

A Study on Social Life and Religion in Bagan Period with Special Reference to Mural Paintings

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Abstract

This paper aimed to know not only the status of highly developed culture in Bagan period which flourished throughout of Myanmar history but also the fine arts in those days based on the religion. A mural is a painting on a wall, ceiling, or other large permanent surface. Sorts of murals date to prehistoric times can be explored inside the caves, temples and pagodas. There are many techniques. The most well known is probably "fresco", which uses water soluble paints with a damp lime wash, a rapid use of the resulting mixture over a large surface, and often in parts. The colors lighten when they are dried. Most of the mural paintings can be seen in many "gu" or caves in Bagan. Because of very little lights inside the caves, the paintings still remain as nearly the same as the original ones, but some of them have been damaged badly due to severe weather and other circumstances. There are over 300 monuments in Bagan which display mural paintings inside. By studying the mural paintings in the religious monuments such as *ceties*, the *pathos*, the temples, and the monasteries built in Bagan period, it can be said that mural paintings reveal the status of social life, the faiths, the work of the arts and the glory and greatness of Bagan Kingdom.

Keywords: *Mural, Religion, Social Life, Jatakas Tales*

Introduction

Bagan, a center of ancient cultural heritage, is located in Myingyan District, Mandalay Region and about four mile south of Nyaung Oo on the eastern bank of Ayeyawaddy River. Bagan, the present day standard Myanmar pronunciation of the Myanmar word *Pugan* is derived from old Myanmar *Pukam*. According to the Rajakumar Inscription, its classical name and Pali name is *Arimaddanapura*, "The City that Tramples on Enemies". Mon inscription of A.D. 1094 mentioned that it was called as *Pukam* or *Pugan*. Furthermore, to the Mons, Bagan and its environs were called as "*Tattadesa*" (the Parched Land). Its other named in Pali were "*Tattadesa*" and "*Tampadipa*" (Bronzed country) with reference to its extreme dry zone climate.

According to the Myanmar chronicles, Bagan was ruled by 55 dynastic Kings from King Thamoddarit to King Saw Mon Nit, but Bagan was established when King Aniruddha (Anawratha Minsaw) (1044-1077) took the throne by force in 1044, that Bagan emerged into the clearly light of history. From the reign of King Anawratha, Bagan was flourished and lasted for over 250 years and Bagan's golden age ended in 1278 A.D when the Kingdom and its capital city was invaded and sacked by the Mongol. Therefore Bagan's glory and greatness and power were gradually faded. In this time, the area of the Bagan Kingdom stretched to Bamaw in the north and far down to the South of Dawei, from the Thanlwin River in the east to the Western Yoma in the west.

By the royal city could draw upon the rice granaries of Kyaukse, 90 miles to the north-east and Minbu, 70 miles to the south and the irrigation canals were constructed there and as depending on the agriculture Bagan was prospered. Economically, therefore, Bagan was a strong Kingdom in Myanmar. The remarkable one during the reign of King Anawratha that Bagan was flourished and spread out religion (*Sasana*) after receiving the Three *Pitaks* from Thahton. The King, the ministers and the people of Bagan believed in Buddha *Sasana*

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(Buddha's Teachings) and in order to last long Buddha *Sasana*, the religious buildings such as pagodas, pathos, cave temples, the ordination hall, Umin were constructed around Bagan by the donation of Buddhists. In addition to this Buddhism, there were also existed the traditional worship of *nats* or spirits and other beliefs. (Dr. Than Tun, *အချစ်ကြီးမားသော မြန်မာ့အလင်း* (Old Myanmar History), Studies in Myanmar History Number One, Yangon, Innwa Book Housing, 3rd Edition, December, 2002, pp. 137-136., Robert E. Fisher, *Buddhist Art and Architecture*, Thames and Hudson World of Art, Singapore, 1993, p.183., Kyaw Lat, *Art and Architecture of Bagan and Historical background with Data of Important Monuments*, Yangon, 2010, p.26.)

The pagodas, the pathos, the temples, the monasteries, the rest-houses and the ordination halls constructed and donated by the Kings and the people were still remained as the ancient cultural heritages including mural paintings, art of carving wood, glazed plaque, inscriptions. Mural paintings of inside the temples and pagodas were reflected the politics, economy, society and religion of Bagan period. Especially, the concerning with society and religion were painted and depicted in the mural paintings inside the pagodas and temples can be seen.

Murals and its Meaning

Murals are in large formats and are integrated with the architecture on the walls, ceiling, floor and the spaces where it is done. These characteristics have made the mural, an important type of art that increases the relationship between the work, the space and the spectator, reflecting the concerns of each era; public art or private, secular or religious, imaginary or real, inside or outside, popular or elitist, playing an important role on social, political or simply in decoration sphere.

Mural Painting is one of the oldest forms of artistic expression, includes all artwork painted directly on a wall or flat surface. In order to understand in a simple way the phenomenon of murals, it is necessary to be familiar with the historical evolution of mural painting that has affected a variety of periods, from prehistory to the present day.

Throughout history and even prehistory, man has expressed himself graphically in many different ways. Like in music, poetry and the arts, also painting has used a language that evolves according to certain rules over the centuries. Not only the traditional subjects are viewed and represented in different ways, but also there have been different choices of the subjects to represent. So through years the fundamental meaning of the message conveyed by the artist becomes not only in form but also in content. For centuries the wall decorations and frescos were a very popular art form but only a small part of the works is totally integer, most of them are damaged or split. (Stevens Curl, James "Mural Painting", *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*, Oxford University Press 2006, p. 512., *Encyclopedia.com*. 17 May 2016 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>>)

The Early History of Myanmar Painting

Myanmar painting has always taken an important part in world history of painting. An introduction to Myanmar painting would necessarily have to start with the prehistoric Paleolithic Age. The man of Stone Age era has left ineffaceable concrete proof of his creative insight and aptitude in different regions of Upper Myanmar. Thus it can be said that a historical record of the progress of Myanmar painting should start from this dawning of the artistic drive

of our ancestors. They occupied this land of ours. These are well mentioned as the mural paintings of Padalin Cave.

Some of the mural paintings that are discovered in Padalin Cave near Ywangan village in southern Shan State are duly examined. After examination it has been proved that the people of this area had same caliber as the cave paintings of other Stone Age men of Europe. Even it has also been seen that the artists of this era were employing the same techniques. The paint used in these paintings was derived from a solution of clay. This was dissolved in some kind of animal fat where the colours were mainly brown, black, and orange. Scholars of that time thus concluded that the paint was most likely obtained by heating animal fat and then well mixing the components. This is done to achieve the desired shade and also colour.

Various pictures that are painted and drawn on the limestone walls of the cave are almost ten to twelve feet high. The height is calculated from the ground. In some of the paintings, the depictions of the fish, a cow, a human palm, calf, elephant, deer, wild boar, sun and bison can be seen. The technique comprised of line drawings overlaid with thick paint. They appear to convey a feel of identification with nature. Force and pride were also present in the paintings. These are some of the earliest paintings found in Myanmar. (U Aung Thaw, "Neolithic Culture of Padah-Lin Caves", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. 52, Part 1, June, 1969, pp. 13.14 (This paper was read on 27 June 1969 at the Burma Research Society), Dr. Than Tun, "Rock art of Badut Hlaing (Badalin Caves)", *Golden Myanmar Magazine*, Vol. 4, No.2, 1997, pp. 9-12.)

Mural Paintings in Bagan Period

The mural paintings which depicted *Jatakas* as well as the life of the Buddha are also painted on inner walls of the Bagan temples during the Bagan Period from the 11th century to 13th century. In Bagan period, from the rulers to the people of Bagan constructed and donated the religious edifices concerning with Buddhism. Until now, the remaining of well-known *ceties*, the *pathos*, the temples, and the monasteries together with their inside mural paintings can be seen clearly. Studying on these religious edifices, it can be said that the art of painting was highly developed due to mural paintings which painted and depicted on the wall of *ceties*, the *pathos*, the temples, and the monasteries and *Sima* (Ordination Hall). By studying at these mural paintings, it can be explored the highly flourished mural paintings art in Bagan period.

The main feature of mural paintings in Bagan period was one of the workmanships of the traditional Myanmar painting which decorated with outline of drawing or line drawing. Painting with line drawing is not only obviously to pictures but also evident the styles of grace, softness, harshness, repose and also activity.

Interior walls of religious monuments such as cave temples, pagodas, ordination halls and monasteries were constructed in concrete and in so doing some of these walls were firstly rugged by plastered and then it put into the finished one or two layers. Above it, paintings were drawn and painted with whiter-wash. Plastering some of these walls was easy to damage due to using of compound red ochre. In early Bagan period, though the painters were used by white colour, black colour, yellow colour and light red colour, but they applied with combination colours of blue and green in later period. Mostly it can be seen they used deep red ochre, soft red ochre, deep fragrance and soft fragrance. In order to last for a long time of painting colours, they used neem tree lubricant and to brightness of colour they also mixed used with gall. In the early time, the painters compounded and used white colour from chalk, black colour from oil dregs and fumes, yellow colour from yellow ochre and yellow orpiment, red colour from vermilion and red ochre, blue colour from indigo and green colour from blue vitriol. The

inscriptions of Bagan were also inscribed in yellow orpiment, vermilion, red, chalk, sealing wax and rod-like thing and they bought these materials in order to use of paintings. (*Buddhist temples wall murals at Bagan*, copyright 2011, allmyanmar.com., Htet Htet Aung, "Changing of Bagan Cultural Landscape in Myanmar", *Summaries of Academic Theses*, 2014, pp. 73-77.)

During the reign of Aniruddha (Anawrahta) (A.D. 1044-1077), he tried to improve Theravada Buddhism and encouraged religion together with various kinds of handicrafts in order to develop. Saw Hla Wun Inscription which dated back in 598 A.D. mentioned that the painters who magnificently decorated mural paintings on the walls of cave temples and fees were given to them. Cave temples, brick monasteries (*Kala Kyaung*), ordination halls and rest-houses were existed around Bagan and therefore workmanships of paintings were found greatly and plenty more than other areas of Myanmar.

Mural paintings of Bagan were lasted for thousands of years and some of these were fallen down and damaged. The remaining ones were dim and whist and attached with smoke and dirt so they were not clear due to dark colour. Moreover, as they were also pious in Buddhism, the Buddhists offered golden robe, white-washing robe and so the mural paintings at many temples were completely lost. Although there were in the loss of antique painting arts which created by ideas of arts and art of paintings, many art paintings in Bagan period were remained to explore. (*Buddhist temples wall murals at Bagan*, copyright 2011, allmyanmar.com.)

Thetkyamuni Temple is situated near Chauk Paya, on the east of Nyaung Oo and this temple was built in 12th century A.D. In the doorways of this temple, the flame-like arch pediments, the pilasters, the garment of pearls and friezes with the ogre heads (Kirttimukha Frieze) were exquisite and interior walls of this temple were covered with panels, of paintings with depicted scenes of the life of the Buddha and 550 Jatakas, King Asoka who sent a Buddhist mission to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and the figures of the processing of the twenty-eight Buddha images and ink inscriptions were drawn. And also, there were paintings, floral motifs in this temple. Furthermore, the paintings represented the Nativity Scene (Prince Siddhatta's Birth) was drawn by the Buddhist devotees with their generosity and the scene of Buddha's Birth at Lonbammni Garden was painted. (Ma Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*, Yangon, Shwe Zin Printing House, First Edition, 2016, p. 60 (Hereafter cited as Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*))

The distinctive feature of this temple representing the style of paying obeisance to the Lord Buddha by human as well as the animals such as monkeys and elephants that lived in the jungle were drawn. And also it was painted the picture of Buddha's footprints down on the lotus sheet which based by lotus-bud and lotus bloom. Furthermore, the pictures like the disturbing to Buddha by Mara's warriors, the temptation to the meditation Buddha by Mara's daughters who created the twelve ages and the Buddha witnessed to the Earth were drawn.

Nandaminnya or Anantapyinna pagoda is a monument of mid-13th century and it is situated in the east-north of Payathonzu about one furlong. The mural paintings of this temple were decorated in detail. Moreover, making *Kahtain*, known as, displaying *Kahtain* in Bagan period and the figures of an artificial tree (*Badeithabin*), the household utensils as well as the shape of harp were hung on the *Badeithabin* were painted. The model of traditional harp was the same as the model of modern harp. In Bagan period, it was obvious the harp and the drum were regarded as the musical instruments. In the setting up of the *Badeithabin*, the two woman dancers who gathered around the *Badeithabin* and their graceful dances can be seen. By looking at the view of the processing the *Badeithabin* that was carried on the shoulders by the people of Bagan and they joyous dancing, the flourishing the Buddha *Sasana* and giving in

charities by the people in Bagan period was revealed. By looking at the citizens who were holding the lotus flowers and paying homage, it was also prescribed the devotion to religion. In this picture, the women made a single knot of hair and the men knotted his hair-knot on top.

The mural paintings in which pagoda from the life of the Buddha represented the scene of the Nativity (Buddha's/ Siddhattha's Birth) and it can be studied the costumed style of Queen Maya and Mahapajapati Goutami. In this painting, their bracelet and necklace were adorned with pointed up of reticulation and it looked like a scarf. Armlets and bracelets were not single ring and joined with folds and the sheet was perforated with floral decoration strip and beautifully worn. The finger nails were beautifully painted and apron and fringe were also placed in tapering and tier upon tier of anklet can be seen. The design of *Htabi* (woman's sarong) was beautifully decorated and it was noted that the reticulation was placed on the forehead. Although the breast was not painted as sculpture but it was clearly embellished the style of Goutami's abdomen was dropping. (U Myo Nyunt (Archaeology), **ယူမိယွန့် (Archaeology), ယူမိယွန့်၏ မြန်မာ့မိကျွန်းများ (Mural Paintings of Bagan Period which came from Pitaka)**, Good Wall Printing (8980), 2nd Edition, July 2014, pp. 61-63 (Hereafter cited as Myo Nyunt, *Mural Paintings came from Pitaka*), Dr. San Shwe, “**ယူမိယွန့်၏ မြန်မာ့မိကျွန်းများ ယူမိယွန့်၏ မြန်မာ့မိကျွန်းများ (Tradition of Bagan Period from Ink Inscriptions and Mural Paintings)**”, **မြန်မာ့မိကျွန်းများ (Research Papers of Ancient Myanmar Evidences)**, Yangon, Archaeology Department, Museum and Library Department, Pyi Oo Hpay Press, 1st Edition, November 2010, p. 178, Ma Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÉ MYSTIQUE*, p. 114, Than Tun, Dr., *Buddhist Art and Architecture with Special Reference to Myanma*, Yangon, Pho Wa Printing Press, First Edition, 2002, p. 47 (Hereafter cited as Than Tun, *Buddhist Art and Architecture*)

In this pagoda, the mural painting painted the style of women who went on a pilgrimage. Similarly in this picture the women's hairs were tied in loose knot without head-band and they also wore a sash-shawl put on their shoulders can be seen. Young women who adorned the head-band were single-breasted and rounded with some of strapless. Some of them wore only armlets and some were not wore both bracelets and armlets. *Htabi* like drawstring bag was worn in left out waist.

Furthermore, the style of the picture that a Buddhist laid devotee who was holding the lotus-bud and lotus-bloom paid homage to the Buddha can be seen and the man wore apron and there was no clock garment. He also wore the tight cuff and armlet and it is assumed to be a male due to his hazily whiskers.

Ananda Temple is located near the east of the Tharaba Gate. It was constructed by King Kyanzittha (also known as Hti Hlaing Shin) in 1091 A.D. The whole temple was completely covered with the mural painting handiworks of King Kyanzittha. However, as it came to be existence for many years, the mural paintings were damaged. There were of course many reasons for damages: the colour of these mural paintings was faded due to the light and falling dawn; damages were also done by insects along the intervening years; rancid fat or grease due to holding by the people etc. Furthermore, successive pilgrims and decorations by the people in their religious zeal had followed suit and they applied coated lime to the walls with wrong ideas. Therefore, starting from 1968, a Researcher Office (Chemistry) of Archaeology Department made attempts to peel away the numerous coats of lime in the hope to uncover these paintings using the chemical methods; they discovered the original mural paintings of in the time of King Kyanzittha. In Buddha images, it is found that the red colour for the holy robes, the yellow colour for the complexion, blue-black colour, yellow and white colours for the floral motifs were also used. Above the scenes of these original mural paintings were coated in red colour of vermilion and recorded with captions in ink inscription of later period.

"Ananda Temple", Myanmar Information 2009, Retrieved 18-3-2010., Field Study Notes by Author (March 2015)



Mural painting from Ananda Temple

Source: Photo taken by Author

Htilominlo Temple is located near the road of Nyaung Oo, about one mile east of Bagan. This temple is situated within the wall of vestibule and it has over 150 feet from base to *Sikhara* (mountain peak) and also it is broadened at 140 feet along either side. This temple is a fairly biggest cave temple in Bagan because it has two-storey caves. Furthermore, some of the people of Bagan recorded their date of birth on the walls in ink inscriptions in order not to disappear their date of birth. (Paragu, *The Bagan Wayfarer*, Translations (A.M & Kyi Kyi Hla), Yangon, Seikku Cho Cho Sarpay, December 2013, p. 53 (Hereafter cited as Paragu, *The Bagan Wayfarer*)., Field Study Notes by Author (March 2015)



Source: Photo taken by Author

Gu Byauk Gyi (Wetkyi Inn) is situated near Kyanzittha Umin. There are also two Gu Byauk Gyis in Wetkyi Inn village. They are Gu Byauk Gyi and Gu Byauk Nge. This Gu Byauk Gyi (Wetkyi Inn) is still remained as a wonder of the World for its mural paintings in Bagan period and therefore so many tourists and pilgrimage of Buddhist Myanmar visited to here. It can be assumed that the donor of this temple is King Kyanzittha. Interior wall of this temple has the twenty-eight Buddha images which dated back of 13th century, the scenes of the lives of the Buddha (550 Jataka stories) and two Buddha footprints and paintings in the eastern roof of vestibule together with the Mon, Myanmar languages are written in footnote. Gu Byauk Gyi (Wetkyin Inn) is taken the model of Maha Bodi Temple of Buddha Gaya in India and it can be studied the mural paintings of Bagan period. On the ceiling of its devotional hall, the scenes like the Seven Places, Subjugation of Alawaka (the Ogre), Distribution the relics of Buddha by Dawna Brahman and Taming of Nandaw Pannada (Naga) and Nalagiri

(the Elephant) were exquisitely painted. Similarly, the pictures of Mara's warriors were astoundingly drawn on the interior walls of this temple. (Charlotte Kendrick Galloway, "Burmese Buddhist Imagery of the Early Bagan Period (1044 – 1113)", 2 Volumes, *A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University*, November 2006, pp. 181-183 (Hereafter cited as Kendrick Galloway, "Burmese Buddhist Imagery"))

Kyauk Ku Umin (Rock Cave Tunnel) is located in Nyaung Oo, near Bagan and it may be constructed in 13th century. It was built into the cliff side of sand stone. This temple is built with mixed brick and stone and it has three tiers. There are mural paintings at the either side of left walls of a colossal Buddha image. The ceiling of this temple has beautiful stone sculpture of Buddha images. The scene of the prince Siddhata sitting under the shady tree of *Zabuthabyay* (the Eugenia Tree) when King Suddawsana celebrated the ceremony of royal ploughing that illustrated on the eastern, the western and the northern niches of the main hall.

The researchers assumed that the Pahtothamya Temple is a good deed of Nyaung Oo Saw Rahan. The pictures from the life of the Buddha were painted in this temple. The pictures of King Suddawsana, the queen and also the concubines in the scene of King Suddawsana taking his son Siddhatta to Kala Devi hermit can be seen. Dealing with the costumed style of mural paintings in this temple, the King usually wore a crown which encompass with pointed ends, he wore piece of cloth to cover the whole part of the body and he adorned with bracelet, necklace, and bangles and also earring-plug can be studied. The King wore moustache and he has long hair curled up at the ends. The King and the chief queen were also adorned the head band together with multi-coloured beads, earring-plugs, armlets, bracelets, and they also adorned the reticulated hair curled up at the ends, waistcoat or stapled were worn on the breast and they left out the belly and wore *Htabi* (a woman's sarong) which was decorated and woven in curlicue pattern.

Pahtothamya Temple is a temple of the early Bagan period and it was defined as "prosperous". Within the temple there was a circuit corridor and the mural paintings depicting the lives of the Buddha were painted and inscribed with Mon language at footnote. For instance, the pictures such as foretelling the Prince Siddhatta would become the Buddha by Kala Devi hermit, rowing style of Prince Siddhatta, Twin Miracle (Miraculous power of the Buddha) were painted. Furthermore, the small caves above the main hall have the style of paying homage by the King. Paintings of Bagan period can be studied about the palace adequately. It can also be seen the spire-like roofs of palace, putting in the pinnacle, pennant placed at the respective corners. In this temple, it can also be seen the illustrations of the citizens of Bagan who laid net in water for fishing.

Six boat's crews were included in this painting. On the top of the stern, the young boy held the stern in neatly at small portico. Similarly, it can be seen the picture of two youths who laid net in water for fishing. By studying the picture of the boat owner who made a devotional offering and the style of paying homage in standing up, it can be clearly seen that they followed the traditional worship. Furthermore, a flag pennant was set up at the top of the boat and therefore it can be assumed the practice of setting up a flag pennant to the elephant, the horse, the carriage, the boat, the sampan, and the ship was existed since the Bagan period. In the trip of the voyage, the pictures of the waves flying in circles, grazing the creature of fishes can be studied. The life style of Bagan's citizens was illustrated in the picture of market scene. (Field Study Notes by Author (March 2015)., Paragu, *The Bagan Wayfarer*, pp. 106-109.)

Gu Byauk Kyi Temple (Myinkabar) is one of the ancient temples in Bagan. Interior walls of this temple, the mural paintings regarding the style of paying respect to husband by the wife were drawn. Similarly, in this painting the man sat at the high place while the woman

joyously do obeisance. By studying this picture, it can be assumed that the wives of Bagan period paid respect to their husbands as the head of the family. Moreover, in the picture of the couple, it can be seen that a woman who kindly prepared to her husband's hair-knot. It can be obviously seen that the men and the women in Bagan period wore a shawl on the upper body when they were staying in their houses.

From these mural paintings of this temple, we know that the farmers of Bagan period had used the harrow for agriculture. Till to modern time, it can be seen that the farmers also used the harrow for agriculture. In Bagan period, there were also pictures that illustrated the pictures like the occupation of farming and the life style of the farmer's family. In this house, the head of the family or the owner of the farms may be delighted and foretold the abundant of the paddy by looking at the scene of ploughing in the fields by the farmers. In the worksite, it was obvious the farmers ploughed in the fields with might and main.

In the famous inscriptions of the Bagan period it was mentioned that farming was a staple occupation in Bagan Kingdom. The mural paintings mentioned various kinds of occupations such as elephant keepers, the horse keepers. In the painting of the warriors who held the round shield and the warrior who held the crossbow, the warriors of Bagan who served in military service were painted to honour them. The painting of the warriors holding both round shield and shield was drawn in 12th century and so, the picture may be recorded and painted for the warriors who were bravely protected the country. Two pictures displayed the main hall may be assumed that the two youths who were trained the martial art. (Thaw Kaung, U, "Myinkaba, Bagan : Its Legends and Historic Pagodas", *Myanmar Perspective*, September 1999, no. page, PDF file.)

In Myanmar, when the donor gets the opportunity to perform more deeds of merit to the Buddha image, he participates in the process of carrying the Buddha image to its destination. In another mural painting of inside this temple can see the donor is the King and the Buddha Image is being carried to a monastery or pagoda. The carrying of the Buddha image is conducted with much devotion in Myanmar, where old customs and traditions are still observed. The Buddha image is carried on a palanquin on the shoulders of devotees. The devotees walk in a line and have their own functions, being either carriers, donors, their accompanying family members, music players or dancers. (Cultural Understanding through Paintings of Southeast Asia and Korea", *Three-year collaborative project among (APCEIU), (SEAMEO) and (SEAMEO SPAFA)*, 2013, p.72.) They are now shining bright, showing clearly fear, anger, sorrow or happiness in their faces and dancers are again frolicking in merry steps. (Than Tun, *Buddhist Art and Architecture*, p. 40.)

Abeyadana Temple was built by King Kyanzittha during A.D. 1102-1103 and it is situated the south of Myin Kaba village by the side of the tarred road towards new Bagan town at the western small hill side. Within the temple, the structure of the vestibule and the circuit corridor were unusual type. The mural paintings of interior wall can be clearly seen due to dimly light from three windows at a wall side. The mural paintings of this temple included the figure of Bodisatta (Lawkanahta) or "Avalawkiteswara". In this painting, Bodisatta (Buddha to be) seated on a lotus sheet together in his left hand holding a lotus flower while the attitude of Varadamudra his right hand turning into his palm was painted. In addition to the Buddhist figures, there were also depicted the figures of Mahayana Buddhism such as hermit, various kinds of deities, Brahman, Siva, Visnu and others figures concerning Brahmanism. There were also ancient ink Mon inscription and episodes of the life of the Buddha at the east main hall. (Myo Nyunt, *Mural Paintings came from Pitaka*, pp. 63-65.)

Furthermore, the striking feature of this temple, the mural paintings of Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism were also found more than other temples in Bagan. And then, it

can be seen the figure of Bodisatta (Avalawkiteswara) sitting on a lotus throne with one leg up and the other down. His left hand was holding the lotus flower that touched on his chest the attitude of Abhayamudra while the right hand was resting on the right knee with palm the attitude of Varamudra and two deities seated his side the style of obeisance with folded knees. In this temple, similarly the figure of the deity who are standing up position on both the elephant and the lion together with one hand was raising above while the rest one was holding the lotus flower was painted. Two of his lower hands were the attitude of obeisance while the rest two were dawn. (U Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma*, Yangon, Printing and Publishing Corporation, Sarpay Beikman Press, 1978 (reprint), p. 91 (Hereafter cited as Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites*), Charlotte Kendrick Galloway, "Burmese Buddhist Imagery", pp. 181-183., <http://paganabeyadana.cavetemple.com>.)

Payathonzu Temple is a Buddhist temple located in the village of Minanthu (southeast of Bagan). It is actually a combination of three pagodas joined together. The mural painting of this temple was the figure of a male appearance holding the spear and the arrow with his hand and tattooed on his chest. In the center of the stone pillar of Minister Mananthu which dated back in 584 A.D. mentioned that the sack-cloth and the apron were given to men as clothes. Therefore, the men wore the sack-cloth or shirt and he also wore the apron and nether garment in lower waist. The term "*Pahsou*" was mentioned in one inscription which dated back in 568 A.D. (Myo Nyunt, *Mural Paintings came from Pitaka*, pp. 67-68.)

Unusual mural paintings were also found in this temple. The eastern and the middle temple displayed the mural paintings but the western temple was entirely bare. There were also found the unfinished paintings in this temple and therefore it can be assumed that the painters could not finish the mural paintings for the reason that the construction of the building was unfinished. The paintings included the Eight Scenes, the twenty-eight Buddha figures, 550 Jatakas, *nats* (spirits), *Kinnara* (mythical bird with human head and torso), the ogre, the ghost, the snake, the dragon, and the elephant. The figure of male deity who embraced two female deities was unusual as it was painted in detail. In this painting, the colour of the figures was the bright because the painters used red colour. (Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites*, p. 96.)

Nagayon Temple is situated just across the road from the east of Abeyadana pagoda. From what that has remained, it can be seen that the inside walls had been completely covered with murals originally. The ceilings as well as the entrance halls and insides of the porches are covered with paintings. Inside the wall and corridor, the figures from the life of the Buddha and the preaching the Buddha's First Sermon were illustrated and the figures of Queen Maya's Dream, Buddha's setting adrift of gold bowl, Buddha's descending from Tavatimsa (Second of the six levels inhabited by celestial Lords), and Palileya's sojourning to forest were painted on the entrance of the interior wall. And then, it can also be seen that the figures of offering food to the monks by Buddhist women devotees. In addition, the pictures of Bagan peoples' behaviour and activity of offering food to the monks' generosity in those day, alms bowl, kettle, lacquered container, earthen pots and spittoon were described. Therefore, it can be seen the utensils of monks and ordinary people's clothes and ornaments like bracelets, armlets. (Minbu Aung Kyaing, *Plastic Arts Adorning The Nagayon Temple*, Yangon, Thidar Press, 2nd Edition, 2010, p. 18-19., Charlotte Kendrick Galloway, "Burmese Buddhist Imagery", pp. 174-176.)

Upali Thein (Upali Ordination Hall) is located near Htilominlo pagoda. It is believed that Mahathera Upali who was a well-known Venerable Buddhist monk in Bagan period, built and consecrated this Ordination Hall. During the reign of King Nandaungmya and King Kyazwa, it was called Ven. Upali's Ordination Hall. Upali Thein was built in the mid-13th century. The structure of Upali Thein is rectangular shape and inside the wall of it there is a

Buddha image sitting with cross-legged placed on a pedestal near western end. The ceiling of all four side walls in Upali Thein were adorned with mural paintings in green colour, white colour and it also depicted the scenes like Great Renunciation of Prince Siddhattha, twenty-eight Buddha images under the respective Bodi Trees, floral motifs and the consecration of the Ordination Hall by King Anawrahta together with his counsellors. (Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*, p. 69., Paragu, *The Bagan Wayfarer*, p. 58-61)

Thetbyinnyu Temple is situated at a distance of one furlong west of Ananda Temple. Mural paintings were adorned on the ceiling and walls in western entrance of Thetbyinnyu Temple and on the ceiling, a set of Buddha footprint and the style of obeisance to the Lord Buddha, the pictures of *Sakka* and Brahma were also painted. (Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*, p. 82., Field Study Notes by author (March 2015))

Lemyathnar pagoda is situated near south-east of Minnanthu village. Although there were the mural paintings inside the wall of it but in the lower part, the mural paintings were destroyed under white-washing. On the ceiling of the east vaulted arch in this temple can be seen the footprint of the Buddha as well as the paintings from Jataka stories of Mahawthada on the upper wall. On interior wall of the vaulted arch, pictures like circles with pictures, the floral motifs, and 550 Jataka stories at upper wall, inscriptions and the life of the Buddha were illustrated. (Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*, Ibid, p. 119.)

The Cave Temple of Kyanzitha Umin is located near the Shwezigon Pagoda at Nyaung U in Bagan. Inside the temple, the pictures of a Mongol Officer and a Mongol warrior which were thought to have been painted during the occupation by Kublai Khan's troops in the late Bagan period. In this painting, it can be seen the clothes of Mongol Officer like hat, long jacket, long trouser, footwear and the archer who binding the hat chin strap and worn the broad and thin hat. In the circuit corridor and vaulted archway of interior wall of Kyanzitha Umin, some of mural paintings were mostly probably painted which dated back from 12th century to 13th century. It can be assumed that these paintings were painted and recorded during the occupation of Kublai Khan's Mongol warriors in 1287 A.D, because the pictures of Mongol warriors and other heroes were painted on the wall of Kyanzitha Umin. (Claudine Bautze-Picron, "Bagan murals and the Sino-Tibetan World", <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01099967>, Submitted on 5 Jan 2015, pp. 16-17., Than Tun, *Buddhist Art and Architecture*, p. 47.)





Mural Paintings from Kyansittha Umin (interior)

Source: (a) Photos taken by Author

(b) Claudine Bautze-Picron, "Bagan murals and the Sino-Tibetan World"

The Kondawgyi Temple in Bagan is located at hill side near the Thetkyamuni. The mural paintings that stand in eastern hill of sheer cliff can be studied. In the episode of Great Renunciation, it was illustrated the scenes of accompanying put on horse-tail whisk by Minister Sanda and Raising and holding the four horse's hoof by two Boddhisatta Devas. Moreover, the pictures such as the Seven Mountains, Mount Meru and the Seven Moons were depicted together with inscriptions. (Thanegi, *BAGAN, LA CITÈ MYSTIQUE*, p. 60.)

Conclusion

Myanmar is one of the countries in the world that flourished in civilization since prehistoric times. According to the historical outline, Myanmar is continuously developed in culture from the Old Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and till to Pyu, Bagan, Sagaing, Innwa, Taunggu, Nyaungyan and Konbaung periods. Moreover, it can be said that standard of Myanmar culture is highly developed due to so many the pagodas, the temples, the mural paintings, the ordination halls, the rest-houses, the palm-leaf manuscripts, the folded paper writing tablets, the inscriptions and also workmanship of architecture styles which existed till modern time.

In Bagan period, the King, the ministers and the people of Bagan built and donated the religious buildings such as *cetias*, the *pathos*, the temples, and the monasteries and the ordination halls. The aim of the construction and donation of these buildings was done in order to propagate the *Sasana* (Buddha's Teachings). It can be assumed that the constructions of the monasteries, the pagodas together with the paintings on the interior walls were one of the parts of meritorious deeds.

The mural paintings in the religious buildings such as Thakyamuni Temple, Nnandamyinnya pagoda, Ananda Temple, Htilominlo Temple, Gu Byauk Gyi Temple (Wetkyi Inn), Kyauk Ku Umin, Pahtothamya Temple, Gu Byauk Gyi Temple (Myinkabar), Abeyadana Temple, Payathonzu Temple, Nagayon Pagoda, Upali Thein, Thetbyinnyu Pagoda, Lemyatnar Pagoda, Kyanzittha Umin, Kondawgyi Pagoda were based on the religion especially Buddhism and they painted 550 Jataks and the previous lives of the Buddha together with decorations may be said that it was their practice.

Moreover, in the paintings of these pagodas and temples, there were also dressing style of the Kings and the Queens, the utensils of ceremonial court, the dressing styles of the citizens, the styles of adorn hairs, the articles use of in those days, the customs of social relations, and their occupations were illustrated. As the farming was a staple occupation of Bagan period, therefore it can be seen that the Kingdom of Bagan had been flourished and the activities of the commercial trading by voyage.

If we study the murals of the Bagan Period, we can see the majority is based on old Buddhist texts. Many of the scenes are from Khuttaka Nikae, (ကျွတ်ကနိကာယ) which is one of the sections of these “Three Pitakas” (ပိတက)။ The scenes bring the ordinary people of Bagan to comprehend Buddhism better as Buddhism had just started to take roots there. These murals also tell us about the painting methods, the clothes worn at that time and also the ordinary daily lives of the Bagan population of that period. But, all in all, the Bagan murals emphasize more the religious aspect which benefits our society. As the paintings are based on the teachings of Lord Buddha, they also promote the positive attitudes in mankind; find tranquility in the shadow of the religious teachings etc. The murals also clearly depict the lifestyles and the piety of the Myanmar people and they showed undoubtedly that Buddhism flourished in the Kingdom of Myanmar.

By studying on these mural paintings of Bagan period, we knew that about the highly development of the work of the arts. According to these mural paintings, there was also discrimination in social lives, the different dressing styles in various social classes, and the warriors. In economy, it was obviously seen, the agriculture was a staple occupation in Bagan period. In the field of religion, Buddhism was flourished and it was accepted and believed by the people of Bagan, devotions to the religion and ceremonial of the religious festivals were held as the present age and also made meritorious deeds and donations. These mural paintings highlighted to the communal life of the people of Bagan period and till modern time they were obviously seen. So, we can say that these paintings are highlighted the work quality of the arts of people in Bagan period and historians and archaeologists can research the valuable evident of these paintings about politics, economy, social and religion in those days.

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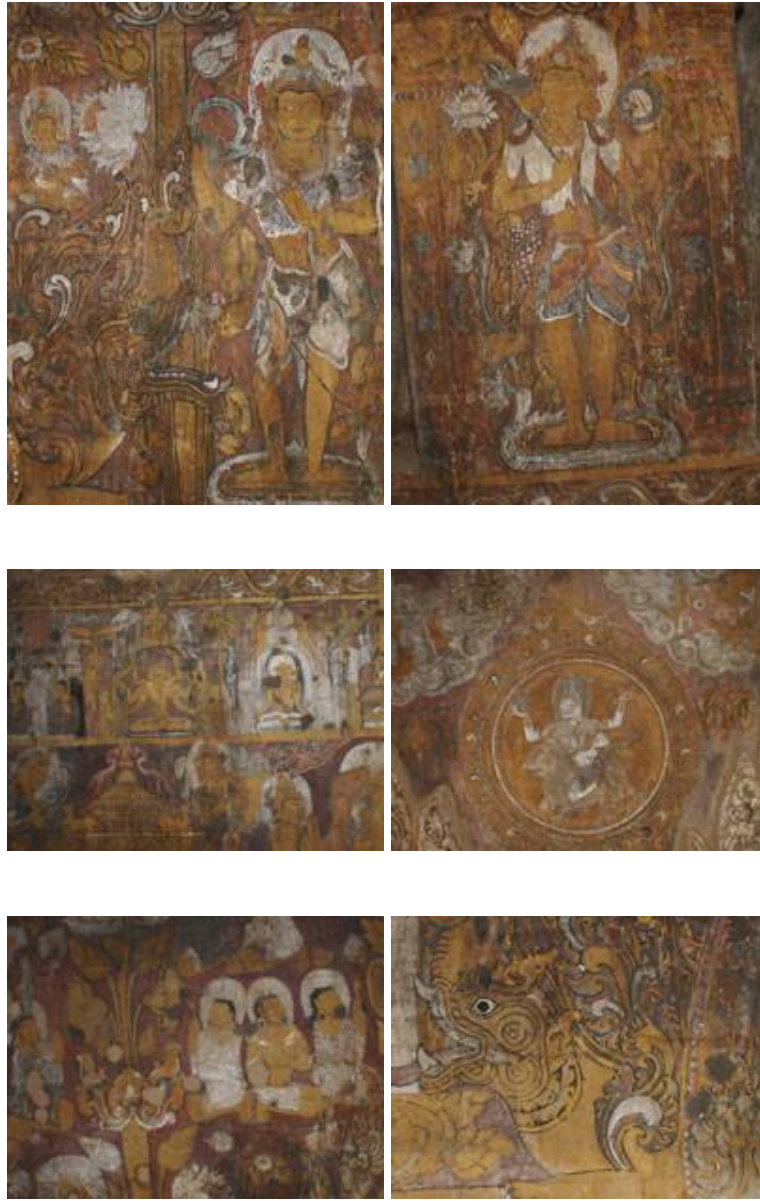
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Mural paintings from Abeyadana Temple

Source: Photos taken by Author



Mural paintings from Nagayon Temple

Source: Photos taken by Author





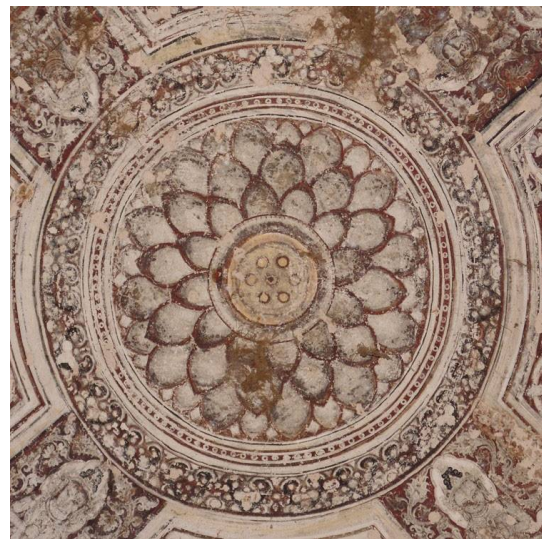
Mural paintings from Gubyaukgyi Temple (Myinkaba)

Source: Photos taken by Author



Mural paintings from Gubyaukgyi Temple (Myinkaba)

Source: Photos taken by Author



Mural paintings from Nandamannya (Minnanthu)

Source: (a) Photos taken by Author

(b) Myo Nyunt, *Mural Paintings came from Pitaka*



Mural paintings from Gu Byauk Gyi (Wetkyin Inn)

Source: Photos taken by Author



Mural paintings from Payathonzu Temple (Minnanthu)

Source: Photos taken by Author