

Prominent Features of Buddha's Statues in Myanmar

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Abstract

The Siddhattha, the founder of Buddhism, was born on the Full Moon Day of Kason in North India. At the age of thirty-five, on the Full Moon of Kason, he attained the enlightenment and become the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One. From that day, for 45 years, the Buddha taught all classes of men and women, kings and peasants, Brahmins and outcasts, etc. At the ripe age of eighty, on the Full Moon Day of Kason, passed away at Kusinara. After that, the representation symbols of Buddha statue appeared and worshipped in humans from about 75 AD. The Buddha statues changed in style and size according to the periods and places when and where they were made. Especially, this article employs Buddha images from the while Myanmar as evidence on their evolution and style. As the ideas of craftsmen and donors changed, the style of Buddha statues changed. This article highlights that the facial expressions of the Buddha images reflected those of the donors and craftsmen. Therefore, it is found that if the Buddha statues are looked at from the archaeological point of view, the reflected the periods when the images were made, thus making scholars be able to guess at the time of making images.

Keywords: Full Moon Day of Kason, Buddha statue, Myanmar, archaeological point of view

Introduction

The Seddhattha was born on the Full Moon Day of Kason in the 6th century BC. His father was King Suddhodaana and his mother was Queen Mahāmayādevī. He saw the Four Great Omens on his journey around the city. From that day onwards, his mind changed and he decided to find the solution, the way out of this universal suffering. At the age of thirty-five, on the Full Moon Day of Kason, he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha. From that day, for 45 years, the Buddha taught of classes of men and women, Kings and peasants, Brahmins and outcasts, etc. His Dhamma brought the benefits and welfares to all humans and deities. At the ripe age of eighty, on the Full Moon Day of Kasone, passed away at Kusināra, leaving behind thousands of followers, monks and nuns, and a vast treasure store of the Dhamma. Moreover the representation symbols of Buddha statues were appeared only worshipped in human form began about 75 AD.³

Background history of Buddha Statue

As the Buddha is recognized as a peerless human, the Buddha images have to be made with 32 characteristics of a superhuman (mahāpurisaolaḅkhaṇā). Buddha images had not yet been made during Maurya, Suṅga and Andra Periods. In those distant days, foot-prints of the Buddha Lotus buds and flowers, wheels of Dhamma, Bodhi trees, thrones, and deer figures were made to represent the Buddha. Buddha images were made suitably according to times and regions in subsequent periods like Andra Period (1st century BC), Mathura Period (2nd century AD), Amarauati Period (2nd century AD), Gandra Period (3rd century AD), Gupta Period (5th century AD) and Pāla Period (9th century AD).⁴ Some evidence discovered show

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⁴ Mg Mg Thiri, Oakdisa, Yokpwāsintutawmyarleḅchraṅ (The study of Buddha Statues), Fujiyama press, January 2019, p-11, (Hereafter cited as Mg Mg Thiri Buddha Statues)

that Buddha images were made and worshipped in Myanmar in ancient times. It is especially found that most of the Buddha images of the Bagan Period are similar to those of Pāla Period.

Data Analysis & Finding

The Buddha images which appeared in Myanmar throughout successive periods

Pyu Period

- During the Pyu Period (about 6th-7th centuries AD), Buddha images were made out of bricks, cement, sandstone, etc. They were endowed with 32 great characteristics of super-human (mahāpurisaolaḅkhaṇā) and resembled humans.⁵

Bagan Period

- During the Bagan Period (11th-13th centuries AD), Buddha images were made in the simple form out of the very hard rock. They are similar to those of Bengal (those of Pāla Period) in the north-eastern part of India. In other words, these images are similar to the works of India.⁶



Fig. 1 Pyu Period 6th-7th AD
Source by Sriksatra Museum



Fig. 2 Pagan Period 11th-13th AD
Source by National Museum

Pinya Period

- Although the Buddha images made in Pinya Period are akin to those of the Late Bagan Period, their facial expressions became more similar to those of the Shans and the Mons, for the culture of the Shan and the Yun were at their height during that period.⁷

Hamsāvati Period

- The facial expression of the Buddha images made in Hamsāvati Period became more similar to that of humans, especially that of the Myanmar.⁸

⁵ Mg Mg Thiri, Buddha Statues, p-15, See Figure-1

⁶ U Mg Mg Tin (MA) & U Win Mg (Tampawaddy), Khetasaksaknhikkoekwekraso Buddha Yokpwāsintutawmyar (The Worshipped of Buddha Statues era by era), Nyan Lin Sarpay, November 1982, p-76, Hereafter cites as U Mg Mg Tin (MA) & U Win Mg (Tampawaddy), See Figure-2

⁷ U Than Tun (Mawlamyine), Khetsamineakhrpra Buddha Sintutawmyar (The Basic History of Buddha Statues), Sarpaybikman, 2013, p-83, See Figure-3

⁸ See Figure-4



Fig. 3 Pinya Period 14th AD
Source by National Museum



Fig. 4 Hamsāvati Period 15th AD
Source by National Museum

Inwa Period

- Inwa Period is divided into Early Inwa Period and Late Inwa Period. The Buddha images made during Inwa Period had more prominent nose-ridge and eye-brows.⁹

Taungoo Period

-The Buddha images made during the Taungoo Period became more proportionate and more richly decorated with floral designs.¹⁰



Fig. 5 Innwa Period 15th AD
Source by National Museum



Fig. 6 Taungnoo Period 16th AD
Source by National Museum

Mrauk U Period

- Buddha images of various sizes were made out of stone during Mrauk U Period. The Buddha images looked more solid and thicker. It is thought that they looked like the people of that time, who were strong and healthy.¹¹

Nyaung Yan Period - The Buddha images made in Nyaung Yan Period are in the distinctive style. In other words, they exerted a great influence on the styles of the Buddha images made in the preceding periods. This is due to the great faith of architects of that time in the Buddha.¹²

⁹ Mg Mg Thiri, Buddha Statues, p-42, See Figure-5

¹⁰ See Figure-6

¹¹ See Figure-7

¹² Mg Mg Thiri, Buddha Statues, p-53, See Figure-8



Fig. 7 Mrauk-U Period 16th AD
Source by Researcher field trip



Fig. 8 Nyaungyan Period 17th AD
Source by National Museum

Yadanapon and Konbaung Period - The Buddha images made during Yadanapon and Konbaung Periods bear the more Myanmarized style. So they became more proportionate, beautiful and adorable.¹³

Recent Period - The Buddha images of today are made out of ideas and inspirations of craftsmen and donors. So they assume a more beautiful and refined appearance.¹⁴



Fig. 9 Yadanar bon Period 19th AD
Source by National Museum



Fig. 10 Konbaung Period 19th AD
Source by National Museum



Fig. 11 Recent Period 21th AD Source by Google

Conclusion

As the Buddha is a peerless, omniscient personality, Buddhists, motivated by their faith in him, carved his images more beautiful. According to the varying degrees of their faith, Buddhists made Buddha images out of stone, copper, bronze, iron, wood, etc. and embellished them with various floral designs. If Buddha images are looked at from the archaeological point of view, it will be found that they took on different appearances in different periods. Therefore, it is to be noted that if Buddha images are explored and preserved, not only can the period be connected archaeologically but also missing links of history can be discovered. It is

¹³ U Mg Mg Tin (MA) & U Win Mg (Tampawaddy), See Figure-9 to 10

¹⁴ See Figure-11

also found that the appearances of the Buddha images reflected the social ways and culture of the periods in which the images were made. These findings can contribute a lot to the students of archaeology.

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