



Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin

Jan - Mar 2022



By Sis Myint Myint Aung

We started our virtual tours to discover Buddhist art and architecture half a year ago. In this Jan – Mar 2022 issue of the BPCA quarterly e-bulletin, we will bring you to the last three stops. We hope you have learnt more about how Buddhism flourished in different periods of time and have been inspired by the dedication, creativity and skillfulness of many who contributed to the propagation of Buddhism through art and architecture.

On the academic front, activities in the last few months were constrained due to the rising COVID-19 cases in Singapore. With the national effort to move towards endemic, we have started physical classes partially for students of diploma, degree and master's classes and planned for a temple visit for the current diploma students, which is part of the course curriculum before the pandemic. We are also planning a graduation ceremony for graduates of diploma, degree and master's classes of 2019 – 2021, and an appreciation event for our respected teachers who have volunteered to teach us, despite having numerous challenges due to the pandemic. We hope to bring you updates on these events in future issues.

In addition, we would also like to invite you to share your insights on putting Dhamma into daily practice, stories on the positive experience from practising the Dhamma or give any feedback or suggestions via email to Sister Tyy Yn at tyyynquek@gmail.com.

Thank you for staying in tune with us. May all be well, happy and peaceful!

The Editorial Team

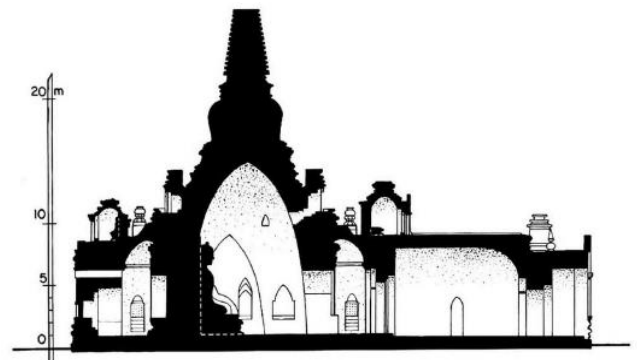
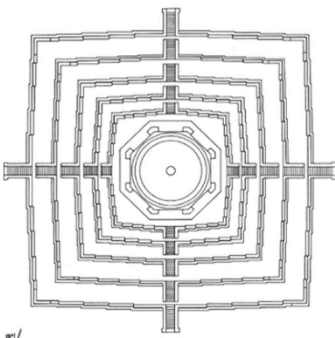
The Arts at Pagan

By Sister Myint Myint Aung

The Kingdom of Pagan (or Bagan) was the first Burmese kingdom to unify the regions that would later constitute modern-day Myanmar. Pagan's 250-year rule over the Irrawaddy valley and its periphery laid the foundation for the ascent of Burmese language and culture, the spread of Burman ethnicity in Upper Myanmar, and the growth of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar and mainland Southeast Asia.

Pagan is a sacred landscape that features an exceptional range of Buddhist art and architecture in Southeast Asia dated to the 11th and 14th centuries and houses the best-preserved corpus of Buddhist mural paintings.

Generally, architecture during that time was of two broad styles: the stupa-style solid temple inherited from the Pyu city-states, and the gu-style hollow temple, from very simple and small size temples to very complicated and large temples. No single temple has the same architectural design and decoration style among these temples.



Section of ShweHsanDaw (stupa-style solid temple) Pathothamyia (Gu-style) hollow temple)

Pagan's artist used glazed plaques to decorate the exterior of the stupa-style solid temple (stucco moulding and glazing) and the interior of the gu-style hollow temple (mural painting).

Shwezigon Pagoda, is a stupa located in Nyaung-U, Myanmar. It consists of a circular gold leaf-gilded stupa surrounded by smaller temples and shrines. Its construction began during the reign of King Anawrahta (1044–1077), the founder of the Pagan Empire, and was completed in 1102, during the reign of his son, King Kyansittha. Shwezigon Pagoda was believed to enshrine a tooth and collar bone relics of Gautama Buddha.



Shwezigon Pagoda, "golden pagoda on a dune". The bell-shaped stupa that is completely gilded sits on a square base, of which the sides are about 49 meters long.

The hollow **gu-style temple** comes in two basic styles: the one-face design with one main entrance, and the four-face design with four main entrances. The primary features of these temples are pointed arches and vaulted chambers, both of which became larger and grander during the Pagan period.

The most important decorative feature is the mural paintings that cover the inner walls and ceilings. They were painted with a wide range of colours on various sized panels glossed with ink writings to depict scenes from the Jatakas, Buddhavamsa, prophetic scenes of the former Buddhas and teachings from various suttas. Available wall surfaces were also painted with floral scrolls / floral patterns, interspersed with figures of Buddhas, Brahmas, Devas and various supernatural animals.

Painted designs were fitted into a framework of architectural moldings that could be executed three-dimensionally in stucco mixed plasters or two-dimensionally in trompe l'oeil painting. More than 387 Pagan period temples preserved some traces of their once colourful interiors.

Among them, Pahtothamya Temple is one of the significant gu-style monuments. Although the founding date of the temple is not known with certainty, it is estimated to be built around the 10th – 11th century AD.



The Pahtothamya is a small, single storey temple oriented towards the East. Its interior is dimly lit, typical of the early type of Pyu-influenced temples with their small, perforated stone windows. On the roof is a bulbous dome. Above it is a disc shaped box called Harmika, where relics of the Buddha were believed to be enshrined.



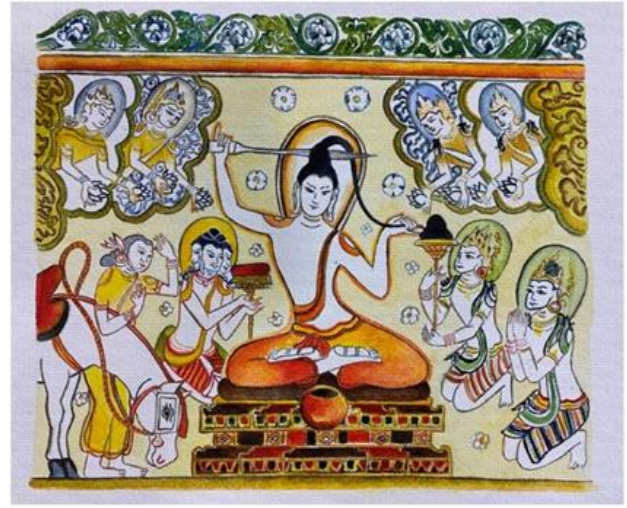
The large Central Buddha Image inside Pahtothamya Temple.

The temple's uniqueness is the magnificent Buddhist murals which were among the earliest Buddhist paintings of the Pagan period. It was believed that the cave walls were once full of Buddhist paintings, with some very large murals, almost 4 feet high and 6 feet long. Under these murals, inscriptions were written in ancient Mon script. In the central shrine, the following inscriptions, with some accompanied with murals were found:

- Vinaya Piṭaka: the four pārajikas, thirteen saṅghādisesas, two aniyata rules, fifteen of the thirty nissaggiya, and ten of the ninety-two pacittiya were identified.
- Sutta Piṭaka: some suttas from Dīgha Nikāya and Majjhima Nikāya.



The Buddha's father, King Suddhodana, showing Prince Siddhattha to Devila, the hermit who foretold his Buddhahood



The Great Tonsure: the Buddha cutting his hair with his sword

The mural pictures are re-painted by Sister Myint Myint Aung, tracking the curves of the original paintings that remained inside the temple.



Pahtothamya Temple: <https://worldtoptop.com/pahtothamya-temple/>

STŪPAS

By Sister Kāñcanā Elaine Tan

In the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta, the Buddha said that four persons were worthy of the stupa: *A Tathagata, a Paccekabuddha, a disciple of a Tathagata, and a universal monarch.*

When a person sees a stupa, his heart is calmed and happy. He has faith in the Buddha and his teachings, and when he passes away, he will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness. A stupa is an object of veneration of the Buddhists.

Stūpas (Thūpa, Pāli) may have originated back in pre-Buddhist times, India, where domed-shaped mounds of earth or bricks (like burial mounds or heaps) were constructed.

Types of Stupa

- **Relic stupas** in which relics or remains of the Buddha, his disciples and ardent lay supporters are interred.
- **Object stupas** house objects belonging to the Buddha or his disciples, such as alms bowls or robes, or important Buddhist scriptures.
- **Commemorative stupas** were built to commemorate events in the lives of Buddha or his disciples.
- **Symbolic stupas** were built to symbolise aspects of Buddhist theology.
- **Votive stupas** were built to commemorate visits or gain spiritual benefits, usually at the site of prominent stupas which are regularly visited.

Sanchi Stūpa

Sanchi Stūpa was one of the earliest stupas in Sanchi, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. It was built by King Asoka, an Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, in the 3rd century BCE. King Asoka was credited for preserving and spreading Buddhism through India (and ancient Asia). One of his ways was the construction of 84,000 stupas.

The Stūpa consists of a drum (Medhi) that forms the solid foundation base and a hemispherical **dome** (Anda) which is the body and a shaft. On top of the dome, there is a square stone railing (Vedikā) surrounding a small platform or box (Hamika); and a short mast (yashti) supporting three flattened umbrellas (Chatra). During that time, the status of the person can be observed from the number of umbrella tiers.



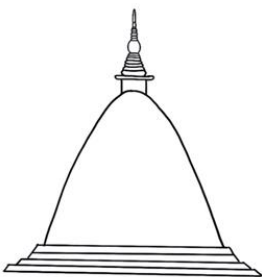
Editor's Note:

This is an example of a Relics Stupa, believed to house relics of the Buddha. The dome (anda), symbolises the dome of heaven enclosing the earth. The platform / box represents the world mountain, from which rises the mast (yashti), symbolising the cosmic axis. The mast bears umbrellas (chatras) that represent the various heavens (devaloka).

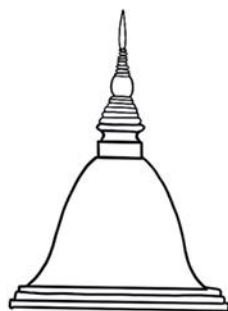
Sketch by Sister Kāñcanā Elaine Tan

Forms / Shapes of Stupas

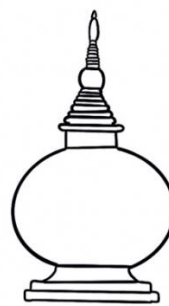
There are various forms and shapes, such as:



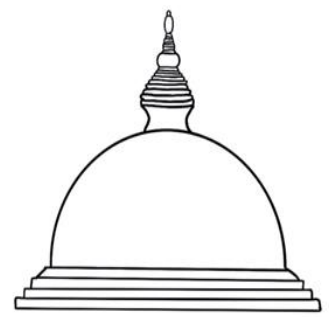
Heap of paddy shaped



Bell-shaped



Waterpot shape



Bubble shape



Kelaniya Maha Vihara, located 11km northeast of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Kelaniya Maha Vihara, Colombo, Sri Lanka, resembles a stūpa in the shape of the **heap of a paddy**. The temple was believed to be hallowed during the third and final visit of the Buddha to Sri Lanka eight years after his Enlightenment.



Tissamaharama Raja Maha Vihara, Southern Province of Sri Lanka.

Artwork by Sister Kāñcanā Elaine Tan

Tissamaharama Raja Mahā Vihara, Southern Province of Sri Lanka, resembles a stūpa in the shape of a **bubble**. It is one of the four major Buddhist monasteries established in Sri Lanka after the arrival of Venerable Mahinda. The site of the Vihara was believed to be consecrated by the Buddha, who spent some time there in meditation with 500 Arahants on his third visit to the Island.

Although the shape of stūpas changes, it is a very powerful art symbol that connects us to the teachings of the Buddha, strengthening our faith and propelling us to practise the Dhamma to achieve the realisation of Enlightenment.

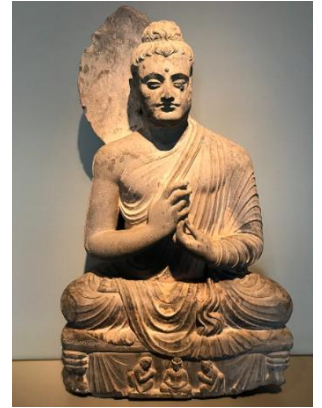
Buddha Images

By Sister Chan Lee Hoon

In the early days, from the Buddha's time to around 1st century CE, symbols were used to represent the Buddha, and the people venerated these symbols. Gradually, Buddha images arose to replace the symbols.

Buddha Statues, Greco Style

One of the first two representations of the Buddha was in Greco style. This Greco-Roman style is a cultural syncretism between classical Greek culture and Buddhism. It is characterised by the strong idealistic realism and sensuous



description of Hellenistic arts. They are the first representations of the Buddha in human form. Such statues are found in Gandhara, which were sculptured during the 1st century CE to 11th century CE, in the kingdoms of Gandhara. The Buddha depicted here looks like Greek gods, e.g., Apollo, with wavy hair and heavy folds of drapery covering the shoulders like a Roman Toga, the distinctive garment of ancient Rome.

Buddha Statues, Mathura Style

Mathura images were the other first representation of the Buddha in the 1st century CE. Mathuran sculptures became prominent after Mauryan art, the art of the Mauryan Empire of King Asoka. Mathura became India's most important artistic production centre from the 2nd century CE. This style is shown with the Buddha in inward-looking meditative expressions.



Other signifiers of his greatness, such as the ushnisha (cranial protuberance) and urna (auspicious mark on the forehead) have been lost over time.

Buddha Statues in India



This is the Buddha statue at Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya, the site of the Bodhi tree where the Buddha attained enlightenment. The current temple was rebuilt in the 6th century CE.

Buddha Images in Sri Lanka

Buddha images of Sri Lanka are shown in bright reds and yellows, with Buddha's squarish facial structure.



Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Painting of Jetavana Monastery



Dambulla Cave, Sri Lanka
The ceilings and walls are covered with such paintings.



A vihara in Colombo
Cobra shielded the Buddha in the first few weeks of his Enlightenment

Buddha Statues in Sri Lanka

Buddha statues are also brightly coloured in red and yellow, with heavily decorated roof overhead in Sri Lanka.



Buddha Statues in Thailand

Buddha images during the Sukhothai Period (14th century CE) were designed to express compassion and serenity in their postures and facial expressions. Images have flamed-shaped aureole¹, finely curled hair, slight smile, broad shoulders and oval face.



Sukhothai-style Phra Buddha Chinnarat,
Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat in Phitsanulok



Sources of References

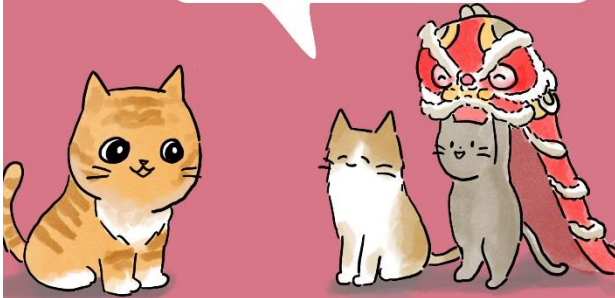
1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>
2. <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/sri+lanka+buddha>
3. Vision of The Buddha, The Buddha and His Teachings by Narada Maha Thero

¹ A radiance surrounding the head or the whole figure in the representation of a sacred personage.

The 38 Greatest Blessings

Thank you so much for coming!
Tell me, how can I acquire the greatest
blessings for this year?

Yes. If you want the highest
blessing for this year, listen well
and try the following:



1. Not to associate with the foolish and ignorant,
2. To associate with the wise;
3. Respect those worthy of respect
— this is the greatest blessing.



4. To be able to reside in a suitable and
amenable location,
5. To have done meritorious actions in the past,
6. To establish oneself in the right course in
morality
— this is the greatest blessing.



7. To be able to acquire harmless skill set,
8. To be skillful in his or her work,
9. To have self - discipline, and
10. To speak kindly
— this is the greatest blessing.



I shall study
and work hard!

11. To be able to support our parents,
12. To cherish our spouse,
13. To care for our children,
14. To be engaged in peaceful occupation
— this is the greatest blessing.



15. To be generous in giving,
16. To be righteous in conduct,
17. To help one's friends and relatives, and
18. To be blameless in action
— this is the greatest blessing.



19. To do no evil
20. To refrain from alcohol and drugs
21. To be steadfast in virtue
— this is the greatest blessing.



Do no evil

- 22) To be respectful,
- 23) To be humble,
- 24) To be contented and
- 25) To be grateful; and
- 26) To listen regularly to the Dhamma
— this is the greatest blessing.



- 27) To be patient,
- 28) Be willing to listen to advice from others,
- 29) To associate with monks and
- 30) To have religious discussions regularly
— this is the greatest blessing.



I will learn to develop my spiritual qualities

- 31) Self-restraint on unwholesome thoughts and actions,
- 32) Living a holy life,
- 33) Seeing the Noble Truths and
- 34) The realisation of Enlightenment
— this is the greatest blessing.



- 35) To be unshaken by the vicissitudes of life,
- 36) To be free from sorrow,
- 37) To be free from defilements and fear
- 38) To strive for the blissful mind
— this is the greatest blessing.



In our tumultuous world today, in which everyone is affected by wars, economic turmoil, pandemic, crisis, natural disasters etc., these 38 blessings are the way to guide us to achieve genuine happiness and peace for ourselves and the world.

May these blessings bring wisdom and guide you towards true bliss and happiness.
Wishing everyone a Happy Lunar New Year!

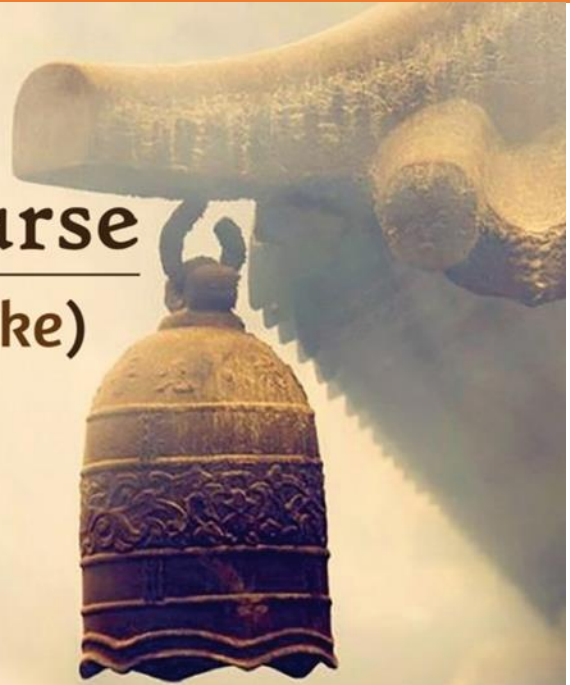


Upcoming Courses

Introduction to **Buddhism Course**

March 2022 (23rd Intake)

- * How much do you know about Buddhism?
- * Are you a knowledgeable Buddhist?
- * What is the essence of Buddhism?
- * Do you know how to practise Buddhism?



Course Details :

- Course Date** : 2nd March to 4th May 2022 (10 weeks)
Frequency : Every Wednesday 7.30pm to 9.30pm
Venue : Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple
30 Jalan Eunos, S'pore 419495 (Opposite Eunos MRT)
Course Fees : By donation
Email : Intro2buddhismpca@gmail.com
Tel : Sis. Lynn @ 8288 9888
Instructors : By experienced Dhamma Teachers

**Topics are covered in plain
and simple language and include:**



The Freedom of Inquiry in Buddhism, the Life of the Buddha, the 3 Characteristics of Existence, the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8 Fold Path, Rebirth and Kamma, the Buddhist Texts, How to Practise Buddhism, the Different Buddhist Traditions, the Meaning of Common Buddhist Rituals and Chanting, Buddhist Meditation.

Organized by the Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore

Current School Activities

- **Buddhist and Pali College Courses**

All courses are ongoing:

- Diploma in Buddhism
- Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Studies
- Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies

Upcoming Activities

- **Introduction to Buddhism (in English)**

Course Date: 2nd Mar 2022 to 4th May 2022

- **Temple Visit for Diploma students**

- 2nd Apr 2022

- **Introduction to Buddhism (in Chinese)**

Course commencement: Sep 2022 (tentative)

- **Graduation Ceremony cum Appreciation for Teachers**

- 28 August 2022 (tentative)

For more information, please contact:

Address	30 Jalan Eunos Singapore 419495
Tel	8288-9888
Email	bpca2017sg@gmail.com
BPC website	https://bpc.edu.sg
BPC Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin