after the Second Anglo-Myanmar War in 1852.

The fall of Mandalay and annexation of Myanmar to British India in 1885.

Myanmar wins independence 4.1.1948.

MAP OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR



MYANMAR LANGUAGE QUESTIONNAIRES
Translated from English by Ma Moe Moe Aung

စူးစမ်းလေ့လာရမည့်ရည်ရွယ်ချက်

ယခုလူ့အဖွဲ့အစည်း၏ ဖွဲ့စည်းပုံအားဖြင့် ရသည့်ရည်ရွယ်ချက်မှာ- မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရှိ မြန်မာ
ပိုင်း ဂျပန်အလုပ်သမား နှင့် ချီပညာရှင်များ၏ အသက်မွေးဝမ်းကျောင်းလုပ်ငန်း ဖြစ်သောအခါတွင်
ပိုင်း ချီပညာရှင်များ၏ အခြေအနေအထားကို သိရှိရန် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ နေပြည်တော် မြို့နယ်၊ မြောက်ပိုင်း
ချီ/အနုပညာရှင်များ၏ လုပ်ငန်းနှင့်ပတ်သက်၍ ကိုဏ်းမြောင်မြောင်ကား သည့်ပန်း ချီပညာရှင်များ လေ့လာ
ခြင်း ခိုင်ရသော အချက်အလက်များကို အခြေခံထားပါသည်။ ရွေးချယ်ထားသော မေးခွန်းများ သည်
ပညာရှင်ပိုင်း ခိုင်ရသော အခြေခံအချက်အလက်များ အား အထောက်အကူဖြစ်စေမည်ဟု မှတ်တမ်း
ရေးသားစစ်ကြည့်ရန် မေးခွန်း ချီပညာရှင်များ အား တစ်ဦးချင်း စီစဉ်သော စိတ်နှလုံး ရွေးချယ်ထွေး
ဦးမေးမြန်းကဏ္ဍစဉ် တင်ပြမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

မေးခွန်းပုံစံ (၂) မျိုးခွဲခြားထားပြီး မေးခွန်းပုံစံတစ်မျိုးစီတွင်
မေးခွန်းအုပ်စု (၉) စုခွဲခြားစီစဉ်ထားပါသည်။ ပထမမေးခွန်းပုံစံသည် မေးခွန်းချီပညာရှင်
အား အစဉ်အဆက် မိမိ၏အသက်မွေးဝမ်းကျောင်းလေ့လာလိုက်စားသော မေးခွန်း ချီပညာရှင်များ အဖွဲ့အစည်း
မေးခွန်းပုံစံမှာ မေးခွန်း ချီပညာရှင်များ အဖွဲ့အစည်းတွင် ရှိသူပေးသော မေးခွန်းချီပညာရှင်များ
အား တက်ရောက်ဆည်းပူးနေသော မေးခွန်း ချီပညာရှင်များ အဖွဲ့အစည်းဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ယခုလူ့အဖွဲ့စည်း တင်ပြထားချက်များသည် ဖင်လန်နိုင်ငံ JYVASKYLA
တက္ကသိုလ်၊ အနုပညာရှင် ဌာန၏ ပါရဂူဘွဲ့တန်း အဖွဲ့အစည်းအဖွဲ့ဝင်များ ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ထွက်ပေါ်စာတမ်းအဖွဲ့အစည်းဝန်းကျင်ဖြေဖြာ ပေးသူအပေါင်းအား
အထူးပင်ကျေးဇူးဥပမာဂုဏ်တင်ရှိပါကြောင်း ဖွဲ့စည်းတင်အပ်ပါသည်။



ART.

UNIVERSITY OF JYVASKYLA , FINLAND.

Irene Moilanen

ပန်း ချီ ကျောင်းသား များ နှင့် ပန်း ချီ ဆရာ များ အတွက် မေး ခန်း များ ။

တွေ့ဆုံ မေး မြန်းခြင်း ပြုရ ဘဲ နေရ ဘဲ နှင့် အချိန် ။ -----

၁။ မွေး ရက် မြေနှင့် မွေး နေ့သက္ကရာဇ် ။

၂။ သင်ယူ ခဲ့ဘူး သော အ ခြေ ခံ ပညာ အဆင့် အတန်း ။

၃။ ဒီ ပန်း ချီ ကျောင်း မှ တက် တာ ဘယ် လောက် ကြာ ပြီလဲ ။

- သင် ခဲ့ အထူး ပြုစု ဘာ ဘဲ ရ တာ ဘဲ ။

- သင် တခြား ဘာ သင် ရင် တွေ ၊ အခြား နည်း ပညာ တွေ ရ ဘဲ သင် ရ သလား ။

- ရိုး ရ ဘဲ ပန်း ချီ ပန်း ပု ပညာ တွေ ရ ဘဲ သင် ရ ပါ သလား ။

၄။ သင် ဘဲ ခြေ ခံ ပန်း ချီ ပန်း ပု ကျောင်း ကို တက် ဖို့ ရွေး ချယ် ရ ပါ သလဲ ။

+ သင် ဖိ သား စု ထဲ မှ ဘဲ ပန်း ချီ ပန်း ပု သား စာ ဘဲ ခြေ ပါ သလား ။

- သင် ဖ ခင် နှင့် အစိုး ကို ချီ အလုပ် အကိုင် တွေ ကို ဖော် ပြ ပေး ပါ ။

- သူ ကို ဘဲ ပန်း ချီ ပန်း ပု ဆရာ များ ဖြစ် ခဲ့ ရင် မွေး ဇာ တီ ခဲ့ မွေး သက္ကရာဇ် တွေ ကို ဖော် ပြ ပေး ပါ ။

- ယခု ကို သင် ခြေ ခံ ပန်း ချီ ပန်း ပု ဘဲ ။ ဘယ် အရပ် မှာ နေ ကြ ပါ သလဲ ။

(၂)

၅။ - ဒီကျောင်း ပြီး သွား ရင် သင့်အလုပ်အကိုင်အတွက်ဘယ်လိုအနာဂတ်မျိုး မြှင့် လင့်တား သလဲ။

- သင်ဟာ အချိန်ပြည့်ပန်း ချိဆရတတ် ယောက်ဖွယ် မယ်လို့ ထင်မြင်မိပါသလား။ (ဘဝတစ်
ကျောင်းလုံး ပန်း ချိဆရတတ် ယောက်အ နေ့နဲ့အသက် မွေး ဝမ်း ကျောင်း မှာလား။)

- ဘယ်လိုအလုပ် မျိုး လုပ်မယ်လို့ စိတ်ကူး ထား ပါသလဲ။

၆။ ပန်း ချိဆရတတ် ယောက်အ နေ့နဲ့ရိုး ရှာပန်း ချိဆရတား သန့်သလား ၊ ဒါမှမဟုတ် ခေတ်သစ်
ဒီဇိုင်း များ ကို ရေး ဆွဲ/ ထုလုပ် ထုတ်ကုန်ရုံ နှစ်သက်ပါသလား ။

+ သင်ဟာ ခေတ်သစ်ဒီဇိုင်း ထွေကိုသာ ရွေး ချယ်ထုလုပ်မှာလား ၊ ဒါမှမဟုတ်ရိုး ရှာပန်း ချိ
ပန်း ပုများ ဆိုင်ရတာနည်း ပညာများ ကိုပါ ရောနှော ဖေါင်း စပ်ပြီး အသုံး ပြုသွား မှာလား ။

၇။ ပန်း ချိ/ ပန်း ပုဆရတတ် ယောက်အ နေ့နဲ့ရိုး ရှာယဉ် ကျေး မှုအစဉ်အလာ ၊ ဘာသာရေး
အယူအဆ ထွေကိုဘယ်လိုမြင်သုံး သပ်ပါသလဲ။ (ရုပ်ထူး ပန်း ချိကား များ ဖုန်းတီး လဲအ ခါဒီသဘော
တရား ထွေကိုဘယ်လို သရုပ်ဖော် ပါသလဲ။)

- သင့်အလုပ်အတွက် စိတ်ကူး စိတ်သန်း များ ကိုဘယ်က နေ့ရရှိ ပါသလဲ။

- သင့်ရဲ့ရိုး ရှာယဉ် ကျေး မှုဆိုင် ရာ နှစ်ပတ်ပုံများ နဲ့ စိတ်ကူး စိတ်သန်း များ ကိုအသေး စိတ်
ဖော်ပြ နေပေး စေလို ပါတယ်။

၈။ သင့်ရဲ့အထူးဖွယ် စံပြပန်း ချိ ပန်း ပုဆရတား (မြန်မာပြည်/ နိုင်ငံရပ်ခြား) ကို ဖော်
ပြပေး ပါ။

- ဘာကြောင့် သူတို့ကို ရွေး ချယ်ရသလဲဆိုတာ ပြောပြ နေပေး ပါ။

(၃)

- သင့်ရဲ့ ခေတ်သစ်ပန်း ချီကား များ ၊ ရုပ်ထူစတာ ထွက်ကယ်လိုအမျိုး စား များ ဖြစ်တယ်ဆိုတာ ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။

- မြန်မာပရိသတ်များ အနေနဲ့ ခေတ်သစ်ပန်း ချီပန်း ပိုများ အပေါ်တက်လိုက်ကြည့်သုံး သပ်ကြပါသလဲ။

ဇ။ လူငယ်များ အနေနဲ့ပန်း ချီပန်း ပိုလုပ်ငန်း တာလေ့လာဆည်းပူး ဖွယ်ဖြစ်ပြီး ၊ ဂုဏ်ယူလေး စား ထိုက်တက်လို့ယူဆမယ်လို့သင်တင်မိပါသလား။

- အနာဂတ်မှာပို၍ ရာအစဉ်အလာအရည်အသွေး နဲ့ပြည့်ဝတဲ့ကျောင်း သား များ ပေါ်ထွက်လာမယ်လို့သင် မြှောက်ပေးမိပါသလား။

(ဖြေဆိုသူ) အမည်။ -----

နေ့ရက်လိပ်စာ။ -----

TRAD.

UNIVERSITY OF JYVASKYLA , FINLAND.

(ဖြေဆိုသူ) အမည်။ -----

Irene Moilanen

နေရက်လီ စာ။ -----

ပန်း ဒီပညာပွင့်များ နှင့်လက်ဖက်ရည်ပညာပွင့်များ အတွက် မေးခွန်း များ။

ထွေဆို မေး မြန်း ခြင်း ပြုရ ဘဲ နေရ ဘဲ နှင့်အချိန် -----

၁။ မွေး ရက် မြေနှင့် မွေး နေ့သက္ကရာဇ်။

၂။ သင်ယူခဲ့ဘူး သော အခြေခံပညာ ရေး အဆင့်အတန်း။

၃။ ပန်း ဒီဆရာအဖြစ်အသက် မွေး ဝမ်း ကျောင်း ပြုခဲ့ သော အချိန်က ဝလ။

၄။ အခုသည်အလုပ် မလုပ် ခင်ကတခြား တာအလုပ် များ လုပ် ခဲ့ဘူး ပါသလဲ။

- သင်တပည့်လုပ်ငန်း တွင် ခုတည်း ကိုသဘာဝ စဉ်းစားစိုက်လုပ် ကိုင်ညွှန် ဖြစ် ပါသလား ။ ဒါမှ မဟုတ် ဒီအလုပ်အပြင် အခြား အသက် မွေး ဝမ်း ကျောင်း လုပ်ငန်း များ လုပ်ကိုးပါ သေးလား ။

- သင့်ရဲ့အတွင်း ကျင့်စဉ် ပညာပွင့်ကို ဖော်ပြ ပေး ပါ။

- သင်အခြား ပညာပွင့်များ တက်မြေ ဝက်ပါ သေး လား ။ ဖော်ပြ ပေး ပါ။

၅။ သင်ယူ ခုလိုအတွင်း ကျင့်စဉ် အဘယ်လို လေ့လာ လိုက်စား ခဲ့ရသလဲဆိုတာ ပြောပြ ပေး ပါ။

- သင့်ရဲ့ဆရာ တစ်ယောက် ပါ။

(၂)

- သင့်အ နေ့မြန်မာပြည်တစ် နေ့ရ၍ (သို့မဟုတ်) သင့်ရဲ့မြို့၊ ဒေသမှတစ်ချိန်တုံး ကထင်ရှား အောင်မြင်ခဲ့တဲ့ပန်း ချီဆရာကြီး များ ၊ ဝိသုကာပညာရှင်ကြီး များ ၊ ဆရာကြီး များ ၊ ဘီဗီ ခဲ့ရင် ပြောပြပါ။

- သင့် ဆွေမျိုး ၊ မိသားစုထဲမှာပန်း ချီအနုပညာရှင် များ ရှိ ပါသလား။

- သင့်ဖခင်နှင်အစိုး တို့လူဝတ်နန်း များ ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။

- အကယ်၍ သူတို့တပန်း ချီဆရာကြီး များ ဖြစ်ခဲ့ရင် သူတို့လူဝတ်နန်း မွေး နေ့ဆန္ဒရ၍ ဖော်ပြပါ။

- အခု ရေသက်ရှိထင်ရှား ရှိ ပါသေးလား။

- ဘယ်မှာ နေပါသလဲ။

၅။ အနုပညာလက်ရတစ်ခုကို ဖန်တီး ထုတ်လုပ်တဲ့အ ခါစိုက်ထုတ်ရတဲ့သင့်လူဝတ်နန်း လုပ်ကန်း၊ နည်း ပညာ အလုပ်အချောသင်ပုံ ထွေကို ဖော်ပြ ပေးပါ။

- ဘယ်လိုကိရိယာတန်ဆာပလာ ဘွေကိုသုံး တတ်ပါသလဲ။ အဲဒီပစ္စည်း ထွေကိုဘယ် နေရာဘက် နေရာ ပါသလဲ။

- သင့်လုပ်ငန်း အထက်ကုန်ကြမ်း ပစ္စည်း ထွေကိုဘယ် နေရာဘက် နေရာ ဘယ်လို ရရှိ ပါသလဲ။

၆။ သင့်ရဲ့ ဖော်ပြချက် မှာ ခိုင်ခံ့ အယူအဆ ထွေကိုရိုး ရသေ့ ဘွေ များ မှာ ဘေးဘက် ချိတ်တာလား ၊ ဒါမှ မဟုတ် သင့်ရဲ့ ကိုယ်ပိုင် အစွမ်း အ ခေင် နဲ့ သင့်ဘာသာပုံစံ ရေး ဆွဲတာလား။ (ကိုယ်ပိုင် နမိတ်ပုံကို သုံး တာလား)

+ သင့် ရဲ့ လက်ရ ဘာပုံ လုပ်ငန်း ဖာပုဒ္ဒတ္တပုံ စော်အစဉ်အလာ အပေါ် ဘယ် လောကီထီး ကား ထား ပါသလဲ ၊ နောက်ကြီး ရေခင်း တမ်း ဝင်ကား ထွေဘယ် လောကီထီး အောင်မြင် ပါသလဲ။

(၃)

၇။ (ရိုး ဂၢယဉ် ကျေး မှာပိုင်း ဆိုင်ဂၢ)

- သင်္ဃာတရိုး ဂၢယဉ် ကျေး မှာစဉ်အလၢ နည်း နာ ထွေကိုဘယ်အတိုင်း အတာအထိလိုက် နာ ရေး ဆွဲပါ သလဲ။

- သင်္ဃာလုပ်အတွက် ရှေ့ ပြေး ပုံစံ (ရှေး ဟောင်း န မူ န ဘလက်ဂၢ) ထွေကိုဘယ်မှာ ဂၢ ဂၢ ပါသလဲ။

- ကျော်ကြား ထင်ရှား တဲ့အ န ပညာ ဘလက်ဂၢ များ ကို ရေ ဂ ပုံထူ ကော် ဝီလုပ် ပါသလဲ ဘေး။

- အ န ပညာ ဘလက်ဂၢ များ ရှိ ခတ်ပုံ ထွေကိုစံပြ ပုံ ထွေအ နေ နဲ့အသုံး ပြုပါသလဲ ဘေး။

- ဘယ်လို ပုံမျိုး ကိုအ မိကထာ ဘေး ပြီး ရေး ဆွဲ ၊ ထူ လုပ် ပါသလဲ။ အ သေး စိတ် ဖော်ပြ ပေး ပါ။

၈။ (ပုံစံသစ်ပိုင်း ဆိုင်ဂၢ)

- ခေတ်သစ်ဒီဇိုင်း ထွေကိုကိုယ်တဘယ် ဘေး နီးစီး ရေး ဆွဲ ၊ ထူလုပ် ပါသလဲ ဘေး။

- သင်္ဃာပုံစံကူး စိတ်သန်း ထွေကိုဘယ်က နေရရှိ ပါသလဲ။

- သင်္ဃာ ခေတ်သစ် ဒီဇိုင်း ပိုင်း ဆိုင်ဂၢ အယူအဆ နဲ့ထူလုပ် ၊ ရေး ဆွဲ ထား တဲ့ပန်း ချီကား ၊ ဂုတ်ထူ အမျိုး အစား များ ကို ဖော်ပြ ပေး ဖော်ပြ ပါတယ်။

- သင်္ဃာပုံစံကူး ၊ အား ပေး ဝယ်ယူသူ များ က ခေတ်သစ် ဒီဇိုင်း ထွေ ၊ အသစ်အသစ် သောအ ရေ ဂ ပုံ သုံး စွဲ မှာစတာ ထွေအ ဖော် ဘယ်လိုထုံပြန် ထင်မြင်ကြ ပါသလဲ။



ဣ။ ပန်း ချီဆရာအဖြစ်အသက်မွေးဝမ်းကျောင်းခြင်းဟာထူးငယ်၊ လူ့ဂွယ်ထွေအနေနဲ့လေ့လာ၊
ဆည်းပူးရာ၊ အထင်ကြီးလေးစားစရာအဖြစ်တတ်လို့ဆိုနိုင်သလား။

ဗ။ အနာဂတ်မှာ၊ ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုဆိုတာပန်းချီ၊ ပန်းပုအရည်အသွေးထွေးနဲ့ပြည့်ဝနေထိုင်
ငယ်ကျောင်းသားများပေါ်ထွက်လာမယ်လို့မျှော်လင့်သလား။

— သင့်မှာရောတပြည့်လက်သားများရှိပါသလား။

— ရှိရင်တစ်နှစ်ယောက်လဲဆိုတာရယ်၊ တစ်နိုင်ရင်တစ်ခုထွေဆိုတာရယ်ဖော်ပြပေးပါ။

— သင့်ရဲ့မိသားစုဝင်ထွေကရောသင့်ရဲ့အလုပ်အပေါ်စိတ်ဝင်စားနဲ့အားပေးပါဝင်ဆောင်
ရွက်တာမျိုးရှိတတ်ပါသလား။ တစ်ခုထွေကတယ်လို့ကူညီတာလဲ။

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to collect first hand information on the traditional woodcarver's profession in Myanmar. The following questionnaire has nine question groups. They aim at documenting the work and study process of artists. The questionnaires will collect basic information. A detailed personal interview will be taken later on a smaller, chosen number of artists.

There are two questionnaire forms. The first one is for artists with traditional studies (marked trad.) and the other for artists with formal art school studies (marked art.).

The material here collected will build the basis for a Doctoral thesis in the Department of Art History in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Thank You for Your kind co-operation.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ARTSTUDENTS AND ARTISTS (art.)

1. Place and date of Your birth?
2. Basic education?
3. How long have You studied in this art school?
What is Your main subject?
Do You also study other techniques?
Do You study traditional arts?
4. Why did You choose the art school?
Are there artists in Your family?
What is Your father's and grandfather's profession? If artist, please give year and place of birth? Is he still living? Where?
5. What do You expect from the future of Your profession after this school?
Do You think You will be a full-time artist?
What kind of work do You plan to do?
6. As an artist do You choose Your motifs from tradition or do You paint/sculpt only modern designs?
Do You use only modern techniques or do You mix them with traditional methods?
7. How much does tradition and/or religion mean to You as an artist?
Where do You find inspiration for Your work?
Please, list Your traditional motifs and inspiration.
8. Who are Your ideal artists (Myanmar and foreign)?
Can You tell why?
Please list Your modern motifs?
How do Myanmar art audiences react to modern painting/ sculpture?
9. Do You think an artist's profession is respected and sought after by young people?
Do You expect there will be students of traditional skills in the future?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN (trad.)

1. Place and date of Your birth?
2. Basic education?
3. How long have You worked as an artist?
What did You do before?
Are You a full-time artist or do You have some other profession as well?
What field of art/craft is Your speciality?
Do You master other techniques?
4. Where did You learn Your skills?

- Who was Your teacher?
 Do You know/remember any other famous teachers/artists/ architects etc. from the past of Your city or elsewhere?
 Are there any other artists in Your family?
 What was Your father's and grandfather's profession? If artist, please give year and place of birth. Is he still living? Where?
5. Tell about Your working methods, techniques and the finishing of the artwork.
 What kind of tools do You use and where do You purchase them?
 Where and how do You get the raw materials for Your work?
 6. Do You choose Your motifs from tradition or do You design Your own motifs?
 How much of Your work is sacral and how much secular?
 7. Traditional: How closely do You follow the tradition? Where do You find the prototypes for Your work?
 Do You copy famous artworks?
 Do You use photographs of artworks as models?
 Please list Your motifs.
 8. New designs: Do You design modern works Yourself?
 Where do You find the inspiration?
 Please, list the modern motifs.
 How do Your customers react to modern designs, new colours etc.?
 9. Do You think the artist's profession is respected and sought after by young people?
 Do You expect that there will be students of traditional skills in the future?
 Do You have pupils Yourself? How many and who?
 Do any of Your family members participate in Your work? Who and how?

FOR BOTH GROUPS

Please tell in Your own words, why You wanted to be a woodcarver artist?

QUESTIONS IN PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Questions were translated from English to Myanmar by
Saw Wai Lwin Moe.

RAW MATERIALS FOR CARVINGS

1. Please show the raw materials You use for carvings.
Which of them do You use most often? Which are rare?
2. In the Mandalay kingdom puppets were carved from different wood according to the image they represented. Were or are there still similar rules or practises in carving Buddha, Nat or Balu images and animals?
3. How do You choose Your raw material? Do the customers still follow astrologer's advice and choose the wood according to the weekday they were born?
4. What qualities do different woods symbolize?
5. What wood do You prefer to carve? Why?

IMAGES

1. Please show the following sculpted images. Please explain the legend or story related to the image.
Labamuni
Dakkhina Sakka
Sinkanpaya
Shin U Pagot and Shin Siwali
Bodaws Bo Bo Aung and U Min Gaung
Maheindaya
Lechamee (Laksmi)
Maongtan (Villagers)
2. Are there some images which are most popular among Your customers? Do You find some images more difficult to carve?
3. A special offering is given by a lady before she begins embroidering the picture of Buddha's sacred footprint on a tapestry. Are there similar observances with Buddha image?
When is the Buddha image considered finished (sacred)?

TRADITION

1. How would You describe "tradition" and "modern"? What images are traditional and what modern? Is there any difference in working methods when You carve traditional or modern images? Have the colours and decorations changed a lot during the past years?
2. Do You think tourists appreciate traditional Myanmar arts? Do the artists and craftsmen design special works for tourists only? What?

INTERVIEWED ARTISTS

Personal data

Traditional Artists and Craftsmen

- U Ba Yin, b. 1315 (1953) Arakan. Basic studies: 10th standard. 10 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Han Htin, b. 1969 Mandalay. Basic studies: 3rd standard. 9 years as woodcarver. Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- U Hla Htwe, b. 1316 (1954) Yangon. Basic studies: 8th standard. 2 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Htint Lwin, b. 1974, Taunggyi. Basic studies: 8th standard. 3 years as woodcarver. Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- U Man Sein, b. 1315 (1953) Mandalay. Basic studies: 9th standard. 17 years as woodcarver. Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- U Mat Shwe, no date of birth, Arakan. Basic studies: no answer. 3 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Maung Saw, b. 1325 (1963) Yangon. Basic studies: 7th standard. 3 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Maung Soe, b. 1324 (1962) Yanbye, Arakan. Basic studies: 5th standard. 6 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- U Moe Myint, b. 1953 Mandalay. Basic studies: 10th standard. No answer in "how many years have You worked as a woodcarver", except "I have learned my work from my father and grandfather" and "I did not have any other profession". Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- Ko Myat Thu, b. 1969 Amarapura. Basic studies: 4th standard. 7 years as woodcarver. Amarapura.
- Ko Myint Naing, b. 1964 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 6 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Myo Myo Aung, no date of birth, Mandalay. Basic studies: 7th standard. No answer in "how many years have You worked as a woodcarver", except "I am still studying". Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- Maung Nyan Lin, b. 1977 Mandalay. Basic studies: 2nd standard. 4-5 years as woodcarver. Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.
- U San Hla, b. 1318 (1956) Amarapura. Basic studies: 4th standard. 24 years as woodcarver. Amarapura.
- Ko San Win, b. 1969 Mandalay. Basic studies: 9th standard. 17 years as woodcarver. Thampawaddy, Mandalay.
- U Soe Win, b. 1959 Yangon. Basic studies: 7th standard. 17 years as woodcarver. Elephant carving shop, Mandalay.
- U Soe Win, b.1321 (1959) Yangon. Basic studies: 8th standard. 15 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- Ko Than Naing Win, b. 1966 Yangon. Basic studies: 1st year in Yangon University. 27 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- U Tin Maung Nyunt, b. 1321 (1959) Mandalay. Basic studies: 7th standard. 18

- years as woodcarver. Thampawaddy, Mandalay.
- Ko Tin Thaug, b. 1331 (1969) Mandalay. Basic studies: 10th standard. 2 years as woodcarver. Elephant carving shop, Mandalay.
- Ko Toe Gyi, b. 1966 Yangon. Basic studies: 7th standard. 13 years as woodcarver. Shwedagon archade, Yangon.
- U Win Maung, b. 1947 Mandalay. Basic studies: Major in Physics, Mandalay University. 20 years as artist. Thampawaddy, Mandalay.
- Ko Zaw Linn, b. 1964 Mandalay. Basic studies: 4th standard. No answer in "how many years have You worked as a woodcarver", except "I haven't done anything else" and "My father is a woodcarver". Mahamuni archade, Mandalay.

Art Students and Artists

State School of Fine Arts, Yangon

- Maung Aung Myo Win, b. 1971 Yangon. Basic studies: 10th standard. 2nd year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Aung Sint, b. 1968 Dawae, Taninthayee Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 6th year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Aung Zaw Lwin Oo, b. 1974 Yameethin Township, Magwe Division. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Aung Zin Oo, b. 1970 Kalihtaw, Yangon Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 2nd year student in sculpture/ woodcarving.
- Ma Cho Cho Lwin, b. 1969 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 3rd year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Da, b. 1969 La Gyi Nwe, Shan State. Basic studies: 9th standard. 4th year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Han Win Aung, b. 1973 Sinpaungwe, Magwe Division. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Khin Maung Zaw, b. 1970 Mate, Taninthayee Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 5th year student in painting.
- Maung Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, b. 1972 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Moe Nin, b. 1970 Nyaung Kan, Sagaing Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Myint Aung, b. 1969 Htone Lake, Kayin State. Basic studies: 10th standard. 5th year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- U Myint San, no date of birth, Kinmonkyan, Bago Division. Basic studies: 9th standard. After the basic 3 years study, 10 years as sculpture/woodcarving teacher in this art school.
- Maung Myint Naing, b. 1975 Kyauk Phu, Arakan State. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung San Naing, b. 1971 Kyikanye, Arakan State. Basic studies: 9th standard. 3rd year student in painting.
- Maung Soe Win Thant, b. 1973 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in painting.

- Maung Than Myint Naing, b. 1973 Mawbi, Yangon Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Than Win, b. 1972 Satapyin, Arakan State. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Than Zaw, b. 1972 Kyaut Tang, Yangon Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Thein Soe, b. 1973 Yangon. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Ma Thin Na Yee, b. 1970 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Ma Tin Tin Win, b. 1971 Yangon. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Win Htoo Soe, b. 1969 Yangon. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3rd year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Win Ko, b. 1972 Yangon. Basic studies: 9th standard. 1st year student in sculpture/woodcarving.
- Maung Win Lwin, b. 1974 Phaung Gyi, Yangon Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 1st year student in painting.
- Maung Zaw Win, b. 1969 Mayin, Bago Division. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3rd year student in sculpture/woodcarving.

State School of Fine Arts, Mandalay

- U Aung Kyaw, b. 1949 Arakan State. Basic studies: 10th standard. "I have been studying art since I was 7 years old. I am now 44." 3 years as student in art school, Yangon. At the moment sculpture/clay teacher in Mandalay school.
- U Khin Maung San, b. 1955 Kanbalu Township. Basic studies: 10th standard. Worked 15 years as painting teacher in the art school.
- U Kyi Thein, b. 1963 Mate. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3 years as student, 3 years as assistant tutor in art school.
- U Maung Aung Kyaw Oo, b. 1329 (1967) Pherpone Township. Basic studies: 9th standard. 3 years as student in painting, at present tutoring the students. *Shwegyidaw* painter (designer of tapestry).
- U Myint Kyaw, b. 1964 Mandalay. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3 years as student in painting. At the moment teacher of painting, working also as *Shwegyidaw* painter.
- Maung Myint Thein, b. 1970 Hopin, Kachin State. Basic studies: 9th standard. Studied 3 years in the school, continues sculpture studies.
- U Myint Tun, b. 1969 Pyin Oo Lwin. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3 years as student in painting. At the moment teacher of painting in commercial or applied arts. 7 years as artist.
- U Myo Myint Taik, b. 1970 Sagaing. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3 years as student in painting. Since 1989 (4 years) as assistant tutor in painting.
- U Soe Win Aung, b. 1970 Mandalay. Basic studies: 10th standard. 3 years as student. At the moment assistant tutor in art school.
- Ma Thet Thet Soe, b. 1969 Phyu. Basic studies: 1st year in Mandalay University. 3rd year student in painting.

- U Zaw Than Thut, b. 1328 (1966) Monywa. Basic studies: 1st year in correspondence class in University. 3 years as student in sculpture. Since 1988 (5 years) as assistant tutor in sculpture/clay.
- Ma Zin Ma Win, b. 1973 Phyu. Basic studies: 1st year in Mandalay University. 3rd year student in painting.

"Miscellaneous"

- Ko Aung Aung, b. 1971 Mandalay. Basic studies: 1st year in Mandalay University. No answer in "how long have You worked as artist". Marble sculpture workshop in Mandalay-Amarapura road.
- U Aye Ko, b. 1959 Mandalay. Basic studies: 2nd year student in Economics, Mandalay University. No answer in "how long have You worked as an artist". Marble sculpture workshop in Mandalay-Amarapura road.
- U Moe Thu, b. 1950 Mandalay. Basic studies: 7th standard. No answer in "how long have You worked as an artist". Marble sculpture workshop in Mandalay-Amarapura road.
- U Myo Myin Aung, b. 1955 Banmaw, Kachin State. Basic studies: 10th standard. 10 years as arts dealer. Souvenir and export sale shop in Shwegonedine rd., Yangon.
- U Pan Aye, b. 1290 (1928) Phatheingyi, Mandalay Division. Basic studies: monastery school. 45 years working as a puppeteer. Studied in Shwebo Tin Maung Puppet Theatre. At the moment performing in Mandalay Marionettes Puppet Theatre in Mandalay.
- U Than Nyunt, b. 1959. Basic studies: 8th standard. 3 years as a puppeteer in Mandalay Marionettes Puppet Theatre in Mandalay. Theatre was founded in 1991 by Daw Ma Ma Naing and Daw Naing Ye Mar.
- Ko Than Soe, b. 1330 (1968) Yangon. Basic studies: 7th standard. 8 years working as a carpenter. Yangon.
- U Tin Maung Kyi, b. 1939. Basic studies: Medical Doctor. Woodcarving, puppetry, traditional painting, Myanmar music and ancient scriptures speciality.

ART COLLECTIONS AND GALLERIES IN MYANMAR

- NATIONAL MUSEUM, Pansodan Street, Yangon. Traditional woodcarving from Mandlay period. Modern art, sculpture and painting from this century.
- BUDDHIST ART MUSEUM, International Institute of Advanced Buddhist Studies, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Yangon. Buddhist sculpture and artefacts from historical periods.
- MANDALAY MUSEUM, Shwenandaw, Golden Palace area, Mandalay. Sculpture, paintings and artefacts from the last Konbaung king's time from the Mandalay Palace.
- PRIVATE COLLECTION OF U SEIN MYINT, Maison Kinnari, Mandalay. Traditional wooden sculpture and artefacts from Konbaung period.
- MYAMANDALA HOTEL, Mandalay. Small collection of excellent watercolour paintings in the dining hall of the hotel.
- INWA MUSEUM, Inwa. Artefacts from ancient capital.
- MYOMA KYAUNG, Inwa. Buddha images from several historical periods. Collected by venerable Sayadaw of the monastery.
- BAGAN MUSEUM, Archaeological area, Bagan. Sculpture and artefacts from Bagan excavations.

MODERN ART GALLERIES IN YANGON

- ANTHER ART GALLERY, 24 Triangle Street, Kadawgalay
- BEIKTHANO ARTS & CRAFTS, 165 East Wing, Bogyoke Market
- GV GOLDEN VALLEY ART CENTRE, 54 D, Golden Valley
- THE INYA GALLERY OF ART, 50 B, Inya Road
- LOKANAT GALLERIES, 62 Pansodan Street
- MOON ART GALLERY, 635 Pyay Road, Yoma Yeiktha
- ORIENT ART GALLERY, 121 E Thanlwin Road
- SEVEN & SEVAN ART GALLERY, 77 Shin Sawpu Road
- SAW HLAING ARTIST, KHIN KHIN GYI MYANMAR MEAL HOP, 267 Pyay Road, Myenegone
- OKKAR KYAW MYANMAR ARTS & CRAFTS, 41 Lanthit Street, Lanmadaw
- NEW TREASURE ART GALLERY, 84/1 Thanlwin Road
- ARTISTS & ARTISANS ASSOCIATION SALE SHOP, 187 to 192 East Wing, Bogyoke Market
- U LU TIN VISION HOUSE GALLERY, Htinyulan, Myothit, MONYWA

GLOSSARY

- ABHAYA hand gesture of protection and assurance. Hand is lifted up palm open towards the viewer.
- ANATTA Buddha's doctrine of no soul. Rebirth is often misunderstood to be reincarnation of the soul. According to Buddha's teaching there is no permanent entity which could be called the soul which could travel from life to life.
- ANICCA Buddha's doctrine of impermanence. Nothing is permanent except change.
- AVALOKITESVARA benevolent and merciful *Bodhisatta*, "Lord, who looks down in pity". Personification of self-generative creative cosmic force.
- AYUTTHAYA capital of Thai kingdom 1350-1767.
- BALU green ogres of the forests. Can assume human form. Heroes of many romantic legends. Both benevolent and hostile spirits.
- BETEL mildly stimulative mixture of areca nuts, lime and other ingredients wrapped in the leaf of betel vine. Produces bright red saliva when chewed. Originates from Southern India around the beginning of the Christian era. Extremely popular entertainment still today despite the fact that it spoils the teeth quickly.
- BHAKTI devotion to a spiritual ideal. Love and service of personified religious Ideal. In Buddhism usually *Bodhisattva*.
- BHUMISPARSA hand gesture where hand touches the earth in front of the knee. The goddess of Earth is called to witness Enlightenment.
- BODAW "Great Father", historical religious leaders in Myanmar, who after death became guardians and helpers of humans. Life histories stress the legendary superman qualities.
- BODHISATTA one whose "being" is *bodhi*, the wisdom resulting from direct perception of Truth. In Theravada an aspirant for Buddha-hood. In Mahayana ideal being, who renounces personal freedom in Nirvana in order to help humanity on its pilgrimage. Sanskrit *Bodhisattva*.
- BRAHMA four-headed demiurg of Hinduism. In Buddhism supporter of Buddha.
- CAKKA wheel of Law, teaching of Buddha. See *dhammacakka*.
- CHANDI "the fierce", terrible aspect of *Devi*, the spouse of *Siva*. In Myanmar accepted as *Nat*. Carved in pleasant and peaceful form differing from the original Indian goddess.
- CHINTHE mythical guardian lion
- DANA Buddhist virtue of generosity even to the state of self-sacrifice.
- DEVA "shining one", celestial being dwelling in the upper worlds of the universe. In Myanmar usually called *Buddha Nats* distinguishing from the *Nats*.
- DHAMMA doctrine, moral teaching of Buddha.
- DHAMMACAKKA turning the wheel of Law i.e. teaching the moral doctrine. In art *dhammacakka mudra* is the hand gesture where Buddha's hands are lifted in the front and fingers form two circles. If deer are

- connected with the image, it suggests the first sermon in Sarnath.
- DHYANA hand gesture of meditation. Hands lay peacefully in the lap palms upwards.
- DUKKHA first of the Four Noble Truths taught by Gotama Buddha: Life is *suffering*. Dukkha belongs to all life in happiness as well as sorrows. Escape from suffering is possible through liberation from the wheel of births and death in *Nibbana*.
- GALON mythical sunbird, *garuda*. Nearest relative in natural world, the eagle.
- GANDHARA school of art in Northern India present day Pakistan and Afghanistan c. 1st to 3rd century. Style strongly flavoured by Graeco-Roman art of Asia Minor.
- GANESA elephant-headed god of wisdom and remover of obstacles.
- GOTAMA Siddhatta Gotama Buddha 543-480 BC. Prince of North Indian Sakya clan. Historical founder of Buddhism. Sanskrit *Gautama*.
- HINTHA goose. Vehicle of *Thurathati Nat*, Myanmar version of Indian goddess of learning *Saraswati*. *Hamsa* of god *Brahma*.
- HTI gilt iron crown of pagodas and *pyatthats*. Resembles the pyramidal golden helmet crowns of Myanmar kings and *Jambhupati Buddhas*. Attached with small bronze bells which play pleasant music in the wind.
- JAMBHUPATI Buddha in royal regalia.
- JATAKA birth story. 547 legends of Gotama Buddha's former lives. Background for moral teachings and popular motifs of art.
- KALAGA see *Shwegyidaw*.
- KALI "the black", fierce and bloody aspect of *Devi*, the spouse of *Siva*. In Myanmar accepted as one of the *Nats*. Carved in pleasant and peaceful form quite unlike the original Indian goddess.
- KAMMA universal law of cause and effect. The Pali language word means action.
- KAN Myanmar language for *Kamma*.
- KEINNAYA and KEINNAYEE mythical half-human half-bird beings living in mountain forests. Heroes of many romantic legends.
- KETU mystical planet of Hindu astrology, actually descending node of Moon. Symbolizes zenith and Buddha in Myanmar.
- KWAN-YIN female Chinese (Kannon in Japan) version of *Bodhisatta Avalokitesvara*, Goddess of Mercy.
- KYAUNG Myanmar language for monastery. Means literally "school". In classical Myanmar monasteries were actually the centres for education and study. Still today there are several monastery universities in both Myanmar and Thailand.
- LAKSMI Indian goddess of good fortune, wealth and fertility. Spouse of *Visnu*.
- LALITASANA sitting position on a pedestal, one leg hanging down and other bent and resting on the cushion. Sitting position of the *Bodhisattas*.
- MAHAPARINIBBANA Great Absorption to *Nibbana*. Term used in connection of Gotama Buddha's passing away.

- MAHAYANA the Northern School of Buddhism practised in China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia. Teachings distinctly religious appealing to intuition rather than intellect. Its goal, attaining Bodhisattva-hood.
- MAKARA sometimes known as the water elephant. Aquatic monster blending features of crocodile, elephant and fish.
- MANOUKTHIHA mythical half-man half-lion of Myanmar art.
- MARA tempting demon who tried to prevent Gotama from Enlightenment. Beautiful daughters of Mara Desire, Pleasure and Passion symbolise the temptations of the sensual world. Myanmar language *Man*.
- MAYADEVI mother of historical Gotama Buddha. Died soon after delivering the child.
- METTEYA future Buddha whose coming marks the end of the present *kalpa* world aeon.
- MI-LO-FU Chinese fat monk, sometimes interpreted as future Buddha *Metteya*.
- MOGGALLANA one of the chief disciples of Gotama Buddha. Renowned for his supernormal powers. According to popular legends he visited the gods in heaven. Moggallana's ashes were buried in a stupa in famous Sanchi in central India together with another famous disciple of Buddha namely *Sariputta*. The British removed the important relics of Buddhist world from their burial stupa in the 19th century and transferred them to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The relics were formally returned to the Buddhists of Sri Lanka in 1947 and back to their original place in Sanchi in 1953. See also *Sariputta*.
- MUDRA hand gesture pointing to certain part of Buddha legend.
- MUKUTA high head gear of Hindu gods and Bodhisattas. Crown of hair and architectural details resembling Indian temple tower.
- NAGA mythical snake and snake spirit. Sometimes takes human form in legends and art.
- NAT spirits of old but still vital Myanmar folk religion. Pantheon of 37 *Royal Nats* was established in the 11th century. Nats help or tease people according to the respect they show to the spirits.
- NATKADAW "wife of the Nat", spirit medium, who communicates with her/his spouse during trance.
- NATSIN altar or tiny temple for the *Nats*. Most Myanmar houses have a niche for the guardian of the house *Mahagiri*.
- NAYA mythical animal mixing features of dragon, snake, horse, bull and lion.
- NEIBAN *Nibbana* in Myanmar language.
- NIBBANA formed of syllables *ni*, which is a negative particle, and *vana* meaning craving or selfish desire (Pali language). Usually interpreted as total extinction, or a state or a form beyond human comprehension: not nothingness and not the not-nothingness. *Mahaparinibbana* or *Parinibbana* mean the absorbing of Buddha to Void in his death moment, breaking the wheel of rebirth and death. (Sanskrit *Nirvana*).
- PADMASANA cross-legged sitting position, where both feet are lifted on the thighs. If only one foot is resting on the thigh while the other leg is folded under the body the sitting position is called *virasana*.

- PAGODA bell-shaped architectural structure, relic chamber, symbol of Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana* (see Nibbana). Developed from Buddhist *stupa* in India. Appeared in present form in Nepal in the sixth century. Further developed in China and Japan.
- PALA ruling dynasty of Magadha in North India 740-1197. Supporters of Buddhism. University of Nalanda achieved the final synthesis of Mahayana philosophy. Blooming last period of Buddhist art in India.
- PONGYI "Great Glory" Myanmar language for ordained Buddhist monk. *Pon* means power, honour and is religiously reserved for men only.
- PONNA Indian astrologer and soothsayer. Active court brahmins already in Bagan kingdom. Today descendants of Manipuri brahmins of Konbaung court.
- PWE popular entertainment including dance, songs and romance. Usually takes place in neighbourhood of a pagoda in the night time. Sponsored by wealthy individual for gaining Buddhist merit. *Zat pwe* - dance theatre, *Yokthe pwe* - puppet theatre, *Nat pwe* - dance ritual arranged especially in honour of *Nat* spirits.
- PYATTHAT pyramidal, multistoreyed roof structure in sacral and royal architecture. Indicates the important buildings. Number of roofs always odd, three, five, seven or nine at the most. Crowned with *hti*.
- PYINSAYUPA mythical animal of "five beauties", mixture of snake, bird, deer, elephant and fish.
- RAHU mystical dark planet of Hindu astrology, which causes eclipse by swallowing the Moon. Actually ascending node of Moon.
- SAKKA Indra of Indian mythology. King of gods and ruler of *Tavatimsa* heaven. Myanmar version *Thagya Min* is the king of *Nats*.
- SANGHA assembly of monks. Monastic order founded by Gotama Buddha. Admission is called "renouncing the world". No oaths are taken and the monks are free to leave the Order any time. In Theravada countries almost all men spend some time of their adult life in a monastery. The *Shinbyu* novitiate ceremony of boys is the most important festival of a Buddhist family.
- SARASWATI Indian goddess of learning and the spouse of Brahma. In Myanmar modified as *Thurathati Nat*.
- SARIPUTTA one of the Gotama Buddha's chief disciples. Regarded as second to Buddha in wisdom. Buried in stupa in Sanchi, India. See details of relics in *Moggallana*.
- SAYADAW literally teacher in Myanmar language. Head of monastery, but sometimes also honorary title for distinguished monk.
- SHIKKO reverent gesture of greeting. Hands are joined together in front of the face with a bow.
- SHINBYU novitiate ceremony of young boys to Buddhist order. Usually takes place when the boy is about 9-12 years old. In colourful festival the boys are dressed as princes before they are taken to the monastery, where their hair is shaved and they are clad in the sacred yellow robe.
- SHWEDAGON the most famous *pagoda* in Myanmar. Reaches nearly 100 meters height. Surrounded by hundreds of smaller sacral buildings.

Yangon.

- SHWEGYIDAW appliqued velvet wall hangings originally used as coffin coverers in funerals for monks and royals. Images are filled with cotton which make the wall hanging look like a soft relief. In international literature called *kalagas* but in Myanmar they are not known with this word (which means curtain in Myanmar).
- SIVA in Hinduism the moving force of the universe, creation, preservation, destruction, embodiment and release from illusion. In Myanmar interpreted as powerful *Nat*.
- STUPA originally a burial mound containing ashes or relics of important persons. Symbol of Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana* (see *Nibbana*). Hemispherical construction symbolic prototype for *pagodas*.
- SUKHOTHAJ centre of classical Thai art and culture. Capital of the kingdom 1238-1419.
- TAVATIMSA one of the six heavens of *Kamaloka*, the world of the senses. Kingdom of 33 gods ruled by *Thagya Min* or god *Sakka*, also known as *Indra*. According the Buddhist legend *Gotama Buddha* visited *Tavatimsa* preaching *Dhamma* to his mother *Mayadevi* and the gods.
- TAZAUNG shelters sacred objects like the Buddha image, footsteps of Buddha or bronze bell of the pagoda, or serves as a meditation hall. Elevated floor is often framed by three walls leaving one of the sides open. Pavillion is covered with *pyatthat* roof.
- THAGYA MIN king of the Nats. Devout Buddhist and guardian of the religion. According to popular belief *Thagya Min* visits the human world in New Year's *Thingyan* festival time. He is supposed to keep a book about good and bad deeds done during the year. When somebody is in trouble or something extraordinary is happening in the world, the throne of the king turns hard and uncomfortable. Then he takes leave to inspect what is wrong and to help.
- THERAVADA "Doctrine of Elders" who formed the first Buddhist Council immediately after the death of Buddha. Followed in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. Goal of life attaining *Arahatship* and *Nibbana*.
- TIPITAKA "three baskets of Law", Canons of Theravada Buddhism. At least partly written down in Sri Lanka in the first century BC. *Vinaya Pitaka* - rules for Order, *Sutta Pitaka* - Sermons, *Abhidhamma Pitaka* - commentary on *Suttas* and system for mind training. Myanmar *Sangha* specializes in *Abhidhamma*.
- TRIBHANGA position of the body in slight s-curve ("three times bent"). Resembles *contraposto* but is softer in angles.
- TUSITA one of the six heavens of *Kamaloka*, world of senses. Home of *Bodhisattas*. The future Buddha *Metteya* waits his time in *Tusita*.
- URNA wisp of hair between the eyes in the forehead.
- USNISA protuberance of head symbolizing great wisdom and insight. In early art covered with short curls of hair. Later added with high flames or pinnacles.
- VAJRAYANA Tantric school of North India and Tibetan Buddhism. Dates from the 6th century. Mystical meditation and ritual systems in both

Hinduism and Buddhism.

- VARADA hand gesture of granting a boon. Expression of compassion and blessing. Hand is lifted to the side palm upwards.
- VISNU the cosmic sleeper, keeper of the status of Universe. In Myanmar identified as *Nat*.
- YAHAN Myanmar language for *Arahat*, "the Worthy One". Enlightened monk, who attains *Nibbana*.
- YAKKHA yaksa and female yaksi, nature spirits of pre-Aryan India. Minor deities in Hinduism, guardian spirits in Buddhist art.
- YAMA Hindu god of Death. Originally king of departed souls, but later judge and punisher of human misdeeds. Yama and his sister *Yami* were the first mortals, children of the sun god *Surya*.
- ZAWGYI alchemist and magician believed to master supernatural powers. Member of one of the many quasi-Buddhist sects. Popular hero of folklore and marionette theatre. Frequent in carved exteriors of monasteries.
- ZAYAT open, wall-less shelter for pilgrims and other casual travellers in a pagoda compound. *Tudhamma zayat* is a special zayat for ordinating monks.

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All photos by author.



Fig. 1 Buddha, 14th century Bagan.



Fig. 2 Buddha, 18th century Inwa.

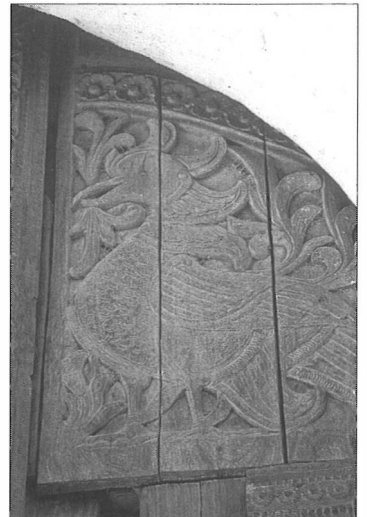


Fig. 3 Door relief, 12th century, Bagan.



Fig. 4 Jambhupati Buddha, 18th century, Shan.

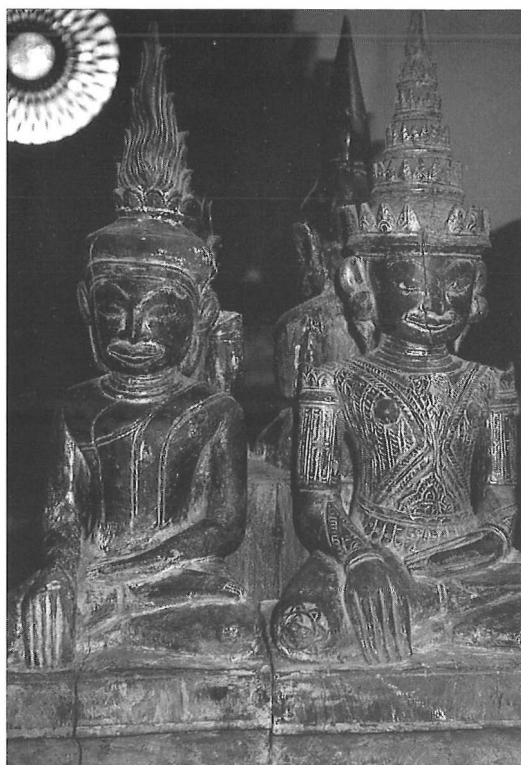


Fig. 5 Two Buddhas, 19th century, Shan.

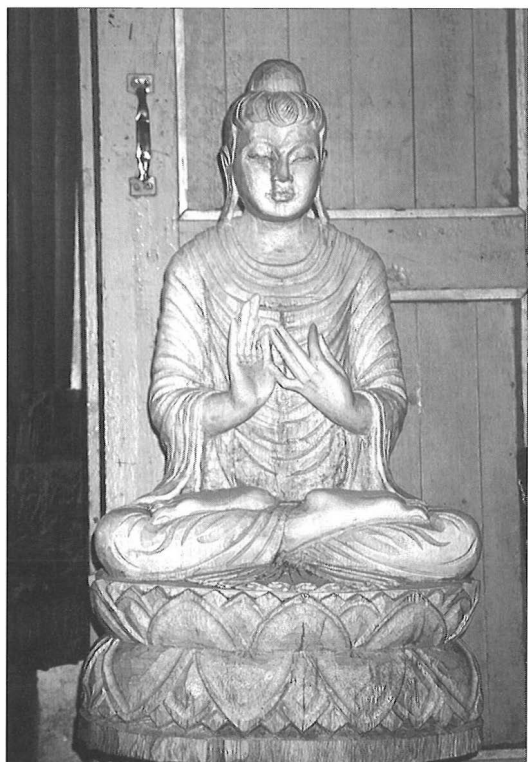


Fig. 6 Contemporary Buddha, Yangon.



Fig. 7 Popular print of Buddha with monks, Yangon.



Fig. 8 Pin Tha Min Kyaung, 1830's Amarapura.

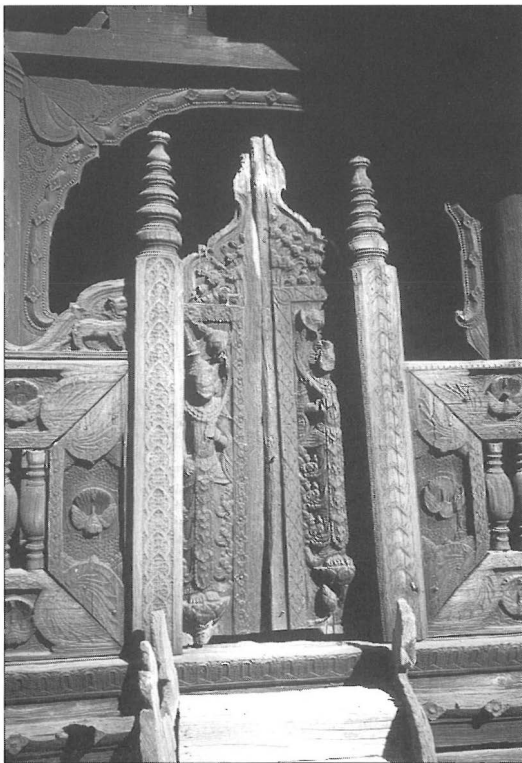


Fig. 9 Bagaya Kyaung, 1890's Inwa.



Fig. 10 Kin Wun Mingyi Kyaung, 1870's Mandalay.



Fig. 11 Nat Thoun Kyaung, 19th century Bagan.



Fig. 12 Nat Thoun Kyaung, 19th century Bagan.

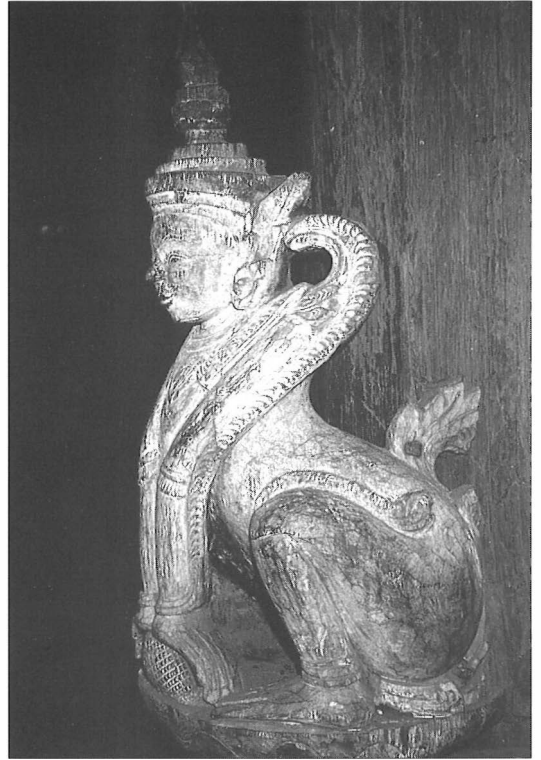


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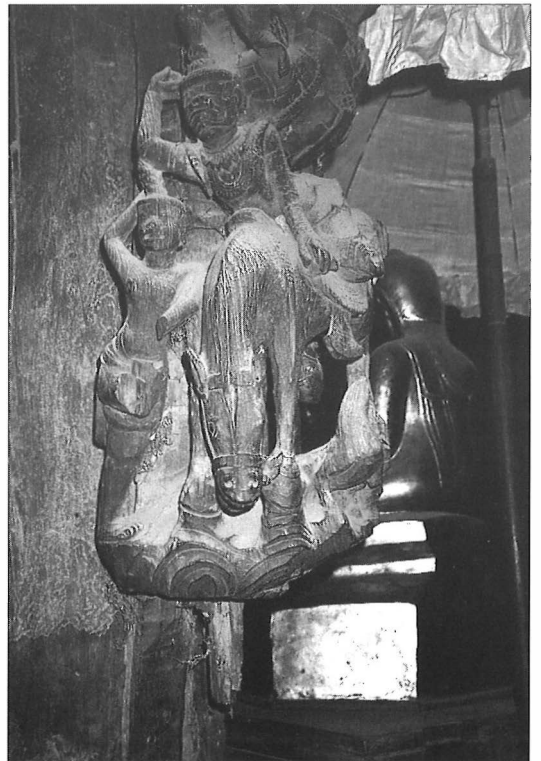


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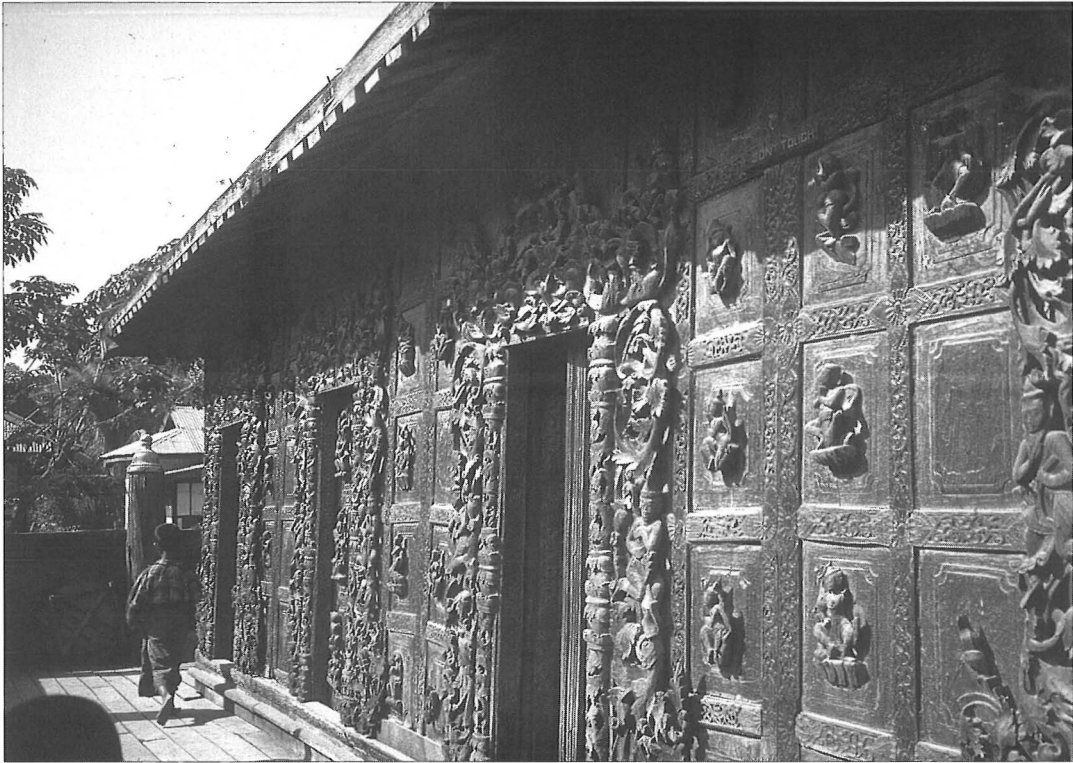


Fig. 16 Shwenandaw Kyaung, 1850's Mandalay.



Fig. 17 Shwenandaw Kyaung, 1850's Mandalay.



Fig. 18 Shweinbin Kyaung, 1890's Mandalay.

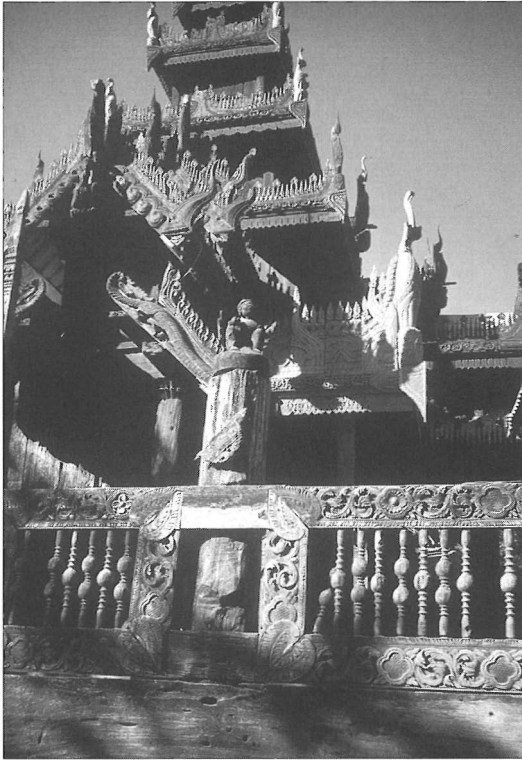


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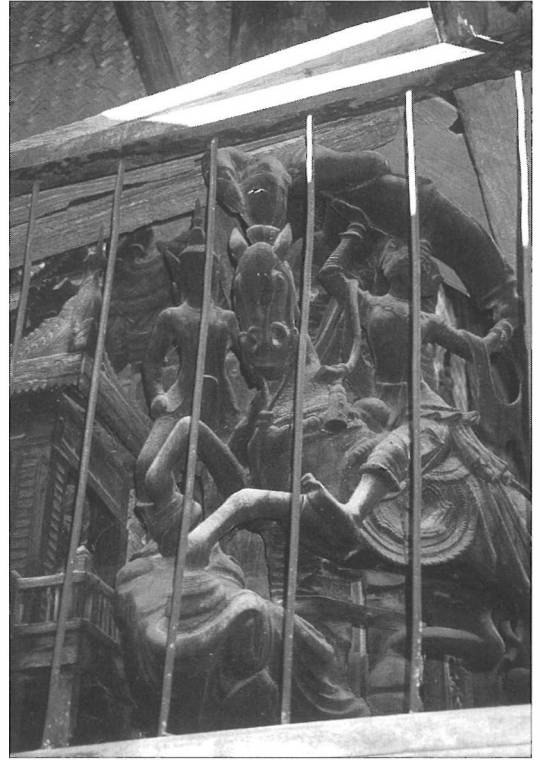


Fig. 20 Yokeson Kyaung, 1870's Sale.



Fig. 21 Yokeson Kyaung, 1870's Sale.



Fig. 22 Thone Htat Kyaung, 1870's Sale.



Fig. 23 Thone Htat Kyaung, 1870's Sale.



Fig. 24 Ko Kyaung, 1870's Sale.



Fig. 25 Shweinbin Kyaung, 1890's
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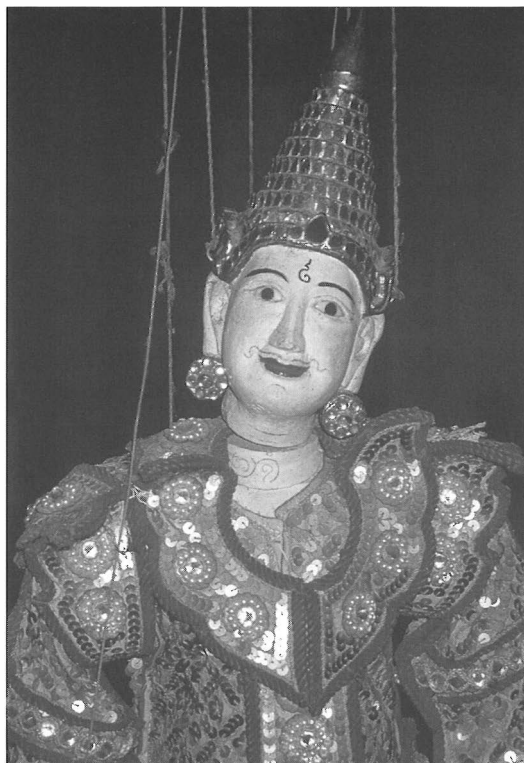


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Fig. 32 Woodcarver artist at work, Mandalay 1993.

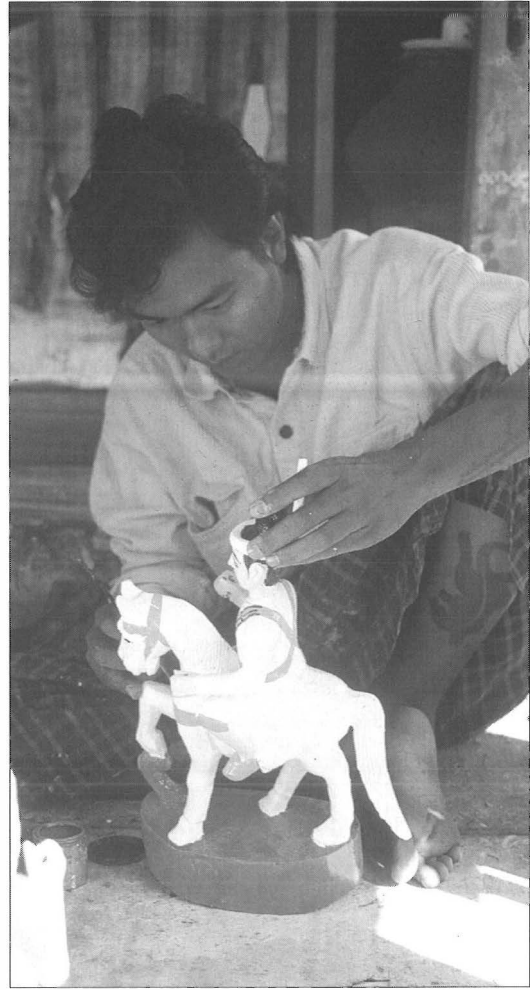


Fig. 33 Painting a Nat image, Mandalay 1993.



Fig. 34 Unfinished Buddha images, Yangon 1993.

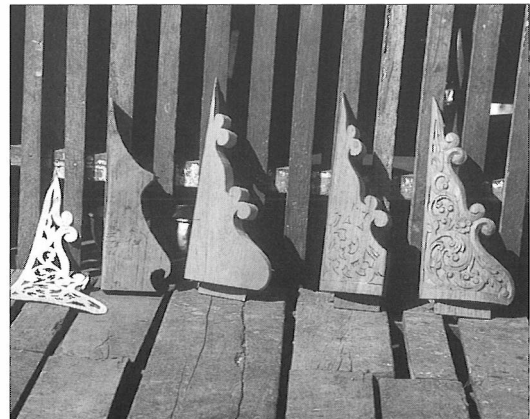


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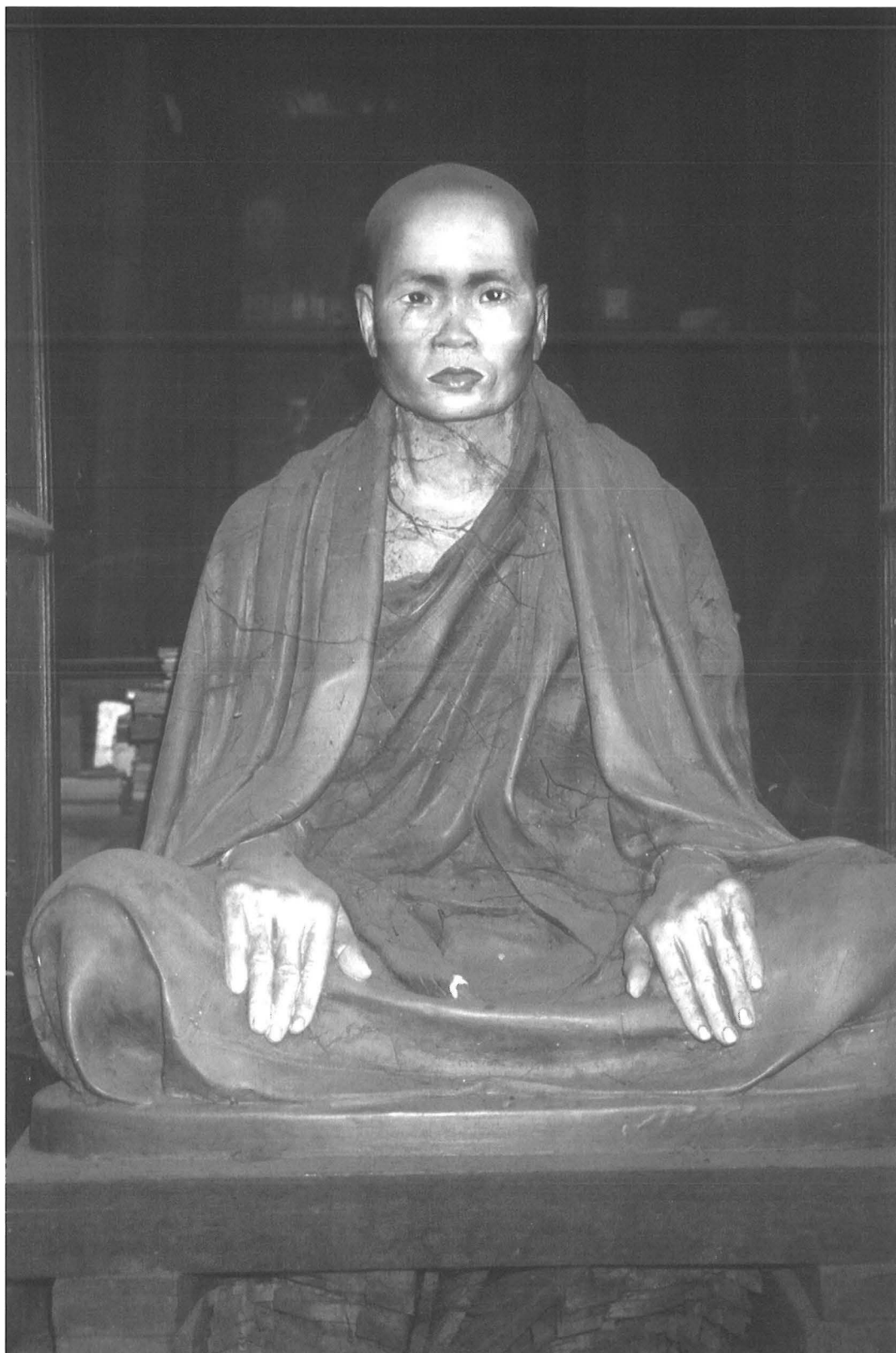


Fig. 39 Portrait of a monk by U Win Maung, Mandalay.



Fig. 40 Lai Taik Kaun Tin by U Win Maung, Mandalay 1991.



Fig. 41 Zawgyi at Shwedagon, Yangon.