CHAPTER-I

MYANMARESE THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

The brief history of Myanmar and its beginning of Buddhism

Myanmar, it was previously called Burma, the Buddhist country has been known throughout its history, is one of the major countries following Theravāda\(^1\) Buddhism in South-East-Asia. Pali and Theravāda Buddhist culture in Myanmar are a living alive even now. Despite the many political upheaval that Myanmar underwent frequently in the course of her record history, the faith of the Buddha is still shining in the hearts of the general Myanmarese mass as it shone on the days when Myanmar was evangelized.

Nowadays, Myanmar is a land of Buddhist people (87% of the population) and the country is often described as the Land of Pagodas. Until the present moment, we can see many religious monuments that were built by the Myanmarese Kings and rich citizens over several decades. There are four dominant ethnic groups in the recorded history of Myanmar: the Mon, the Pyu, the Bamar, and the Shan\(^2\). Bamar, which is one of major ethnic name, was adopted as Burma to indicate its territorial integrity. The name of Myanmar is pronounced as Burma to designate despite its individual name by the Western people. The

\(^1\) - Theravāda means words of the Elders the teaching of the Buddha that has been preserved intact by generations of Bhikkhus. The texts of the Buddha’s Teachings approved at the Councils by the Ven. Mahākassapa and later generations. The views of the Buddha, according to which Bhikkhus observe and practise as has been agreed upon a the councils and handed down without any changes by the Theras led by the Ven. Mahākassapa is, called Theravāda. ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms’, Yangon, P. 274. The Doctrine of the Elders is that formed the first Buddhist Council. As the Theravāda Schools covers Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia etc. the scriptures preserved in these countries are written in the Pali language. The Seeker’s Glossary of Buddhism, New York, (1997), P. 478.

great majority people of Myanmar indeed adhere to Theravāda Buddhism as a way of life. In recent years, it appeared as the ground of nationalism.

The Mon\(^1\) were the first people of Myanmar to practise Theravāda Buddhism, called the Southern School since it took the southern route from India, its place of origin. Uncertainty surrounds, the origin of the Mon but it is clear that at least linguistically, they are related to the Khamar. Around the sixth century, what is known is that they settled in the south of Myanmar and Thailand while the Khamar made northern Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia their home. These two people were probably the first migrants to the region, apart Indian merchants who established trading colonies along the coast. The Mon with their distinct language and culture competed for centuries with Myanmar, however, today their influence and language is limited to remote areas of the south of Myanmar.

Another group known as the Pyu created city-states in central of Myanmar at Beikthano, Hanlin, and Tharekhittara between the first century BC and the ninth century AD. The Pyu like Myanmar, are a people of Tibet-Burma origin with a distinct culture and language. They lived in the area around Prome\(^2\) long before the Myanmar pushed into the plains of Myanmar from the north.

Their language was closely related to the language of the Myanmar and was later absorbed by it. Their script was in use until about the fourteenth century, but was then lost.

\(^1\) - The Mon is also called Talaing, but this term is considered to be derogatory. It is thought to come from Telagu, a language of South Indian whose script the Mon adopted. Roger Bischoff, 'A Short History of Myanmar', P.7.

\(^2\) - Prome is an ancient name, SriKetra (Tharekhittara). Nowadays, it called Pyay in Pegu Division.
The Myanmar people began to colonize the plains of Myanmar only towards the middle of the first millennium AD. They came from the mountainous northern regions and may well have originated in the central Asian Plains. After the Myanmar, the Shan flooded in from the North, finally conquering the entire region of Myanmar and Thailand. The Thai people are descended from Shan tribes. The northeast region of modern Myanmar is still inhabited predominantly by Shan tribes.

In the sixth century BC, most of what we now know as Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia were sparsely populated. While migrants from the last of India had formed trading colonies along the coast of the Gulf of Muttama, these coastal areas of Myanmar and Thailand were also home to the Mon. By the time, the Khamar probably controlled Laos, Cambodia, and northern Thailand while Upper Myanmar may already have been occupied to some extent by Myanmar tribes.

We had found many sources in Sasanavamsa regarding with the name of Myanmar. It was referred that three countries Hamsavati, Muttama, and Suvatipbhumi of Rāmāṇa country remained united with the Maramma circle under the name of Sunāparanta. Chronicle records is that at the time, some monks of the Maramma country used to go to the Kalyāṇī Sima in the Rāmāṇa country. They took their training afresh from in that very place and thus the Buddhism

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1 - According to geographical condition, Hamsavati, Muttama, and Suvatipbhumi are in the lower Myanmar. Present names are Hamsavati (Pegu), Muttama (Muttama) and Suvatipbhumi (Thaton) and Rāmāṇa country is called Mon State.
2 - The Right Bank of the Irrawaddy river near Pagan was accordingly renamed Sunāparanta and identified with Aparanta. Taw Sein Kho, 'Indian Antiquary', and Vol. xxiii.P.103.
3 - Sima is a Pali word, an ordination hall. The boundaries of a piece of land and the ordination hall, in which Bhikkhus are ordained and monastic precepts, heard, are demarcate by an assembly is Bhikkhu reciting the prescribed texts, Kammavācā. Both the side and the building are known as 'Demarcated area'. 'Burmese, English, Pali Dictionary' (Rangoon), P. 875, A Dictionary of Buddhist Term, Yangon, P.54.
established by the King Dhammazedi spread throughout the Maramma country\(^1\) extensively.

**Geographical position of Myanmar**

Here, we would like to mention about the geographical position of Myanmar. Sāsanavamsa states that the upper or continental Myanmar is separated from the mainland of India by the highly inaccessible Assam and Manipur hills as well as by the Arakan hill ranges. The lower of Peninsular Myanmar, which forms one unit with Malaysia, is cut off from the continent of India by the Bay of Bengal. Ethnologically, Myanmar is very closely related with Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and also with India proper. But neither the natural barrier nor the ethnological differences between India and Myanmar could prevent the influx of Buddhism into Myanmar and oriental countries from the mainland of Myanmar.

The rim of mountains extending from northwest to northeast and the Indian Ocean on the west and south tended to isolated Myanmar. Robert, E. Huke also referred the shape of Myanmar country on the map. He stated that, ‘Looking at Burma on a flat map, it may be readily seen that this country larger than any in Western Europe and approximately the size of ---is shaped like a kite with its top lying in the Eastern and of the great Himalayan Ranges and the tip

\(^1\) - Sir, A Phayre suggested in his book that right from the ancient times the Indian settlers in Burma where known as Sak or Thek (i.e, in abbreviationof Sākya). Now, all whojoin then were admitted to brotherhood with the proud designation of ‘Brahma’. This term gradually included many tribes and latter on, with 19\(^{th}\) century, the great number of people lived in the delta of Irrawaddy River came to be known as ‘Maramma’. G. E. Harvey, ‘History of Burma’, p. 5.
of its tail extending down the Malay peninsula'. Myanmar has its own particular history and located between the two big countries.

In order to strategy, it is very important for those countries. The source of history of Myanmar deserves special attention. According to Sāsanavamsa, which were mentioned in the above regions are that Kasmir and Gandhar on the right bank of the Indus River is the south of Kabul. Mahimsāmandala is Andhara. Varanasi is a region around Prome (now, Pyay). Aparanta is west of Upper Irrawaddy; Mahārattha is Thailand; Yona the country of the Shan tribes and Suvaṇṇabhūmi is Thaton. The Sāsanavamsa also mentions five places in South-East-Asia where Asoka’s missionaries taught the Buddha’s doctrine and through their teaching many gains inside and took refuge in the Triple Gems (Tisaraṇa).

It is to be noted that some well-known localities in ancient India like Aparantaka. Mahārattha, Ukkalapa bear identical names in ancient Myanmar. There is no room to doubt that some famous places can be shifted from one place to another their individual name. One of the causes may be that when a place becomes at he time the same name is ascribed to other places to mark their importance. Perhaps, this happened behind the identity of names in this case. Thus, a system of mythical geography had arisen. Myanmar received the Theravāda Buddhism not only their religion but also practically the whole of their civilization and culture in such way.

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2 - Tisaraṇa, the Triple Gems, namely, the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha.
3 - Hinduism and Buddhism, Vol.iii, P.55.
The Arrival of Buddhism into Myanmar

The first founding of the Buddhism in the Rāma country took place during the life time of the Buddha after his attainment of highest wisdom (Sammāsambodhi), when he converted Tapussa and Bhallika who were graced by the Buddha with some scarce hairs from his head. They brought these holy relics by sea to the Ukkalapa and enshrined the holy hairs under the Shwedagon Pagoda. They were the first disciples of Buddha, having the Buddha and the Dhamma as their refuges. It is called Devasika Saranagama in Pali.

Sasanavamsa gives the details the second arrival of the Buddhism in the Rāma country. It narrates that in the Aparanta country, there was a story. During the reign of King Tissa, one of his ministers had two sons, Tissa and Jaya who renounced the family life and adopted asceticism when they had been to the Gijjhagiri Mountain, they got two eggs. Each of them kept one with him. In course of time, two men were born from these two eggs. The offspring from the younger brother’s egg died at the age of ten and was reborn as a prince named Gavampati in the

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1 - It denotes the Pali name for Myanmar, specially the Maritime Provinces according to Kalyānī Inscription.
2 - Sammāsambodhi, perfect Self-Enlightenment. In according to Pali, there are three kinds of bodhi (I) Sammāsambodhi; Perfect Self-Enlightenment, (ii) Paccekabodhi; Enlightenment of a lesser Buddha; (iii) Sāvakaboddhi; Enlightenment of a Disciple. ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms’, Yangon, Myanmar, P.74-75.
3 - David Maurice stated that the ancient stories tell of the trading mission to India of two brothers, Burmese merchants. Tapussa and Bhallika by name, more than 2500 years ago, and of how they met the Buddha just after he had attained his long-sought Enlightenment, and obtained from him eight hairs of his head to be enshrined and their native town of Okkala, the present day Yangon. ‘The Light of Dhamma’, Vol. I. No.1 (1952). But some scholars say Okkala is probably modern Orissa.
4 - The Buddha and the Dhamma are called Devasika Saranagama in Pali.
5 - Mithila exists in Upper Myanmar. It is also identified with modern Tirhut by B.C. Law in ‘Mithila’ in Ancient India, Indian Antique, 1947 and also Geography of Early Buddhism, P.30-31.
city of Mithila in the Middle country (Mījījhimaṇḍa)\(^1\). The prince at the age of seven was ordained before the Buddha and soon attained Arahatāśīp (the highest spiritual life). There, Gavampati came to the Sudhammapura in the Rāmaṇīṇa country to instruct his former mother who had been living there. He preached the doctrine to the inhabitants of Sudhammapura\(^2\) as also his brother Sīharāja.

As the King Sīharāja desired to see the teacher of Thera Gavampati, the elder requested the Blessed One to come to that place. The text stated that the Blessed One with a large number of monks visited Sudhammapura or Sūvanṇabhūmi in the Rāma country eight years after the attainment of his enlightenment\(^3\). The Buddha preached the doctrine to the inhabitants of the country and the people together with their King were established in the Three Refuges (Tevācikarasāna) and five precepts (Pācaśīla)\(^4\). The text also states that he Buddha gave six hair-relics to the six hermits to worship. And eight years after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, King Sīharāja with the help of the elder Gavampati set up thirty-three tooth-relics of the Blessed One. Thus, the elder Gavampati established the Buddhism at Sudhammapura in the Rāmaṇīṇa country for the second time. But the text further states that the Buddhism at that time had no strong foothold in the Rāmaṇīṇa country.

\(^1\) - - Middle country i.e., Mījījhimaṇḍa stands for Central India, which was the prith-palace of Buddhism and its activities. *Dictionary of Pali Proper Name*, G.P. Malalasekera, Vol. II, P. 418. It lies in the northeastern part of India today. *Dictionary of Buddhist Term in Pali*, P.153

\(^2\) - Pali name for the city of Thaton. ‘Hinduism and Buddhism,’ vol., P.50. Says that the name ‘Thaton’ appears to be a corruption of Saddhammapura (i.e.) Sudhammapura, the form Saton representing Saddhan.

\(^3\) - In the Mahāsaṅkarī year 111, in the 8\(^{th}\) vassa of the Buddha, Arhat Mahā Thera Shin Gavampati entreated the Buddha to visit Thaton (Sudhammapura) in the Kingdom of Rāmaṇīṇadesa. Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, ‘The Arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar’, P.9.

\(^4\) - Five branches of moral practices (Paṭiccaśīla). Among the ten Sikkhāpadas, the first give are the Paṭiccaśīla also practised by the Lay devotees, viz. (i) Pāpātiśīla Veramaṇi; abstaining from killing, (ii) Adinnāśīla Veramaṇi; abstaining from taking what is not given, (iii) Kamesumīcchāśīla Veramaṇi; abstaining from sexual misconduct (iv) Musśvādvā Veramaṇi; abstaining from telling lies, (v) Suramameraya Majjapamadatthāni Veramaṇi; abstaining from taking or using intoxicants.
According to the Sāsanavamsa, the city of Aparanta is situated on the western shore of Irrawaddy River at the latitude of Magwe. The Sāsanavamsa gives only a very brief summary of the events surrounding the Buddha’s visit to Aparanta, presumably because there were well known and would be read in the Tipiṭaka and the commentaries. Puṇṇa, a merchant from Sunāparanta went to Sāvatthi (Sravasti or Savatthi), in Pali now called Sahet Mahet, was the capital of Kosala, the most powerful Kingdom during the 6th century BC on business and there heard a discourse of the Buddha. After sometime, he asked the Buddha to visit and preach him a short lesson so that he could return to Sunāparanta and strive for Arahatship. The Buddha warned him that the people of Sunāparanta were fierce and violent, but Puṇṇa replied that he would not allow anger to arrive, even if they should kill him. In the Puṇṇovada Sutta, the Buddha instructed him not to be enticed by that which is pleasant and Ven. Puṇṇa returned and attained Arahatship in his country.

He won over many disciples and built a monastery of red Sandalwood for the Buddha. He then sent flowers as an invitation to the Buddha and the Buddha came accompanied by five hundred Arahats, spent the night in the monastery, and left again before down.

Sakka (Devarāja), the king of the thirty-three devas living in the Tāvatimsā plane (Deva realm), provided five hundred palanquins for the Buddha accompanying the Buddha on the journey to Sunāparanta. But only 499, of the palanquins were occupied. One of them remained empty until the ascetic Saccabandha, who lived on the Saccabandha Mountain in central Myanmar, joined the Buddha and the 499

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1 - Puṇṇovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya Vol.1, 267, Theragāthā, V, 70, Theragāthā Atthakathā Vol.1, 156,
2 - See entry 'Puṇṇa' in, G.P.Malalaseker, A Dictionary of Pali Proper Name, PTS, (1937-38).
Bhikkhu accompanying him. On the way to Sunāparanta the Buddha stopped in order to teach the ascetic Saccabandha. When ascetic Saccabandha attained Arahataship, he then joined the Buddha and completed the total 500 Bhikkhu who usually traveled with the master.

On the return journey, the Buddha stopped at the river Nammada which close to the Saccabandha Mountain. Here, the Blessed One was invited by the Nāga King Nammada to visit and preach to the Nāgas later accepting food from them. The tradition of Myanmar relates that the left behind a footprint for veneration near this river, which would last as long as the Sāsana. Another footprint was left in the rock of Saccabandha Mountain. Another resemblance to the Sinhalese (now Sri Lanka) tradition is the evangelization of Suvaṇṇabhūmi by Asoka's missionaries. According to the Buddhist tradition, the Emperor Asoka sent two Buddhist monks Thera Sona and Thera Uttara into Ceylon and Myanmar in the third century. It is to propagate the Buddhism of Gotama and its Dhamma in the country of Suvaṇṇabhūmi, the Land of Gold, which is usually identified with the country at the Mon State. The country located round about Mt. Kelara, 30 miles north of Thaton. The traditions primarily based on the authority of two Sinhalese chronicles, the Dīpavamsa, and the Mahāvamsa, which contain the "Legends of the Nine Mission."

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1 - The Sāsana-vamsa says the Buddha stayed for seven weeks and converted eighty four thousand beings to the Dhamma, vii, and p.23.
2 - Sāsana means the teaching of the Buddha, there are three kinds of Sāsana: -
   (i) Learning the Buddha's teaching, that is Pariyatti Sāsana, (ii) Practical application of the Buddha's teaching, that is Patipatti Sāsana, (iii) The realization of the Buddha's teaching, i.e., attainment of Jhāna, Magga and finally attain Nibbāna, that is Pativedha Sāsana.' A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms', P.258.
4 - G.H.Luce, ' Foreign relations of King Aniruddha', P.260.
5 - Dīpavamsa, Chapter, VIII, P.14.
6 - Mahāvamsa.XII, 3-8, is given below the names of Nine Mission:-
   (1) Majjhimantika, to Kasmira and Gandhāra,
   (2) Mahādeva, to Mahāsīmamandala,
   (3) Rakkhita, to Vanavāsī,
The Mahāvamsa contains a more detailed version of the narrative and in respect of Suvaṇṇabhūma, the Great Chronicle says that together with Thera Uttara, Thera Sona of wondrous might go to Suvaṇṇabhūmi—Many were the people who came into the (three) refuges and the precepts of duty; sixty thousand were converted to the true faith. Three thousand five hundred sons of the noble families received it likewise. Thenceforth when a prince was born in the royal palace, the King gave when to such the name Sonathera. This world suggests that Buddhism had been in existence in Myanmar at nearly age before the Christian era. But a few scholars like Vincent Smith and also Kern have expressed their doubts as the historicity of the account of Moggaliputta Tissa’s mission to Suvaṇṇabhūmi headed by the two chiefs Thera Sona and Uttara. In view of the fact that it is not mention in any of the Edicts of King Asoka. Vincent Smith expresses his opinion thus; “The silence of the Edicts concerning the alleged fact goes a long way towards disproving its reality, for King Asoka seems to have intended to give a complete account of his missionary operations, to the publication of the Rock Edicts. It is inconceivable that he should have omitted to mention in them an event of such importance.” Although there is no historical corroboration of the story, the tradition of the “Asoka Mission” is so widespread and held with such deep conviction in Myanmar that its possibility can not be denied outright. This story of evangelization is repeatedly mentioned in the Myanmarese chronicles. We celebrated Kalyāni inscriptions (1476 AD) of King Dhammadzedi of Pegu which give a summary of

1 - Geiger, ‘Mahavamsa’, P.82.
2 - Ibid. P.86.
the history of the introduction and gradual progress of Buddhism in Myanmar also refer to the ancient story if the mission of Thera Uttara in Suvaṇṇabhūmi. At the conclusion of the Council Moggaliputta Tissa Mahāthera reflected that in the future the religion would be established in neighboring foreign countries. He sent the Theras with the injunction; ‘Do you establish the religion in those countries’. Of these Theras, he sent out Thera Mahinda to establish the Buddhism in the Island of Tambapāṇi. Thera Sona and Uttara sent to the Mon country, which was also called Suvaṇṇabhūmi to establish the Buddhism in that region.

According to Dr. Blagden, the editor of the Kalyāni inscription says, ‘the statement of Dhammazedi’s inscriptions is not altogether devoid of any foundation’. He also says Myanmar has long claimed Thera Sona and Uttara as founders of their branch of the church, and though the tale has been embellished with many legendary accessions in the course of ages, it can hardly on that account be dismissed. Evidence is gradually accumulating from various different quarters, which tends to show that Indian influence made itself felt in Indo-China from about the beginning of the Christian era. On possibly even two or three countries before that date; and there seems to be nothing antecedently improbable in the story is a Buddhists mission being sent Theras at a relatively earlier period, through it may well hazardous to fix that date exactly.

Dr. N.Dutta mentions that ‘During the life-time of the Master, the religion spread all over the central belt of India from Kajangala and Campa on the east Veranja and Varānasi to Kosambi, Sravstthi and Sāketa on the north as also to the various tribes inhabiting the

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Himalayan foothills\(^1\). Dr. A.C. Banergee also writes that ‘Buddhism during Buddha’s lifetime was not confined to limit of Majjhimadesa. It traveled outside its boundary. It had thus a rapid progress\(^2\).

At present time, Theravāda Buddhism flourishes in Myanmar. But question is that when and how Buddhism came to Myanmar and who brought this Sāsana to Myanmar. There are many legends, oral histories as well as written and court chronicles giving an array of answers to these questions. They all tell us Buddhism arrived in Myanmar not once but many times.

In brief, we have found that he three times of introduction of Buddhism into Myanmar in the lifetime of Buddha. The first arrival of Buddhism combined with the legend of the Shwedagon Pagoda\(^3\), the landmark of modern Myanmar. According to this legend, Buddhism arrived in Myanmar in the lifetime of the Buddha. This is mentioned in the Shwedagon stone inscription, set up by the King Dhammazedi (AD, 1472-1492) of Hamthawady Kingdom. Myanmarese Buddhists believe Dhammazedi were the historical evidence of the first arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar\(^4\). In the second and third arrivals of the Buddhism, we notice that the Buddha himself led to Myanmar and he himself preached the Dhamma, thereby, converting the kings and the

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1 - Buddhism is East Asia, reproduced
3 - The pagoda enshrines eight hairs of the Buddha’s head brought from India more than 2500 years ago by two Burmese merchants. There was then in this southern most spur of Pegu Yoma only the Mon or Mun village of Dagon, from which eventually becomes Yangon, from which is the modern name Rangoon. The Shrine now known as the Shwedagon pagoda, strictly Shwedagon paya was the creation of Shinbyushin, King of Ava, in 1774. Ethiel Mannin, ‘The Light of Dhamma’, Vol. III, No, (I), (1955).
4 - Buddhism arrived in Myanmar in the lifetime of the Buddha. In the Maha Sakarat year 103, on the full-moon day of Kason (May), the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment. Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, ‘The Arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar’, P.25.
people and left his representatives to venerate such as sacred hairs and footprints. These above sources are of great important among the legend of Myanmarese chronicles. Although Myanmarese Buddhists belonged to the Theravāda Buddhism in the eleven-century AD, with the help of Shin Arahan, they traced the Buddhism from a much earlier period. Some scholars like Vincent Smith, Kern have doubted about the authenticity of King Asoka’s mission to Suvaṇṇabhūmi. In fact, there is no need to doubt that because of Suvaṇṇabhūmi or the land of Gold, as an important centre of commerce was very familiar to India people from a very early time. Besides, in order to graphically view point, both countries are very close and can also impact their individual culture, religion etc. these mutual relations gave us an idea about the establishment of religion, culture and trade between India, and Suvaṇṇabhūmi, which is an ancient lower Myanmar.

**The Spread of Buddhism in Myanmar before the 11th century**

The third Buddhist council was an important landmark in the history of the Buddhism. It was for the first time. Thera Moggaliputta Tissa, the teacher of Emperor Asoka and the convener of the council sent the Buddhist missionary monks to foreign countries for the propagation of the Buddha’s doctrines. By sending of these religious missions, the Theravāda Buddhism produced in Myanmar as the important result of that country and other countries belonging to the region now known as South and South-East-Asia were commercial

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1. In the Mahāsakarit year 123 in the 20th Vassa of the Buddha, while the Buddha was residing in the Jetavana vihara in the Kingdom of Sarvasthi, one Mahāthera Puṣṇa came and requested the Buddha to visit Sunīṭaparanta Vaniccaḥāma. The Buddha with his 500 disciples came to that place. Dr. Khing Maung Nyunt, ‘The Arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar’, P.28.
2. Taw Sein Kho mentioned that ‘the history of Buddhist Church in Rāmaśāh of the country of the Talaings begins with the Third Buddhist council by Asoka in 309 BC. According to Myanmarese chronology, the Buddha’s demise took place in 544BC, and the Third Buddhist council was held
intercourse between the main land of India and the Far Eastern countries including Myanmar. Although definite historical and archaeological evidence are not yet available to establish beyond doubt. The earliest point of contact between Myanmar and India chronologically, still we have enough textual sources which if liberally interpreted make it tolerably certain that some kind of cultural contact had been established between India and Suvannabhumi as early as the first or second century before the Christian era. The relation no doubt, had its origin in commercial enterprise and the tradition of fabulous wealth earned by trade gave rise to all sorts of 'mythical stories', regarding with Golden Land.

Many people migrated from Southern India to Lower Myanmar, bringing with them both Buddhism and Hinduism. They developed into a race called Mon-Telagu who was from India. Another group of immigrants to Myanmar originated in. Tibetan migrated to Yuman province of China, and then to Myanmar in the 8th century AD. They established a powerful kingdom with its capital at Bagan and gave their name to the whole country in the 10th century AD. At the time, Tantric or Mahāyana Buddhism was already established in Upper Myanmar.

On the other hand, the trade relation which sprang up between India and Suvaṇṇabhūni as for back as the sixth or 5th centuries BC. opened the routes by land and sea, through which Indian traders and adventurers in the subsequent centuries poured into the golden land. It is against the background of this commercial intercourse between India and Myanmar that we have to assess and interpret the traditional 235 years after that event, i.e., in 309 BC. At the conclusion of this council, missionaries were sent forth to various countries to propagate the religion. Mahinda was dispatched to Ceylon, and Sona and Uttara were sent to Suvannabhumi, which land both Talai and Burmese writers agree in identifying with Thaton. See the introduction of Buddhism into Burma (1883-1913).

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story of the mission of Thera Sona and Thera Uttara. This tradition to which the later history of Buddhism in Myanmar. This tradition is of course, based on the accounts available in Ceylonese chronicles the Dipavamsa and the Mahāvamsa, the later containing a more detailed version of the narrative.

In the Mahāvamsa, we find that the list of the Theras, who were sent to different countries on missionary work, we also mentioned Thera Sona and Uttara who were sent to Suvannabhumi. In his inscriptions Emperor Asoka himself refers to his dispatching organised bands of zealous missionaries to carry the message of the Master not only to every corner of South and South-East-Asia but also to the countries of the Greek and Alexander. If we accept these missions of Asoka, in regarding with Thera Sona and Uttara mission to Rāmāñadesa, though this is not corroborative historical and archaeological evidence, to prove, it is able to consider tha the arrival of Theravāda Buddhism into Myanmar. Because of the value of the Ceylonese chronicles, as other scholars have recognized source book for history of Buddhism not only in India, but also in farther counters, who have made a specialized and unbiased study discoveries in the countries concerned. These discoveries enable us to assert that the story of the Theras those went to Suvannabhumi is true in its main outlines.

From the fifth century onwards, we have more positive and reliable evidence of the exact state of Buddhism in Lower Myanmar. We are no more to depend on suspicious tradition or speculation about uncertain identification of places referred to in various sources of information. There is archaeological evidence to show that Theravāda Buddhism flourished in Lower Myanmar in the sixth century AD.

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1 - Kanai Lal Hazra, "Buddhism in South-East-Asia, P.70-71."
Several inscriptions in Pali have been found at Hmayza. The earliest epigraphic text so far known is engraved in two thin gold plates found in 1897 at Maung-gan, a small village near Hmawza in the Pyay District.

The discovery of these inscriptions clearly indicates that Theravāda Buddhism existed at the time. These two plates begin each with the well-known Buddhist formula and contain three lines with “Ye Dhamma hetuppabhava tesam hetum tathāgato āha,” etc., which is followed in the first by several categories from the Abhidhamma in numerical order. Some of these categories are explained in Vibhaṅga, one of the seven books the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. But the subject matter of the inscription is not arranged in a systematic way and it never follows the written order of the Vibhaṅga. We have found some Pali words in these plates like Vedana, Saññā and Saṅkhara, etc., a book of twenty leaves of gold was found at Hmawza. In these leaves, there are about nine passages from the different texts of the Piṭakas. All these inscriptions are written on characters similar to the Andhra-Kadamba script of South India about the sixth century AD.

Around the Hmawza is clear that it was an important centre of Theravāda Buddhism by the sixth century AD. Buddhist canonical texts written in the Pali language were known and widely studied during this period. The Pali records or inscriptions in the Andhra-Kadamba script of South India found at or near Hmawza indicate that

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2 - Vedanā is of five kinds, namely, (1) Sukha, pleasure, (2) Dukkha, suffering, (3) Somanassa, mental well-being, (4) Domanassa, mental suffering, (5) Upeka, neutral feeling. There is a kin of good taste in the objects that are desirable. A shin Janakābhivamsa, ‘Abhidhamma in Daily life’, p.116.
3 - Saññā is making marks or noting in every function in diverse ways.
Myanmar had close connections with the Theravāda Buddhist centre in Southern India.

Three more fragments of a stone inscription in Pali were discovered from a small if the debris rounds the Bawbawgyi Pagoda\(^1\). Their characters are the same as those of the Maung-gan plates and script may be referred to the sixth century AD. It contains the selected text from the Vibhaṅga for the edification if the faithful. But the most important record discovered again from the ruins of old Hmawza in 1926. It is a manuscript so common in India and Myanmar. The manuscript contains short extracts from the Pali Piṭakas. It begins on the first leaf with an extract Paṭiccasaṁuppāda and ends on the last leaf with the words “Iti pi so bhagavā, āraham saṁmāsambuddho, vijjā carana sampanno, sugato, lokavidu, anuttaro purisa dhammasārathī”, etc., enumerating the qualities of the Buddha. Another gold leaf bearing in two lines the text of the well-known formula in praise of the Buddha, found in the Pali Piṭakas, was recovered in 1998-99 from Kyun-dwa-za, a village near Hmawza in old Prome. The script of this record is the same early south Indian type and so it may be assigned to the fifth or sixth century AD\(^2\).

Thus, the above mentioned epigraphic records furnish more or less a definite evidence of a flourishing condition of Buddhism in the metropolis of the Pyu Kingdom in Lower Myanmar. We can infer that the Chinese travelers must have been referring to the ancient kingdom of Prome. They had their capital at Tharekhettara (then Sri Ksetra)\(^3\)

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3. His son, Davuttabound, succeeded the founder of the city of Tharekhettara having perished at sea. Nothing is recorded regarding him or his successors, and the dynasty came to an end BC, 110, according to the chronology of the Mahā Rājaśī. The King then reigning adopted a son who succeeded the throne AD 84. In the Burmese chronicle twenty-seven kings of this dynasty are said to have reigned in Prome and Tharekhettara during five handed and seventy-eight years. Provost, ‘History of Burma’, P.17.
and were also followers of the Theravāda Buddhist faith. Chinese traveler's report of the mid-third century AD refers to the Kingdom of Lin-Yang where Buddha was venerated by all and where several thousand monks or Bhikkhus lived. This is all the more likely as archaeological finds prove that only one-century later Pali Buddhist texts, including Abhidhamma texts, were studied by the Pyu.

The earliest highly developed urban settlement of Pyu was Beikthano, near Prome. However, its importance dwindled towards the sixth century, when Tharekhettara became the centre of Pyu civilization. A major monastery built in the fourth century has been unearthed at Beikthano the building contracted in brick, with a stūpa and shrine nearby is identical to the Buddhist monasteries of Nāgarjunkonda the great Buddhist centre of Southern India. The Pyu had used bricks since the second century AD for the construction of pillared halls, which formed the temples of their original religion. Interestingly, the Pyu bricks have always been of the exact dimensions as those used at the time of Emperor Asoka in India.

We learn from the account of Chinese travelers that he visited India, some part of South East Asia from China, and spent there for several years. His record is very useful and mentioned that the inhabitants of Shih-li-cha-ta-lo revere the three gems. This Shih-li-cha-ta-lo has been identified with Tharekhettara or Prome. An another important note is those Four Nikāyas or Schools were found in Tharekhettara. A clear view of these facts, the state of Buddhism in ancient Prome is also corroborated by the Chinese literary sources of the period closely following the date of the inscriptions. The most

1 - A record of the Buddhist religion as practised in India and the Malay Archipelago, P. 9-10.
3 - (i) Āryamahasanghika, (ii) Āryasthavīra, (iii) Āryamila sarvastivāda, (iv) Āryasamitiya. Kanai Lal Hazra, 'History of Theravāda Buddhism in South East Asia', P.66.
valuable information is supplied by the itinerary of the celebrated Chinese pilgrims who sojourned in India and the South East Asia archipelago during the last quarter of the seventh century AD.

Another Chinese chronicles of Tang dynasty (AD 618-907) stated that “when the Pyu king goes out in his palanquin, he lies on a couch of golden cord. For long distances he rides on elephant --- the wall of his city build of greenish glazed tiles, is 160li in circumference with twelve gates and with pagodas at each of the four corners. The people live inside --- they are Buddhists and have a hundred monasteries with courts and rooms all decked with gold and sliver courts with cinnabar and bright colours, smeared with Kino and covered with embroidered rugs. It is their custom to love life and hate when they come to the age of seven both boys and girls cut hair and go to live in a monastery”1. It is also referred that a Pyu Kingdom, which had eighteen vassals, states mainly in Southern Myanmar2. Finally, Pyu Kingdom of Prome came to an end in the ninth century AD3.

Besides, as has already been pointed out above, a large number of stone scriptures, which were depicting scenes, the life of the Buddha, were also discovered at home. Among them, one relief was about to take good offered to the Buddha by the two figures those who were probably two merchants, namely, Tapussa and Bhalika. They were the first disciples of Buddha and also believed as Myanmarese origins. Another relief is that Buddha seated as the posture of Bhumiphasa mudrā on a lotus pedestal and on his left, there is an alms bowl. He is surrounded by four figures that are probably offering

2 - AISTBB, P. 55-56.
3 - AHSEA, P.134-35.
alms to the Buddha and one important sculpture, which described the story of the taming of the elephant Nālāgirī at Rājagaha was found at Hāmwaza¹.

These sculptures have been conveyed to a period from the sixth to the ninth centuries AD. A number of golden plates, sculptures probed that the Theravāda Buddhism flourished in ancient Pyu Kingdom like Tharakhettara, Beithano, and Hanlin etc. These sculptures are similar in style that of Amarāvatī, a centre of Theravāda Buddhist learning in South India.

Although, Theravāda Buddhism may have taken its root in Thaton as early as the second century AD due to the missionary of Thera Sona and Uttara. It spread in the Tharekkhettara and Pegu kingdom by the patronage of King Vikrama round about 6th century AD, at the same time the wave of Mahāyana Buddhism also swept over a few places of lower Myanmar which were strongholds of Theravāda Buddhism. This is sufficiently proved by archaeological finds and the accounts of the Buddhist monks, Tāranātha and Buddhagupta.

The existence of Mahāyana Buddhism and allied cult is afforded by the discovery of a considerable member of images in stone and bronze representing Mahāyana divinities from the ruins of Hmawza². This indicates that the gods and goddesses of the Mahāyana pantheon must have been worshipped there for several centuries. The style of the images definitely proves that Mahāyana in lower Myanmar was introduced from eastern India. According to Tāranātha, Mahāyāna Buddhism also prevailed in Pegu (Ussa) and Arakan (Dhāfyavadda)
and the account of Buddhagupta's travels seems to indicate that it was known also at Tennasserim (Taninthayi).

The Kings and the Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism (From 11th to 19th century)

Bagan though today it is deserted remains the most notable of the Myanmarese capitals, of which there is very many ruin Pagodas and cultural heritages. Once there were Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism flourished hold of the country and Myanmarese scripts were also found. It was not only the first real Myanmar kingdom and but also the place where many Pali commentaries were written in Buddhist literature. The arrival of shin Arahan, a young Mon monk of Thaton noted for his learning in the Theravāda School Buddhism and the arrival of Tipitakas along with missionary monks in Bagan are the important events that make turning points in Myanmarese religious and cultural history.

Scott², J. G described that "that formation of the Myanmar nation began with the founding of Bagan in AD 108, but there is no real history in connection with Myanmar till we come to King Anawrahta. These are several fantastic tales soberly recorded with the main intention of connection the ruling house the ancient Kings but they are not worth noticing. According to the ancient record the memorable events of the sack of Thaton had far reaching consequences in the history of Bagan. Mon culture and civilization became dominant in the whole empire of which Bagan was the capital. The Mon architects and craftsmen, working in collaboration with the

¹ - Tucci, says that the sea and land travels of Buddhist Saddhu in the sixteenth century, 'Indian Historical Quarterly, VII, IV, P.583-702.
² - Scott, J. G, 'Burma from the Earliest Times to the Present', P.25. According to Sir Phayre, king Sammati (Samudri, Thamudri, Thamugdait, Thamudirit, or Thaloondirit) was the founder of a dynasty of Bagan.
Myanmar and Pyu artisans created a new city. Theravāda Buddhism gradually spread all over the country and Pali literature also becomes the classical language of Myanmar.

The reign of Anawratha, the ruler who made Myanmar a major political force in Southeast Asia established the first Empire of Myanmar in (1044-1077). He tried to enlarge Myanmar from small principality of Bagan to a strong kingdom comprising the greater part of modern Myanmar. It was also made the unity both of upper and lower Myanmar as a one rule. The establishment and propagation of Theravāda Buddhism in the Kingdom of Bagan was almost entirely the result of the ruler’s determined efforts.

The King Anawrahta who made the clearance of Buddhism with the Shin Arahān’s\(^1\) instruction suppressed the sinister the local\(^2\)of Buddhism which had become affected by Tantarism were banished to became a true religion in Myanmar but for all his zeal of Theravāda Buddhism. King Anawrahta was unable to root out the all the thirty-six goddess (popularly called Nats) with Minmāhāgiri of mount Popa and Ari cult also was not quite extirpated. Shin Arahān with full royal support and co-operation had devoted himself to his noble mission of evangelising the Kingdom of Bagan to the pure and orthodox form of Buddhism, until within a short time he secured thousands converts to his side. Hundreds from different parts of the country came to receive ordination and they entered the Holy Order. King Anawrahta built many pagodas and temples, initiating the surge of construction whose

\(^1\) Shin Arahān came from the Kingdom of Thaton (Sudhammapura) to Arimaddanapura (Bagan), During the early part of the reign of Anawrahta. Actually, he was Dhammadassi by name, but as his fame spread far and wide, the people of dignity and honour conferred the epithet of ‘Arahanta’ on him. The Sāsanavamsa gives in details about the advent of the elder Arahanta at Arimaddana. ‘Glass Palace Chronicle of Myanmar’, P.71-72.

\(^2\) Ari sect and their cult which dominated Upper Myanmar for several centuries. This sect with its centre at Thamahta, a village adjacent to the Bagan metropolis is referred to in a few inscriptions. Archaeological Survey of Burma, (1912) and C. Duroiselle, ‘The Aris of Burma’, P. 92-93.
still impressive ruins cover several square miles in the Bagan region. He also worked to establish Theravāda Buddhism elsewhere in his spreading domain, which either by directly rule or tributary kinglets included most of modern Myanmar.

We have already seen that the establishment of Theravāda Buddhism but at the time, there were no sacred texts in Bagan. Guided by the advice of Shin Arahan, the King Anawrahta sent envoys to the court of King Manūhā (1057 AD) of Lower Myanmar for bringing copies of the Piṭakas his own Land. At the time, the original text of Buddha rested in the country of Sudhammapura (Thaton) in Lower Myanmar under the rule of King Manūhā. He refused to part with the copies of the rare texts¹.

On his insolent refusal, King Anawraht raised an army and marched upon Thaton, which he took after long persistent attack. He brought with him loaded on the back of thirty-two elephants not only the thirty of the Tipitaka, but also some monks and even King Manūhā along with his family². King Anawrahta enshrined the relics, brought from Thaton in the famous Shwesigon Pagoda in Bagan. Besides, thirty sets of Piṭaka were also made necessary correction by compared with Ceylonese version. After King Anawrahta had brought over the Pali scriptures to Bagan, its study coupled with the pressure put forth by Shin Arahan, encouraged the King was to make Theravāda Buddhism the religion the state. His enthusiasm ushered an era of religious reform, Pagodas rose, a new programme of education was adopted, and the cause of culture was strongly encouraged and advocated.

While Bagan was as centre of Theravāda Buddhism, at the time Ceylon suffered from the ravages caused by a war with Colas. From the end of the fifth century, Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka rapidly declined as a result of the waning power of its royal patrons. Until the eleventh century no conspicuous Buddhist activity is observed. Sinhalese King Vijayabahu I (1055-1110) sought King Anawrahta’s aid against the Colas and gave his attention to the re-establishment of the monastic order in Ceylon. He sent an emissary to the Myanmarese King to reintroduce Theravāda form of Buddhism from that country. He encouraged the Tipitakas and Buddhist activities in both countries. In this way, with the support of Shin Arahan, King Anawrahta had been able to establish Theravāda form of Buddhism in Bagan in the first Myanmarese dynasty.

King Anawrahta died in 1077 AD and was succeeded by his son Sawlu (1077-1084), the young prince in epigraph. According to Hmannan Yazawin, he interested to live only in the enjoyment of the worldly pleasure. He preferred no this father’s religious works. But King Kyanzittha (1084–1113) the other son of King Anawrahta was a devotee and great patron of Theravāda Buddhism. He completed the Shwezigon Pagoda begun by his father. But the great achievement of King Kyanzittha, which established his face and spread the name of Bagan beyond the boundaries of Myanmar, was the construction of the Ānanda Temple at Bagan. According to the legends, it was built in imitation of the grotto of Nandamū on mount Gandhamādana.

King Kyanzittha was a fervent follower of Buddha due to his deep sentiment on the Buddhism. As a typical Buddhist ruler, he expressed in the following words “with loving-kindness shall King

1 - Cūlavamsa, Chapter 6, 48.
2 - Glass Palace Chronicle, P.110.
Kyanzittha wipe away the tears of those who are parted from their trusted friends——his people shall be unto him as a child to its mother’s bosom — be shall soften the hearts of those who intend evil”. With wisdom, which is even as a hand shall King Kyanzittha draw open the bar of the Gate of Heaven, which is made of gold and wrought with gems\(^1\).

According to the Shwesandaw inscription of the year 1093, King Kyanzittha sent a mission to India to restore the temple at Buddhagaya\(^2\). He was the first Myanmar King who took an active interest in the repairs of the holy shrine at Buddhagaya. He became the first official attempt on the part of Myanmar King at establishing cultural contacts with India. Shin Arahan continued to be spiritual adviser of the King. He also persuaded Cola prince of India, who had came to Bagan, to adopt the Buddhist faith. “The Cola prince together with his followers — cost off adhesion to false doctrine and adhered simply to true doctrine\(^3\).” It should be mentioned here that if King Anawrahta and his successors were not able or did not care to exterminate all the other existing cults, they gradually weakened them by unwavering patronage to the Theravāda. Having command over the sea girt coast of Myanmar; they were able to keep in touch with the reigning Buddhist monarchs on Ceylon, to check their Pali Texts with those of the latter and to receive and give help in matters religious\(^4\).

King Kyanzittha expired in 1112 AD and was succeeded by his grandson Alaung Sithu, who had a long reign of fifty-five years. Early during his reign Shin Arahan who had grown old breathed his last

\(^{1}\) The Great Talaying inscription of the Shwezigon Pagoda, Ep-Birm, I.
\(^{2}\) Epigraphic Birmanica, I.P, 154-164.
about the year 1115 AD\textsuperscript{1}. Panthagu Thera as Primate succeeded him. King Alaung Sithu was royal disciple and an ardent follower of the religion. The Glass Palace Chronicle represents him as an ideal Buddhist king and attributes to him the erection of a great number of monuments and other building works of merit. He built the Shwegu temple and the famous That-Bin-Nyu (Sabbaññau) Pagoda in Bagan. He also made an unsuccessfully attempt to obtain the tooth-relic of Buddha from Nanchao in China.

The King of Bagan was murdered\textsuperscript{2} by his younger son Narathu when he was the eighty-one years old, after a long reign of fifty-five years. He sized the throne in (1167 AD) after a brief inglorious reign, marked by blood shed and oppression, this thirsty king himself became a victim of a palace revolt and was succeeded by his son Naratheinkha. Before his death, King Narathu built the biggest pagoda to remove for his own crimes, performed work of merit in constructing the Dhammayangyi Pagoda, the biggest monument of Bagan\textsuperscript{3}. After a reign of three years his younger brother Narapati Sithu who ultimately restored peace, law, and order in the Kingdom succeeded Narathinkha\textsuperscript{4}.

The reign of Narapati Sithu (1173-1210), who sway extended to the Shan states were on the whole a peaceful and prosperous one. He was a great patron of the religion. Among the splendid architectural monuments of Myanmar he erected most of them in Bagan. Some of them are that Cūḷāmani pagoda, Gawdawpallin\textsuperscript{1} etc. One of significance was happened in his reign due to the fact that in 1192, Chapada Thera, a Myanmarese monk trained in Sri Lanka and

\textsuperscript{1} - A Report, A.S.B. (1915), P.73.
\textsuperscript{2} - The Glass Palace Chronicle, P. 127.
\textsuperscript{3} - De Beylie, 'Architecture an Extreme Orient', P.287.
\textsuperscript{4} - D. G. E. Hall, 'A History of South East Asia', P. 129.
convinced there, which was a more orthodox place at the time. The King Narapati Sithu persuaded to reform the regnant Thaton Buddhism by having many monks re-ordained. These monks formed the Later Order, in contrast to the Former Order.

After King Narapati Sithu, his son, Htilominlo known as Zeyatheinkha succeeded Bagan throne (1210-1234). He was a devout Buddhist and Theravāda Buddhism flourished during his reign. He was the last of the great temple builders of Bagan. He completed the construction of Gawdawpallin pagoda, which had been left unfinished by his father. He was also the builder of the Sittana pagoda in the Sinhalese style and the Mahābodhi in imitation of the famous temple at Buddhagaya as well as the temple of Htilominlo after named himself.

The next King Kyaswa (1234-50) was even more earnest in propagating the cult of Myanmar than his previous predecessors propagate. This King was of great learning and had a vast knowledge in the Buddhist scriptures. He was a well-versed in Tipitaka and none of the existing personalities either among the monks or among the kings were equal to him in this respect. He credited the Gandhavamsa and Sasanavamsa, to have been the author of the ‘Saddabindu’ and ‘Paramatthabindu’. His daughter also interested in the study of Pali Buddhist scriptures. She wrote a small book entitled ‘Vibattyattha’, a grammatical work on Pali case endings. King Kyaswa was so much earnest for the uplift of the Saṅgha as the great deal of his administrative duties. He used to remain unattended such an enthusiasm, zeal, manifestation of eagerness and interested on behalf

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2 - Sasanavamsa, P.65.
3 - Htilominlo known as Zeyatheinkha is called as Nadaungmya Min.
4 - Ibid. P, 77.
of a King towards the ecclesiastical affairs of the state are unprecedented in the religious history of Myanmar.

Throughout the Bagan period, Theravāda Buddhism brightened till to the King Kyaswa. The royal authority had advanced its support in furthering the case of the religion in the Kingdom. After he dead, next King Narathihapate who was famous as a swarthy tyrant in history of Myanmar showed no zeal for religion. With the death of Kyaswa in 1250, the light of religion which shone the Bagan Empire for more than two centuries began to diminish because of the loss of royal patronage and political disturbances affecting the religious life of the country.

Thus, towards the end of the thirteenth century, Bagan fell before the onrush of the invading Tartars, and Myanmar was left in a state of prolonged anarchy and confusion Theravāda Buddhism also naturally shared in the general declines with its country. This state of confusion continued till the second half of the fifteenth century.

When Dhammazedi (1472-1492) ascended the throne and a somewhat stable kingdom was set up in Myanmar again. Reform in the Saṅgha community was necessary and the monarch brought it about schisms within the Saṅgha were healed and once again the ideal of a unified church with the king as the history of Buddhism. Never again was the country so seriously concerned about its religious orthodoxy and Buddhism became self-sufficient.

The most significant event of his reign was the foundation of the Kalyāṇī Sīmā at Hamsāvatī (now Pegu). According to the Buddhist texts, the King Dhammazedi was ordained himself as a Buddhist monk who took lively interest in the promotion of Buddhist cult in the country. The King started examining and comparing the
Buddhist scriptures with existing texts on Dhamma and found there that the Pabbajjā and Upasammapada were two principal ceremonies in the Buddhist religious practice to maintain the true form of Buddhism unaffected.

The early kings of the Taungoo dynasty (1531-1752) were too busy with political conquests to give much attention to the internal organization of the Saṅgha. As conquerors they also became missionaries and in the annals shine forth the name of at least one king, that of Bayinnaung (1551-1581) who stopped animal sacrifice in the Shan states and distributed scriptures among the people.

King Bayinnaung of Taungoo dynasty is not only unified the country's politically but also made Buddhist principles the standard for his entire dominion. He forbade the sacrificial slaughter of animals, a custom still practised by the Shan chiefs, the worshippers of certain spirits, and the followers of some other religions. He built pagodas and monasteries in all the newly conquered lands and installed learned monks in order to convert the after uncivilised inhabitants to gentle ways. The main religious building of his reign is the Mahāzedi Pagoda, a majestic monument to the Buddha in the capital of Pegu. He also crowned the main pagodas in Myanmar with the jewels of his own crown, a custom practised by many rulers of the country.

The beginning of the sixteenth century was one of the most difficult periods for Buddhism in Upper Myanmar, while the religious fervour of Dhammazedi still lived on in the kingdom of Pegu. At the

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2 - He is mostly famous for his erection of Mahāzedi pagoda at Pegu, an imposing monument where he is said to have enshrined a alms bowl and a tooth-relic of Buddha. TBB, P.201. The most notable advent is that he even forced Buddhism on the invaders like Muslims, etc. (Sa6-Dis, P.321).
time, Shan rulers were endeavouring to bring about the destruction of the Sangha. One king named Thohanbwa was particularly well known for his barbarity, destroyed pagodas and monasteries. Although he was a king, he was uneducated and ignorant. Under these terror regimes of the Shan rulers the Myanmar did not feel safe and had too much suffers. Many, including learned monks fled to Taungoo, the stronghold of the Myanmarese race in the south of country. Despite the anarchy was prevailing some respected treatises on Pali grammar were written in these years.

In the Alaungpaya dynasty, the first point is that attracts attention is a bitter controversy among the monks during the time of King Alaungpaya who founded Ratanaseinkha (Shwebo) as the capital of Myanmar in (1753-60). His four immediate successors with reference to the proper way of wearing the monastic robe whether it should cover both the shoulders or leave the right ones exposed. He rather cut short the debate between the two sides by issuing a proclamation that the two warring factions should abide by the instructions of his preceptor who happened to be one of the Ekamsika sects. But from some quarters the opposition to the royal order had been expressed and the king found it difficult to suppress.

After a long struggle continuing for more than a century it came to an end during the time of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819) with the verdict in favour of those insisting on covering both the shoulders. King Bodawpaya was a great builder. During his reign, he scores of pagodas rose. An ardent collector of books, he hand many treatises, particularly those written in Sanskrit who brought from India for the

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1 - Ratanasingha is also called Shwebo or Mokesobo. It is about 60 miles to Ava. ‘Indian Antiquary’. Vol. XXII. P. 28.
2 - Ekamsika means covering of one left shoulder, Parupana, covering of both shoulders.
royal library encouraged their study and even got a number of them translated into Myanmar. His reign too saw great progress in the pursuit of secular knowledge, even amongst the members of the Saṅgha. Besides, the King Bagyidaw, the first Myanmarese kings lost territory to the British invaders in (1846-1852) and the King Thayawaddy (1837-1846) were also keen enthusiasts who contributed immensely to the welfare of the Saṅgha.

But the real glorious period of the Myanmarese Buddhist ecclesiastical life is marked by the reign of the great King Mindon, the son and successor of King Bagan. The period of his rule was indeed a golden age for the Saṅgha, which enjoyed the sincere and vigorous patronage of the King. Under his patronage the Saṅgha received a fresh booster, which immensely popularized the religion in the Land of Myanmar. King Mindon who built the city of Ratanapura (Mandalay) as his great capital was a zealous patron of Theravāda Buddhism.

The King’s contribution to the development of the religion is undoubtedly great. It had been mentioned in the text that the King with the help of scholars got the Tipiṭakas. He was so much respectful to the exponents King Mindon was not only an efficient ruler but also a devout worshipper of the Buddha. One more noteworthy event during the period of King Mindon remained disputes, which arose regarding with the demarcation of a boundary of Simā in the Island of Ceylon. The complainants approached the King for justice and the King in response with help of much reputation for

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1 - King Bodawpay is the fifth son of King Alaungpaya. Sir Phayre, ‘History of Burma’, P. 208, 209, 287.
2 - The Mandalay the second capital of Myanmar is founded in 1857.
3 - Sāsanavamsa, P.150.
4 - Two factions of Ceylonese monks belonging to the Amarapura School fell into a rivalry over an ancient Simā in Ceylon. Sāsanavamsa, P.159.
his contribution to the development of the Buddhist Saṅgha that even monks from the country of Ceylon used to approach him for the settlement of various religious disputes. The King Mindon cordially received the monks from the Island of Sīhāla. It refers that the succession of elders under whose auspices the religion of Buddha flourished became well rooted and firmly established in the whole circle of the Myanmar. In fact this was a period of renaissance of Theravāda Buddhism in the Myanmar country.

After King Mindon’s death in 1877, his son Thibaw ascended the throne. He was weak and of feeble intellect and his reign was short. In 1885, he lost his kingdom to the British Empire and was exiled to India¹. Thibaw was the last King of Myanmar before the British invader annexation of the whole of Myanmar in 1885. After occupation the whole Myanmar by the British forces was of utmost significance for the Saṅgha, as the British administration did not grant the traditional protection afforded it by a Buddhist ruler.

British ruling times from 1885 to 1948 in those periods were misfortune for the Theravāda Buddhism of Myanmar. It ended state support for the Buddhist institutions; no provision was made for the Saṅgha supervision by a primate and missionary or government schools replaced the traditional monastic education schools. The Saṅgha became disorganized and undisciplined. In the restive 1930, the British made a belated effort to authorize national supervision of the Saṅgha community in Myanmar but it was ineffective. Protests against British who are wearing shoes within pagoda boundaries developed into a strong pre-independence movement in the Saṅgha. Post independence time from 1948 to 1962, U. Nu the first premier of Myanmar sought to make again Theravāda Buddhism as the state

religion. At the time, government instituted a Buddhist calendar and Buddhist institutions were given state support. He also attempted Theraṇḍa Buddhism to be as a state level religion. But General Ne Win ended it after the military takeover in 1962, the state was secularized and the monks sent back to their monasteries. From this time till today, military governments, which were, ruling the country very wanted the monks to do only their religious activities. In this way, a novel feature of Myanmarese Theravaḍa Buddhism appeared in the country.

Compulsory ceremonies of Theravaḍa Buddhism in Myanmar

Traditionally, there are many forms of ceremonies, which are believed to shower blessings on those who perform them and also on those in whose honour or on whose account they are perform. These ceremonies, according to popular belief protect the parties concerned from dangers and troubles. They are commonly called that “Twelve secular beatitudes of blessing.”¹ Each ceremony is performed on a specified occasion at a particular time. Apart from, initiation ceremony the other eleven forms are common to both boys and girls. These kinds of ceremonies can be performed for both sexes. As for the ‘Pabbajja ceremony’, it is very significant, only require for the boys. Exclusively concerns the male sex or sons only. Those eleven forms are just ordinary routine duties. They are not regarded as compulsorily binding on the people. The performance of those rites may bring blessing and happiness but their non-observance will not bring any

adverse effects, socially, materially and morally or spiritually. Any one of these may be waived at one’s own convenience.

However, Myanmarese Buddhists believed that the initiation ceremony is of paramount importance. It is more or less compulsory. Though, there is no prescribed rule in any of the Buddha’s teaching that the Theravāda Buddhist must perform the initiation ceremony but this is a duty of voluntarily and compulsorily of every Myanmarese Buddhist those who taken upon oneself. It is regarded to initiate his son or any other person’s son as the highest form of duty ever performed towards them.

Here, we discussed that a brief account of the compulsory ceremonies of Myanmar and their rituals prevalent throughout the country. Among them, we may refer to Pabbajjā ceremony, Upasampada ceremony, Uposatha ceremony, Vassavāsika ceremony, Pavāraṇā ceremony, Kathina ceremony, and Paritta ceremony, which are the principle ecclesiastical ceremonies and rituals of Myanmar. They are described below:

**Pabbajjā ceremony**

In the Pabbjja ceremony, there are three essential things for the boy to perform before becoming as a novice. Regarding this, it is no prescribed age for Sāmañera. But since the Rāhula, the son of Buddha Gotama was initiated at the age of eight. It was a popular

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1 - Pabbajjā or (skt. Prarvaja) is denoted generally leaving the world by adoption of ascetic life. History of Buddhism, P, 110.
2 - (i) shaving of the head (ii) reciting articulately with perfect and unerring accent the phrases, which mean that he took refuge in the three Gems (iii) He has to make a formal request that the monk teacher gives him the robe and makes him a novice.
3 - Sāmañera who has taken what is called Lower Ordination. A novice observes the ten precepts, avoids the ten offences, which would result in being defrocked (Litigas in Pali) the ten misdemeanors, which are punishable (Dandas), and dutifully follows the 75 Sekhiya Sikkhapadas. ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms’ published in Myanmar (2000), P.172-173.
belief as a common regulation of Pabbajjā ceremony in Myanmar. The usual age is between ten and fifteen, but here important point is not the age. The most necessary is that the ability of reciting ‘Tisarana formula’ articularly and distinctly. Unless and until the boy can recite this Tisarana formula with proper accent, he is not considered to have initiated successfully, in other word, he did no become a novice.

The initiation ceremony is only for the boy’s ceremony. It is his personal occasion. It is a great day of his life. In this occasion, he must appear before the public with pomp and splendour. He is the cynosure, and the focus of all the eyes of the world. On the pre-initiation day the boy is dressed in his the best cloths like a prince. The idea of such a procession of pomp and splendour originated during the reign of the Great Empire Asoka of India on the occasion of the ordination ceremony of his brother Tissa, the crown prince of India. It was in the third century BC when Tissa was sent to the place of ordination; Emperor Asoka gave express orders that his brother must be sent as if a Great Emperor went out in royal state. He is entitled to be in dressed royal garments.

The next procedure of initiation ceremony is that the coming day of initiation the embryo novice is carried usually on a palanquin or occasionally on a horse from the pandal to the monastery. At the time, the father of novice is carrying the eight essential utensils for the novice and mother is also carrying her son’s bedding on her head. One could troupes and dancers also form part of the procession. It played folk music and the participants performed folk-dances of Myanmar.

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1 - This formula was used for initiation of a person into Buddhism and one would become a Buddhist by merely uttering this. Oldenberg, ‘Vinaya Paṭṭaka’, P.86.

2 - The eight essential utensils are (I) an alms bowl (Patta), (ii) an upper garment (Saṅgha), (iii) upper robe (Uttarasangha), (iv) an underwear (Antravasaka), (v) a water strainer (Dhammakaṇṭha), (vi) a girdle (Kāyabandhana), (vii) a razor (Vāsika), and (viii) a needle with thread (Suci). ‘The Light of the Dhamma’, Vol. V. No. (I) P.22.
The procession started from the pandal and it ended at the Monastery where the boy is to be initiated.

Usually, in the evening the boy is shaved with due ceremony. Here, one significance is that the shaved pieces if hair of embryo novice in a clean tray or white cloth and they are either thrown away into river or buried in somewhere a fairly deep hole. This idea is that any one should not tread the hair of the embryo novice. After shaving, the boy is dressed in a plain white garment, which symbolises purity of mind and heart. Finally, the embryo is taken before the Presiding monk who hands over the yellow robes to the boy and then lets him put on them. This is the culminating point of the ceremony. Then, the young novice goes along with Presiding monk to the monastery where he has to observe ten precepts. He has how turned a new leaf and a life of austerity awaits him in the monastery. Also, he had duty that a novice shall every day meditate upon the four sustenance, namely robe (Cīvara), food (Piṇḍapāta), dwelling (Senāsana) and medicine (Bhesajja). This is called Paccavekkhanā in Pali.

This is a typical Myanmarese initiation ceremony, which is accompanied by many preliminary activities. Though most of Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhists that take pride in old traditional cultures still keep up in their hearts those functions, some of the activities have almost died out today.

2 - Ten precepts are virtually prohibition requiring abstinence from (i) Paṇātipatā veramaṇi refraining from destroying life,(ii) Adinādanā veramaṇi, refraining from taking anything not given, (iii) Abrahmacariya veramaṇi, refraining from unchastely, (iv) Musāvādā veramaṇi, refraining from speaking falsely, (v) Suramaryya majapamādatthana veramaṇi, refraining from drinking alcohol, (vi)Viśalabhojanā veramaṇi, refraining from eating at forbidden times, (vii) Naccagīta-vādita viśūkka dassana veramaṇi, refraining from dance, music etc., (viii) Mālāgandha vilepana dhārana mandana vibhūsanatthanā veramaṇi, refraining from wearing flowers, perfumed etc., (ix) Uccāsasya mahāsāyanā veramaṇi, refraining from high and holy places, (x) Jātarūpa rajata paṭīgghanā veramaṇi, refraining from holding the money.
Upasampada ceremony

It will be pertinent to discuss here some of the procedural enactment of the Upasampada\(^1\) ceremony in Myanmar. This Upasampada ordination which candidate has to receive confers a peculiarly sacred character and gives a special religious power to him. It inspires him to a more perfect course of life and enlists him as a full-fledged member of the Saṅgha community. It is also believed that the ordination ceremony helps him to get out the secular profane society and enrolls him into the sacred community.

One who wants to be a monk accordingly with the Vinaya rule, he must necessarily be initiated as a novice before the higher ordination for the monk-hood\(^2\). But to be a really monk, there are five essential aspects of monastic ordination to transform the candidate into fledged Upasampada. The first essential qualification to become a candidate for admission to the order of monks is that one must be of the male sex. Only men are eligible for candidacy of monk-hood. Moreover, he must be free from communicable diseases and from debts. He must be neither illegitimate nor a slave. He must have acquired the consent of his parents. He must be at least twenty years of age and must be provided for ordination ceremony with a proper suit of three robes (Ticīvara\(^3\)) and an alms bowl (Patta\(^4\)).

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1 - Upasampada is a higher ordination ceremony of Buddhist monks in accordance with Vinaya rules.
2 - As twenty years is the lowest age at which a man is qualified for Upasampada. It follows that a boy, who has become a Novice at eight, will have to wait 12 years before he can receive Upasampada. Childers D. P. 532 (1872-75).
3 - Ticīvara are Dukkutta or Saṅghāti, the thick robe is a double-sheet measuring (9) feet by (6) feet. Uttarāsaṅga, the upper robe is a single sheet measuring (9) feet by (6) feet and Antravāsaka, the third piece measuring (6) feet by (4) feet is used as under wear.
4 - Patta or the alms-bowl is a black pot, round, smooth, and made of earth or Iron. The Light of Dhamma, Vol. V. No. (I), Rangoon, (1984), P.23.
The second essential aspect ordination is Sima, the ordination hall, especially established and reserved for such monastic functions. This special building or rather a boundary is set apart from lay people and animals those who are not permitted to enter or to approach closer than demarcation, during the performance of the monastic retells and ceremonies. Usually, the time and date for the ordination rites and fixed by astrological calculation. Third essential aspect of ordination of monk is the number of participants in the ceremony and a minimum of four Bhikkhus is mandatory to form an appropriate chapter of monks. Among them, the eldest one will preside over the occasion as chairman of the assembly or the newly ordained monk. Another elder monk will act as counselors or instructors. The third elder monk will read the authorised words of ritual from the prescribed book of compendium. In some cases when the participant monks are more than four, readers are selected to read the Kammavācā. It is necessary to read three times in three groups.

The fourth important aspect in the ordination ceremony is the declaration of the Announcer on the Master of the ordination ceremony that the assembly is going to ordain a candidate into the order lawfully. This is called in Pali technical term as Ēatta. The announcement must be articulate and understandable so that the participant shall unanimously and solemnly approve the performance. The fifth and most important aspect in the ordination ceremony is the reading of Ēatticatuttha Kammaścā by the reader monks, selected by the Chairman monk of the Assembly for this occasion.

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1 - Kammavācā is the ecclesiastical scriptures or the ceremonial compendium prescribed to be read in the ordination ceremonies and other monastic rites. Each and every syllable in the Kammavācā must be read articulately with perfect accent and pronunciation. The Light of Dhamma, Vol. V. No. (I), P.34.

2 - Mahāvagga, Vol. I, P.28-30-76. Also the Kalyānī inscription of AD 1476 text translated by Taw Sein Kho, Indian Antiquary, XXII.
A candidate seeking Upasampada duly equipped with alms bows, yellow robes, and had his spiritual guide or 'Upajjhacariya' chosen already was to appear before a chapter consisting of at least ten monks.\(^1\) After having completed necessary things, the present of the chapter will examined him. And he has to answer a questionnaire such as his personal name, his spiritual tutor's name his eventual short comings or disabilities etc. When things were ascertained by the Instructor or Examiner the candidate could pray for ordination. On his request, the president formally proposed to the chapter to accord their consent to the candidates' prayer. The proposal used to be repeated twice by the consent and in that event the president accepted him as a newly ordained which is a member of Saṅgha. The ordination ceremony through the formal Ńatti Kammaćā by the monks, who were members of current ceremony, he was considered as a full-fledged member of the Saṅgha.

After formal admission by the chapter of senior monks, the chairman of this assembly should thoroughly explain to the new monk to follow the four necessaries\(^2\) and to avoid four capital evils\(^3\) as long as he is living in the Saṅgha community. Hence forth, a new monk usually lived under the spiritual guidance of Upajjhaya. Here, the higher ordination of a monk in the Myanmarese Buddhist tradition is over. When candidate was a full-fledged monk, he needs to learn all

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\(^1\) The number of monks sometimes varied and under certain circumstances.

\(^2\) The four nissāya or four necessaries are:
   (I) Pindiya lopahojana, living on a pittance of alms round,
   (II) Pamsukula cīvara, rags forms a dust heap,
   (III) Rukkhamula senāsana, lodging at the foot of a tree, and

\(^3\) The four capital evils are; (i) the first evil is that whatever monk should indulge in sexual intercourse loses his monk hood. (ii) The second evil is that whatever Bhikkhu should take with intention to steal what is not given loses his Bhikkhu hood. (iii) The third evil is that whatever monk should intentionally deprive a human being of life loses his monk hood and (iv) the fourth evil is that whatever monk claims to attainments he does not really posse, namely attainments to Jhāna or Magga and Phala insight loses his monk hood. U. Ko Lay, 'Guide to Pitaka', P.9-10.
the monastic rules and disciplinary rules of Vinaya Piṭaka\(^1\). In accordance to Theravāda rules, there are altogether (227) regulations. This is a brief procedure of Myanmarese Upasampada ceremony.

**Uposatha Ceremony**

The Uposatha or Sabbath ceremony is one of the most sacred and significant ceremonies of the Theravāda Buddhism. According to the teaching of the Buddha, Uposatha was introduced at the instance of King Bimbisara. During the Buddha’s lifetime, in such ceremonies were convened by the non-Buddhism societies like ascetics and heretics. Having realized the importance of such congregation, King Bimbisara recommended setting up such forth rightly religious assembly. Later came to be known as Uposatha ceremony\(^2\). The purpose of Uposatha ceremony was to strengthen the bond of union inside the Saṅgha and to purge it from impurities by uplifting moral standard or individual monks. The keeping of the Uposatha ceremony is a concession made by the Buddha to public opinion. It is one of numberless concessions by the brotherhood to the religious and moral activities of human beings.

In Myanmar, the weekly Uposatha is a day of celebration for the monks and laity. Especially, two of the four holidays in each of

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\(^2\) Uposatha fasting days, the specially assigned days of the month on which lay folks observe the Uposatha (eight) precepts, the days marked for the members of the order to recite Pāṭimokkha. In the teaching of the Buddha, the days of the observance of the eight precepts one called Uposatha. The eighth and fifteenth days of the waxing half of the lunar month and the eighth and either the fourteenth or fifteenth days of the waning half of the lunar month are the fasting days. The members of the order observe Uposatha on the fifteenth day of the waxing half of the month as well as on the new moon day which fall alternately on the fourteenth and the fifteenth of the waning half of the month. ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms’, P.96-97.
month is the ceremony of reciting the Pātimokkha Pali for the monks. Two Uposatha are on the days of the new moon of the all full moon of on the 14th and 15th of the month. Occasionally, a holiday only for monks is the Saṅgha Sāmaggi Uposatha, reconciliation holiday, which held when a quarrel among the fraternity has been made up. In Myanmar, generally the Uposatha is a day of rest. It is not proper or do any business activities like hunting and fishing is forbidden. The lay devotees must celebrate the day with clean garments and with clean minds, and it is meritorious in them to keep the eight precepts. Preaching and hearing the sermon is a common feature of each Uposatha day.

But the Buddhist monks, Uposatha conveys a denotation meaning a fortnightly ceremony or sitting of monks either on the 14th, 15th day of a month to discuss matters concerning the Dhamma and Vinaya to recite the rules of Pātimokkha which is containing 227 rules. For holding the Uposatha ceremony, the Sīmā or boundary as also the jurisdiction of the Saṅgha was defined and rules were framed for the purpose. Formal selection if the spot where the monks were to assemble was made before hand complete attendance in an Uposatha ceremony was viewed as important and in no case Uposatha was to be held by an incomplete congregation. It was imperative for the monks not to leave their places of dwelling on the Uposatha day unless

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2 - Uposatha Śīla, eight moral precepts, observed on fasting days, (I) abstaining from killing any living beings, Pāñcatipāṭā veramaṇi, (ii) abstaining from taking others' things, Adinnadāṇā veramaṇi, (iii) abstains from taking liquors and intoxicants which can lead one to forgetfulness, surūmerayamajjhapadamudatthaṇā veramaṇi, (iv) abstaining from taking liquors and intoxicants which can lead one to forgetfulness, (vi) Abstaining from taking food after instruments seeing shows, wearing flowers and using perfumes, Nacca gīta vāditā visuksa dassana, mālāgandha vilepana dhāraṇa mandana vibhusanatthanā veramaṇi and (viii) abstaining from using high and luxurious beds, seats, Uccāsayana mahāsayanā veramaṇi. ‘A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms’, P. 65-66.
authorized. Before conduct of business in the Uposatha, some preliminary arrangements had to be made such as cleaning of the congregation hall, provision of seats, lit the candle, and put in drinking water inside the Simā. It is formal announcement of the day, declaration of Pārisuddhi by all the members those who selection of monks to put queries on the Pātimokkha Dhamma and Vinaya to explain the entire Bhikkhus.

While attending the Uposatha customary for the monks to come fully dressed to recite the rules of Pātimokkha. Unless, there was any apprehension of danger or cause for emergency, the Pātimokkha was recited in details. But the recital could be cut short according to the intensity of the impending danger. When a monk fell sick, there was special procedure to obtain his approval to the ecclesiastical acts carried on by the Assembly. Similarly, special procedure was laid down for dealing with monks who had become insane.

The recitation of Pātimokkha in front of the Saṅgha comes up to be propounded once every half-month in compliance with the Discourse promulgated by the Buddha. Herein all members of the assembly should unanimously practice and observe and rules cheerfully and without dispute. Because of these disciplinary rules are scattered through out the Vinaya Piṭaka.

Whatever might be purpose of organizing the Uposatha assembly it was beyond doubt that subsequently the institution degenerated to mere for observance of Pātimokkha rules and formalities than seeking inner spiritual realization and self-development. But in spite of all the later shortcomings and outward religious festivities which had little to do with the real spiritual attainment. Uposatha had a great moral impact on the monks. It
infused them with a religious favour and unification of the Myanmarese Saṅgha community.

**Vassavāsika ceremony**

Vassavāsika means rain-retreat during the monsoon time. It is a great significant ceremony of Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism. According to Myanmarese calendar, the full moon day of Āsandha (mid-July) usually coincides with the full moon day of Waso\(^1\). It is at the beginning Vassavāsa or retreat time, which is observed and celebrated very auspiciously in Myanmar. It is not only religious day for the Buddhist monks but lay devotees were also concerned with this ceremony. Because of it is time, which stops wedding ceremonies from the beginning of rain-retreat time till the end of Vassavāsa. In this occasion, the Buddhists of Myanmar used to visit monasteries to take the Sabbath or Eight precepts before the monks and offer nice food, flowers etc, to Buddhist monks. They spent there in the whole day at the monastery by listening Dhamma, reading the religious books and doing meditation.

One important is that during the rainy season, all Buddhist monks used to take shelter in a fixed monastery for their rain-retreat. Now a day, it is customary regulation of Myanmar. According to Vinaya rules, Buddhist monk who will participate at the Vassavāsika ceremony should say loudly once, or twice or thrice such as “Imasmimvihāre imam temāsam vassam upemi” that means is “I enter upon Vassa in this Vihāra or monastery for three months” and besides, a vowed object of the institution is to keep the monks from roaming

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\(^1\) - Vassavāsika is Pali, the taking up of residence for the rains. Burmese English Pali dictionary, P. 798.
This observance was called Vassavāsa or Waso a colloquial of Myanmar. So far, this traditional culture goes on as the compulsory ceremony of Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism.

The usual period of retreat time is three months, from the first of Saravaṇṇa to the first of Kyattikā. In these months, the monks are forbidden to travel and have to arrange for themselves places to live in. They can go to any other place but they cannot stay there for more than seven days. In other words, they must come back to their monastery within seven days. Here, we have to mention the purpose of Vassavāsa. It was mainly twofold, viz. to avoid inconvenience of traveling in the raining season to avoid injuring sprouts and insects, germs, which grow abundantly at the time. For observance of Vassavāsa, which is generally, two periods were earmarked. The earlier one commencing from the day after the full moon day of Āsandha (Waso, mid-July) and the later one, a month after Saravaṇṇa. The first Vassa was to conclude with full moon of Kyattika,¹ which is end of Buddhist lent.

No prescribed way for spending the retreat was laid down nor was any special duties allocated to the monks during the period of retreat. However, observe the disciplinary rules, and attach more importance to instruct the laity attending them in large numbers during the period of Vassavāsa.

It may be said that Vassavāsika ceremony, in fact, aimed to emphasize two primary duties of a member of the Saṅgha during the time of rain season. They are (i) the study of the Dhamma (Pariyatti), (ii) the practicing of Dhamma (Paṭipatti) accordingly the teaching of

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¹ - Waso is a month in accordance with Myanmarese calendar. It is fourth Myanmarese month nearly corresponding to July. Burmese English Pali dictionary, P.786,
the Buddha which is to the sake of the world for the welfare and happiness of all human beings. This religious culture of Vassavāsa ceremony is still shining in the Myanmarese society since the golden days of ancient Myanmarese kingdom of Bagan.

**Pavāraṇa ceremony**

This ceremony held in high Pavāraṇa ceremony held in high esteem in the land of Myanmar. It means invitation and come to a name given to a meeting held at the end of the rainy season, during which members of the Saṅgha having dwelt cheek by jowl for three months, grievances might have made themselves felt. Mutual confession was invited on this valedictory occasion in accordance with the radiation of Saṅgha. Pavāraṇā was held on the fourteenth or the fifteenth day of month Kyattika (October – November). The purpose for holding this ceremony was to exonerate the monks from their acts of omission and commission done during Vassavāsa period through confession and formalities observed were almost identical to those laid down for Uposatha ceremony. The Mahāgovinda Sutta provides ample of reference of Pavāraṇa. In celebration the ceremony presents were given to the monks who released from the confining state of Vassa emerged with fresh energy and vigorous to take up their mission of deliverance supported and encouraged by the laity.

The procedural paraphernalia followed for observance of Pavāraṇā in short time. It was like this on the auspicious day fixed for observance of Pavāraṇā, the monk had a assemble at a particular Sima,

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1 - Kyattika or Thadingut is the Seventh month according to Myanmarese calendar. It is nearly corresponding to October. U. Hoke Sein, 'Dictionary of Burmese English and Pali', P. 856.
3 - Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga, P. 157-158.
for mutual confession of their flaws which are heard, seen or suspected the same may be pointed out, if any committed during the term of Vassavāsā. The erring monks received punishment according to the gravity of the acts. It here may be pointed out that while the Uposatha ceremony used to be held in the morning the time for holding Pavāraṇā ceremony was fixed up in the evening which was also a convenient time for the ordinary people to attend. There were two kinds of Pavāraṇā, namely Mahāpavāraṇā and Saṅgha Pavāraṇā. For due to observance of Pavāraṇā elaborate rules were framed for the guidance of the monks. Those monks charged with an offence were not allowed to participate in Pavāraṇā unless he had been dealt with according to the regulation of Vinaya. When the nature of offence could not be precisely determined and in case of doubt, the transgressor had the punishment for the lighter offence.

The Buddha himself initiated by the Buddha himself this tradition of Pavāraṇā ceremony. If there is any evidence how much the Buddha appreciated mutual confession among the members of the Saṅgha. It is necessary to invite one another for mutual fault finding that is, in a constructive way. In living together in the same monastery for the past three or four months, the monks are able to see, hear, or suspect the flaws in one another. Thus, they are obligated to fill up vacuum. It made up for the deficiency and straighten out the divergences of one another. It is only appropriate that any feeling, which has arisen during the period of their togetherness, should be revealed in a spirit of co-operation, and brotherhood. There are essential of Pavāraṇā ceremony. In this way, the concerned Bhikkhus

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1 - Mahāpavāraṇā or the great Pavāraṇā is a lengthy process and was executed in details. Saṅgha Pavāraṇā or the shortened Pavāraṇā is less time consuming and executed in abridged form.

will benefit by discovering his own flows and mending his ways in
time accordingly with Vinaya regulations.

**Kathina ceremony**

Kathina means firmness or solidity\(^1\). It commonly follows Pavāraṇa. The performance is called ‘Kathinattharo’ (Kathina aththaro),
the five benefits (ānisamsa) such as are spread over the precincts of
the monastery in a firm manner so that these benefits may be derived
within the monastery without letting them out. It is as solid and
durable as the cord, which can be gathered and stored. Hence, the act
of extending the benefits to all parts of the monastery in accordance
with Vinaya rules is called ‘ Kathina’ ceremony. It is also implied
offering of special robe to those monks who stayed in the monastery
continuously during the entire first Vassa\(^2\) are entitled by the laity on
the occasion of Kathina ceremony. It was allowed to perform lasts for
one month, from the first waning day of Thadaingyut (about mid-
October) to the full moon day of Tazaungmone (about mid-
November). By offering this Kathina civara, there are specific five
benefits for monks. For instance, during the rain-retreat time, a monk
is not allowed to travel or make house visit without the expressed
permission of the Saṅgha. He can travel outside the monastery for a
maximum of seven days on an emergency matter with the express
permission of the Saṅgha. However, by performing the Pavāraṇa and
Kathina, he is allowed to travel or make house visits without
permission from the Saṅgha. This is the first benefit of Kathina

\(^1\) - Sayadaw U Pandita, ‘On the Path to Freedom’, P.291.

\(^2\) - The entire first Vassa is from the full moon day of Waso (mid-July) to the full moon day of
Thadingyut (about mid-October) in accordance with Myanmarese calendar.
As a regulation of Vinaya, a chapter of at least five monks used to receive the Kathina robe from the donors and nobody other than selected persons of the chapter was authorized to accept the Kathina robe. Here, we need to describe the regard distribution of the robes, entitled monks who stayed in their monastery continuously during the Vassa to get a share of the Kathina cīvara. As regards the significance of the Kathina ceremony, it may be said that the itinerant monks after celebration the Vassavāsa usually disperses to different directions with the reference, to the Bhaddhavaggīya brothers. Regarding this matter, the Buddha proclaimed the Kathina celebration of robe offering for needy monks and traditionally it is held in every part of Myanmar, as a predominantly Theravāda Buddhist country.

**Paritta ceremony**

Apart from those ceremonies discussed above, there is one more important ceremony, which is necessary for Myanmarese society called ‘Paritta’, which needs mention for its wide circulation and also for a comprehensive study.

Paritta means ‘the Sutta that protests those who chant and who listen to it against dangers, calamities, etc., from all round’. More than the ancient times, this ceremony has practically gained greater importance role in Myanmar. Paritta was a special collection of texts gathered from original Pali Piṭakas, and contained various charms, spells, and exorcism.

We find nine Suttas in Piṭaka namely as Ratana Sutta, Khandha Sutta, Mora Sutta, Dhaṭagga Sutta, Āṭānāṭiya Sutta, Aṅgulimāla Sutta, Bojjhanga Sutta, and Isigli Sutta in Milāndapāṭhī the

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commentaries by the venerable Buddhaghosa. Much like the Tantric culture, the Paritta was learnt by memory, recited by the monks on appropriate occasions to ward off various physical ailments, and mental misbalance. It was also taken part to keep off harm from the beasts of pray and vengeance of reptiles etc. Because of its intrinsic attraction, the Paritta ceremony gained wide popularity among the devotees and even nowadays among the Theravāda Buddhist community, no social or religious function is considered as complete and promotes without the chanting Paritta.

According to the kind of occasion, it could be a concise ritual. The common on belief had been that most of the afflictions caused to humanity are due to supernatural evils, influences more concisely due to malice of demons and evil spirits and that the worth of those which friends could be appeared by Paritta incantations.

The arrival of Paritta into Myanmar is that in the well-known legend of Thera Sona and Thera Uttara who were selected by Emperor Asoka as missionaries to lower Myanmar (ancient Suvaṇṇabhūmi) there was an example of the use of Paritta. On that time there, they subjugated a demon (Yakkha) that struck terror in the Land by gobbling up all newly born babies in the King’s palace. The victory of those holy men was accomplished by pronouncing the Paritta1.

According to Myanmarese culture eleven Suttas are chanted in everyday at every monastery and some houses of Lay devotees in all parts of the country. This collection is known in Myanmar as ‘Mahā Paritta’, not because they have great power, if chanted and listened to in a correct way could word of dangers and bring in results. But for are some collection are long ones, but probably because they have

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1 - Sasanavamsa, VII, P.38.
great powers and bring in results. But for protection and other good results, a correct way is very important. There are some conditions to be fulfilled by both the chanters and the listeners so as to get the full benefits of the Parittas.

Here, we found the notices those three conditions in dealing with the chanter. They are described below:

(1) They must have learnt and chant the Paritta Sutta correctly and full without any omission.

(2) They must understand the meaning of the Suttas beings chanted.

(3) They must chant with the heart filled with goodwill and loving-kindness.

Similarly the three other conditions in dealing with the listeners are also described here:

(1) They must not have committed the five most heinous crimes, namely; killing one’s own father, killing one’s own mother, killing an Arahant, lousing the blood to be congealed in the body of the Buddha by wounding him, and causing schism in the Saṅgha.

(2) They must not have the ‘fixed wrong view’, the view rejects Kamma and its result.

(3) They must listen to the chanting with confidence in the efficacy of the Paritta Suttas in warding off the dangers and bringing good results.
Only when their conditions are fulfilled do people get full benefits from the Parittas. Therefore, it is important that when the Parittas are being chanted, people should listen to the chanting with confidence, respect, and attentiveness. Although the Parittas are for chanting in general, some of them are to be practices as well. There are six Suttas, namely Ratana Sutta¹, Mora Sutta² Vaṭṭa Sutta³, Āṭānātiya Sutta⁴, Aṅgulimāla Sutta⁵, and Pubbaṅga Sutta⁶ are meant for chanting only. The other Suttas liked Maṅgala Sutta⁷; it is blessing and prosperity, Metta Sutta⁸; it is for suffusing all kinds of beings with loving kindness. Khandha Sutta; it is for protecting against snakes and other creatures, Dhajagga Sutta⁹; it is for protection against fear, trembling and horror, and Bojjhaṅga Sutta¹⁰; it is for protection against and getting free from sickness are using in Myanmar for both chanting and practicing.

The procedural follow up for reciting the Paritta was like this the monks that used to hold in their hands a long thread technically called ‘Payeikchi’. This thread was wound found the neck of a new clay jar filled to bring with consecrated water. The other end of the thread was hold by the assembled monks squatting o the floor. After the final incantations, the sanctified thread used to be broken is such lengths as to tie the same round the neck, hand and the wrist of the persons initiating the ritual and then the sanctified water contained in the pot was sprinkled on all persons assembled there. The site for

¹ - Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, II, P. 272, Khuddakapāṭha, P.4-7, Sutta Nipāṭa, P.312-5.
² - Jātaka, No. 159.
³ - Cariyā Piṭaka, P.415.
⁵ - Majjhima Nākaya, II, P. 306.
⁷ Khuddakapatha, P.5, Sutta Nipāṭa, P.312, Anguttara Nikāya I, P. 299.
¹⁰ - Samyutta Nikāya, III, 71-72-73. Here, all reference numbers are page numbers of Sixth Buddhist Council edition in Myanmar.
holding the Paritta ceremony could be a temple, a home, a temporary recitation hall, or a pavilion specially constructed for the purpose.

There was no limited period last from one hour to one day and on some occasions for weeks. It may be performed any time, any place throughout the whole year. Apart from its use as a protective charm against evils, dangers and diseases, the belief in Paritta was embedded in the minds of the common people so much, that even in domestic affairs such as during the election of a new house or starting of a Journey. It was extensively practiced. When the Paritta ceremony extended for a longer period, it was known as Mahā Paritta or Great Paritta.

We learned that the compulsory ceremonies and ritual system, there were lots of ceremonies in Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism, which were domestic in nature, performed with the assistance or guidance of the monks. As well wishes, adviser and religious guide of family, the monks actually maintained a close relation with the laymen and they used to participate in various domestic functions from birth to death and even thereafter. In fact, the Paritta ceremonies were natural growth and out come of the social problems of human beings in the world throughout different ages, and different circumstances.

**Non- Theravāda elements in Myanmarese Buddhism**

Theravāda Buddhism is an important role of in the daily life of Myanmarese Buddhists. However, it is blended with bits of spirit worship, Hinduism, and Mahāyana Buddhism. They definitely survived some Mahāyana elements to worship in Myanmar. For example here we have to discuss about the Thera Upagutta who is called Shin Upagot in Myanmarese language. Its posture is that Shin Upagot is sitting by cross-legged on a lotus raft in the middle of the
ocean of with an alms bowl and can appear to anyone who races physical danger. By offerings or invitation to Shin Upagot ensure protection in instances of mortal danger, bad weather. Myanmarese Buddhists used to invite Shin Upagot at the almost every function like Pabbajjā ceremony, Upasmpada ceremony etc., to pretend all of forth coming dangers. Some Myanmarese Buddhists also worship to Lokanātha. In other word, it is known as Avalokitesvāra, a Mahāyana deity. He is thought to be protecting the world between the passing of the last Buddha and the coming of the next the crowned Lokanatha sits on a lotus pedestal, with his left thigh parallels to the pedestal and his right knee upright, holding a lotus flower in his right hand. In almost all major pagodas in central Myanmar feature separate Shrines to these three figures some where in the grounds1.

Hinduism also survives mainly in the form of Myanmarese astrology, which is based on the Indian system of naming the zodiacal planets for Hindu deities and is very important for deciding the proper dates for weddings, initiations, ordination, and other life cycle ceremonies. And a cabalistic ritual held on behalf those who have fallen ill or have experienced serious misfortune, similarly invokes Hindu deities. A Brahman priests usually but not always of Indian descent often officiates at ritual as these and may also diving the most auspicious moment for significant occasions.

Nat worship

The widespread adoption of Theravāda Buddhism in Myanmar suppressed but never replaced the pre-Buddhist practice of Nat2 (spirit) worship. Originally animism associated with hills, tress, lakes

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1. Steven Martin & Mic Loby, ‘Myanmar (Burma)’, P.58.
and other natural features. Myanmarese Nat has evolved into a spirit that may hold dominion over a place, person on field of experience. Orthographically, the written Myanmarese word Nat is derived from the Pali ‘Nātha’ (Lord or guardian,) though this spelling may have over lay an existing indigenous term. Despite the continued efforts of some Buddhist leaders to down grade the Nat culture. It remains an important dimension of every day Myanmarese life.

However, to make Theravāda Buddhism the national faith, the King Anawrahta tried to ban the culture of Nat worship in Bagan, which was the strongest basting of spirit worship in Myanmar. As part of his anti-Nat campaign, he ordered the destruction of all Nat shrines in the Kingdom. He also forbade the practice of animal sacrifice at nearby Mt. Popa; a volcanic outcropping considered the abode of the (36), which are the most powerful human Nat in Myanmar. Despite of abandoning in order to Myanmar their belief in Nat, however the people of Myanmar merely took their practices underground, rebuilding the guardian Nat shrines in their home alone with Theravāda Buddhism.

Since the Bagan era, among them the house guardian Nat has stayed indoors and merged with Mahāgiri to form. Eindwin-Min Mahāgiri. In most homes in Myanmar, this dual Nat is represented by a large, unhooked coconut, which is dressed with a red turban (gaung baung), perfumed, and hung from a pillar or post somewhere in the house. This Nat must receive daily offerings from the house’s inhabitants; for the Myanmarese people, this is the only Nat worshipped on a regular basis. Other Nats such as Saravasti (Thurassati) many help a student pass a though examination have shrines in Pagodas or monastery grounds which receive occasional offerings only during their festival time.
Knowledge of the complex Nat world is fading fast among the younger Myanmar generation, many of which pay their respect only to the coconut guardian. Red and white are widely known to be Nat colours. The main fear is not simply that spirits will wreak havoc on your daily affairs but rather that one may enter your mind, body, and then force you to perform unconscionable acts in public. This spirit possession is a real phenomenon in Myanmar.

But staunch Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhists claim, against to pay no attention to the Nat. this is only because they ‘out rank’ Nat due to their adherence to the Buddhism and this they have no reason to fear them. It is believed that Buddhist can stay out of the Nat, reach as long as they keep the five lay precepts.

In brief, the King Anawrahta’s scheme worked and today the common people of Myanmar believed cosmology places the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha are at the top of their life but Hinduism and Myanmarese traditional Nats are still in the second and third place. In spite of the Nat lower position in the hierarchy, the Myanmarese Nat culture is nearby as strong as ever along with Myanmarese Theravāda Buddhism.