

A Study of the Buddha Image Made of Bamboo – strips at the Myathabeik Foothill in Thaton, Mon State

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Abstract

After the lord Buddha *Parinibbāna* (pass away), the Buddhists have worshipped with devotion (1) *Sarīrika Cetiya* (Relics) (2) *Dhamma Cetiya* (Teachings) (3) *Uddissa Cetiya* (Images) (4) *Paribhoga Cetiya* (Bodhi tree and utensils) (5) *Pāda Cetiya* (foot - prints of the *Buddha*) in memory of the Lord *Buddha*. Among these five different kinds of *Cetiyas* where there are images of the Lord *Buddha* on it, are called as *Uddissa Cetiya*. In traditions, the Lord *Buddha* Images are made of gold, silver, copper, iron, stone, wood and bamboo - strips. Just as there are many differences with the materials used in carving sacred images there are also differences in shape, size and style. One image different from another in gesture (*mudrā*), sitting posture (*āsana*) and sacred throne (*pallaṅka*). A wonderful Hneephayargyi made of bamboo - strips exists at the Myathabeik foothill in Thaton, Mon state. A group of six young craftsmen who made the image was led by Sayar Myint Naing Oo. Unlike other images, there are interesting and wonderful features in the creating of this particular Hneephayargyi . Therefore, this monograph on the brief history of statues and images and the creating of Hneephayargyi are compiled and presented so that Buddhists may not only revere and strengthen their faith, but it may also, be of partial help to those who want to find out and study Buddhists arts.

Key words: the impressive capability of the Myanmar's handicraft.

Introduction

As Myanmar is a country where *Theravada* Buddhism flourishes, religious edifices and handiworks such as statues and images of the *Buddha*, Pagodas and monasteries, etc, can be found everywhere in various regions. Famous pagodas are usually named and acknowledged jointly with the names of regions. For example, the names; Innlay Phaungdawoo pagoda, Mandalay Mahamyatmuni pagoda, Zalun Pyi dawpyan pagoda, --etc, are known after the special names of the pagodas and as well as those of the regions. In Mon State also there are many famous pagodas including Kyaik thiyo pagoda, Myathabeik pagoda, Shwe za yam pagoda, Kyaik Than lan pagoda and Kyaik khamhi pagoda, etc. Among many popular pagodas in Mon State, there are six Images of *Buddha* woven with Myanmar's handicrafts using bamboo – strips, namely , Hneephayargyi's height is 31 feet and 6 inches (9.6 meter) at Myathabeik foothill in Thaton Town, Hneephayargyi's height is 21 feet and 9 inches (6.63 meter) at Phaauk Tawya in Mawlamyine Town, Hneephayargyi's height is 15 feet and 6 inches (4.72 meter) at Pantaw Khaung in Zinkyaik Township, Hneephayargyi's height is 12 feet (3.66 meter) at Taung Pauk Kyaung in Mawlamyine Town, Hneephayargyi's height is 11 feet (3.35 meter) at Kyaikmayaw pagoda platform in Kyaikmayaw Township and Hneephayargyi's height is 7 feet and 6 inches (2.29 meter) at Kyaik than lan pagoda platform in Mawlamyine Town.

Among the six bamboo-strips images, the Hneephayargyi located in Myathabeik foothill in Thaton is the largest image not only in Mon State but in Myanmar. This paper is presented the location of the Image which is made of numerous woven bamboo strips or Hnee, pegging ceremony and constructing residential building, the history of the *Buddha's* image, the history of the first Hneephayargyi, the artistic crafts of the craftsmen, bamboo collection and steps of preparation, offering of bamboo strips ceremony, steps of weaving the Image and duration, closing of enshrinement, people's donation and offer of labour, consecration (*Anekajā*) ceremony and presentation to one who looks after (*Gopaka* team) for maintenance and other different artistic works of the image. Unlike other images, there are interesting and wonderful features in the creating of this particular Hneephayargyi .

Besides, literature references, discussion with learned people and documented photographs are presented to demonstrate the significant Buddhist art works and *Dhammacakka mudrā* (hand position) in creating the Statue.

Material & Method

I would like to include in this monograph, in the oral history of Sayargyi Lone On Sai and Venerable *Vijaya, Saṅgha Mahāthera, Saddhamma Jotikārāma* monastery, Thaton Town. After I went to Thaton, interviewed to Sayar Myint Naing Oo (Craftsman) and Sayargyi U John, especially to collect the data for this monograph, to know the technique of the craft of making the Hneephayargyi. All the necessary photographs are attached herewith.

Location, Foundation and Construction of Residential Building

The *Buddha* image made of bamboo strips located in Myathabeik foothill in Thaton is the largest image not only in Mon State but in Myanmar. It was built with the height of 31 feet 6 inches (9.6 meter) by the order of Venerable *Paññāsāmi*, Taungkalay monastery of Hpa -an, Kayin State and *Aggamahā Saddhama jotikadhaja* Venerable *Visuddha* , *Dhammālaṅkāya* monastery of Bago.

The location for the Hneephayargyi was marked by the Venerable *Vijaya* and Venerable *Dhammanandī*, *Saddhama jotikārāma* monastery on 7th March 2012 and the foundation was laid followed by the construction of Devotional hall (*Gandhakuṭi*) building. The building for the Hneephayargyi has a length of 58 feet(17.68 meter), width 48 feet(14.63 meter) and height 40 feet(12.19 meter). Besides, a temporary building was also built to weave throne in front of the current building of the Hneephayargyi.

A Brief History of Buddha Images

A brief history of *Buddha* image will be presented as a Background. The culture of India was initiated by the two groups of people called Dravidian and Arian. The Dravidians resided in the southern part of India and devoted to different kinds of gods such as the earth god, Dragon and an ogre (*Yakkha*) while the Arians resided in the northern part of the country devoted to *Aggi* (the god of fire), *Indra* (the god of rain/sky) and *Sūriya* (the god of sun). Through combination of the two people emerged Hindus who have devoted to Images made of iron, copper, silver and gold...etc. After the *Buddha* was enlightened in 6th century B.C, the

Hinduism and the Buddhism have progressed concurrently. People remarked there had been no cult of having images due to the presence of the *Buddha* in his time and no literature about the devotion of images was found too. After the pass away of the *Buddha*, its images and pagodas were built in memory of the Lord.

The word “*Ceti*” comes from a *PāĀi* word “*Cetiya*” and the *Cetiya* was originated from the pile of soil (cemetery) under which the dead body of a noble man was buried. The *Buddha* had told the private *Buddha* (*Pacceka Buddha*) and Universal Monarch(*Sekkyawataymin*) that it was worthy to build *Cetiya*. In Buddhism, there are five types of *Cetiya*.

1. *Sarīrika Cetiya* - Relics
2. *Uddissa Cetiya* - Images and statues
3. *Dhamma Cetiya* - The teachings of *Buddha*
4. *Paribhoga Cetiya* - *Bodhi* Tree and utensils
5. *Pāda Cetiya* - Foot-prints of the *Buddha*

Among these five kinds of *Cetiya*, *Uddissa Cetiya* is building and devotion of the Images. Before people practiced devotion of shrines, they created some items that symbolized the Lord *Buddha* and devoted them. Symbols such as *Bodhi* tree (tree under which a *Buddha* attains enlightenment), statues (*thūpa*), Lotus flower can be found at the four entrances of Sanchi pagoda which was built in King *Asoka*’s regime in 3rd century B.C. Besides, at the top of the one stone pillar of King *Asoka*, icons of lion, elephant, horse and ox exist. The elephant symbolizes *Bodhisatta*’s (the future *Buddha*) conception, of the lotus flower as the symbol of his birth, of the horse as indicating his renunciation, of the lion as a representation of his attainment of the lord *Buddha* and of leading ox as a symbol of the passing into *Parinibbāna* (the ultimate passing away of *Buddha*) were carved and worshipped. These Five scenes symbolize the Images of the Lord *Buddha* and thus, it can be regarded that during the regime of King *Asoka* in 3rd century B.C, there was no culture of having the *Buddha*’s Images and just the symbols instead.

The place where the Lord *Buddha*’s images were found at earliest time is believed to be *Gandhāra* State in Northern India. The inhabitants of that state who are Greece built the first Images to be devoted to. The art of making *Buddha*’s Image emerged in 1st century B.C before the regime of *Kaṇṇisya* King and was believed to be widely spread in his regime. The images made in *Mathuyā* region in Southern India were built above lotus thrones. The sitting image has *jhāna* (Meditation attitude) or *bhūmiphassa mudrā* (gesture of *Buddha* Enlightenment) manner on it. The *Buddha* images and the Hindu god images are believed to derive from Indian ethnic culture arts.

There usually are many kinds of materials used in carving images by Buddhists. These are stone, brick, bronze, wood and bamboo strips, etc. With regard to carving and worshipping of images it could be found that there were differences in workmanship over the centuries. The *Buddha* images were traditionally made of stone, brick, bronze and wood, etc. For this reason, the ability to weave the whole image of the *Buddha* using just bamboo strips is indeed very special and wonderful. From now onwards, about the Hneephayargyi image which is completely made of bamboo strips and the marvelous Myanmar’s weaving handicraft will be presented.

Ancient Hneephayargyi Image's History

The official name of the image is "Pharakyauk Inn San Nagayone Hneephayargyi". "Pharakyauk Inn San" is of Shan language and the separate meanings are Pharakyauk = the *Buddha*, Inn = King of the celestial gods (*Sakka*), San =weaving and Nagayone = being surrounded and guarded by dragons. So, the image of the *Buddha* woven by King *Sakka* himself and surrounded and guarded by dragons. According to tradition, King *Sakka* in white gown making himself as an old man showed to a monk Venerable *Mahānanda Mathe* in a strange dream that the first marvelous ancient Hneephayargyi with amazing handicraft with a height of 13 feet and 5 inches(4.09 meter) in Minehnone village, Minekhat township, Northern of Kyaing Tone town in Myanmar. The Hneephayargyi can be devoted until today for more than seven hundred years.

The Craftsmen who Wove the Image

The craftsmen who wove the Hneephayargyi were a group of six young people led by Sayar Myint Naing Oo from Lelchayyartaung, Nyaung Shwe township of Southern Shan State who are trained by famous Shan Architects and craftsmen Sayargyi Lone On Sai and Sayargyi U Aung Myint. For firmness of the Image, District General Administration Head U Soe Naing, Township Administration Head U Aye Naing and Sayargyi U John had contributed with their technical know-how for inserting iron systematically inside the image. Followings are a total of 14 bamboo- strips images woven by the youth group led by Sayar Myint Naing Oo.

1. Thaton Town	Height	31 feet 6 inches	(9.6 meter)	1 image
2. May Myo Town	Height	13 feet	(3.96 meter)	2 images
3. Nyaung Shwe Town	Height	11 feet	(3.35 meter)	1 image
4. Naung ChoTown	Height	10 feet	(3.048 meter)	1 image
5. Paungte Township	Height	10 feet	(3.048 meter)	1 image
6. Kyaikmayaw Township	Height	10 feet	(3.048 meter)	1 image
7. Taik Kyi in Yangon	Height	9 feet	(2.74 meter)	1 image
8. Bago Town	Height	9 feet	(2.74 meter)	1 image
9. Hpa-an Town	Height	8 feet	(2.438 meter)	1 image
10. Yangon City	Height	8 feet	(2.438 meter)	1 image
11. Hlaing Bwe Township	Height	5 feet	(1.52 meter)	1 image
12. Ywarthargyi in Yangon	Height	3 feet	(0.914 meter)	1 image
13. Mandalay City	Height	3 feet	(0.914 meter)	1 image
14. Zalon Town	Height	3 feet	(0.914 meter)	1 image

The above mentioned Hneephayar images are of sitting position. Hand gesture are mostly of *Bhūmi -- phassamudrā* with a few of *Abhayamudrā* (Fear - dispelling attitude) and *Dhammacakka- mudrā*.

Cutting and Gathering of Bamboos and other Steps

Local people of Thaton town donated bamboos and collected at the nunnery there. Other needed bamboos were bought from Gyophyu Lake Region located east to Taik Kyi township of Yangon Division. Different varieties kinds of bamboos included Wayar, Warnwe and Warphayaung where Wayar was used

for making knee and elbow of the Image, Warnwe and Warphayaung for body, head, fingers and toes. Firstly, the members of weaving team and the devotees did measuring bamboos, cutting into required sizes, striping and smoothening works. To protect smooth strips from damage by insects and for long lasting, they have to be dried under sunlight after infusing them in borax solution for 3 days. About 1800 pounds(816 kg)of smoothened bamboo strips were used up for weaving after celebrating offertory ceremony of the bamboo strips.

Ceremony of Offering Bamboo Strips

In the morning of the commencement day of weaving the Hneephayargyi image, Venerable Vijaya of *Saddhamma Jotikarāma* monastery delivered *Sīla* (observance of the precept) and recited *Paritta* (*sutta* to ward off evil or harm) *doctrine*. Then, Sayar Myint Naing Oo offered the bamboo strips through donations of people saying “Venerable sirs! we offer these noble, pure and lawfully – all required bamboo - strips to the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Samgha* (the order of *Buddha*’s disciples) to be of support to attain *Magga* (pathway to nirvana), *Phala* (fruition) and *Nibbāna* (liberation from the endless rounds of suffering). Please accept these and use them as much as you wanted for our long - term benefit and prosperity.

Then, *Samgha Mahāthera* (the most venerable in the entire order of monks) accepted by reciting *Sādhu* (“well done !”) three times saying “I pray in the presence together with King *Sakka* let lay virtuous person, virtuous deities, virtuous monks, all virtuous people with supernatural power, guardian spirits and all beings who should see, know and hear the prosperous *Sāsana* (teachings of the *Buddha*), of the *Buddha*.”

Then, he handed them over to the talented Sayar Myint Naing Oo, who was in the presence of monks, requesting him to weave and worship the image of the *Buddha* who was endowed with infinite power, infinite wholesome deeds, infinite wisdom, who was the noblest as He was endowed with infinite power so great that it could break the whole universe together with the earth and the sky with a crash as He was also the most glorious as He possessed the (32) marks of *Mahāpurisa* (a great man).

Sayar Myint Naing Oo received the bamboo-strips and made a promise by saying as followings:

With the permission of the *Samgha Mahāthera* and monks , from this day and time on wards we would weave and worship a Hneephayargyi, a sacred image of the *Buddha* for the welfare of all tractable beings of man, *Devas* (gods) and *Brahmas* (the highest class of beings in the 31 realms inhabited by sentient beings) carefully and properly without fail up to the end successfully preserving *Sīla* (precepts), *Saccā* (truthful), *Khanti* (forbearance), *Mettā* (loving - kindness), *Paññā* (wisdom) and *Sati* (mindfulness) despite whatever obstacles and difficulties we might come across. May king *Sakka*, king of *Devas* (Deities), the four Dragon kings, protecting in the world, all the audience and the attendants, all the masters of treasure troves ,all persons protecting the *Sāsanā* (teachings of the *Buddha*), all virtuous persons, all teachers and benefactors come joyfully without anyone missing and help and protect us. Then, after pouring out libation water and sharing of merits briefly the Sayar Myint Naing Oo and party at the same time continued to weave beginning with the throne of Hneephayargyi.

Weaving to the Hneephayargyi Image Step by Step

In the very front of the Hneephayargyi, a temporary residence was constructed and inside which weaving of a throne with a height of 4 feet and 6 inches (1.37 meter) was initiated on 1st April 2012. After completion of the throne, it was moved to the place where the Hneephayargyi would be located with the help of the responsible authorities concerned. The throne was placed above about 25 feet (7.62 meter) long steel sheet. For long lasting of the Image, stainless steels were inserted from inside the throne and the sketch was formed.

Then the weaving with bamboo strips commenced. As the Image is in the sitting position, thighs, knees and throne are woven together followed by weaving buttock, waist, chest, neck and head step by step. The legs and the hands are woven after forming shapes with steels inside first. When the two hands are woven, fingers are made separately and then fixed to the palms followed by weaving the wrists. The same goes for toenails woven and fixed to the feet. Ears and hair-knots are also woven separately and fixed. The body is woven as a robe is worn on the body. Lotus flowers are woven separately and fixed to the throne. After the Hneephayargyi was woven gracefully, as well as the difference of skin and robe to be seen vividly, the face, the neck, the hands and the feet were painted with lacquer inside and out. Then the Image was gilded in gold colour. Besides, other kinds of Buddhist Religious groups offered daily recitation of *Dhammacakka* (the Turning of the Wheel of law), *Paṭṭhāna* (conditional relations) and *Paritta* (*sutta* to ward off evil or harm) doctrine.

Duration of the Weaving

The followings show duration of weaving different parts of the Image.

(1) Preparation and weaving of the throne	30 days	1 part
(2) Each piece of Lotus flower	1 day	50 parts
(3) Throne to Neck	60 days	1 part
(4) Each arm	10 days	2 parts
(5) Palm and fingers	15 days	2 parts
(6) Feet	15 days	2 parts
(7) Whole Head	30 days	1 part
(8) Each ear	5 days	2 parts
(9) Hair Knot	1 day	700 parts
(10) Painting with Lacquer		5 months
(11) Gilding with gold colour		1 month

The weaving works had commenced on 1st April 2012 and completion of all works including the buildings lasted for two years and two months.

Closing ceremony of the Relics, Consecration and Maintenance of the Image

At the chest of the Hneephayargyi Image is a two – square - feet sized enshrinement box. In it, images, attributes of the Three Gems documenting on a steel sheet, the Lord **Buddha's** relics and other jewelries

such as diamond, gold and other precious pebbles donated by monks and laities were enshrined. But secular charms and deep objects such as cabalistic squares, amulets tied around the waist, amulets to keep off evil, solid task of a hog, etc, objects containing various pictures of human and animals and cloths and papers which were easy to decay, etc, must not be enshrined. It was said that relics of *Arahats* (person innocent of defiling passions) need not be enshrined as it was not the image of an *Arahat*. After the repository was closed, all the tasks of weaving Hneephayargyi came to an end.

On the day of Consecration ceremony, the monks offered image *soon* (rice), water, candle light, flower and fragrance together with showering scented water by reciting an glorifying rite of *Buddhābhiseka* (inauguration of the *Buddha* by the pouring water on his forehead) *Udāna* (joyous utterances) *Gāthā* (verse) beginning with “ *Anekajāṭisaṃsāraṃ--- etc*” (the first phrase from the inaugural utterances of the *Buddha* spoken after attaining enlightenment) continued in the consecration ceremony. After all works were completed the Chief Chair of Myathabeik foothill *Saddhammajotikāyāma* Monastery, Mon State *Samgha* Association, State Sayardaw *Sirīpavaradhammācariya*, *PiṭakattayaPāragū*, *Mahāganta Vācaka Paṇḍita*, *Bhaddanta Vijiya Mahāthe* representing Myathabeik taung *Buddha* affairs *Samgha* Association have continued long lasting maintenance of the Hneephayargyi Image. The Closing ceremony of the relics and Consecration ceremony was held on 13 May 2014. This Hneephayargyi was devoted by labour and donations of the monks and laities which amounted to more than Myanmar Kyats two hundred and fifty million.(U\$ Dollar 2.5 Million)

Discussion

The handicrafts of Thaton Hneephayargyi

The Hneephayargyi Image full of Myanmar’s rich arts and crafts was woven in accordance with the 32 *Mahāpurisa* (a great man) characteristics of *Dīgha Nikāya Mahāvagga*, *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Pāthikavagga*, *Lakkhaṇa Sutta*. The thirty-two marks are (1) He has feet with level tread. This is one of the marks of a Great Man. (2) On the soles of his feet are wheels with a thousand spokes, complete with fellow and hub. (3) He has projecting heel. (4) He has long fingers and toes. (5) He has soft and tender hands feet. (6) His hands and feet are net-like. (7) He has high-raised ankles. (8) His legs are like an antelope’s. (9) Standing and without bending, he can touch and rub his knees with either hand. (10) His male organs are enclosed in a sheath. (11) His complexion is so bright, the colour of gold. (12) His skin is delicate and so smooth that no dust can adhere to his body. (13) His body-hairs are separate, one to each pore. (14) His body-hairs grow upwards, each one bluish-black like collyrium, curling in rings to the right. (15) His body is divinely straight. (16) He has the seven convex surfaces. (17) The Front part of his body is like a lion’s. (18) There is no hollow between his shoulders. (19) He is proportioned like a banyan-tree: the high of his body is the same as the span of his outstretched arms, and conversely. (20) His bust is evenly rounded. (21) He has a perfect sense of taste. (22) He has jaws like a lion’s. (23) He has forty teeth. (24) His teeth are even. (25) There are no spaces between this teeth. (26) His canine teeth are very bright. (27) His tongue is very long. (28) He has a Brahma-like voice, like that of the karavīka-bird. (29) His eyes are deep blue. (30) He has eyelashes like a cow’s. (31) The hair between his eyes is white and soft like cotton-down. (32) His head is like a royal turban.

In describing the handicrafts of the Hneephayargyi it will be done in four separate parts of the head section, body section , gesture (*mudrā*) and throne section.

The head (*Uṇhīsasīsa*) section of the Hneephayargyi

Uṇhīsasīsa is the *Pāli* word. *Sīsa* means head and *Uṇhīsasīsa* means a head decorating with shapes of hairs. The Lord *Buddha's* head is a grace - filled one. The girth of the head of the Hneephayargyi is 23 feet (7.01 meter), the sacred head is modeled and woven in the form of small groups of hairs. The diameter of a hair group was 7 inches (0.178 meter). The number of those groups of hairs was 700. It could be found that many kinds of head forms were carved for images of the *Buddha*. It was necessary to give special emphasis to the head section in the study and research of Buddhist *sāsanika* (related to the teachings of the *Buddha*) statues and images accepted and worshipped during successive ages in the history of Myanmar. The head section of Thaton Hneephayargyi was presented in general so that it would be of partial help to such study.

Basically in carving and worshipping of the head section it could be found that there were more than (40) different forms such as clean shaven head, thorns of jack fruit, funnel cone, banana bud, wavy hair and neem fruit, etc. In weaving the detailed head model of the present Thaton Hneephayargyi by using bamboo strips singly it was done in detail including the small groups of hairs. It could be assumed that in modeling the small groups of hairs thus the workmanship found in images made from stone, wood, bronze,---- etc., could not be as artistic as this much. The eyes were woven in open style. The single strand of Hair or a beautiful Unhalondaw (Hair mole) in the middle of the two eyebrows was encircled with quartz stones, Russian diamonds, gold, silver and jewels was used in making it. Its length was 9 inches (0.2 meter). A pointed nose was woven in bamboo strips so that it became handsome. On the face of the Hneephayargyi Image would be found that the sublime face with the smiling style and the head section with the major marks of a *Mahāpurisa* were woven with great artistry.

The body section of the Hneephayargyi

The neck of the Hneephayargyi is woven roundly as a Shwemuyosi (small drum) with a girth of 9 feet and 4 inches (2.84 meter). The shoulders are well- proportioned and the front part of the body was like that of a lion. The chest was spread out and displayed glory and great strength. Thus it is woven by bringing out the lines of bamboo strip so that the robe also manifested itself. The body is neatly covered with a robe. As the arms and fingers are also woven with plumpness so that the major parts manifested themselves, it was so artistic.

The mudrā (gesture) of the Hneephayargyi

The *mudrā* of the Hneephayargyi was *Dhammacakka mudrā*. After his Enlightenment the Buddha remained for some weeks near the Pipal (*Bodhi*- tree) which has come to be known as the *Bodhi* -tree or simply Bo-tree. Then he thought as to whom he should reveal the *Dhamma* that he had perceived with such difficulties. He remembered the five ascetics and he went to the Deer Park of *Isipatana* near *Bārāṇasī*. The ascetics were reluctant to be attentive and delivered the *Dhammacakka-pavattana sutta*, better known as the First Sermon. His First Sermon, *Dhammacakka-pavattana sutta*, "Turning the Wheel of the law" was delivered to them. As *Dhammacakka mudrā* was the style of preaching the First Sermon to the five *Pañcavaggi* (five ascetics). In the hand position of the Image, the left hand has a little distance from the body with 90 degree of elbow, the palm pointing towards the heart and the tips of the thumb and the middle finger touched with the rest fingers pointing upwards. The same is true to the right hand with palm facing outwards. The tips of the thumb and the index finger of the right hand also are touched with the other fingers pointing upwards bending and the palm facing towards the devotees. The fingers of the

left hand push up from beneath the thumb and the index finger of the right hand. Both hands are above the chest with a manner of rounding. It was very artistic as each of the small fingers of the present Hneephayargyi was woven singly in detail so that they manifested themselves in agreement with the marks of *Mahāpurisa*. It was found to have been woven separately.

Graces of devoting *Dhammacakka mudrā* (gesture)

The devotees gain Special teachings, Intellectual improvement, Easier awareness of the truth, Wealth, Conquering every enemy, Greater glory and power.

The *āsana* (the style of sitting posture) of the Hneephayargyi

The term *āsana* is not only referred to something such as the sitting throne, bed slab, bedstead,--etc. In *Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā*, *āsana* is described as seat, place or the floor. The sitting posture (*āsana*) of the present Hneephayargyi was *pallaṅkāśana*. The sitting posture with one cross – legged foot upturned and the other leg inserted under the other knee was called the cross-legged posture, *pallaṅkāśana*. The distance between the two knees is 23 feet and 4 inches(7.11 meter). From the knees to buttock was a length of 15 feet and 6 inches (4.72 meter).

The throne section of the Hneephayargyi

Throne – “*Pallaṅ*” derives from the Pāli word “*Pallaṅka*”. *Pallaṅka* means couch, bed, cloth. There are Four kinds of *Pallaṅka* .

1. ***Vimala pallaṅka*** - seat having 6 sides
2. ***Sīha pallaṅka*** - seat with 4 sides
3. ***Padumā pallaṅka*** - round shape and
4. ***Ananta pallaṅka*** - seat with 3 sides

Among the above mentioned, the throne of the Hneephayargyi is a round shape with *Padumāśana* (seat of lotus). It could be called *Padumāśana* if lotus figure is made on the throne or lotus flower figure was made in the form of down-turn and up-turn position or if the base of the throne was ornamented and upgraded by the figures of lotus leaf, lotus stalk, lotus sprout and lotus bud. Although it was called *Kamalāsana* and *Uppalāsana* if the throne was upgraded by carving the figures of other white lotus, red lotus and blue lotus on it, generally it was usually called as *Padumāśana* metaphorically. The sitting *pallaṅka* of the round shape was also called *Padumāśana*. The throne of the present Hneephayargyi was modeled in the shape of a sepal in the form of an inverted lotus flower and spreading lotus flower and it was woven with the ornament of small lotus buds between them. The throne of the Hneephayargyi was woven by the marvelous Myanmar’s crafts has a height of 4 feet and 6 inches(1.37 meter). The length of the throne was 25 feet 6 inches (7.77 meter). The girth of the round surface of the throne was 70 feet 6 inches (21.5 meter). Beside the throne is decorated with 50 lotus flowers where each has 20 inches (0.51 meter)width. Thus the Hneephayargyi was indeed woven not only in agreement with the marks of *a Mahāpurisa* but the procedures and the rituals indeed were also systematic.

Conclusion

By reading this paper, the learner will have knowledge of the location of the Hneephayargyi, pegging ceremony and the measurement of the residence building, the origin of *Buddha* images and time, the history of the first Hneephayargyi, the exact number of Hneephayars made by the craftsmen, different

varieties of bamboo used, steps of making bamboo strips, bamboo strips offertory ceremony, different parts of the Image and duration of making them. Closing of relics, donation of people, consecration ceremony and handing over to the services rendered for the *Buddha* for further maintenance are also presented in order.

The analysis of the study of the art works embedded into the Hneephayargyi shows definition and symbol of the head, body, gesture (*mudrā*), sitting position and the seat, the relations of the life cycle of the Lord and advantages of worshipping *Dhammacakka mudrā*.

Although many kinds were found in showing Buddhist handiworks, if the handiworks of the present Hneephayargyi are scrutinized, the detailed workmanships such as the splitting of bamboos into bamboo strips and the weaving of the whole revered image of Hneephayargyi using single bamboo strips could be seen. In doing so they have kept systematic fundamental rules, the uniform fundamental rules which are the standard in weaving Hneephayargyi.

The Hneephayargyi is thus woven and worshipped systematically through such procedures. In making (weaving) the images of the *Buddha* it has been found that such making or weaving is done very carefully so that the images of the *Buddha* look as close as possible to the real physical appearance (*rūpakāya*) of the living *Buddha*. Therefore, if the devotees also worship the images of the *Buddha* like the living *Buddha*, it is indeed certain that they can enjoy the same benefits just like they are offering homage to the living *Buddha* himself.

The impressive capability of the Myanmar's art work can be seen by studying the weaving work of the Hneephayargyi. Thus, this paper will be of great help and a valuable one for all Buddhists as well as for those who would like to study the cultural arts of Buddhism. The wonderful Hneephayargyi rich with the Myanmar's art work also clearly demonstrates fullness of well-wishes, strong generosity, strong respect and faith in Buddhism and unity of all ethnic groups in Mon State.

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