

Comparative Study on the Myanmar Cloth Painting Fine Art during 11th - 18th Century CE: Documentary References and Survey Findings

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Introduction

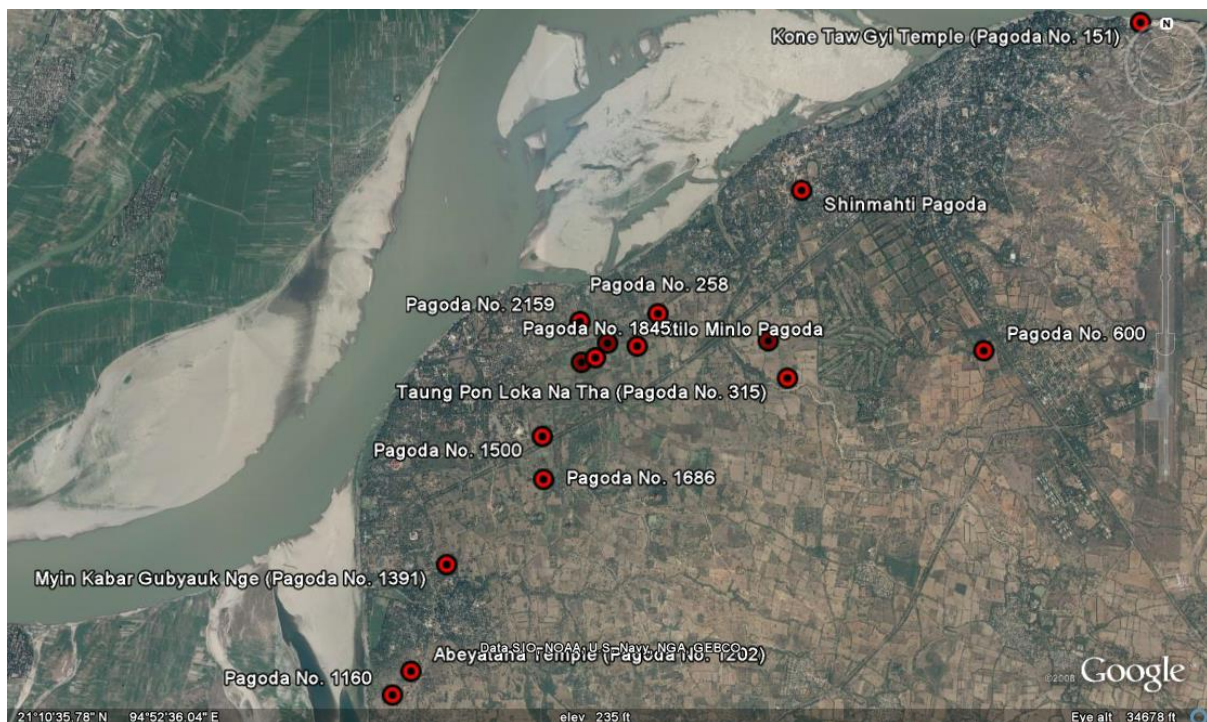
The main purpose for this study on the Myanmar cloth painting fine art as comparative work during 11th – 18th century is to attain perceptive knowledge and exchange of expertise among the neighbouring counties in Southeast Asia. In Myanmar, knowledge and practice of Theravada Buddhism has been related to the literature, architecture, fine arts and daily lifestyle of the people residing in the ancient city of Bagan (11th- 13th century CE). At that time, the traditional fine arts of Myanmar in Bagan was unique and perpetually augmented. Thus varieties of arts like architecture, stucco carvings, inscriptions, sculpture of wood/stone and other materials turnery and tapestry and glazed plaques and reliefs and smith –works were decorated at the stupas and temples. Moreover, mural paintings were also depicted those mainly consisted of Buddha's life stories including Nativity scenes, ascending the throne, great renunciation, Enlightenment 45 years preaching Dhamma, 550 Jatakas stories and Demised Buddha in the Parinicana scene.

Nearly at the same period of the 11th century, fine arts on cloth painting emerged in Myanmar. According to the documentary references and survey findings of archaeologists and researchers, it was stated that Myanmar cloth painting fine arts appeared in the ancient city of Bagan (Abeyatana Temple No. 1202). Since then, the tradition of cloth painting spread out by the fine artists to the other people within Bagan and also to different places in later periods. Abeyatana Ceti, situated over the vault of the main temple No. 1202 (1084-1113 CE), was the only temple being built in 11th century CE.

Even after 800 years, some remains of cloth painting were seen on the lowest terrace of the Ceti of that temple. Regarding the cloth painting terraces at Abeyatana Ceti, it can be assumed to be one of the oldest extent images in Myanmar. In this paper I will also argue that it could be one of the oldest extent cloth painting idols in Southeast Asia.

At the present, there are traces of cloth paintings in twenty temples in Myanmar from the 11th- 18th century. (See map. 1) Out of 20, sixteen temples are situated in Bagan (See map. 2), one is in Salay, one in Sarle, one in Mandalay and the final one is in Pakhan Gyi.

Since the 1975 earthquake, which seriously destroyed ancient monuments in Bagan, the cloth paintings have appeared in the process of conservation and renovation works. These cloth paintings have come to the forefront of scholars' interest for ancient artwork from the Bagan period. According to the survey findings in this study on cloth painting fine arts, being found by artists of researchers, it was reported that "the track of evidence" were seen in different portions. Some evidence can be found in ceilings, porches, arch pediments, vaults and the rosette of the temples. Some of the remains of cloth paintings have been seen in different parts on the body of the Buddha image, such as the arm. Other remnants have been found on the reredos (back slab of the throne). In addition, some small pieces were left and still exist on the wall of the temple (568/303). As evidence, medium-sized cotton stoles also depict paintings, as a wrapping for palm-leaf manuscript. It is now displayed at Pakhan Gyi museum, which displays the historically and archaeologically important evidence of Nyaung Yan and Kounghaung period (15th - 19th century CE).



Map. The temples in Bagan where cloth painting traces exist

Cloth Painting Stuck to the Buddha's Holy Body Inside of the Temple

Temple No. 1686 is a one story temple from 11th century CE and it is situated between Anada temple and Dhammayangyi temple. It is very close to Anada temple. Its vestibule faces to the west and is surmounted with Sikhara in square shape. There are 58 Buddha images in the niches of inner passage of the central shrine. According to the reference person, it can be assumed that all Buddha images were stuck by cloth paintings since Bagan period and these evidences appeared during the survey work in 1997 undertaken by Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Culture (Aung Kyaing, 2014). The traces of cloth paintings have been seen only on seven images which still exist. Indeed, it is the only temple where application of cloth painting on Buddha images can be seen. These Buddha

images were sculptured with mud motor. Such kind of mud images can be found in Myin Pyu Gu temple situated at old city of Bagan. It indicates this kind of making Buddha images were the 11th century artcraft in Early Bagan period. Therefore, we can suppose that the cloth painting from these images had been created since 11th century CE (Aung Kyaing, 2014). (See Fig. 1)



Fig. 1 Mud Buddha image covering with cloth paintings in Temple No. 1686

Temple No. 1500 was built in 12th century CE. It is situated at south-western side of Anada temple. Its vestibule faces to the north and Sikahara is square in shape. The gesture of Buddha is Bhumisphassa mudra and the length between two cross legged knee is 10ft in length and 13ft in height. It is supposed that the holy body of Buddha image was stuck with cloth paintings expect for the face. Due to the renovation works on 18, August, 1997, cloth painting on Buddha images was appeared.

Temple No. 1391 (Myinkabar Gu Pyauk Nge Temple) was supposed to be built in 12th century CE and it takes up to the east of Bagan-Chauk motorway. It orients to the east and also has similar tower to those of above mentioned temples. The Buddha image in central shrine faces to the east. The length between cross-legged knee is 10ft in length and height is 12ft. In the ancient time, cloth painting was applied and renovated on 25, February, 2013. According to renovation, some fragments of cotton cloth were traced on the right half of the back and left thigh portion. (See fig. 3)



Fig. 3 Cloth paintings behind and on the left thigh of the Buddha Image at Pagoda No. 1391

Temple No. 320/204 (The group of Sule Kone Phaya Su) was likely to be built in 13th century CE. It is situated south-eastern side of Alo Taw Pyae temple near the old road of Bagan –Nyaung U. Its vestibule faces to the east. There are 3 sitting Buddha images in central hall. Among them, the middle one is a crowned Buddha. Actually cloth paintings were applied to the Buddha image before renovation on 30, January, 1998. Some small fragments from right thigh, knee, arm and at the back of the body give evidence for the traces of cloth paintings. (See fig. 4)



Fig. 4 showing the traces of cloth painting at temple No. 320/204

Temple No. 75/60 (Shinmahti temple) was built in 13th century CE. It is located to the east of the southern passage of Shwezikon ceti. It faces to the east and Sikhara is square in shape. There is one Buddha image with Bhumisparsha mudra. In ancient times, the whole body of the Buddha was

decorated by cloth painting before renovation on 13, July, 1999. Only small fragments of cloth painting have been left.

Temple No. 27 (Sarle) built in 13th century CE is situated near Sarle village and the northern side of Yenanchaung at the eastern bank of Ayeyarwady River. The temple orients to the east and Sikhara is square in shape. The measurements of the Buddha are 4ft in width and 6ft in height. The Buddha image was decorated with cloth painting before renovation in 1999. At the present time, the face and body of the Buddha image has not been destroyed, although the hand portion has been destroyed. Some small fragments are left at the portion of the body.

Temple No. 1812 (Htilo Min Lo temple) was supposed to be built in 13th century CE. It is situated near the road of Bagan Nyaung U. It is a three storey temple and Sikhara is square in shape. The main Buddha image was covered with cloth painting and it appeared on 18, April, 2011 due to conservation works (Aung Kyaing, 2011; Kyi Pan, 1984). However, the trace of cloth painting cannot be seen today since the image has been gilded.

Temple No. 600, also known as Maung Yone Gu, appears to have been built in 13th century CE. It is situated in Minanthu village and very near to Shin Itza Gowna temple. The original Buddha image was decorated with cloth painting in ancient times, but only a few fragments can be seen due to renovation works. (See fig. 8)



Fig. 8 The traces of cloth painting was found on the left arm of the Buddha in temple No. 600

Temple No. 1824 built in 13th century CE, is located at the southern side of Upali ordination hall. Its vestibule faces to the east and Sikhara is square in shape. There are many Buddha images and disciples in the niche decorated with cloth painting on both side of the vestibules. (See fig. 9)



Fig. 9 showing temple No. 1824 and the main Buddha image once covered with cloth painting.

Cloth Painting on the Porch of the Temple

Temple No. 15, also known as Kone Taw Gyi, is a single storey temple built in 13th century CE. It is located at the southern part of That Kya Muni monastery, one mile away from the Bagan-Nyaung U motorway. The vestibule orients to the east. The porch at the lotus plinth pillar at the entrance of the ventral hall was decorated with cloth painting pieces with colour such as red, yellow and brown. (See fig. 10)



Fig. 10 temple No. 151 where traces of cloth painting was detected at the porch

Cloth Painting on the Reredo of the Temple

Temple No. 1845/1142 was built in 13th century CE and it is situated in the group of Khayminkha Phay Su and the name is given by the Department of Archaeology. Its vestibule faces to the east and Sikhara is square in shape. There is a main Buddha image in the central shrine showing Bhumisparsha mudra. At the back slab of the image, the flame top, acroterion, cornices are covered with cloth painting. Above the reredo, graffiti tread on the mouth of Vyala at the Acroterion. It the flame arch floral designs, frieze rails and conical arch are depicted on the cloth painting. Moreover, octagonal frieze design, tasselled freize with pointed obovals are depicted the flame arch by using

red, yellow, light yellow dyes. These small cotton segments had been at that time and are still present there.

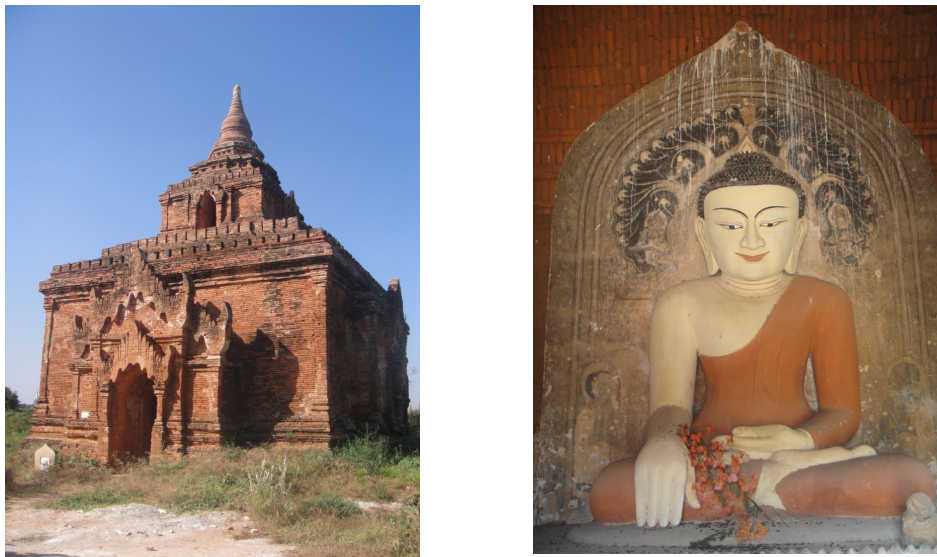


Fig. 12 showing the cloth painting at back slab of the Buddha image at temple No. 2159/1143

Temple No. 2159/1143 is situated to the east of Taung Phee. It is a double storey temple built in 13th century CE. (See fig. 12) There is no mural painting in both stories. In the vestibule there is a Buddha image with gesture of Bhumisparsa mudra. On the reredo back slab, the cotton cloth are stack and variety of platform up to the top of the reredo to cover the area of 5ft in length and 3.4ft in height. The painting consists of Bagan tree mythical bird Kainnaya and Kainaya, venerable Sariputtatha and venerable Moggallana. Moreover, there are other disciples holding lotus flower for the homage to the Buddha, flying cloud celestials around the reredo. The dyes used for the colour the painting are red, brownish red, yellow and white as mixture. Due to the earthquake in 1975, a lot of brick debris was found from the collapse of the upper storey. U Doe, a mason worker (passed away now) from Taung Phee village, is the person who noticed the fragments of cloth paintings as a first person while he was cleaning the brick debris. Another companion for that interesting event was U Nyunt Hlaing living in the same village. He is one witness for that event and personal communication work with our survey team. He showed exact place of that breakdown event. As a doti-conscious person, he handover the all fragments of cloth paintings to U Bo Kay, senior officer of Archaeological Department. Officer U Bo Kay also gave an advice to keep those fragments with plastic coverage for

long term. Thus, the witness fragments of upper storey breakdown event was sent to the Bagan Archaeological Museum and displayed in mural painting selection. One of the three pieces, in this cloth painting fragment, one hermit and one man are seemed to travel somewhere. The honourable hermit was wearing brownish-red coloured monk robe and possess a fair skin. One follower man behind the honourable hermit was wearing a doti, armlet and wristlet and skin is dark. Thus this cloth painting scene two describe the differentiation between they two.

In the third scene, a fully-dressed prince is holding a stambha ride on a horse-back and seems to pay homage to the pagoda. Other fragments of fabric and one image of the holy Buddha can be found under the shelter of the dragon and two ordinary images of the Buddha.

Cloth Painting of the Inner Arch on Ceti in the Central Hall

Temple No. 1202, also known as Abeyatanar, was built in early 11th century CE. It is situated at Myinkabar villae and also near to the New Bagan city car road. Its vestibule faces to the north and pieces of cloth painting fragments were found on the lower terrace of the inner arch ceti within the bell shaped dome. The cloth painting measures 8ft in height and 6ft in length and traces of cloth painting were found by Radolfo Lujan and associates on 1, January, 1994. They also created an initial conservation work plan for further programme and discussed with the group of archaeological officer take U Kyi Lin's group. That group also worked for the conservation of Abeyatana temple up to 2000. In fact, Abeyatana is the earliest temple in early century. The dyes used in the cloth painting consist of yellow, white, red and a brownish-red.

Cloth Painting from the Arm of Buddha Image

Temple No. 315 (Taung Pon Lokanatha) is a two storey temple situated at the south-eastern part of Alotawpyae. Its vestibule faces to the west and near to the New Anawyatha road. A remarkable cloth painting was discovered in a small brick temple at Bagan in 1984. Recovered in more than thirty fragments, the work was restored over a two year period in Rome. As the fragile cotton fragments were fitted together, there emerged, like a jigsaw puzzle, a 12th century Jataka painting more than a meter in height. Returned to Myanmar in 1987, it became a centrepiece in the Bagan Museum, but has not received the attention that it merits. While certainly painted at Bagan, this extraordinary work of art highlights the complex ties linking Myanmar and the wider Buddhist world. This examination of the Jataka painting complements a number of objects from the Bagan period (11th -13th century CE) included in the exhibition.

The conservators in Rome, measured the selvages on all sides and determined that the original painted composition was 136 cm in height and 81.5cm in width. Both sides were coated with a thin clay or gypsum primer. Followed by a preparatory design made with black lines. Coloured washes were then applied with detail indicated by thin stokes in violet lacquer or black. The palette range widely and included "cinnabar, realgar, orpiment, vegetable lacquer carbon black, yellow and red ochre, copper green and blue" (Pichard, 1988).

Taunng Pon Lokanatha 96 Jataka on the cloth painting piece Talapatta Jataka was depicted. To know the exact condition of that Talapatta Jataka story Archaeology Department had analyzed the scene from cloth painting with the book and mural paintings of 550 Jataka stories. The dyes used in the cloth painting are red, black, yellow and dark green.

Cloth Painting from Rosette at the Ceiling

Temple No. 1160 was built in 13th century CE. It is situated at north of Soe Min Gyi temple and south of Myinkaabar village. The vestibule is facing to the east and has a square shaped tower. After the earthquake disaster in 1975, the large rosette hanging at the ceiling of temple 1160, was broken and fell down. The fragment of the cloth painting was found accidentally mixed with brick debris. This cloth painting was actually designating as a container for the rosette. On the cloth, lotus flower design was depicted. This rosette design was kept in the Archaeological Museum. The dyes used in the cloth painting are red, black yellow and dark green. (See fig. 15)



Fig. 15 cloth painting fallen from the ceiling of the temple No. 1160

Cloth Painting on the Throne

Temple No. 258/181 (Shin Leik Pauk Temple) built in 13th century CE and situated to the south of Old Bagan-Nyaung U main road. The vestibule faces to the west. The throne in the central hall was the place of sticking cloth paintings depicted. Measurement of the throne is 9ft 6in in length and 9ft 3in in height. Lotus bud and flower designs are depicted at the centre of fulblown lotus petal and inverted lotus petal. The dyes used in the cloth painting consist of yellow, white, red, brownish red and white. (See fig. 16)



Fig. 16 temple No. 258/181 (Shwe Leik Pauk) and the traces of cloth painting has been found at the throne of the main Buddha image in the central shrine

Temple No. 69 from Salay was built on 13th century CE. The vestibule faces to the east and Sikhara is square tower. It is situated in Salay village. In 2004-2005, Bagan subtownship fund contributed the conservation of mural painting. Thus, officer U Kyi Lin and group were carried to the present only the remnants of cloth painting are seen. The dyes used in the cloth painting consis of yellow, white, red, brownish red and white.

Cloth Painting Found to the East Vestibule of the Central Hall

Temple No. 568/303 was built in 13th century CE. The vestibule faces to the east. There is a porch on each side of the temple. At the west, half of temple, there are cloth paintings. At the present cloth painting of Buddha image was depicted in 13th century CE style.

Cloth Painting on the Wrapping Pieces of Palm-leaf Manuscript

Palm-leaf manuscript from the late Bagan Era, cloth painting traditions became practised and the artists used grid pattern design and lines to to depict the cloth painting. In that plotted area design of Ahcheit pattern creeper handing down kind of kanote are depicted. These palm-leaf manuscript processes are depicted in the cotton painting below.

Cloth Painting on the Porch of the Enclosure Wall

Lokamanisula Ceti situated at Pyi Gyi Ta Gon Township. In 1200 CE, this ceti was established and has double enclosure walls. Cloth paintings are depicted at the porch (Aung Kyaing, 2014). After renovations, the cloth painting is no longer seen in the present day.

Conclusion and Discussion

In the early times of the Bagan Era (11th- 13th century CE), there were quite large members of Theravada pagodas and temples, whereas other temples of different religions and ancient traditional assembly halls were used for specific occasions. During that period, 80% of Bagan citizens were Theravada Buddhists. The king, royal families, his aristocrats, noble men, wealthy persons and the dedicated lay people donated their earned savings to the temples or pagodas to show their benevolence. During the shining times of cloth painting fine arts, some of the people dwelling in Bagan city preferred the decorated (beautiful and gorgeous) cloth paintings inside temples to the other offerings. Generally, styles of cloth paintings fine art is partially correlated to that of mural painting work. It can be seen that there are two different instructions for the operation steps in cloth

painting. Firstly, each woven cloth cotton pieces will need application by line and mud motor. Then the chosen pieces are treated with glue and made flat and even by spreading out the cloth. Thus, the pieces are ready for further painting. Second instruction for another chosen fragment is reinforced on linen and cotton backing and then affixed to a wooden stretcher to be spread out and thus ready for further painting work. The cloth painting artist can choose either method depending on his preference.

Classification of different kinds of cloth painting fine arts is intimately similar with that of mural painting. These fields are correlated through their attractiveness due to the colorful appearance and the ability of lively and spirited themes. In the longevity of evidence, stability including of cloth painting fine art is seemed more fragile comparing with that of mural painting. Most of the mural paintings can live long and strong lives compared with cloth paintings. In Bagan's temples, the atmosphere of the weather is nearly always warm and dry. Humidity can be attenuated by the very good ventilation. Therefore, the climatic condition gives a chance for the mural paintings to survive for a long time. For the cloth painting, it will need proper conservation in order to survive.

In Thailand, the earliest known cloth painting is attributed to the 16th century CE and features the Buddha descending from Tavatimsa Heaven. More than 3m in height, it was folded and deposited into a clay jar discovered inside a brick stupa in a village near Chian Main 1960 (Skilling, 2012, Fig. 11)

References to cloth painting are found throughout Southeast Asian Pali and vernacular literature and occasionally in local inscriptions (Skilling, 2006). Among the earliest examples is an epigraph from Sukhothai dated to 1384, referring to a Chinese cloth picture of the Buddha (Prasert and Griswold, 1992, p. 326)

In India cloth painting as *citra-peta* (Sanskrit) has enjoyed a long standing tradition but the 1st millennium has yielded no examples. Buddhist works on cotton from Nepal and Tibet date to as early as the 11th and 12th century CE and certain examples are attributed to artists based in eastern India during the Pala period (c. 750- 1200 CE) (Kossak and Singer, 1998). In addition cloth painting is mentioned in at least four Buddhist Sanskrit texts from India and Nepal, while a 12th century Chinese source notes in use at Nalanda (Skilling, 2006, p. 226; Van Gulik, 1958, p. 166)

Indian textiles were exported widely from Fustat in Egypt to Indonesia and were likely present at Bagan. Cotton was plentiful around Bagan, judging from stone inscriptions recording load dedicated for its production, and weavers and spinners during the Bagan Era. One especially valued type of cotton cloth known as *Puchuiw*, was probably imported from India, although its exact origin is unknown. One especially valued type of cotton cloth, known as *Puchuiw*, was probably imported from India although its exact origin is unknown (Tun Aung Chain, 2013). The style of the cloth painting relates most closely to the Jataka paintings at the Lokahteikpan temple at Bagan, which likely belong to 1125 CE (Pichard, 1988; Pal, 1999). This is indicated through certain details such as the small red flowers with yellow stems sprinkled against the black background. Those almost identical red flowers used in the same way in Pala period palm-leaf manuscripts further affirm the profound role of East Indian painting played at Bagan from its inception.

According to the documentary references mentioned above in the contemporary neighbouring countries cloth painting fine art emerged when weaving fine cotton pieces depicting Buddhist related events. Those cloth painting fine arts were found in the period of 12th to 16th century CE as earliest evidence. As of the period in order, cloth painting fine art work was assumed to be practised in eastern India in the Pala period (c. 750- 1200) (Kossak and Singer, 1998). The cloth painting fine art text written with four Sanskrit literature of Nalanda in India and Nepal was mentioned by Chinese researchers in 12th century CE (Skilling, 2006; Van Gulik, 1958). Moreover, Chinese cloth pictures of the Buddha were mentioned as early evidence in the Sukhothai epigraph in the 14th century CE. In 16th century CE, cloth paintings of the “Buddha descending from Heaven” was found in a brick stupa at Chiang Mai in 1960. Therefore, from archaeological and researcher’s point of view, it can be speculated that ancient Myanmar appears to have the oldest extent cloth painting in Southeast Asia. It is the cloth painting of the Ahthataya Jataka story mentioned by the monk Shin Thi Wali who has a luck feature for the prosperous condition. The etiology of this condition is attained by the donation of big offerings to the Badumottar Phaya and solidified milk to Wippathi Phaya a long time ago. Figure 4 mentions the quality of cloth painting in the colour paly and gesture of the Gotama Buddha when he brought his cousin-brother and newly-wed Janapatta Kalyaini. Fig. 5 is only a sample of the mural painting just for comparison of the similarity with the mural painting of Lokahteikpan.

For this paper to become more effective it will need further exchange and cooperation between Myanmar and its neighbouring countries in this important area of archaeological research.

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Annex 1

No	Name of temple/place	Location	Survey findings on remanants of cloth painting stuck concealed or enshrined	Date
1	No. 1686	Bagan	On the chest of the image	11 th century CE
2	No. 1500	Bagan	On the waist of the image	12 th century CE
3	No. 1391 (Myinkabar Gupyaug Nge)	Bagan	On left thigh of the image	12 th century CE
4	No. 320/204	Bagan	On the head and neck of the image	13 th century CE
5	No. 75/60 (Shin Ma Hti)	Bagan	Some part of the body of the image	13 th century CE
6	No. 27	Sarle	The whole body	13 th century CE
7	No. 1812 (Htilo Minlo)	Bagan	Now gilded on cloth painting of the image	13 th century CE
8	No. 600 (Maung Yon Gu)	Bagan	On the left arm	13 th century CE
9	No. 1824	Bagan	both disciples on each side of the Buddha image	13 th century CE
10	No. 151 (Kone Taw Gyi)	Bagan	On the proch of the temple	13 th century CE
11	No. 1845/1142	Bagan	Reredo at the back of the image	13 th century CE
12	No. 2159/1143	Bagan	Reredo at the back of the main Buddha image and some pices of cloth painting recovered at brick debris after 1975 earthquake	13 th century CE
13	No. 1202 (Abeyatana)	Bagan	At the porch of the passage to the central shrine	11 th century CE
14	No. 315	Bagan	Inside the arm of the image	12 th century CE

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	(Taungpon Lokanatha)			
15	No. 1160	Bagan	Rosette at the ceiling	13 th century CE
16	No. 258./181 (Shwe Leik Pauk)	Bagan	At the throne	13 th century CE
17	No. 69	Salay	At the throne	13 th century CE
18	No. 568/303	Bagan	On the wall of the vestibule	13 th century CE
19	Pakhan Gyi Museum	Pakhan Gyi	Wrapping for the manuscript	16 th - 18 th century CE
20	Lokamani Sula	Mandalay	On the wall of the enclosure	19 th century CE

Table showing the twenty temples which have traces of evidence for cloth painting in Myanmar.