

## **JĀTAKA STORIES: THE ANTERIOR LIVES OF BUDDHA (JĀ.1- JĀ.547) INTERPRETED DURING THE BAGAN PERIOD\***

Ko Ko Toe Lwin Thaw<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Among the themes of Buddhist visual art, *Jātaka* stories have mostly reflected on social lives of Bagan people especially on performers and the characters intermingle as main icons and supporting icons in a single scene of *jataka* stories. The stories gave moral and ethical education to the common people and they were reflected with Bagan life-style. *Jātaka* stories are depicted at the most temples as interior wall mural painting decoration and adorned at many prominent solid-pagodas as the exterior glaze plaque decoration. *Jātakas* are mostly illustrated on the side walls of vestibule or entrance hall in the temples. In fact, these real narrative stories are transformed into the static scenes of narrative performance. Most *Jātaka* plaques and mural panels have serial numbers, captions of title and mentioned notes under them. They can be identified easily by mean of iconic and narrative patterns if they have without captions. The kind of *Jātaka* with Burman caption is different from those with Mon caption on figural attitude and scenic composition and even interpretation on each story is distinguished each other because of their religious concepts and different times of early and later periods. Most Bagan narrative stories murals and plaques are arranged in the pattern of square or rectangular panels. Few are in the pattern of circular tondos. The study will comparatively focus and examine the *Jātaka* stories between plaques and murals.

**Keywords** *Jātaka*, interpret, icon, mural, glaze, decoration, caption, panels, tondos

Research Method qualitative, quantitative, descriptive, comparative and field research methods

### **Introduction**

The *Jātaka* stories especially the last ten stories of previous lives of Buddha are the favourite themes of Bagan people. In fact, *Jātakas* were used as popular media of instruction in ethical and moral ideas and illustrative education. But Ananda *Jātaka* plaques are situated in the inaccessible and invisible places for the common folks so they were probably used for canonical references only that will be sometime used to compromise as evidential criterions.<sup>2</sup> Among the themes of Buddhist visual art, *Jātaka* stories have mostly reflected on social lives of Bagan people. The characters intermingle as main icons and supporting icons in the single scene to illustrate 537 short *Jātaka* stories. Few last ten *Jātaka* stories found in Bagan are illustrated in many scenes. The *Jātaka* stories gave moral and ethical education to the common people and they were reflected with Bagan life-style, so the themes and events of these stories will be explicitly examined in prior.

---

\* Best Paper Award Winning Paper in History (2022)

<sup>1</sup> Department of History, East Yangon University, Attached at University of Yangon

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1 Source, Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication



**Figure 1** Glaze Plaques of *Jātaka* Stories, as Exterior Decoration, the Upper Part of Ananda<sup>1</sup>

*Jātakas* constitute 547 stories of former births of Buddha that can be divided as the 537 shorter stories of former 21 books and the last ten longer stories of 22<sup>nd</sup> book. *Jātaka* stories are depicted at the most temples as interior wall painting decoration and adorned at many prominent solid-pagodas as the exterior glaze plaque decoration. *Jātakas* are mostly illustrated on the side walls of vestibule or entrance hall in the temples. In fact, these narrative stories are transformed and illustrated as the static scenes of narrative performance. The interpretation of earlier short 537 stories and the last ten long stories are distinctively verified and examined.

### **The Comparative Study between *Jātaka* Plaques and *Jātaka* Mural Panels of Bagan**

Most *Jātaka* plaques and mural panels have serial numbers, captions of title and mentioned notes under them. They can be identified easily by mean of iconic and narrative patterns if they have without captions. For instance, in some narrative scenes of later Bagan period, images of Bodhisattva called *purhā loṇ* meaning the Buddha-to-be are frequently illustrated under parasols as Burman style which are traditionally used as a piece of regalia for royalty. In the small panel scenes of *Jātaka* depicted with small figures on nearly full of wall, they are difficult to be identified who Bodhisattva is there, so it can be pointed out with an umbrella that distinguished with others. Some images can be identified according to head dresses for example, royalty has adorned with crown and others have various hair-knots.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Most figures used in this paper is supported by Than Zaw (Bagan) who is a Bagan Mural specialist.

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 2 and Figure 3, Source- Photo Taken by Researcher, each scene is composed of three different kinds of social life-styles \_the king, minister/ chaplain and an average person of attendant with each has own hair dress



**Caption** / ဂါမဏီဇာတ် ပုဂ္ဂလောင် အမှတ် ၈

//gāmani jat purhālōn amat 8



**Caption** /သီလဝိမာန် ဇာတ် ဗြောဟ္မိတံ။ ၈၆။

// silavimānsa jat brohit //86//

**Figure 2** (left) JĀ. 8, Gāmani Jātaka: Minister Who Is Bodhisattva with Parasol, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi

**Figure 3** (right) JĀ. 86 Sīlavimānsana Jātaka: Chaplain with Parasol, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi

Jātaka with Burman caption is different from those with Mon caption as well as figural attitude and scene composition and even interpretation on each story is distinguished between each other because of their religious concepts and different times. Most Bagan plaques and murals of narrative stories or Jātakas are arranged in the pattern of square or rectangular panels, but few figures are in tondos that can be seen in illustrating tondo Jātakas in M.1826 temple.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 4** Tondo Art, the Rows of Tangent Circular Floral, Jātakas and Floral Friezes from Vaulted Ceiling down to Upper Wall, M. 1826, Source- Photo Taken by Researcher

As the said scenes of Jātakas are one of the favourite themes of Bagan muralists and sculptors as well as of Bagan audiences. In Bagan period, “among the Jātakas, the last ten longer stories, especially Sama JĀ-538, Janaka JĀ-539, Mahosada JĀ-542 and Vessantara JĀ-547, were most prized and read; they have been translated in prose and verse, and turned into

<sup>1</sup> See Figure 4, M is referred to Monument. Source- Photo Taken by Researcher

theatrical plays or dramas”.<sup>1</sup> The plaques and panel scenes of murals illustrated with *Jātaka* stories can be defined as static performance which reflects real live performances and real life-styles of Bagan people.

“A number of inscriptions at Bagan refer to the paintings, mentioning that 'on the walls were beautifully painted the scenes from the 500 *Jātakas*', and that 'on the walls of the hollow-pagoda were painted 14,619 Buddhas and scenes from the 550 *Jātakas*'”.<sup>2</sup> To compare with stupa, temple seemed to be more popular as they provide many interior walls and ceilings on which the scenes from the *Jātaka* could be painted as decoration and education. “Moreover, the paintings of canonical narrative scenes were the most effective means of convincing the common folk how to get the merit of giving alms and of meditation”.<sup>3</sup>

In the inscription dated A.D. 1239, a donor, *Siri Mahādhammarajapaṇḍit* recorded Pali Pitaka texts following as // *Visuddhimagga 1 klam//Sut Sīlakkhandhā 1 klam Majjipannāsa, Suttanipat // Dhātuvaṇ// Mahāvaṇ / Catu-nipat Jat Athakathā / Nibbāna sut//*.<sup>4</sup> Among these texts, some Buddhist narrative stories would be cited and represented for narrative scenes and real performance. So many Pitaka texts were used to be dedicated to the monks, they became references of monks who would instruct the artists to illustrate the stories.

Stories of the anterior births of Gautama Buddha known to the old Burmans sometimes as *jat nā ryā\_ 500* birth stories, and sometimes as *jat 550\_ 550* birth stories, are also popular themes for painting on interior walls of temples and for plaques decorated on the outer parts of hollow-pagodas and solid-pagodas. Actually, there are only 547 stories. Strangely the *Jātaka* plaques at West Phetleik pagoda, found in earliest time of Bagan period so far, mentioned complete 550 stories. To reach number 550, the 547 *Jātakas* are added three stories such as *Velāma Jātaka, Mahagovinda Jātaka* (Dhīgha Nikāya, Mahagovindasutta) and *Sumeda- paṇḍita Jātaka*. There are six other pagodas belong to Bagan period which have only number 547 each. The six pagodas for plaques in exterior walls are: the East Phetleik solid-pagoda (by Aniruddha), the Shwe Sandaw solid-pagoda (by Aniruddha), the Shwezigon solid-pagoda (by *Thiluiṇmaṇ*), the Ananda hollow-pagoda (by *Thiluiṇmaṇ*), the Dhammayazika mix type of temples and stupa, (by *Caṅsū II*) and the Mingalazedi solid-pagoda (by *Tarukplyi*).<sup>5</sup>

Most temples are mainly decorated with *Jātakas* in the entrance vestibule or entrance hall. Good examples of displaying mural *Jātakas* can be seen in the temples of Myinkaga Kubyauk-gyi(M-1323), Pahtohtomya (M-1605), Lokahteikpan (M-1580), Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi(M-298), Maungyon (M-600), Vinido (M-659) and Thingayaza (M-1051) which have captions of titles and brief mentioned notes engraved under narrative images of each plot of *Jātaka*. The ink gloss captions of *Jātakas* of the first three temples are in old Mon. In the scene of Lokahteikpan, caption is labeled using bilingual of Mon and Myanmar for *Jātaka* stories\_ the twenty shorter stories from the first twenty books are captioned in Mon and a story from 21<sup>st</sup> book and the last ten stories from 22<sup>nd</sup> book in Burman. *Jātakas* of the rest temples above are mentioned only in

<sup>1</sup> Chas. Duroiselle, “The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda, Text”, *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. II, Part I, Yangon, Government Printing, 1921 p. V (Hereafter cited as Chas. Duroiselle, “The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda, Text”)

<sup>2</sup> (a)Pl.105, (b)Claudine Bautze-Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan: Timeless Vistas of the Cosmos*, Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2003, p.2, (Hereafter cited as Bautze-Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan*) (c)Dr. Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma”, A.D. 1000-1300, Ph.D. Thesis Submitted to SOAS, Revised and Enlarged Edition, *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. LXI, i & ii, Yangon, Burma Research Society, 1978, pp.64,141(Hereafter cited as Dr. Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma”)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma”, p.141

<sup>4</sup> U Nyein Maung, ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ (*Old Burma Inscriptions*), Vol.1, (Hand Writing), Yangon, Archaeological Department, 1972, p. 289 (Hereafter cited as *OBI-I*)

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Than Tun, “History of Buddhism in Burma”, p.65

old Burman. The above captions also define the three cultural periods of Bagan called early (Mon), transitional (Mon and Burman) and later (Burman) periods.

The last longer ten stories of previous lives of Buddha are illustrated in many episodes but the rest former 537 *Jātakas* are always depicted in the pattern of one plaque for one scene. The media materials are always used of plaque or mural on wall\_ the former is depicted on the exterior wall or in the roof decoration and the latter for an interior decoration. The Ananda pagoda has nearly 1500 *Jātaka* plaques in which the arrangement of displaying stories is made in two divisions; “the first representations of the *Jātakas*, one story to one plate from *Ekanipat* to *Arsītinipat* (Nos. 1 to 537 *Jātakas*) totally up to 537 plaques as well as the second representations for the last ten stories (*Mahanipat*) from *Mūgapakkha (Temi) Jātaka* to *Vessantarā Jātaka* (From JĀ-538 to JĀ-547) amounted to 389 are illustrated each in a series of plaques on the roof and the receding terraces. It is not peculiar to Ananda because they are found on several other pagodas and temples at Bagan. It could be sure that the feature is unique, for no other monument in the Buddhist world has so large a number of separate scenes of plaques like Ananda”.<sup>1</sup> In *Jātaka* plaques, the caption is used for only serial number and the name of each *Jātaka* but in mural, each *Jātaka* is always labeled with number, title of *Jātaka* (always in Pali) and short mentioned note always for life or career of Bodhisattva.

The Myinkaba Gubyaul-gyi has painting of the 547 *Jātaka* stories on its walls with Mon glosses of Pali titles and short mentioned notes, but they are unnumbered.<sup>2</sup> The mentioned notes are little different from Mon and Burman for their own interpretations on the story. The common name of Buddha’s previous existence is indicated as *Bodhisat* (Bodhisattva) in Mon and *purhā loñ* (Buddha- to- be) in Myanmar. In the comparative study between the Mon captions of Kubyauk-gyi (Myingaba) M-1323 in A.D. 1113 and the Burman captions of Kubyauk-gyi (Wetkyi-in) M-298 in early 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., we found the different usages between Mon and Burman i.e. ပဏ္ဍိတံ *paṇḍit* is applied in Mon and ပညာတိသသူ *prañā hi sa sū*<sup>3</sup> and သုခမိန့် *sukhamin*<sup>4</sup> in Burman for wise man or sage, အာရ် *acār* in Mon သမာ *samā* in Burman for doctor, Deva ဒေဝ in Mon, *nat sā* နတ်သာ in Burman for celestial gods and Indra in Mon, Sakrā in Burman for the king of 33 gods. In this case, it is obviously found that Burmans of Bagan have used their own terminological roots or they have coined the new terms based on Pali by their own ways while Mon in Bagan have applied Pali-Sanskrit adaptation words as classical term.

In the representation of *Jātaka* stories, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi used the division of volumes of *Jātaka* stories which is arranged from *eka nipāta*, *dukkā nipāta* etc. to *mahā nipāta*. The caption of *Sañjiva Jātaka* no. 150 shows *Disābrāmuik eka chuṃ* (a world-famous teacher, end of *Nipāta* I). The next *Jātaka* resumed with the number one of second volume, third, fourth and so on.<sup>5</sup> *Jātaka* stories were arranged by mean of each *Nipāta* or book. But there are some mistakes \_ the number one ahead the Sinhalese order from JĀ-171 until 265 because a *jātaka* named *Supāta jat* is wrongly illustrated. The stories from JĀ-497 till JĀ -503 are omitted and some stories are actually in blank. No.272 *Jātaka* is illustrated twice. Moreover, the places from JĀ-257 till JĀ-264 are inserted with scenes and captions from *Buddhawam*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chas. Duroiselle, *The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda, text*, p. v

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.83

<sup>3</sup> JĀ-6, JĀ-49, JĀ-89 in the *Jātaka* Panels, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi,

<sup>4</sup> *Jātaka* JĀs 110,112,170, 364,401, 402, 403, 413, 441, 452 in the *Jātaka* Panels, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi

<sup>5</sup> See Figure 5, Source- Photo Taken by Researcher

<sup>6</sup> (a) Ba Shin, K. J. Whitbread and G. H. Luce, “Pagán, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi, an Early Burmese Temple with Ink-Glosses”, *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1971, pp.200-217, (Hereafter cited as Ba Shin, “Pagán, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi)

(b) Based on *Jātaka* Stories’ ink glosses in Hall-Shrine.



**Caption** / စူလကာလင်္ဂဇတ် ပုံနာရသိ။ စတုတ် အစ။ //culakālaṅgajāt buṁṁā rasi catuk ac//

**Figure 5** Brahman Hermit Beginning of *Nipāta* IV, Source- Photo Taken by Researcher

Divisions of books can be found in the mural panel scenes of the temple, Lokahteikpan. They are particularly arranged, differed to other serial order of *Jātakas*, one panel scene for one *Jātakas*, but one panel scene for one book. “The first twenty-one *nipātas* or books of *Jātakas* are summarized with a limited number of panels in which twenty *Jātakas* cover the upper two rows (Mon captions) of the western wall in the shrine and a *Jātaka*, *Sutasoma Jātaka*, JĀ-537, the extreme left part of the third row of that western wall (Burman). They are followed by a detailed rendering of the first eight *Jātakas* included in the twenty-second book entitled the 'Great *nipāta*' called *Mahānipāta*, which cover the remaining right part of the third row and the following fourth to fourteenth rows. As for the last two *Jātakas*, the *Mahosadha* and the *Vessantara*, they are on the two walls of entrance hall”.<sup>1</sup> So can be defined that the two stories mentioned above became the favourite themes of Bagan people like those of today Myanmar but they differ to the order of *Jātakas* between them.

It is Lokahteikpan that is distinguished to the any other temples for all the scenes of *Jātakas* and *Buddavaṁ*, displayed on nearly almost all the walls are mentioned in the said two languages except 28 Buddhas on the north wall of Shrine which are captioned in only Mon language. According to the spatial art, the top two rows in Mon are reserved for Mon script writers and artists and the rest rows from the third to the lowest bottom for Burman respectively. The last ten *Jātaka* stories, *dasajati*, ten births were particularly favoured by Bagan artists and artisans. We found about the dedication of *Mahānipāta* called *Dasajat* in the inscription dated A.D. 1273 situated at Min Khaung Pagoda at Pyay, the old city.<sup>2</sup> In this inscription, the donor and architect of pagoda recorded as “*Pisukā Ṇa Pisan̄ nhañ atū pluso Dasajat Iklam̄ Abhidhammā 17klam̄*”<sup>26-27</sup> ဗိသုကာ ငဝိသင်နှင့်အတူ ပျူသောဒသဇေတ် ၁၇၇၆ အဘိဓမ္မာ ၁၇ ၇၇၆” means the architect, *Pisukā Ṇa Pisan̄* and the donor made canonical texts such as a set of *Dasajat* (Last Ten Stories)

<sup>1</sup> Bautze-Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan*, p.75 (Bautze-Picron mentions the shorter stories as 20 books and Mahānipāta as 21<sup>st</sup> books)  
<sup>2</sup> U Nyein Maung, *ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာ ကျောက်စာများ* (*Old Burma Inscriptions*), Vol.3, (Hand Writing), Yangon, Archaeological Department, 1983, pp.87-89 (Hereafter cited as *OBI*, III)

and 17 sets of *Abhidhammā* for pagoda and monastery.<sup>1</sup> It is noted that architect, mason and painter are essential for creation of art works and religious edifices as well as they were assumedly skillful in canonical texts. So, they have received the most price and prize for their art works from donors. Whereas, *Tipitakas*, canonical texts had ever been well known by monks and educated lay people, they were distributed in public using media of visual arts and performing arts.

The performance is closely related to canonical texts especially in *Jātakas* nos. 59, 60, 116, 179, 212, 243 and 309. Bodhisattva of each *Jātaka* was reborn as a performer of specific different career as well as fairy musician, kinnara in *Jātaka* JĀ-485. The Bodhisattvas (Buddhas-to-be) were reborn as instrumentalists \_a drummer (*cañ sañ*) in JĀ-59 *Bherivāda jātaka*,<sup>2</sup> a conch blower (*Khrusañ sañ*) in JĀ-60 *Samkhadhama Jātaka*,<sup>3</sup> a harpist (*coñ tat*) in JĀ-243 *Guttīla Jātaka*.



**Caption** /ab&0j' Zmwí aAm' bwl of aumeh;rwlLzZ/ oc' rZmwí aAm' bwl of aumeh;r nKoií

**Figure 6** (right) *Bherivāda Jātaka* JĀ-59 with the Mon Caption Means that Bodhisattva Is a Drummer, Kubyauk-gyi (Myinkaba) Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

**Figure 7** (left) *Samkhadhama Jātaka* JĀ-60 with the Mon Caption Means that Bodhisattva Is a Conch Blower, Kubyauk-gyi (Myinkaba) Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

In the terms of old Myanmar, there is a little different word for music player between inscription and ink gloss caption for instance the former mentions *coñ sañ*<sup>4</sup> for harpist instead of using *coñ tat* in the caption of ink gloss found in a *Jātaka* called *Guttīla* JĀ-243 of Kubyauk-gyi (Wetkyi-in). In Mon ink gloss of Kubyauk-gyi (Myinkaba), the caption of same *Jātaka* describes as *acār tana* (အာရ် တန) that means a teacher for music of harp.<sup>5</sup> *Coñ sañ* of inscriptions defines ordinary harpist but *coñ tat* in old Burman and *acār tana* in old Mon captioned for *Guttīla Jātaka* means a professional musician for string instrument of harp.

<sup>1</sup> G.H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin. *Inscriptions of Burma*, 5 Portfolios, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933- 57, Plate. 242 Lines 26-27 (Hereafter cited as Pl. for example Pl.242<sup>26-27</sup>)

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 6 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 7 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

<sup>4</sup> Pl.265<sup>35</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Figure 8 and Figure 9 Source- Photos Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication



**Caption /** ဂုတ္တိလ္လဇာတ်။ ဗောဓိသတ်ဒသ် အစာရ် တနံ။

ဂုတ္တိလ္လဇာတ် ၂၄၃

**Figure 8** *Guttīla Jātaka* with Mon Caption, Mural, Two Harpists, Dancer and King, Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi

**Figure 9** *Guttīla Jātaka*/, Plaque, the Same Icons to Figure 8, Ananda, Source- Photos Taken by Than Zaw

(Bagan), Private Communication

This story mentions about the contest of plucking skill on string instrument of Harp between the teacher named *Guttīla* and his pupil who finally became a loser. To depict the story, two harpists before the king are always illustrated in the scene whereas sometimes the female celestial dancer on the side of teacher is inserted in the scene to help him. In this story, Bodhisattva is *Guttīla* who is a teacher of lutenists.

In JĀ-116, *Dubbaca Jātaka*, Bodhisattva became an acrobatic dancer, called in Myanmar word *khun ka so sū* (ခုန်ကသောသူ). Unfortunately, the image was damaged, but the style of the dancer can be traced in Ananda plaque of the same story.<sup>1</sup> In JĀ-212, *Ucchīṭṭhabhatta Jātaka*, Bodhisattva became a poor acrobatic dancer, *suchuiw nray kakhriy* (သူဆိုဝိဠိယ ကြိယ)<sup>2</sup> in which case Myanmar language refers to “a dancer” for each career but canonical texts indicates an acrobat. The term could be corrected as an acrobat with spear (လှံခုန်သောသူ) in the *Jātaka* caption of Vinido temple M-659.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> (a)Ba Shin, “Pagán, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi”, p.204  
 (b) See Figure 10 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication  
<sup>2</sup> Ba Shin, “Pagán, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi”, p.207  
<sup>3</sup> See Figure 11 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication





Caption / ဒုဗ္ဗဇာတိ ၁၁၆

/ဒုဗ္ဗဇာတိ လုံချန်စသော (၁၃)

**Figure 10** (right) *Dubbaca jātaka* JĀ-116, an Acrobatic Dancer, Plaque, Ananda  
**Figure 11** (left) *Dubbaca jātaka* JĀ-116, Vinido M-659, Source- Photos Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

In the last ten stories, the supporting characters of dancers and instrumentalists revealed in narrative visual scenes and scriptures are the provable evidences that performances are essential in Buddhism. They are beautifully, widely arranged and illustrated as mural panels on the interior walls of Lokahteikpan temple and as the plaques at Ananda. The paintings of Lokahteikpan can be compared with those of any other temples such as Nagayon, Pahtotharmya and even Abeyadana which is said, the best model of the finest murals. Nonetheless, the finest murals of *Mahā Nipāta* can only be seen in Lokahteikpan. The numbers of mural stories of *Maha Nipāta* in Burman style of Lokahteikpan and of glaze plaques of the longer ten stories in Mon style of Ananda, were more used to depict some scenes of *Jātakas* than others according to the profound sense of the canonical instructor, the monk.

It is noted that both Burman and Mon preferred Vessantara and Mahosadha to other eight stories of *Maha Nipāta*, but the Mons have changed the serial order of arrangement for *Maha Nipāta*, Last Ten *Jātakas*. In Lokahteikpan, two recent former life stories of Buddha are fully decorated with many narrative scenes on the two walls of entrance hall. In this case, Burman script-writer of Lokahteikpan has followed the order of Sri Lanka.

**The Order of Last Ten *Jātaka* Stories**

Order	Sri Lanka	Lokahteikpan	Ananda	Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi	Modern Myanmar
1	Mūga-pakkha 538	Temiya 538	Temī	Temī	Temiya (aw)
2	Mahā Janaka 539	Janaka 539	Janak	Janak	Janaka (Z)

Order	Sri Lanka	Lokahteikpan	Ananda	Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi	Modern Myanmar
3	Suvaṇṇa Sāma 540	Sāma 540	Syām	Syām	Suvaṇṇa Sāma (ok)
4	Nimi 541	Nemi 541	Nemi	Nemi	Nemi (ae)
5	Kandahāla (CandaKumāra) 542	CandaKumāra 542	Mahos	Maho	Mahosadha (r)
6	Buridatta 543	Buridatta 543	Candakumār	Candakumār	Buridatta (bk)
7	Mahānāradakassapa 544	Nārada 544	Bhūridat	Bhūridat	Canda (pef)
8	Vidhurapandita 545	Vidhura 545	Nār	Nārada	Nārada (em)
9	Mahā-Ummagga 546	Mahosadha 546	Widhir	Widhir	Vidhura (0d)
10	Vesantara 547	Vesantara 547	Wisantar	Wesantara	Vesantara (a0)

According to the canonical masters of Ananda, 124 plaques for *Wisantar* (Vesantara) and 95 plaques for *Mahos* (Mahā-Ummagga), 45 for *Janak* (Mahājanaka), 37 for *Temī* (Mūgapakkha), 24 for *Widhir* (Vidhurapandita), 21 for *Bhūridat* (Bhūridatta), 19 for *Syām* (Sāma), 13 for *Nemi* (Nimi), 9 for *Candakumār* (Khandahala) and 3 for *Nār* (Mahānāradakassapa)<sup>1</sup> are arranged on the second roof and three receding terraces above it of Ananda<sup>2</sup>. The different numbers among *Jātakas* at Ananda are much more than those of Lowkahteikpan. The number of plaques gradually reduced from most favourite to the least favourable story. “The different numbers of plaques of *Jātakas* indicate the popular interesting of Bagan on the last ten stories. The great popularity of *Vesantara Jātaka* in Myanmar has been noticed for his practice of *Dāna* (charity), one of the ten perfections (*pāramī*) that was striking sympathetic chord in Bagan society”.<sup>3</sup>

To point out the study of the visual art, the composition and attitude of imagery in the illustration of the *Jātaka* stories are important for the viewers. “There are two types of composition\_ one asymmetric and imbued with movement and energy, and one based on a strict symmetry developed about a central figure. For instance, Bodhisattva alone occupied a half of the scene, usually the left one and a group of worshippers face him which implies that he is also

<sup>1</sup> Tun Aung Chain, *Glimpses of Myanmar History, Texts and Images*, Yangon, SEAMEO, 2011, p.83(Hereafter cited as Tun Aung Chain, *Glimpses of Myanmar History*)

<sup>2</sup> Chas. Duroiselle *The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda, Text*, p. V

<sup>3</sup> Tun Aung Chain, *Glimpses of Myanmar History, Texts and Images*, p.85

taller than his companions. The other composition is imbued with a strict symmetry showing the Bodhisattva in the foreground and in the centre of the square panel”.<sup>1</sup>

Among the last ten stories, the *Jātakas* closely related with performance will be examined between Ananda and Lokahteikpan pagodas. In the scene of *Temī* (*Mūgapakka Jātaka*), *Jātaka* plaques of Ananda reveal more performing figures with the Prince *Temī* than those of Lokahteikpan mural panels. In the test scenes with devices that are related to performance of Ananda plaques, Bodhisattva is mostly in a reclining posture on his couch whereas he is always in a sitting attitude in those of Lokahteikpan murals. In Ananda, 37 plaques of separate episodes were used to illustrate *Temī Jātaka* in which the first scene starts with the episode of Indra’s inviting to Future *Temī* in the Tāvātimsa to be reborn as a son of Candādevī, the chief queen of the king of Benares. In this story, *Temī*, actuated by the fear of hell resulted from the cause of kingship and on the advice of a goddess, pretends to be dumb.

According to the modern Myanmar texts, the king and his services test seventeen ways with many resorted devices to ascertain whether he is really so dumb, but all fail. The story discusses the *nekkhama pāramī* (perfection of renunciation) and *khantī pāramī* (perfection of forbearance). In this case, the artist and script writer used 16 plaques in Ananda for 16 scenes of testing tricks i.e. 1.*Khīra vimaṅsa*\_ the trial with milk 2.*Pūwakhajjana vimaṅsana*\_ the trial with cakes 3.*Biḥat ku sacchu*\_ try with fruits 4.*Kīlābhaṅḍaka vimaṅsana*\_ the trial with toys 5.*Bhojana vimaṅsana*\_ the trial with food 6.*Biḥat ku cīṅ*\_ try with elephants 7.*Biḥat ku jrum*\_ try with snakes 8.*Samajja vimaṅsana*\_ the test of the mime 9.*Biḥat ku snāk*\_ try with a sword 10.*Biḥat ku saṅ*\_ try with conches 11.*Biḥat ku phaṁ*\_ try with drums 12.*Biḥat ku pnāṅ*\_ try with lamps 13.*Biḥat ku taṅglāy*\_ try with molasses 14.*Biḥat ku haḍak*\_ try with filth 15.*Kapalla vimaṅsana*\_ the test with fire pan 16.*Nātaka vimaṅsana*\_ trial with nautches or personal dancer.<sup>2</sup>

The Mon artists for Ananda, assumedly, omitted or missed the scene of the test with burning the house in which *Temī* was staying that are mentioned in old and modern Burman versions. They had chosen the test scenes as the climaxes of the story by using 16 plaques for 16 episodes that amount up to nearly the half of all scenes. Among the testing plots, the four tests are used with dancers and instrumentalists to elicit some words from *Temīya*. The Mon script writer used some Pali adopted words to mention the narrative episodes. The narratives are more vividly précised and more specific to cover the story than those of any other pagoda.

In the mural scenes of Lokahteikpan pagoda c.1120 A.D. that is fifteen year later than Ananda c.1105 A.D.,<sup>3</sup> the last ten stories are reserved for Burman script writers and artists. All last ten painted *Jātakas* have been mentioned with archaic Burman scripts as painted inscriptions. The story is illustrated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row and 4<sup>th</sup> row on the west wall of the shrine. The scenes have continuously run from left to right, episode by episode, without partition of panels within the row. But we can easily identify the kind of scene according to the captions below each scene. In *Temīya Jātaka* of this temple, the performing images with the prince are also seen at the testing episodes.

The first scene of *Temī* starts with the episode of the monk’s asking Buddha to preach the law, Dhamma for the past story of *Temīya*. The concept of interpretation and representation on

<sup>1</sup> Bautze-Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan*, p.71

<sup>2</sup> (a)Chas. Duroiselle, *The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda Text*, pp.1-8

(b) Chas. Duroiselle, *The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda Index*, *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. II, Part II Yangon, Government Printing, 1961, pp.2-12, plates, I-IV (Hereafter cited as “The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda Index”)

<sup>3</sup> G.H. Luce and Bohmu Ba Shin, “Pagan Myinkaba, Kubyauk-gyi Temple of Rājakumār (1113 A.D.) and the Old Mon Writings on its Walls” *BBHC*, II, Myanmar Historical Commission, 1961, pp.288-329 (Hereafter Cited as G.H. Luce and Bohmu Ba Shin, “Pagan Myinkaba, Kubyauk-gyi Temple”)

*Jātaka* defers even between Mon and Myanmar as well as early and later pagodas. In fact, what the most important is, is the local art works and their talents on cannon. The caption of the first test scene is illegible. 2. *Purhāloṅ sacśī phlaṅ cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with fruits, 3. *Purhāloṅ chaṅ mraṅ yoṅ cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with toys of elephant and horse 4. *Purhāloṅ thamaṅ cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with food 5. *Purhāloṅ im phut so cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be by setting house fire 6. *Purhāloṅ chaṅ huyciy aṃ cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be by seemingly causing an elephant to charge him 7. *Purhāloṅ mruy rac so phlaṅ cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be by coiling him with a snake 9. *Purhāloṅ coṅ nheṅ phlaṅ e cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with harp and trumpet 9. *Purhāloṅ snek<sup>1</sup> phlaṅ e cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with the sword 10. *Purhāloṅ khuru mhut so cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be by blowing conch-shells 11. *Purhāloṅ miy' uiw cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with clay pot-lamp 12. *Purhāloṅ keṅkrī cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with excrement 13. *Purhāloṅ mī cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with fire 14. *Purhāloṅ myā cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with wives 15. *Purhāloṅ samī cam e* \_ they test Buddha-to-be with daughters.<sup>2</sup>



**Caption** / ပုဂ္ဂလောင် ဆင်ဟုယ်စိယ်အံသောဖွင်စေံအံ။ ပုဂ္ဂလောင် မြုယ်ရစ်သောဖွင်စေံအံ။ ပုဂ္ဂလောင်စောင်ငှင် ဖွင်စေံအံ။ ပုဂ္ဂလောင် သွက်၏၏။ ပုဂ္ဂလောင် ခု...

**Figure 12** Row of Long Panels and Captions are the Narrative Scenes for *Temiya Jātaka*, Second Row Is for Janaka, Lokahteikpan, Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

In this case, Burman used more own glossaries than Mon, but the order of test is not précised and some tests are excluded such as tests with cakes, drums and molasses. They install the test with burning house that the Mon has omitted and the last two tests are overlapped. A very interesting case is that the test with entertainment is mentioned by playing harp and blowing trumpet. They are represented to the form of theatrical drama but they do not use the word *pantyā* that probably means narrative performance and performers. In the illustration of *Temiya Jātaka*, Buddha-to-be (Bodhisattva) is in sitting posture before the pair performers of whom a man is plucking five strings of *coṅ* \_ Myanmar arch harp and a woman is blowing trumpet called *nheṅ*.

<sup>1</sup> Old Mon word, compare with Ananda caption of test with sword, later, Burman of Bagan used *Sanlyak* for sword  
<sup>2</sup> (a) Ba Shin. *Lokahteikpan: Early Burmese Culture in a Pagan Temple*, Rangoon, The Burma Historical Commission, 1962 Myanmar text, pp.53-54, English Transliteration, pp.91-92, English Translation, pp.122-123 (Hereafter cited as Ba Shin. *Lokahteikpan*) (b) See Figure 12 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

In two musical instruments they held, the harp is clearly prominent and the trumpet is fade out because of white wash, but it can be seen if carefully.<sup>1</sup>

In the scene of coronation ceremony of *Janaka Jātaka*, the elder prince namely *Aritthajanaka*, the crown prince who is sitting under a white umbrella and a Brahman who is blowing the conch for *Abhiseka* is illustrated in the mural of the fifth row on the west wall of shrine in Lokahteikpan.<sup>2</sup> Some figuring styles are good example of asymmetric art in which the artists magnify supporting images that can be seen at the scene of the goddess' rescuing the Bodhisattva from the sea. The scene represents that *Mañimekhalā* carries *Janaka* in her arms by flying through air in which the movement acting posture can be well portrayed in Lokahteikpan.<sup>3</sup> The figure of main icon, *Janaka* is minimized and the support icon, goddess is magnified.



Caption: This scene illustrates the coronation of the Crown Prince Aritthajanaka. He is seated under a white umbrella, and a Brahman is blowing a conch shell for his *Abhiseka* (coronation). The mural is located on the west wall of the shrine in Lokahteikpan.

**Figure 13** Crown Prince, *Aritthajanaka* under white Umbrella who is Father of Bodhisattva is Raised as the King, the Brahman Blows the Conch-shell for *Abhiseka*



Caption: This mural depicts four episodes of the *Janaka Jataka*: the ship splitting, Janaka climbing the ship's mast, his conversation with the goddess *Mañimekhalā*, and her carrying the Bodhisattva through the air. The scene is located in Lokahteikpan.

**Figure 14** Four Episodes of *Janaka*, the Ship Splits, *Janaka* Climbs the Ship's Mast, he Converses with *Mañimekhalā*, the Goddess and she Carries Bodhisattva in her Arms through Air, Lokahteikpan

<sup>1</sup> See Also Figure 12 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

<sup>2</sup> See figure 13 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

<sup>3</sup> See figure 14 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication





**Caption** b&d wri folv [ ef 0' sm

**Figure 16** *Bhūridatta* Observe *Sīlas* in the Garden (Two Performers\_ One is an Instrumentalist and Another, a Dancer before *Bhūridatta*), Ananda, Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private communication

In the mural scenes of *Lokahteikpan*, there are omitted that an important climax episode of observing *sila* by *Bhūridatta*. In comparing with Ananda, the script-writers of *Lokahteikpan* are less skillful in *Jātaka* stories because some main scenes are absent, minor supporting and linking plots are mainly illustrated and the story does not convey to an end and stops with the scene of searching *Bhūdiatta* by his brothers who come from *Nāga* world (*nagā rwā*). The supporting images of performance are displayed as *alambāy*<sup>1</sup>, a snake-charmer, beholding *nagā* daughters' dancing on the north wall of the arch-window<sup>2</sup>.



**Caption** uv/bé\*gtpm cā, st/ &od hōwibōhōmtm uv/bēhā, / tvrh, fe\*gord fupaomz{k? .

**Figure 17** *Alambāy*, Snake-charmer Beholding *Nagā* Daughters' Dancing, *Lokahteikpan*

<sup>1</sup> Old mon of Ananda applies the term, *alambāy*, an abbreviation of *Ālambayana* for snake-charmer, now *alambāy* is written for the same meaning word in Mon and Burman, Chas. Duroiselle “The Talaing Plaques on the Ananda Text”, p.85

<sup>2</sup> (a)Ba Shin. *Lokahteikpan*, Myanmar text, p.62, English Transliteration, p.100, English Translation, pp.122-123 (b)See Figure 17 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication

In *Vidura Jātaka*, the episode concerned with dance is mentioned at 13<sup>th</sup> row on the wall to the north of the arch-window with the dancing illustration of *Nāgī Arandatī* who has the dragon head-dress. Her dance pattern looks like a celestial one that is often seen in Bagan Murals. She intentionally dances and sings on the top of the mountain to attract *Punṇaka*.<sup>1</sup> *Vessantara Jātaka* is the most favourite theme out of ten *Jātaka* stories for artists and audiences during Bagan period. In the *Vessantara Jātaka*, the scene related performance is absent in Bagan, but we found that scene in Sale temple no.94 in which a drummer and a trumpeter as the ushers noticing the crowded audience with their instruments are inserted in the narrative scene of departure.<sup>2</sup> Bagan artists inevitably used performance and narrative stories prohibited by Buddha for propagation and education of Buddhist teaching.



**Caption** . . rd mEṣṢṢṢṢ t/ t&EḌwāwmiix/y u{t/ yEé uzKt/ yEé uEñiē\*grīṣumqDk t/ **Figure18** Arannatī’s (Nāgī Arandatī) Dance at the Top of Mountain, Being Beheld by Punṇaka



**Figure 19** Departure of *Vessansara*, Performers as Ushers Going Ahead of Procession, Sale-94, Source- Photo Taken by Researcher

<sup>1</sup> See Figure 18 Source- Photo Taken by Than Zaw (Bagan), Private Communication  
<sup>2</sup> See Figure 19 Source- Photo Taken by Researcher



## Conclusion

The *Jātaka* stories from *Ekanipāta* to *Mahānipāta* are illustrated in plaques and mural panels. They were used as popular media of instruction in ethical and moral ideas and illustrative education, but those stories in the inaccessible places for the common folks were probably used for canonical references only. *Jātakas* constitute 547 stories of former births of Buddha that can be divided as the 537 shorter stories of former 21 books and the last ten longer stories of 22<sup>nd</sup> book. *Jātaka* stories are depicted at temples and solid-pagodas as an interior wall painting decoration and as an exterior glaze plaque decoration respectively. These narrative stories are transformed and illustrated as the static scenes of narrative performance. Among the themes of Buddhist visual art, *Jātaka* stories have mostly reflected on social lives of Bagan people. The last longer ten stories of previous lives of Buddha are illustrated in many episodes, but the rest former 537 *Jātakas* are always depicted in the pattern of one plaque or one panel for one scene. The plaques and panel scenes of murals illustrated with *Jātaka* stories can be defined as static performance which reflects real live performances and Bagan life-styles.

In the last ten stories, the supporting characters of dancers and instrumentalists revealed in narrative visual scenes and scriptures are so provable evident that performances are essential in Buddhism. They are beautifully, broadly arranged and illustrated as mural panels on the interior walls of Lokahteikpan temple and as the plaques at Ananda. In the pattern of serial order, the Mons have changed the serial order of arrangement for *Maha Nippāta*, Last Ten *Jātakas*. In this case, Burman script-writer of Lokahteikpan has followed the order of Sri Lanka. The component figures, both dancers and instrumentalists are related to such scenes of *Jātakas* as *Temiya*, *Janaka*, *Caṇḍa-kumāra*, *Buridat*, *Vidura* and *Vessantara*. The narrative scenes of *Jātakas* are unavoidably used as a media for education and propagation of religion although Buddha prohibited performing practice in the observing of *Sīla*.

## References

### Inscriptional Sources

- Blagden, C.O. *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, III & IV, Rangoon, Government Printing, 1919-34
- Chit Thein, U. ရှေးဟောင်းမွန်ကျောက်စာပေါင်းချုပ် (*The Compilation of old Mon Inscriptions*, I, II in Mon and Myanmar), Rangoon, Department of Archaeology, 1965
- Duroiselle, Chas. *Epigraphia Birmanica*, II, i and ii, Rangoon, Government Printing, 1921
- Luce, G.H. and Pe Maung Tin. *Inscriptions of Burma*, 5 Portfolios, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933-57
- Nyein Maung, U. *The Old Burma Inscriptions*, (Hand Writing), 6 Volumes, 1972-2012
- Than Tun, Dr. (Deciphered and Transliterated), နှောင်းတွေ့ကျောက်စာများ (*A Miscellany of Inscriptions*), Yangon, Myanmar Historical Commission, 2005
- Than Tun, Dr. *A Miscellany of Inscriptions*, (Text Transcription and Translation in English), Yangon, Myanmar Historical Commission, 2016
- Walshe, Maurice. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, Massachusetts, Wisdom Publications, 1995

### Literature Sources

- Aye Cho, U. ငါးရာငါးဆယ်သိမှတ်ဖွယ် (*The Knowledge of 550 Jātakas*), Yangon, Sar-pay Beikman, 1988
- Ba Shin. *Lokahteikpan: Early Burmese Culture in a Pagan Temple*, Rangoon, The Burma Historical Commission, 1962
- Ba Shin, K. J. Whitbread and G. H. Luce. "Pagán, Wetkyi-in Kubyauk-gyi, an Early Burmese Temple with Ink-Glosses", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1971, pp. 167-218

- Bautze-Picron, Claudine. *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan: Timeless Vistas of the Cosmos*, Bangkok, Orchid Press, 2003
- Cowell, E.B. *The Jataka, or Stories of Buddha's Former Births*, Vols. I to VI, London, Pali Text Society, 1957
- Galloway, Charlotte Kendrick. "Burmese Buddhist Imagery of Early Bagan Period (1044-1113)", 2 Volumes, (A Doctoral Thesis submitted to ANU), Canberra, ANU, 2006
- Halliday, R. *A Mon-English Dictionary*, Rangoon, Mon cultural Section, 1955
- Khin Maung Nyunt, Dr. and Members, *Dictionary of Myanma Performing and Plastic Arts*, Yangon, Ministry of Culture, 2001
- Kyaw Nyein, ဝုင်မြို့ဟောင်း မြင်ကပါရူပဗြာဟ္မဏ်ကြီးဘုရား (*Myin-ka-pa Ku-byauk-gyi Temple of Ancient Bagan*), Yangon, Department of Archaeology, 1992
- Luce, Gordon. H. *The Old Burma-Early Pagan*, Vol. I, II, III, New York, New York University Press, 1969-1970
- Luce, G.H. and Bohmu Ba Shin, "Pagan Myinkaba, Kubyaug-gyi Temple of Rājakumār (1113 A.D.) and the Old Mon Writings on its Walls." *BBHC*, II, Myanmar Historical Commission, (1961), 271-416 the Powin Taung Caves), Bangkok, White Lotus, 2007
- Pichard, Pierre. *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan*, Volumes 1-8 (vol.1 1992, vol. 2 1993, vol.3 1994, vol.4 1994, vol.5 1995, vol. 6 1996, vol. 7 1999, vol.8 2002) KISCADALE EFEO UNESCO. 1992-2002
- Than Tun, Dr. "History of Buddhism in Burma, A.D. 1000-1300", Ph.D. Thesis Submitted to SOAS, Revised and Enlarged Edition, *JBRS*, Yangon, Burma Research Society, 1978
- Tun Aung Chain. *Glimpses of Myanmar History, Texts and Images*, Yangon, SEAMEO, 2011