



**A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCES OF BUDDHISM ON  
THE FESTIVALS OF THE TA'ANG ETHNIC GROUP IN  
MYANMAR**

U VINAYAPARLA

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University  
C.E. 2017



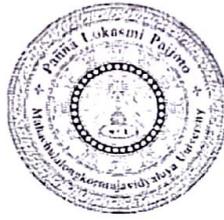
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The Graduate School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University approved this thesis entitled “A Study of the Influences of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta’ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar.”, as part of education according to its curriculum of the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

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### **Abstract**

This is a qualitative research that has three objectives, namely, 1) to study the historical and geographical background of Ta'ang community in Myanmar, 2) to study Buddhism in Ta'ang community in Myanmar, and 3) to analyze the influence of Buddhism on the festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group Ta'ang in Myanmar.

The findings showed the history and geographical background of Myanmar, the origin of Palaung or Ta'ang, and the geography of Ta'ang identified in brief. Concerning the history of Myanmar, the researcher has found the background Myanmar in two historical periods; Tagaung period and Bagan period. In history of Ta'ang, the researcher has found that the origin and different branches of Ta'ang.

In the middle part of the research, the researcher has described Buddhism in Ta'ang community. The beginning of Buddhism, the beginning of Yuan Buddhism, the types of Myanmar Sangha community, the characteristics of Buddhism in Ta'ang region, and the doctrines of Buddhism such as five precepts, kamma and rebirth are practiced in the Ta'ang community. On the other hand, Ta'ang traditional beliefs which are kabu and kanam found among their belief.

In the last part of the thesis, the researcher found that the influence of the doctrine of Buddhism: five precepts, eight-fold paths, the four noble truths, triple gem that influenced on the festivals of Ta'ang ethnic group in Myanmar. Buddhism very much influenced on New Year festival, Vassa (warso) festival, Thadinguyt festival, Pavaranā Festival, and Lucknii festival celebrated in Ta'ang community of Shan State in Myanmar. On the other hand, Ta'ang rites, rituals, traditional beliefs and daily life of the Ta'ang community in Myanmar are influenced by Buddhist theory.

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U Vinayaparla

10<sup>th</sup>/March /2018

**List of Abbreviations**

AD	:	Anno Domini
BC	:	Before Christ
BE	:	Buddhist Era
CE	:	Common Era
Ed	:	Editor/Edited by
Ibid	:	Ibidem/in the same book
P	:	page
PP	:	pages
PTS	:	Pali Texts Society
Trans	:	Translator, Translated by
Vol	:	Volume
Ven.	:	Venerable

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

Geographically, Ta'ang tribes are to be found in small hill villages in both Northern and Southern Shan State in Myanmar through to the west and southwest of Yunan in China and Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. In 1921, during the time of British rule, Ta'ang people had migrated thence to another place; there was a particularly large movement from China to Tawnpeng.<sup>1</sup>

Most of Myanmar people think that Ta'ang is one of the Shan ethnic groups. Actually, Ta'ang is not a sub-ethnic group of Shans. Ta'ang people claim that they have migrated from China to Tawnpeng. Hence, Ta'ang is a sub-ethnic group of Mon-Khmer. Originally, there are 19 sub-Ta'ang tribes in Myanmar.<sup>2</sup> Before 1996, Myanmar government rejected Ta'ang tribes who officially called themselves Ta'ang. But on February 29, 1996, Ta'ang was allowed to be called Ta'ang officially.

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<sup>1</sup> Leslin Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clam A Study of the Palaung of the Shan States**, Oxford: Clarendon press, (1924), p.23.

<sup>2</sup> Ashin Sujat, **The Culture and Tradition of Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Namhsan**, Yangon: press, (2013), p.21.

Moreover, Ta'ang ethnics have their own history and language, which belongs to the branch of Mon-Khmer language<sup>3</sup>, even though nowadays they still have no records to teach Ta'ang history and Ta'ang language to the young generation. Therefore, the researcher of this thesis must do research on the historical background of Ta'ang in Myanmar in order to know how to identify the true history, life style, beliefs, spirit-worship, culture, economic, social work and Buddhism of Ta'ang tribe for the young Ta'ang generation to study.

Majority of Ta'ang tribes had a strong belief in spirit worship before Buddhism was introduced to Ta'ang region. After Buddhism has been introduced to Ta'ang region, most Ta'ang people converted to Buddhist devotees. In 601 BE, Mang. Tara Gyi-Mindaya Gyi<sup>4</sup> known as Bodawpaya king of Burma sent a Buddhist monk to Tawngpen to introduce Myanmar Buddhism among Ta'ang.

On the other hand, Yuan Buddhism was also practiced in Ta'ang region. It introduced by a monk from Wat Dood in 1923-75. Yuan Buddhism also influenced Ta'ang's festivals such as New Year, Vassa, Pavarana day, Kathina and Luchnii in Myanmar. Recently, Yuan Buddhism was also practiced in the area of northern Thailand, Laos, Southern China and some areas of Namhsan, Kyoutme, Manton, and Kengtung, Shan State. Therefore, it could be said that there are some similarities and differences between Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism in Ta'ang region. Even though Buddhism has influenced

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<sup>3</sup> Tin Yi Daw, **Socio- Economic life of Wa Ethnic Group**, Yangon, (1999), p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in northern Thailand**, (Canada: Mount Allison University, 2004), p. 34

Ta'ang's festivals, many of Ta'ang people still do not know where Buddhism is coming from, how to practice, and how apply the teaching of the Buddha in the daily life because most of Ta'ang tribes are not Buddhist but being born to Buddhist parents.

Furthermore, the researcher of this thesis thinks that both Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism need to be analyzed to discover a way how to make Ta'ang people clear about the Buddhist way of life and the application of Buddha's teaching in the life of Ta'ang tribes. The researcher hopes that the study of the influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals in Myanmar can bring about geography and history of Ta'ang, history of Buddhism in Ta'ang, and the influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals in Myanmar. The researcher also hopes that this thesis will motivate the young generation of Ta'ang monks, novices, laymen, and students to learn their own history.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Research**

1.2.1 To study the historical and geographical background of Ta'ang community in Myanmar.

1.2.2 To study Buddhism in Ta'ang community in Myanmar.

1.2.3 To Analyze the Influences of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problems**

1.3.1 What is the historical and geographical background of Ta'ang community in Myanmar?

1.3.2 What is Buddhism in Ta'ang community in Myanmar?

1.3.3 What is the influence of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar?

## **1.4 Scope of Research**

1.4.1 **Scope of scripture:** This present thesis focuses on the influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang's festivals in Myanmar. Documentary research method will be deployed for this study. Both primary and secondary sources will be used for this study. It will be focused on the book and some expository work sources concerning this research study. The data for the research will be collected from the original books and electronic sources such as Internet, CD, E-books, etc.

1.4.2 **Scope of content:** The research work will be a limited study of influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals in Myanmar. In

chapter II, scope is limited to historical and geographical background of Myanmar, historical and geographical background of Ta'ang, and development of Ta'ang community in Myanmar. In chapter III, scope is limited to brief history of Buddhism in Myanmar, Theravada Buddhism in Ta'ang community, Yuan Buddhism, and development of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in Ta'ang. In chapter IV, scope will be limited to general influence of Buddhism, Buddhist rites and rituals of Ta'ang community, and the influence of Buddhism on the festivals of Ta'ang ethnic group in Myanmar.

## **1.5 Definition of the Terms Used in the Research**

**1.5.1 Influence:** Influence refers to an effected of Buddhist theoretical and practical world-view and way of life on people's behavior in regards to culture, tradition, and festivals. Festivals, in this research, refer to the New Year festival, Vassa (warso) festival, Thadinguyt festival, Pavaran Festival, and Lucknii festival celebrated in Ta'ang community of Shan State in Myanmar.

**1.5.2 Ta'ang:** Ta'ang is one of the ethnic nationalities of the multi-national country that is the Union of Myanmar. They reside in Shan State. The Ta'ang people have a long history and a strong sense of their unique identity. They have their own language and literature, a distinctive traditional culture, their own territory and self-sufficient economy. Ta'ang people predominantly are Buddhists, with less than ten percent of the population being animist and Christian.

**1.5.3 Festival:** In There are more than ten festivals in Myanmar that are influenced by Buddhism. Festival in this research mean only the

New Year festival, Vassa festival, Thadingyut festival, Pavarana Festival, and Lucknii festival celebrated in Ta'ang community of Shan State in Myanmar.

## **1.6. Review of Related Literature and Research Works**

**1.6.1** Leslie Milne, **The home of an eastern Clan, A Study of Palaung of the Shan States**, Clarendon press, Oxford, 1924.<sup>5</sup>

This book is very useful in the present research. The author of this book explains the Ta'ang history, Ta'ang religion, Ta'ang life style, culture, and economy of in Ta'ang community. The researcher found that this book is very relevant for this research work.

**1.6.2** Takkathoe Myant Thu, **Buddhist Disciple in the World after the Buddha's Passing Away**, Yangon press, 1980.<sup>6</sup>

In this book, the author has provided important records of Buddhist history in Myanmar. It offers a short history of Buddhism in Myanmar from its origins through the country's loss of independence to Great Britain in the late nineteenth century. I have found that this book helped me in my research work.

**1.6.3** Ashin Thuzata, **The Culture of Ta'ang (Palaung) Ethnic Group in Namhsan Region**, Yangon, press. 2013.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan, A Study of Palaung of the Shan States**, (Clarendon press, Oxford,1924,) P.15-219.

<sup>6</sup> Takkathoe Myant Thu, **Buddhist Disciple in World after the Buddha's Passing Away**, (Yangon press,1980,) p. 44-150.

<sup>7</sup>AhsinThuzata, **The Culture of Ta'ang (Palaung) Ethnic Group in Namhsan Region**, (Yangon, press. 2013,) p. 21-159.

This book is an authoritative work on the history and origin of Ta'ang community in Northern Shan State. In this book the author has collected information on the different life styles, dressing, and economics of Ta'ang in Myanmar. The author tries to explain Ta'ang's life style, culture and tradition. Ta'ang's young boys, when they are teenager, usually have to become monks and learn the teaching of the Buddha at the Pariyattisarhindaite. At high school of Pariyattisathindaite. there are 5 levels of study to be completed. I have found this book very helpful for my research work.

**1.6.4 Sean Ashley, Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in northern Thailand,** Mount Allison University Canada, 2004.<sup>8</sup>

In this thesis research written by Sean Ashley the author examines the history of Ta'ang Palaung from early years until modern times. He also mentions the Ta'ang (Palaung) in Yunan (China) and Myanmar. The author includes Ta'ang culture, tradition, beliefs, and education in his research. The researcher has found this thesis research very helpful for my research work.

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<sup>8</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in northern Thailand,** (Canada: Mount Allison University, 2004), p. 20-30.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

This research is documentary. It is a study of the Influences of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar. The research methodology will be documentary of approach what it needs. Data from other sources such as historical pagodas, old temples, old Buddha's images, published and unpublished books, magazines, journals, articles and electronic sources such as Internet, e-books, etc., will be collected in this research. The methodology of this research can be divided into three stages as follows.

1.7.1 Collecting data from sources of the Buddhist texts, Myanmar scripts, Ta'ang's scripts, and books written by Leslie Milne and other scholars.

1.7.2 Collecting data from the historical and geographical sources such as pagodas (chedis), old temples, and historical Buddha's images around the places where Ta'ang people live and comparing the collected data with other historical pagodas (chedis), temples, and Buddha's images in Myanmar.

1.7.3 Analyzing the collected data and categorizing it systematically to show a clear picture of the influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals in Myanmar.

1.7.4 Making conclusions, identifying significant results and suggestions for further study.

## **1.8 Advantages Expected to Obtain from the Research**

The following advantages and outcomes have been obtained after doing the research.

1.8.1 Knowing the Historical and Geographical background of Ta'ang community in Myanmar.

1.8.2 Knowing the Buddhism in Ta'ang community in Myanmar.

1.8.3 Knowing the Influences of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar.

## **Chapter II**

### **Historical and Geographical Background of Ta'ang Community in Myanmar**

In this chapter, the researcher will provide an introduction to historical and geographical background of Myanmar and, secondly, historical background of Ta'ang. Moreover, this chapter will be related to the history of Mon-Khmer, geography of Ta'ang, and, finally, development of Ta'ang community in Myanmar. These points will be also discussed in concluding remark of this research.

#### **2.1 Introduction to Historical and Geographical Background of Myanmar**

Myanmar (officially called Republic of the Union of Myanmar) is a country in Southeast Asia that has a long history. Many different tribes have been living in Myanmar. The number is one hundred and thirty-five ethnic groups altogether.

##### **2.1.1 Burma Tagaung Period (1300 AD)**

The researcher will examine the history of Myanmar in Tagaung period in order to identify historical background of Myanmar. It is necessary to go back to historical background of the time of Pyu country

period and Bagan period because most Myanmar people mention that the beginning of Myanmar started from Pyu people and Bagan period. This period is also related to the time of becoming of Buddhism in Myanmar as well.<sup>9</sup> According to the research of some Myanmar folklores, Dagaung city is the first city of Myanmar. Dagaung city was founded by Pyu people. This city still exists in upper Myanmar. But unfortunately, Pyu language is not used in the modern time.<sup>10</sup> In the research by Sadana Ratna, it is mentioned that the people of Myanmar or Burma belong to a group called Tibeto-Burman who came down to Burma from the north.<sup>11</sup>

It could be correct that Myanmar belongs to Tibeto-Burman group if the claim is true that the movement of Pyu people were flourishing from Tibet, China, to Myanmar region. Myanmar people strongly believe that Bama script nowadays used as official language originates from Arakanese scripture.<sup>12</sup> Eighty percent of Bama and Arakanese scripts are similar. Only twenty percent of pronunciations are different to each other. Ta'ang grammar published in 1999 uses Bama alphabet<sup>13</sup> in order to write words in Pali language for the coming generation of Buddhists.

Some local people in upper Myanmar regions do strongly believe that Myanmar nations such as Chin, Kachin, Narga and Lahu nations are

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Bischoff, **Buddhism in Myanmar a short History**, Sri Lanka, 1995, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Nai Zaw, **Pyu Country and Pyu people**, Yangon, 2011, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Sadhana Ratna, **A Survey of Buddhism in the Chittagong Hill Tracts**, Bangkok, B.E, 2551, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> James Gray, **Ancient Proverbs and Maxims from Burmese Sources**, London, 1888, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Milne Leslie **An Elementary Palaung Grammar** Cleveland, OH, U.S.A. 1921, p. 1.

in some part Mongolia nations. These ethnics flourished in Myanmar region since the period of the stone ages.<sup>14</sup> And some old people in upper Myanmar claim that some ethnic groups of Myanmar, especially upper region, are sub groups of Pyu people.<sup>15</sup> Such as Thet, Bamar, and Rakhain ethnics. Most of them strongly believe that Burma tribe comes from Pyu but Bama language nowadays still is confused with the ethnic groups of Myanmar nationals. It is hard to believe that Burmese language originates from Pyu language. Pyu people and their language became extinct for a long time now.

In Myanmar, recently, the word of sacca vata is very popular because Myanmar people believe that Pyu is one of the sacca vata nations. The meaning of sacca vata is a national of the Buddha.<sup>16</sup> Myanmar nationals are very proud that they are one of the tribe that is the same with the Buddha. The Buddha's ethnic is also a sacca vata nationality. Linguistically, only seven ethnic groups could be called Bamar nationals during the period of kind Anawyatha. These seven sub-ethnic groups of Bamar do not include Mon, Shan, and Kachin. It could be said that the name of Burma or Myanmar does not refer only to Bamar sub ethnic group but also refers to all the ethnicities that exists in Myanmar. This should be clear when mentioning the name of Burma or Myanmar. Bamar stands for only seven sub ethnic groups of Bamar tribe. It doesn't stand for Burma or Myanmar. Some ethnic groups in Burma or Myanmar are confused in the terms of Bamar and Burma or Myanmar. It

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<sup>14</sup> Nai Zaw, **Pyu Civilization: The Regions and the People**, Yangon, 2011, 113.

<sup>15</sup> Nai Zaw, **Pyu Civilization: The Regions and the People**, Yangon, 2011, p.113.

<sup>16</sup> Nyoe Mya, **The Period of Kung Baung**, Yangon, 2003, p. 18.

should be noted that only the name of Burma or Myanmar stands for all the 135 national ethnic groups of Myanmar. The term should be made clear in order to solve the problem of ethnic conflict between Bamar and other ethnic groups.

### **2.1.2 Modern Period of Myanmar (1114 BC to 1247 BC)**

From 1114 to 1247, Burma or Myanmar was tried to be united as a single country for four times by kings Anawyatha and Bayinnaung<sup>17</sup> Since that time the name of Bayinnaung was popular across the country of Myanmar. This statement is about to show the modern Myanmar especially in the modern period of Kunbaung dynasty. To describe modern Myanmar history, Kunbaung dynasty is a very good example to discover the history of Myanmar in the modern time. Before discussing the history of king's membership in Kunbaung dynasty, the researcher would like to introduce the founder of Kunbaung dynasty, because it is one of the most important messages for the young Myanmar generation to learn the modern history of their country. Hence, Myanmar historians often describe the history of Burma century by century.

Here, there are some disagreements between Myanmar historians who study the history of Pyu and Bagan and hold it for the beginning of Myanmar and who research the modern history of Myanmar during Kunbaung dynasty. Modern Myanmar historians claim that Kunbaung dynasty is the beginning of Myanmar. The researcher believes that Kunbaung dynasty belongs to modern or colonial history, while Pyu and Bagan refer to precolonial period in the history of Myanmar. It could be

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<sup>17</sup> Nyo Mya, **Kun Baung Period**, Yangon, 2003, p. 20.

also said that Kunbaung dynasty is time of getting back lower Myanmar region and Pyu and Bagan is the before British Colonia control.

In 1852, Alaungpaya was a local leader who succeeded winning the throne using an occasion in Burmese history. In fact, Alaungpaya is the founder of Kubaung dynasty.<sup>18</sup> In Kunbaung dynasty, there were eleven kings. They are as follow.

1. King Alaungpaya (1114-1122 ME) (1752-1760 AD),
2. King Naungdawgyi (1122-1125 ME) (1760-1763 AD),
3. King Hsinbyushin (1125-1138 ME) (1763-1776 AD),
4. King Singu (1138-1143 ME) (1776-1782 AD),
5. King Phaungkarsar Maung Maung (7 days)
6. King Bodawphayar (1143-1181 ME) (1782-1819 AD),
7. King Bagyidaw (1181-1199 ME) (1819-1837 AD),
8. King Tharrarwaddy (1199-1208 ME) (1837-1846 AD),
9. King Pagan (1208-1214 ME) (1846-1852 AD),
10. King Mindon (1214-1240 ME) (1853-1878 AD),
11. King Thibaw (1240-1247 ME) (1878-1885 AD).<sup>19</sup>

The kings that have been mentioned above were very powerful in Kunbaung dynasty. During the period of Kunbaung, Burma or Myanmar was governed by the kings and saw bwa. There were over fifty saw bwa who ruled in northern Myanmar especially in Shan State. According to

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Paul Weller, **Power and Protest in the Countryside**, Duke University Press united states, 1982, p.81.

<sup>19</sup> Rev.U. Agganana, **A Study of Theravada Buddhism in First Konbaung Dynasty in Myanmar**, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2006, p. 2.

some folklore saying, Union of Myanmar was found by those kings in the modern time.<sup>20</sup> They are memorable for the young generation of Myanmar nowadays.

## **2.2. Historical Background of Ta'ang**

Ta'ang people were spreading to different parts of Asian countries. Most of them are living in Yunnan (China), Shan State (Burma), and some parts of Northern Thailand. The researcher will only focus on describing the existence of Ta'ang in China, Burma or Myanmar, and Thailand as different parts of Asia.

### **2.2.1 The Term of Ta'ang**

The term of Ta'ang has a very wide meaning describing people of Ta'ang tribe. This term refers to De'ang in China, Tala'ang in Thailand, and Palaung in Myanmar. Ta'ang tribe spread from Yunnan, China, across Southeast Asia region. In Myanmar, there are only 3 sub-ethnic groups of Mon-Khmer tribe. They are Mon, Wa and Ta'ang. The Ta'ang or Palaung people are the second biggest minority ethnic group in Shan State, northern Myanmar.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nyo Mya, **The Kunbaung Dynasty, Yangon, 1982**, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaungs of the Shan States**, Oxford, p. 15.

Ta'ang or Palaung tribe divided into nineteen different ethnic subgroups in Myanmar.

1. Hsamlone Ta'ang
2. Kwanhe Ta'ang
3. Ngutyot Ta'ng
4. Taungma Ta'ang
5. Rujin Ta'ang
6. Rugwan Ta'ang
7. Ruhkel Ta'ang
8. Rupo Ta'ang
9. Rumai Ta'ang
10. Pannim Ta'ang
11. Ruho Ta'ang
12. Ruman Ta'ang
13. Ruling Ta'ang
14. RubrarnTa'ang
15. Ruhkit Ta'ang
16. Runa Ta'ang
17. Ruleng Ta'ang
18. Rutrar Ta'ang
19. Rubrong Ta'ang<sup>22</sup>

According to old Ta'ang or Palaung people's saying, all Ta'ang belong to the same tribe. They are not different. But the Ta'ang or the

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<sup>22</sup> Ashin Sujat, **The Culture and Tradition of Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Namhsan**, Yangon: press, (2013), p.21.

Palaung people spread to different palaces in Burma.<sup>23</sup> Based on Ta'ang region, they are called with different names and also after their villages they are divided in various names. That is why the regions of the Ta'ang or Palaung could be described as the name in front of Ta'ang.<sup>24</sup> In Ru Mai Ta'ang, Ru refers to the region. Mai here means the name of the region. According to Chinese historians on Ta'ang or Palaung sub-ethnic groups, originally there are only four Ta'ang ethnic groups such as Bulie, Liang, Rumia, and Raojin.<sup>25</sup> To identify the nineteen subgroups of Ta'ang is to identify them according to dressing of the women.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, in some region the groups are identified by language that they used originally. The Ta'ang or the Palaung is a branch of Mon-Khmer ethnic group, probably originated from Yunnan, China<sup>27</sup> This statement could be true because many of Ta'ang or Palaung people still remain in the valley of western China.

The term Ta'ang or Palaung originally found in Yunnan. In 1921, especially during the time of the British rule, Ta'ang people migrated from Yunnan, China, to Tawngpeng whic is located to the west of old Shan State of Hsenwi where Palaung sawbwa ruled. Tawngeng has 2,430 square kilometers) .<sup>28</sup> This race was divided into groups with different names in order to destroy them in different places. Hence, there

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<sup>23</sup> Tin Yin, Daw, **The Lfe of Wa**, Yangon University, 1999, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara A. West, **Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania**, USA, 1967, p. 185.

<sup>25</sup> Zhipeng Cheng, **Journey Through the World of De'ang Ethnic Minority: The collection of pictures of De'ang minority in English and Chinese**, Kunming, China, 2008, p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaungs of the Shan States**, Oxford, p. 60.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p. 17

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

is a lack of higher education in the Ta'ang tribes. There is no way for them be united for fighting back their own region. The reason of losing their own region is that Ta'ang or Palaung people are poorly educated and being not united.

As we know, the name of De'ang was given to the Ta'ang or the Palaung in Yunnan province officially. The name that the researcher uses in this thesis is the name that the people of this group use to refer themselves as an ethnic in Myanmar. However, the term De'ang<sup>29</sup> is also a different name of Ta'ang or Palaung that refers to the branch of Mon-Khmer in China. In China, the government uses the term De'ang as the official name for the Ta'ang people. This people speak Mon-Khmer language<sup>30</sup> but there is no record on the language. By the time of the Qing dynasty, the name Benglong was used instead of De'ang.<sup>31</sup> It could be said that the term Benglong is the same as Palaung<sup>32</sup> that is known in the modern history of Myanmar.

### 2.2.2. Origin of Ta'ang

When the researcher recalls the history of De'ang in China, it is found that the tribe of De'ang has differences between De'ang in China and Myanmar. But the history told that the tribe of Ta'ang in Myanmar

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<sup>29</sup> www.Chinatravel.com, **De Ang Ethnic Minority**, Eng. version, 28th march, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Simpson, **Language and National Identity in Asia**, Oxford, B.E 2550, p. 267.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara A. West, **Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania**, USA, 1967, p. 185.

<sup>32</sup> Ashin Sujat, **The Culture and Tradition of Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Namhsan**, Yangon press, (2013), p.21.

originates from China, and although the name is different, these ethnic groups belong to the same national group.<sup>33</sup>

However, the background of Ta'ang should be clearly understood to identify the origin of their ethnicity. That is why the researcher will describe the differences of history of De'ang people who lived in China and Ta'ang who existed in Myanmar. In the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), De'ang and Va minorities were belonging to Pu people.<sup>34</sup> In that time, Pu people were the majority in Yunnan province. Pu people governed the country. De'ang and Va were known under the name of Pu people.<sup>35</sup>

Hence, the name of Pu here refers to Pyu. In China the term Pu is used as Pyu officially.<sup>36</sup> The issue of Pu government to the other ethnic group in Han dynasty is similar with the issue of American. There were many different tribes being controlled by the Pu government. But unfortunately, these tribes are not allowed to use to term De'ang in order to describe their original name as they deserved officially. According to the history that the researcher has mentioned above, this De'ang tribe was not the branch of Mon-Khmer tribe but they claimed that they speak Mon-Khmer language known as Palaungic.<sup>37</sup> The Ta'ang tribe in

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<sup>33</sup> James B. Minahan, **Ethnic Groups of North, East, and Central Asia**, California 2014, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> James B. Minahan, **Ethnic Groups of North, East, and Central Asia**, California 2014, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Ian G. Cook, **China's Third Revolution: Tensions in the Transition Towards a Post-communist China**, China 2001, p.120.

<sup>36</sup> Nai Zaw, **Pyu Civilization: The Regions and the People**, yangon, 2011, p.113.

<sup>37</sup> Jeremy H, **Austroasiatic Languages**, London, 1991, p. 67.

Myanmar claim themselves as a branch of Mon-Khmer race originally and speak Mon-Khmer language.<sup>38</sup>

The Ta'ang or Palaung are actually a part of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, in all likelihood, they inhabited this region before the Burmese, Thai, Lao and even Shan peoples migrated into this part of Asia. Mon-Khmer groups are still found right across "Southeast Asia from southern China, northern Vietnam and Burma right down into the jungles of southern Malaysia."<sup>40</sup> Today Mon are concentrated in western and central Thailand (Kanchanaburi province in particular), and Burma's Mon State, "with Khmers obviously in Cambodia, and southern Isaan"<sup>41</sup>.

The Mon-khmer groups were pushed into remoter areas by migrating Malay, Tai, Burmese and Vietnamese peoples, "for example the Mabri, many of Vietnam's Central Highlands Montagnards such as the M'ngong and several Orang Asli groups in Malaysia are ethnic Mon-Khmer."<sup>42</sup> Anyway back to the Palaung, who are found across a wide swath of Burma's Shan and Kachin States, 'in Yunnan (where they are known as De'ang); and now even as far south as northern Thailand."<sup>43</sup> They are relatively recent migrants to the latter area and still low in

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<sup>38</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaungs of the Shan States**, Oxford, p. 15

<sup>39</sup> James Minahan, **encyclopedia of stateless nation**, London, 1984, p. 1486.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Kunstadter, **Southeast Asian Tribes, minorities**, USA, 1967, p. 255.

<sup>41</sup> Lowis, **A Note on Palaung Hsipaw Tawngpeng**, Yangon, 1906, p. 38.

<sup>42</sup> R.B. Mandal, **Erontiers in Migration Analysis**, India, 1981, p. 323

<sup>43</sup> James Minahan, **Encyclopedia of Stateless Nation**, London, 1984, p. 149.

numbers but “several villages can be found interspersed with the Black Lahu and Akha of Chiang Mai’s Fang district.”<sup>44</sup>

According to Mon-Khmer book, at the present, Ta’ang or Palaung who speak Mon-Khmer could be found in different parts of Asia. They existed in China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Data on the population of Mon-Khmer speakers in individual countries is given below.<sup>45</sup>

<b>Country</b>	<b>Approximate population</b>
China	630,000
Myanmar	2,000,000
Bangladesh	20,000
Thailand	1,000,000
Laos	1,300,000
Cambodia	12,700,000
Vietnam	75,650,000

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<sup>44</sup> Jonathan Rigg, **Living with Transition in Laos**, Canada, 2005, p. 88.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald D, **Mon-Kmer People of the Mekong Region**, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 2015, p. 14.

### 2.3 Geographical Background of Ta'ang

In order to understand the location of Ta'ang or Palaung, it is better to describe the location of Myanmar firstly because the study of this content is related to the geography of Ta'ang in Myanmar. Myanmar covers an area of 677,000 square kilometers, or 261,228 square miles, ranging 936 kilometers (581 miles) from the east to west and 2051 kilometers (1275 miles) from north to south. It is a land of hills and valleys and is rimmed in the north, east and west by mountain ranges forming a gaint horseshoe. Enclosed within the mountain barriers are the flat lands of Ayeyawady, Chindwin and Sittaung River valleys where most of the country's agricultural land and population are concentrated. "The state is organized into the following seven states and seven divisions."<sup>46</sup>

1. Kachin state
2. Kayah state
3. Kayin state
4. Chin state
5. Mon state
6. Shan State
7. Yakhine state
8. Sagain division
9. Tanintharyi divison

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<sup>46</sup> Robert H Taylor, **the state in Myanmar**, Singapore, 2002, p. 330.

10. Bago division
11. Mandalay division
12. Ayeyawady division
13. Yangon division
14. Magway division

Moreover, northern Shan State is one of the areas of greatest ethnic diversity in Myanmar, and perhaps in the world. “It also exhibits great geographic diversity. The region’s steep mountain and broad, fertile valleys and plains support speakers of Tibeto-Burman, Han-Chinese, Tai-Kadai, and Mon-Khmer languages who converged more time to settle into today’s mix of Shan, Kachin, Palaung, Wa, and Kokang – each with their subgroups as well as a large number of other ethnic and linguistic groups.”<sup>47</sup>

Approximately 200,000 Shwe Palaung people inhabit areas of northern Shan State in northern Myanmar (formerly Burma). “The main geographical centre of Shwe Palaung in Myanmar is the town of Namhsan,”<sup>48</sup> home to about 15,000 people. An additional 6,000 Shwe Palaung live in Zhenkang and Baoshan counties in the western part of China’s Yunnan province, where they are part of the officially recognized De’ang minority. The Shwe Palaung are also known as the golden Palaung due to the style of the women’s dress. Ronald D. who has written a book on Mon-Khmer claimed that that the population of Ta’ang or Palaung numbers about a half a million-people living in the hills. The

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<sup>47</sup> Wen-Chin Chang & Eric Tagliacozzo, **Ordinary Life Stories Under the Burmese Regime**, Oxford University, 2014, p. 220.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Hattaway, *People of Buddhist World*, Singapore, 2014. P. 218.

ruler of their traditional center, Nam Hsan, governed the state of “Tawngpeng,”<sup>49</sup> west of the city of Hsipaw close to the center of their settlement area. “The rulers of Nam Hsan were recognized as saohpa for generations.”<sup>50</sup>

The researcher believes that the population of Ta’ang of Palaung in the Union of Myanmar is over 1 million nowadays. The nation of Ta’ang or Palaung exists across the Shan State. It is a problem to record the exact number of Ta’ang or Palaung people because the region of Ta’ang nation is in a conflict with the government since 1961 until now.

## 2.4 Concluding Remark

In this chapter, the researcher has described upon the history of Myanmar, the beginning of Ta’ang, and the term of Ta’ang community in Myanmar and Geographical Background of Ta’ang. The researcher hopes that the knowledge that has been presented in this chapter will offer the encouragement to the young generation of Ta’ang in order to identify the origin of Ta’ang Community in Myanmar.

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<sup>49</sup> Tawngpeng is located west of the old Shan State of Senwi, Tawngpen, and was described as a Shan State, though most of its inhabitants were Ta’ang or Palaung and ruled by a Ta’ang or a Palaung sawbwa. Its capital Namhasn contained the ruler’s haw with an area of 2,430 square kilometers (938 square miles). Tawngpeng was rich because of the cultivation of tea, enjoyed throughout Burma and Bawdwin, and silver mine in the hills around Namhsan.

<sup>50</sup> Ronald D., **Mon-Khmer: Peoples of the Mekong Region**, Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 2015, P. 271.

## **Chapter III**

### **Buddhism in Ta'ang Community in Myanmar**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss of the background Buddhism in Ta'ang community of Myanmar, nik yas and their characteristic in Ta'ang community, the doctrine of buddhism in Ta'ang community, the life of Ta'ang and concluding remark.

#### **3.1 Background of Buddhism in Myanmar**

Theravada and Yuan Buddhism have introduced to Ta'ang Community in Myanmar since thousands of years ago. Myanmar government had announced that Myanmar is a Theravada Buddhist country in South East Asia. After the government reformed that Myanmar is a buddhist country, Ta'ang people use the theory of Theravada and Yuan buddhism in order to develop their economy, social work, politic and life styles.

##### **3.1.1 Background of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar**

Buddhism such as Theravada and Yuan Buddhism have long historical movement to Ta'ang Community. In order to describe those historical movement of buddhism to Ta'ang community, it is better to find out the historical background of buddhism in Myanmar firstly. Buddhism spread from India to the countries of South East Asia in sixth

century BC.<sup>51</sup> Theravāda Buddhism has entered Thathone which is known as Suvannabhumi. Myanmar people believe that Thathone is the first region where Theravāda Buddhism has introduced. Ananda WP Guruge has mentioned in his book that Buddhism has a long history in the region of Thathone.<sup>52</sup> Buddhism was also brought by Buddhist missionaries from different different places, such as India, China, and other regional areas to Myanmar. But, some of Myanmar folklore said that Buddhism entered Myanmar first among the countries in Asia. There is a belief that Thathone known as Suvannabhumi is the first place where Buddhism was firstly introduced in Asia.<sup>53</sup>

According to the record of *sasanavamsa*, Buddhism was introduced to Myanmar since the early lifetime of the Buddha, about the sixth century BC<sup>54</sup>. This statement could be agreed among the readers who try to record the arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar because there are many historical backgrounds of Buddhism introduction to Myanmar. To take some examples on the spreading of Buddhism to Myanmar, it is also better to look back to the time of Buddhism in Pagan period. Theravāda Buddhism flourished to Myanmar during the Bagan dynasty in upper Myanmar. Bagan dynasty is more important for the study of the historical background of Theravāda Buddhism to Myanmar. Ven. Sutoyo Raharto

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<sup>51</sup> Sadhana Ratna, **A Survey of Buddhism in the Chittagong hill Tracts**, B.E. 2551, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Ananda WP Guruge, **What in Brief is Buddhism**, USA 1999, p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> Roger Bischoff, **Buddhism in Myanmar a Short History**, Sri Lanka, 1995, p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> Van Hei Lian, **The Strategy and Method of Evangelism Among Buddhist People in Myanmar**, MF Norwegian School of Theology, University in Oslo, Norway, 2015, p. 15.

mentioned in his thesis regarding to history of buddhism in Myanmar as follow.

“In 1044 AC, Anawratha ( Aniruddha) ascended the throne of Pagan and was dissatisfied with the prevailing religion of his people, which was a mixture of Tantric Buddhism and native animistic beliefs. He resented the enormous authority and prestige of the Ari monks, whom he considered depraved. At this juncture a Mon monk, Shin Arahan by name, also known as Dhammadasi who came from Thaton, arrived at Pagan. His saintly personality stood in contrast to the heavy-eating and arrogant Ari monks, and within a short period of time he was able to convert Anawratha to Therav da Buddhism. Anawratha, who must have been already planning to conquer the Mons and extend his frontiers to the seacoast, was now seized with genuine religious zeal and assumed the role of a champion of his new faith.”<sup>55</sup>

According to this message, the arrival of Therav da Buddhism to Burma happened through Thaton which is known as Suvannabhumi. on the other hand, in the book *The Home of an Eastern Clam A Study of the Palaung of the Shan States*, Leslin Milne stated that “In 1144 B. E (1782 A. D) Mong.Ta Ra Gyi known as Bodawpaya, sent a Buddhist monk to Tawngpeng, to introduce Buddhism among the Ta’ang or Palaung. This was one of his many acts of expiation for having put to death many Buddhist monks at the beginning of his reign. The monks teach the people in the Ta’ang or Palaung the Buddhist commandments which from

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<sup>55</sup> Ven. Sutoyo Raharto, **Buddhism as a part of Indonesian Culture**, Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalay University, Bangkok, Thailand, B.E. 2551, p. 199.

their moral code; they are as follow: do not destroy life; do not steal; do not lie; commit no unchaste act; drink no intoxicating liquors.”<sup>56</sup>

In 1542, Yuan Buddhism has been introduced to the region of Ta’ang from Chiang Rai, northern Thailand.<sup>57</sup> In Ta’ang region, there many sects of Buddhism have been introduced before 1500 years ago. But in the period of King Sibaw, in 1246, all other sect has been destroyed but only yuan and Theravāda Buddhism still practiced in the Ta’ang region until present time.<sup>58</sup> After King Sibaw allowed Theravāda and Yuan buddhism in Ta’ang region, most of the Ta’ang people accept the teaching of those Theravāda and yuan Buddhism. At the present time, fifty percen of Ta’ang people practiced the teaching of Theravāda buddhism and fourty percent practice yuan Buddhism.

Sean Ashley claimed that in 1923, Yuan Buddhism is found throughout the Tai Speaking land of Northern Thailand, Laos, southern China, and Shan State of Kengung from where the Ta’ang or Palaung living in Northern Thailand. Iiffers from the center Thai and Burmese Buddhist tradition in its religious script, the structure of its rituals and the organization of its clergy.<sup>59</sup> In Ta’ang region of Shan State there many ethnic groups such as Ta’ang, Pao, Kachin, Lisu, Lahu, Wa and some of people from the central Myanmar lived together. But, Shan or Tai, Ta’ang, Wa and Ta’ang or Palaung pectice the teaching of Yuan Buddhism. Yuan Buddhism nowadays is connected with Theravāda

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<sup>56</sup> Leslin Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clam A Study of the Palaung of the Shan States**, Oxford: Clarendon press, (1924), pp.132-3.

<sup>57</sup> Mai Aik Kaw, **History of Ta’ang (Palaung)**, Yangon, 2017, pp. 81-82.

<sup>58</sup> Mai Aik Kaw, **History of Ta’ang (Palaung)**, Yangon, 2017, p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand**, Canada, 2004 p.34.

Buddhism especially the literature. The literature of Yuan in the Ta'ang region is very similar to Lanna literature. The researcher believes that the literature of Yuan in Thailand known as Lanna but in the Ta'ang region it will be known as Yuan.

### **3.1.2 Main Nik ya Practiced in Myanmar**

In Myanmar, or monastic orders, have emerged and allowed as official *Nik yas* in *Sa gha* Community, however, there is one *nik ya* that is accepted by most of Ta'ang people of Shan State still does not address as official Nikaya by the central government. It is the Yuan *Nik ya* which will be discussed in detail later section of this chapter.

All sangha *nik yas* (gaing) have their own history and a founder. The researcher will describe them below.

#### **1. Sudhamma Gaing or Sudhammanik ya**

This Nikaya was formed in 1214 BE (Burmese era), 1852 AD. When king Mindon authorized the division of Burmese Sangha, hitherto on cohesive unit, into two Nikayas, suggesting to the Sudhamma Sayadaw. This nikaya is thus simply the majority group that remained.

#### **2. Shegying Nik ya**

This Nikaya was formed in the time of king Mindon as a result of ganavimutti. It advocates stricter attention to monastic discipline. It is the oldest of the Myanmar "reform sects" still in existence today and the one which has been discussed in greatest detail in the available source material.

### **3. Mah dvara Nik ya**

Founder of this “school” was the Okpo Sayadaw (1179-1267 BE). This nikaya was found as an independent group as the result of a dispute in Okpo in 1217 BE. The Dvaranika is derived from the use of the word dvara instead of the word kamma at the beginning of an important recitation formula: this difference is based on a philosophically stricter interpretation of the law of kamma.

### **4. Muladvara Nik ya or Dhammavinayanulomadvara Nikaya**

This Nikaya was formed by the Ingapu Sayadaw after the death of the Okpo Sayadaw through separation from the Mahadvara Nikaya.

### **5. Vanaukhaung Dv ra Nik ya**

This nikaya is a splinter group that broke away of the Mahadvara Nikaya during the lifetime of the Okpo Sayadaw.

### **6. Weluwun Nik ya or Veluvananik ya**

This nikaya was founded by the Weluwun Sayadaw U Puntawunthat Pandavamsa. It has existed independently since 1281 BE.

### **7. Catubhummika Mahasatipatthana Nik ya or Ngettwen Nik ya**

This Nik ya was found by the Ngettwin Sayadaw whose monastic name is U Pandava: he lived in 1193-1272 BE and propagated

radical reform idea, especially the rejection of the practice of placing offerings before altars and statues of the Buddha. He also advocated the compulsory instruction of all monks in meditation techniques as a prerequisite for admission to ordination. The Ngettwin Sayadaw was one of the most prominent advocates of a revival of the long-forgotten practice of satipatthana meditation in Myanmar

### **8. Kanawimoke Kado Nik ya**

This group was founded by Pitakattaik Kyaung Sayadaw U Indavama ( 1193-1279 BE) , upon whose request it was granted ganavimutti in 1258 BE. by the head of Sudhammanikaya.

### **9. Dhammayuttika Nik ya**

The founder of the nik ya, the Mahayin Sayadaw U Buddhavamsa, founded the monastery of Mahayin Khaungtaik, thereby introducing the Dhammayattikanikaya, the reform movement which was initiated in Thailand by King Mongkut to Myanmar. All these nine Nikayas are recognized by textual transmission of Theravada Buddhism as authoritative. Beside the Tipitaka texts this also include the series of classical commentaries as well as the sub-commentaries. For all these texts only, editions conforming to the text approved by the sixth council are officially regarded by the Myanmar Buddhists.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Heinz Bechert, **Society for the Study of Pali and Buddhist Culture: The Nikayas of the Myanmar Sangha in the Context of Contemporary Myanmar Buddhism**, Yangon, 199, p. 11.

Those Nikayas were reformed by the Myanmar government in 1979 and 1980. After 1980, there was no new Nikaya orders allowed in the Sangha community.<sup>61</sup> The Sangha members are working together to expound the teachings of Buddhism to the whole country, as well as overseas. The researcher has been ordained as a monk at the monastery of Dvara Gain but studied at the monastery of Shwekyin Gain. The way of living does not significantly differ in two of these places.

The groupings within the Sangha which are named Nikaya (group) in Pali and “gaing” in Myanmar language (derived from Pali gana) are often erroneously described in Western literature as “Buddhist sects”. The above described reorganization of the Sangha required a define clarification of the Nikaya formation existing within the Myanmar Sangha, because criteria were necessary for ascertaining the validity of monastic ordination.

### 10. Other Accepted Nikayas

There are two more nikayas, namely “rammana nikaya”<sup>62</sup> and yuan nikaya. These two Nikayas were not included in the reform of the government. The former is still practiced by the group of people in the Mon State especially mon people while the latter is widely practiced by Ta’ang people of Shan State. “Yuan Buddhism or Yuan nikaya is the major religion practiced in Ta’ang region while is accepted by about 60%

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<sup>61</sup> <http://echo-lab.ddo.jp/Libraries>, **society for the study of pali and Buddhist culture**, review on 10, 8, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Nain Pan Thar, *Ramanna Nikaya and history of Mon Buddhism*, Yangon, Myanmar, 2016, p. 25.

of people and the rest about 40% is belonged to sudhamm nik ya”<sup>63</sup> but Ramanna nik ya or Ramanna Buddhism is the major religion in Mon State practiced by the Mon tribe.

<b>Main Practiced Nikayas in Myanmar</b>		
	<b>sets</b>	<b>founder</b>
1	Sudhamma Nik ya	Sudhamma Sayadaw
2	Shegying Nik ya	King mindon
3	Mahadvara Nik ya	Okpo Sayadaw
4	Muladara Nik ya	Ingapu Sayadaw
5	Anaukhaung Dvara Nik ya	Anaukhaung Sayadaw
6	Weluwun Nik ya	Weluwun Sayadaw
7	Catubhummika Mahasatipatthana Nik ya	Ngettwinn Syadaw
8	Kanawimoke Kado Nik ya	Pitakattaik kyang Sayadaw
9	Dhammayuttika Nik ya	Mahayin Sayadaw
10	Ramanna Nik ya	Dhammaza King
11	Yuan Nik ya	Yonathiddhi, Yonakambi, yonakamminna

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<sup>63</sup> Mai Ait Kaw, History of Ta’ang (Palaung), Yangon, Myanmar, 2017, p. 73.

## **3.2 Nik yas and their Characteristic in Ta'ang community**

The missionaries of Buddhism in Ta'ang region have different characteristics. In the Ta'ang region, there are only two Sangha sects in general, namely Sudhamma that belongs to Theravada Buddhism from the middle Myanmar and Yuan Sangha sect of Yuan Buddhism from the western Shan State.

### **3.2.1 Nik yas in Ta'ang community**

Previously, the researcher has described main nik yas of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar. In Ta'ang region, there are only two nikayas which are practiced among the nine. They are Sudhamm nikaya and Shwe Kyin nikaya. Therefore, the researcher will mention only two nikayas of Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism in the region of Ta'ang.

#### **a. Sudhamma Nik ya**

Suddhamm nik ya has a long history in Myanmar. This nikaya was supported by the king Mindon. When king Mindon ascended the throne on 17 February 1853, he was determined to help the Buddhist religion to prosper. On the other hand, he used the religion as a guide to all his political programs. Perhaps it was to atone for his sin in usurping the throne by a revolution. During the time of king Bagan, the second Anglo-Myanmar war broke out in 1852 and lower Myanmar was ceded to

the British Indian Empire on 22 December 1852.<sup>64</sup> Since that time, Sudhamma nikaya was practiced in Ta'ang region. In Ta'ang region, Sudhamma or Therava Buddhism was known as "Paiman."<sup>65</sup> Sudhamma nikaya or Theravada Buddhism is practiced in many of Ta'ang regions. At the present time, the teaching of Sudhamma nikaya is spreading among the Ta'ang people. There are many of monasteries of Sudhamma nikaya across to Ta'ang region. The teaching of Sudhamma nikaya is related to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism such as five precepts, the four noble truths, noble eightfold path, and the three trainings.

#### **b. Yuan Nik ya**

Yuan nik ya has its own literature. Yuan literature is still learned by yuan people in the region of Ta'ang of Shan State, Northern Myanmar. When the researcher went to Mahachulalongkorn University in Chiang Mai Campus, the researcher saw yuan literature is appeared the library of University of Chainmai but yuan literature known as Lanna literature. Yuan Buddhism or Yuan Nik ya are practiced from Chiang Mai across to Ta'ang region of Shan State. According to the record of Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, Yuan Buddhism came from China and introduced to Chiang Mai, Thailand. Moreover, the researcher would like to describe the brief historical background of Yuan Buddhism to the Ta'ang region as follow.

Buddhism has been regarded as an ultimate refuge in Kengtung State and Chiang Mai for more than one thousand years now. It was Yuan

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<sup>64</sup> Thaung, Dr., **Burmese Kingship in Theory and Practice During the Region of Mindon**, Yangon, 1959, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Paiman refers to Theravada Buddhism brought by King Mindon to the Ta'ang region.

Buddhism that was introduced into Kengtung and Chiang Mai after king Mang Rai from Yunna of China had conquered Kengtung and Chiang Mai and established Lanna Kingdom, including Kengtung state. People in Kengtung and Chiang Mai were called Yuan at that time but later the name was changed to Khuen according to astrologic beliefs.<sup>66</sup>

Yuan Buddhism has been influenced the life of Ta'ang in Kengtung state and Chaing Mai since one thousand years ago. According to the statement above, after King Mang Rai conquered Kengtung and Chiang Mai, Yuan Buddhism became the major *nik ya* for their refuge. The People in Kengtung and Chiang Mai were called Yuan after Yuan Buddhism has been practiced as the main *nik ya*. The researcher beliefs that people who practice the teaching of Yuan Buddhism became Yuan people in the Ta'ang's region of Shan State,

From 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century AD, Yuan Buddhism was introduced to people in Chiang Mai through to Kengtung; they had faith in Yuan Buddhism and practiced Yuan Buddhist teaching. In 17<sup>th</sup> century AD, Yuan Buddhism influenced Thai and Tai people. At that time, those people who practiced the theory of Buddhism were called Yuan people. Those people had to learn the Yuan Language. In the region of Ta'ang, northern Myanmar, the tradition and culture of Yuan has flourished since four hundred years ago. Yuan Buddhism was introduced to Ta'ang region by Ven. Yonathiddhi and Ven. Yonathi who used to teach Yuan Buddhism in Yawnarattha division, Chiang, Chiang Rai Kengtung. At the present time, Yuan Buddhism could be seen in many areas of Ta'ang

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<sup>66</sup> Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, **A Study of the influence of Buddhism on the life of Shan people in eastern Shan State of Myanmar**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010, p. 7.

regions. Unfortunately, Yuan Buddhism disappeared from Chiang Mai already. Now, Yuan Buddhism entered Ta'ang region through Yunnan, China. Ta'ang people still use Yuan language for the recording of Tipitaka in Ta'ang region.<sup>67</sup>

Since Buddhism came to Kengtung state from Lanna, Ta'ang and Shan people in eastern Shan State are more than ninety-five percent converted to Buddhist. Ta'ang language, culture, and tradition are very similar to Yuan. In the eastern Shan State, Yuan Buddhism has teaching that related to the teaching of Theravada Buddhism. Some historians state that Buddhism appeared here through its spread from China through Sipsongpanna to Kentung and through eastern Shan State to Lanna.<sup>68</sup>

According to the research of Mance Phayomyong, Yuan Buddhism is a part of Theravada Buddhism for Yuan people. After Yuan people have taken refuge in both Yuan and Theravada Buddhism it was named Yuan Buddhism. Nowadays, the tradition and culture of Yuan people are related to Theravada Buddhist traditions. This Yuan Buddhist tradition was spread to Kengtung state from region of Lanna. At the same time, Ta'ang and Shan people in eastern Shan State migrant from China to Lanna.

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<sup>67</sup> The researcher tr., **The History of Ta'ang Palaung**, Yangon, 2017, p.75.

<sup>68</sup> Mance Phayomyong, "Literary Tipitaka and Commentary", **Literature of Buddhism in Lanna, Chiang Mai**, (Social Research Institution Chiang Mai University and Office of Research fund, Thailand: Suriwong Book Center, 1997), p.44.

### 3.2.2. Characteristic of Nikayas in Ta'ang community

Sudhamma and Yuan Sangha sects in Ta'ang community are familiar more than before. They have different styles of developing and propagating Buddhism in Ta'ang community. For the Yuan Sangha sect, Ta'ang people try to develop it by themselves. Yuan at the present day is a major sect among Ta'ang people but the Suddhamma sect is supported by Myanmar Sangha community.

#### a. Characteristic of Sudhamma Nikaya

During the time of king Mindon, the supreme leader and Sudhamma Charatoaus decided only the cases sent to them. They were accusations of any kind. Some monks spent their time in alchemy, which was forbidden. Some were found guilty of several kinds of sex crimes, some indulged in profit making through trade or money lending. The Vinaya instructs that each Sangha representative should keep himself away from doing wrong, and if a monk broke the precept, his fellow monks should admonish him. The supreme leader and Sudhamma Charatoaus used nothing but the Vinaya to decide all cases of the monk.<sup>69</sup>

As mentioned above, in the research of Shwezin Hpon Naing, it is stated that the characteristic of Sudhamma is to practice the rules of Vinaya. The rule of Vinaya is the rule of Sudhamma. Even though the name of Sudhamma is a name of a nikaya, the rules are not different from other nikayas. The rules of Vinaya remain in the rule of Dhamma nikaya.

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<sup>69</sup> Shwezin Hpon Naing, **History of the Sudhamma Buddhist Order of Monks**, Yangon, Myanmar, 2004, P. 46.

## **b. Characteristic of Yuan Nik ya**

The characteristic of Yuan Sangha sect had been described by Anning Ning in his article, which provides the following information.

The Yuan Buddhist statement disregards the highest authority of the “three jewels” (tiratana) of Buddhism – the Buddha, the Buddhist “law” (Dhamma), and “the clergy” (Sangha). There is no fundamental Buddhist concern for retribution (kamma or the liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (samsara). Instead, emphasis is given to the supreme power of the ruler, moral judgment, and obedience by the ruled: these views touch upon traditional Chinese thought. The Chinese Beidou worshiped by the Chinese Buddhist monks was entirely different from the image of the Indian Beidou introduced later.<sup>70</sup>

As mentioned above, the author said that people who follow Yuan Buddhism pay attention not to the Triple Gem, the law of Dhamma, the community of the Sangha, kamma, and samsara but regard only the supreme power of the king who was a ruler of the country, and moral decision of the law. The king is highly respected in the doctrine of Yuan Buddhism. This view is the attitude of Yuan Buddhism in China. But, in the book of Kham Mong, the author gives a characteristic of Yuan Buddhism, which is very different from the view of Anning Ning. Kham Mong described the characteristic of Yuan Buddhism as follows.

Yuan traditions, beliefs, letter and language are, thus, quite the same. Yuan script is called by various names today such as Khuen, Lue,

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<sup>70</sup> Anning Ning, **The Yuan Buddhist Mural of Bhaisajyaguru, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is collaborating with Jstor to digitize, preserve, and extend access to Metropolitan Museum Journal**, www. Jstor.org, p.158.

Yua, Dhamma, Lanna, and Merng according to each local usage like in Laos, Kegtung, Lanna and Sipsongpanna. This script was used for the religious writings by Shan people in Shan State in the early days.<sup>71</sup>

Yuan Buddhism in China and Yuan Buddhism in Shan State have significant differences because Yuan Buddhism in China places a special emphasis on worshipping the king, the law, and moral judgment, but for Yuan Buddhism in Shan State the belief in Dhamma, letter, language and traditions is of vital importance. Yuan Buddhism is related to Theravada Buddhism. It was, thus, introduced in Eastern Shan State first during the time of King Mang Mai.<sup>72</sup>

Nowadays, the people who follow Yuan Buddhism try to develop Yuan Buddhism in the way of Theravada Buddhism. In Ta'ang region, Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism are practiced similarly by Ta'ang people. This tribe followed Yuan Buddhism according to their own understanding. It is in name only that they believe in Yuan Buddhism. Actually, they follow the traditions of Theravada Buddhism. It is believed that Theravada Buddhism practiced in Shan State and Ta'ang region today has reached the Ta'ang people by two main ways. The first way is from Yuan Buddhism as Theravada Buddhism and the second way is from Sudhamma nikaya as Theravada Buddhism. That is why the Buddhism in the Ta'ang region must be called Theravada Buddhism. In the Ta'ang region, there are two ways to develop in Theravada

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<sup>71</sup> Kham Mong, Sa, **The History and Development of the Shan Scripts**, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2004.

<sup>72</sup> Saimong Mangrai, Sao, **The Padaeng Chronicle and the Jengung State Chronicle** Translate. United States of America: 1981.

Buddhism. The first way is learning and the second way is training. The method is exactly the same with Yuan Buddhism.

To make a conclusion, in this chapter the researcher has discussed types and characteristic of Buddhism followed by Ta'ang ethnics, in particular Yuan Buddhism and Sudhamma nikaya. Above all the researcher has described Yuan Buddhism in China, Yuan Buddhism in Shan State, and Yuan Buddhism in Ta'ang region. Analyzing the differences between Yuan Buddhism in China, Shan State, and Ta'ang, the researcher would like to say that it is true that Yuan Buddhism was introduced to Shan State and Ta'ang region from China. Although the name of Yuan Buddhism is same in these regions, the characteristics and practices are different in each of them.

Yuan Buddhism in China focuses on the king's law rather on the teaching of Buddha or the law of kamma. Yuan Buddhism in Shan State and Yuan Buddhism in Ta'ang region are more related to the teaching of the Buddha, the law of kamma, five precepts, the noble eightfold path, and the four noble truths, but there is no worship of the king's law and moral judgment. Followers of Yuan Buddhism in Ta'ang practice the way of Theravada Buddhism. The lifestyle of Yuan Buddhists is same as in Theravada Buddhism.

### **3.3 The Buddhist Doctrine in the Ta'ang community and Their Beliefs**

The doctrine of the Buddha is a refuge in the lives of Ta'ang people. Buddhism has been practiced in Myanmar since it was introduced to the country of Burma. But in the Ta'ang region, the theory of Buddhism became a mix of Yuan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. The people in Ta'ang area describe themselves as the people who believe in Yuan Buddhism. They follow the culture and tradition of Yuan Buddhism but when they take refuge in the triple gem, ask for five precepts, and listen to the Dhamma talk, they listen to the Dhamma talk in Theravada Buddhist tradition. In this part, the researcher will touch upon three topics: activities related to Buddhist doctrine, application of Buddhist theory, and everyday life of Ta'ang people.

#### **3.3.1 The Buddhist Doctrine Practiced in Ta'ang community**

Buddhist doctrine can be practiced by everyone but sometimes the doctrine is very hard to understand for the people. The Buddhist monks in the area of Ta'ang use simple words to explain the doctrine in Dhamma talks so the people can develop in the Buddha's teachings such as the five precepts, kamma and rebirth, the four noble truths, and the noble eightfold path.

##### **a. Buddhist Five Precepts**

Buddhist five precepts are vitally important to Ta'ang Buddhist people. They follow the theory of five precepts such as to abstain from taking the lives of living beings, to abstain from taking that which is not given, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from telling

falsehoods, to abstain from distilled and fermented intoxicants, which are the occasion for carelessness (which also includes drugs) in their daily lives because they understand that morality of Buddhism is a way to build a peaceful life.

Ta'ang people keep five precepts by understanding the ways that the first precept, based on compassion, prohibits killing, hurting and torturing, the second forbids (direct) stealing, actions supporting stealing and actions analogous to stealing. this is to secure observance of other's rights regarding their property, the third is meant as a guide against perverse sexual actions (un-chastity) and unfaithfulness in marriage life, the fourth emphasizes truthfulness and includes avoidance of telling direct and indirect false-hoods and the breaking of promises, the fifth is to prevent indulgence in intoxicants. They can make their actions and their mind wholesome based on the five precepts teaching. These precepts are the basics of moral life for Buddhist and non-Buddhist people alike. Sean Ashley described the practice of five precepts of Buddhism by the Ta'ang or Palaung people as follows.

Palaung Buddhism is very perplexing. I do not propose to go fully into the subject of Buddhism, but simply to some of the religious beliefs and customs of the Palaung people. The monks teach the people the Buddhist commandments which form their moral code. They are as follows: do not destroy life, do not steal, do not lie, commit no unchaste act and drink no intoxicating liquors.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with buddha**: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand, Simon Fraser University, 2004, p. 43.

The head monks in the monasteries give Dhamma talks to Palaung or Ta'ang Buddhist followers on every Buddhist holiday. The monks explain each of the five precepts and explain the way how to apply them in their daily life to be a good person. Most of Buddhist monks from Ta'ang region went to Buddhist education schools that are known as Pariyatti Sathindite. After they graduate, they come back to Ta'ang region and share the Buddhist teachings, especially the ones on Buddhist morality. Most of the people in Ta'ang regions do not understand Pali language. The monks need to learn both Pali and the translation in order to explain the five precepts and other Buddhist doctrines. Especially, five precepts are very vital to the ta'ang people. Whenever, they do Buddhist charity, they need to ask for five precepts for the monk. Five precepts are very special on any activity of Buddhist tradition such as listening to dhamma talk and prittat chanting. Five precepts make their mind calm down, peaceful, and happy.

#### **a. Kamma and Rebirth**

Kamma and rebirth are very hard to understand for the Buddhist people. Palaung or Ta'ang people have strong belief in kamma and rebirth. In Ta'ang region, most of Ta'ang people understand kamma and rebirth according to the sayings of their elders. Milne who did the research of Ta'ang described the doctrine on kamma and rebirth of Ta'ang people as follows.

The belief that when a man dies his spirit goes out of his body and seeks another habitation is held by all Palaung, even by those who are little more than spirit-worshippers, though I do not know whether they held this belief before they accepted Buddhism. A man or woman may be

reborn as the spirit of a human baby, or, if his life on earth has been extraordinarily good, he may be transported to a paradise.<sup>74</sup>

Ta'ang people believe that when a man passed away his soul goes out from his physical body and looks for another state of living. If he has been very wicked, he may be obliged to descend to a place of torment. When his or her soul knows he or she leaves the body at the time of death he or she looks for his or her next state. This belief in rebirth is exactly the same with Buddhism because Buddhism regards the doctrine of rebirth not a mere theory but a verifiable fact. Theory of rebirth forms the fundamental tenet of Buddhism. From Buddhist perspective, rebirth is the arising of mentality-materiality resulted from causes and conditions. Here, it does not refer to reincarnation which transmigrates as soul or a spirit from life to life.

In the Ta'ang region, when a mother gives birth to a child, people in that village think that this little child is the person who died some years ago. For the kamma, Ta'ang people believe that "this body also sooner or later comes to an end, and the spirit may take to itself another ethereal body, or again enter a human being or it may enter one of lower animals, because although the evolution of the spirit is a possibility, it may descend as well as ascend in the scale of existence." The concept of kamma described in *The Home of an Eastern Clan: A study of the Palaungs of the Shan State* is similar to the Buddha's teaching.

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<sup>74</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with buddha: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand**, Simon Fraser University, 2004, p. 313.

According to the Buddha's teaching on the concept of kamma, good deeds and bad deeds that we commit in our daily life have corresponding consequences. In Dhammapada, kamma means volitional actions done by a non-arahant. It consists of wholesome and unwholesome. Generally, there are ten wholesome kamma and ten unwholesome kamma performed through three doors, namely three bodily actions, four verbal actions, and three mental actions. We should understand that wholesome actions listed above are not merely negative, they are also positive. For instance, abstention from stealing does not only imply one should avoid form stealing but also one should practice right livelihood, etc. The remaining nine actions can be understood in the same way. Moreover, kamma is also classified according to different aspects such as with respect to function, with respect to the order in which the effect of kamma takes place, with respect to time of taking effect, and with respect to the place in which the affect takes place.

To make a conclusion regarding the concept of kamma and rebirth in Ta'ang community, in short, an action, whether good or bad, surely, produces a result. Sometimes, it gives result immediately but sometimes not. However, it is always true that good action produces a good result, and bad action gives a bad one. Therefore, one should try to perform good actions and avoid evil deeds. Rebirth is not created by external beings or forces. It is governed by the kamma. Wholesome deeds lead to good rebirth, and unwholesome deeds lead to bad one. Good or bad rebirth depends not only on the deeds done during lifetime, but also on those deeds done in the past or on the dead bed. The moment at the verge of death is extremely important. It plays a decisive role in giving

bad or good rebirth. Conway Susan described the doctrine of Buddhism in her research in Ta'ang region as follows.

Buddhism influenced Ta'ang people very much; even the princes who ruled Kengtung were all interested in Buddhist teachings and meritorious deeds. According to Kengtung chronicle, Kengtung ruler succeeding to the throne usually ordained as a novice monk and stayed in the monastery in order to practice Dhamma for at least a rain retreat (vassa).<sup>75</sup> Ta'ang people follow the teachings of Buddhism whenever they do some activities belonging to Buddhist culture such as becoming a novice or ordaining as a monk. Ta'ang people deeply believe in the teachings of Buddhism such as the noble eightfold path, the five precepts, the four noble truths and the three trainings. Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri describes the religious practices of Ta'ang people and Shan people as follows.

Before the Buddhist doctrine has been introduced to Ta'ang regions, Ta'ang people used to believe in spirits of nature including spirits of plants, trees, sky, mountains, earth, rivers, lakes, temples, and houses. For their believed that all of these could be useful for Ta'ang and Shan people. Astrology, spiritual healing and messages through dreams have always played an important role in Shan and Ta'ang daily life.<sup>76</sup> Palaung or Ta'ang people were mostly the people who believed in astrology and mediums. When they were sick, they asked the astrologer

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<sup>75</sup> Conway Susan, **The Shan: Cultrue, Art and Crafts**, (Thailand: River Books., Ltd, 2006), p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, **A Study of the Influence of Buddhism on the Life of Shan People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010, p. 36.

to cure their sickness. At the present time, in some areas where Buddhism have not been introduced yet, Ta'ang people still believe in gods. They pray to gods in order to gain a good life because there are no Buddhist people who teach them about Buddhism. That is why they believe in gods and spirits of the mountains.

### **3.3.2 The Beliefs of Ta'ang community**

Ta'ang tribes had a strong faith in god, soul, and fortune tellers about thousand years ago but after Yuan and Suddhamma sects were introduced to the region, Ta'ang people converted to Buddhism. Nowadays, Kar-Bu and Kar-Nam are non-Buddhist beliefs that are still popular in Ta'ang region. However, at the present time, the teachings of Buddhism are more common than the traditional beliefs.

#### **a. The Triple Gem**

Buddhism has influenced Ta'ang people, which now have a strong faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Most of Ta'ang people respect the Triple Gem. Before the researcher describes the faith of ta'ang people on the triple gem, it should clear how faith is very important to human being life. Venerable Master Hsing Yun mentioned about the faith on triple gems as follow.

Human life cannot be without faith, and the first step along the path to faith is taking refuge in the Triple Gem. Taking refuge in the Triple Gem enables human life to become more enriched, as well as more solid and secure. The word "gem" can refer to mundane wealth or it can refer to supramundane wealth. Mundane wealth is represented by gold, diamonds, pearls, carnelian, and so forth; supramundane wealth is

represented by the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The possession of mundane wealth can enrich our material life, while obtaining the supramundane Triple Gem of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha can enrich our spiritual life. Thus, if we want to live a rich and abundant life, we must first take refuge in the Triple Gem.<sup>77</sup>

All the Buddhist people believe in the triple gems in Buddhism. human being could live without faith. Faith are very vital to human life. Not only Buddhist people have faith but also Christian people and Islam people have faith. In Buddhist society, Buddhist people have faith in triple gem of the Buddha, the dhamma, and the singha. Buddhist people believe that triple gems can improve their life. The faith and beliefs of Ta'ang go hand-in-hand with Theravada Buddhism. Triple gem is their main belief in Theravada Buddhism. A Shin Sujata described the strong belief of Ta'ang people in the Triple Gem as follows.

The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are three objects of highest veneration in Buddhism to the Ta'ang community. They are called Triple Gem (Triratana) which implies they are very precious and invaluable. The Ta'ang people believe that being Buddhist<sup>78</sup>, one should take refuge in Triple Gems. In the Ta'ang region, before Ta'ang budhist people took five precepts, they must take refuge to Buddha, dhamma and the sangha. The triple gems influence their everyday life. Some of Ta'ang people always recite the p li term that dedicate to Buddha, dhamma, and the sangha. They believe that taking refuge to the buddha is about to be

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<sup>77</sup> Venerable Master Hsing Yun, **The Triple Gem, Hacienda Heights, California**, 2011, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> The Researcher., tr., **Ta'ang Culture and Daily Life**, Yangon, 2013, p. 42.

powerful, dhamma is about to gain wisdom, and refuge to the sangha is about to fulfil properties. The Ta'ang monks' missionary always explain the what is the buddha, what is the dhamma and what is the singha in dhamma talk section. The effect of explanation about the triple gems by the monks influence to their life. Ta'ang people put the sign of triple gems in front of their house in order to protect home, properties and family. When someone in the family is ill, the mother or father comes to the monastery, then invites monks to their house and recites dhamma to the one who is ill. They feel safe on the dhamma. It could be identified that the influence of triple gem effects to their everyday life in the case of illness, protect, and leading them to gain the wisdom.

### **b. Kar-Bu**

Spirit of Kar-Bu is also important in the life of Ta'ang community. Ta'ang people believe in Kar-Bu as the soul of human being, especially in life after death. Milne described the Kar-Bu belief as follows.<sup>79</sup>

Palaungs look upon the spirit as the same in kind, whether it' habitation is an ethereal body normally invisible, or a human body. The spirit inhabiting men is called Kar-Bu. The Kar-Bu appears to be one spirit and yet to be composed of many parts, some say thirty-two, some say not so many. When a person sleeps, some parts of his Kar-Bu leave his body. A person, especially one who is ill, should never be roused from

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<sup>79</sup> **Kar-Bu** refers to the spirit inhabiting men.

sleep. In illness, some of the parts of the Kar-Bu are in any case of the body, and in sleep still more part may have gone out.<sup>80</sup>

Ta'ang people believe in the spirit of Kar-Bu. It is believed to go with or follow the funeral of the body which it inhabited, on the way to graveyard, accompanied by the two guardian spirits who sit on shoulders of every human being. In some regions of Ta'ang community, there are people who can call back the Kar-Bu to the person who is sick. Fifty years ago, there were no doctors and nurses to cure the sickness of the person. People used to invite the person who was the master of Kar-Bu to cure the sickness. It could be said that this belief is very important for Ta'ang people. Nowadays, they still use this method of inviting Kar-Bu as a tradition of the Ta'ang community. It is generally believed that the Kar-Bu hopes to be reborn into the home that it still remembers, but it may happen that there is no woman there of an age to have another child, so the poor Kar-Bu wanders away seeking a new home and a new mother. For this task the spirit has a limited period of seven days.

### **c. Kar-Nam**

Kar-Nam is one of the spirit that Ta'ang people have a strong believe in. There are many Kar-Nam in the Ta'ang traditional belief. They pay respect to the Kar-Nam whenever they pass the Kar-Nam house. They normally build the Kar-Nam house in the gate of the village

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<sup>80</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an EasternClan: A Study of the Palaungs of the Shan State**, Oxford, 1924, p.315.

for the safety of their own lives. Mile describes the Kar-Nam belief as follows.

A Kar-Nam as a rule is invisible, but there is a legend of one that was seen several times sitting on the roof of the Chief's palace, to the terror of all beholders. This Kar-Nam had previously been the Kar-Bu of a great Chief. No one would describe a visible Kar-Nam to them. Palaungs or Ta'ang people say that it is like and yet unlike a human being, but they do like to be questioned on the subject, possibly because they fear the vengeance of an invisible but listening Kar-Nam. Kar-Nam in a tree, a stone, or in any other object which has never been in a human body, does not seem to have power to do mischief to a human being.<sup>81</sup>

For the Ta'ang people, Karn-Nam is an invisible but yet a very powerful god. We cannot question the Ta'ang elders about the Kar-Nam spirit, although the older villagers just force the young generation to pay respect to the god or the Kar-Nam. All of the villagers believe that paying respect to the Kar-Nam or the god will certainly protect you by its way. We have to give some special food, flowers, and water to the Kar-Nam. In some areas, they build a living place for the Kar-Nam next to main door of the house. No one dares to touch the god's or the Kar-Nam's palace. In the Ta'ang or Palaung jungles in Burma and in other parts of the Shan State, there are many Kar-Nam shrines. A small house, almost like a doll's house, two or three feet in height and the same in width, is set on poles under some great tree at a distance from a path. It is roughly

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<sup>81</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A study of the Palaungs of the Shan State**, Oxford, 1924, p.343.

put together of split bamboos, and a small fence of a few upright and horizontal poles encloses both tree and shrine.

To sum up, the researcher has described the Buddhist teachings practiced in the Ta'ang community and their beliefs. The Ta'ang people observe the five precepts in their daily life in the Theravada Buddhist way. Then they apply the theory of kamma and rebirth in everyday life based on the faith in Triple Gem. The researcher has described how Ta'ang people understand the theory of kamma and rebirth according to doctrine of Buddhism. Concerning Ta'ang communities believe in the Triple Gem, Kar-Bu, and Kar-Nam, the researcher has explained how they take refuge in the Triple Gem, and worship Kar-Bu and Kar-Nam.

### **3.4 Everyday Life**

The life of Ta'ang is very interesting to the people in Burma or Myanmar because the life style of Ta'ang is very different from any other ethnic group of Myanmar. The style of houses, villages, and the daily life are not similar with other tribes such as Kachin, Shan, etc. In the book by Leslie Milne, the life style of Ta'ang community is described as follows.

In every Palaung village, at the highest part of the hill, stands a Buddhist image-house and monastery, surrounded by a large unpaved court. As Palaung or Ta'ang villages are built on a ridge with a valley on either side, or on a slope near the top of a hill, it is usual to find that the highest part of the ridge or the top of the hill has been cut away to make a platform, on which is built the image-house and monastery. There may also be a pagoda, built of brick or stone, much in the style of those of

Burma. On the edge of the platform is a house for the nuns where village women sometimes go to spend quite days.<sup>82</sup>

Triple Gem is considered as the highest and holiest objects of worship because they can ward off danger, eliminate suffering and bring good benefits. The Triple Gem will enjoy more benefits than a person who makes unlimited and incomparable offerings. Ta'ang people believe that one who is taking refuge in the Triple Gem will not be reborn in the four lower realms after death, being reborn in human or celestial worlds, and surpassing others by enjoying visible objects, pleasant sounds, good tastes, pleasant contacts, long life, good appearance, happiness, power, and a large number of companions.

Herein, Leslie Milne said that the everyday life of Ta'ang ethnics generates interest in people of the country of Myanmar. We can see that the style of building Ta'ang houses is very similar to the style of building temple halls. When Ta'ang people start building their houses, they plan a place where to put the Buddha image first and then they build their living room next. Ta'ang people love to live on the top of the mountains. Some of them live in the dangerous mountain areas but they are proud of living in these beautiful places they own as the heritages from their grand fathers and mothers of Ta'ang tribe. Whenever they engage in some activities, they follow the theory of the religion that they believe especially the guidelines of the monk who is the head of the monastery in their village. Ta'ang people love to carve the Buddha images out of stone

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<sup>82</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A study of the Palaungs of the Shan State**, Oxford, 1924, p. 315.

to worship. In their house, there is a special place for the Buddha statue. They offer food, flowers, and water to the Buddha statue.

In some areas of the region, Ta'ang or Palaung people still believe in spirits. They still think that looking upon the spirit is the best way to save their life from the evil. On the other hand, in some areas of the Ta'ang people try to cut down the spirit worship. "Palaungs or Ta'ang looks upon the spirit as the same in kind, whether its habitation is an ethereal body normally invisible, or a human body or the body of an animal. The spirit inhabiting men and animals is called the Kar-bu. Should the same spirit pass into a plant, a stone, or even take up its abode in the earth or in the air, or in a dead body, it is called a Kar-nam."<sup>83</sup> Not only the teachings of Buddhism have an influence on Ta'ang people but also worshipping the spirits who are believed to protect people from dangers and help them to become more wealthy and healthy. Ta'ang people believe that worshipping the spirits leads to benefits in their lives.

The faith in spirits takes place as one part of their life. Some of them believe in god. On the riverside, they can offer some meat and chicken to the god for getting back their belonging which have been lost. At the present day, this tradition influences the Chinese people who live near the areas of Ta'ang. Some of Ta'ang who live in deep forests believe in astrologers who can call back their soul. When they feel sick, they mostly think that they lost their soul. This tradition is also very popular among the people in the Ta'ang region. Therefore, in some Palaung people the faith in spirits is stronger than in Buddhist teachings.

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<sup>83</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A study of the Palaungs of the Shan State**, Oxford, 1924, p.336.

### **3.5 Concluding Remark**

As a conclusion remark, in this chapter, the researcher has briefly touched upon the history of Buddhism in Myanmar, Nikayas, Yuan Buddhism, the characteristics of Buddhism in Ta'ang community, doctrine of Buddhism which is practiced in Ta'ang community, and the everyday life of Ta'ang. In this chapter the researcher collected data from the following publications: Study of the Influence of Buddhism on the Life of Shan People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar, The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaung of the Shan State, History of the Sudhamma Buddhist Order of Monks, Theravada Buddhism in the Reign of King Mindon, Palaung History, and Metropolitan Museum Journal.

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Influences of Buddhism on the Festivals of the Ta'ang Ethnic Group in Myanmar**

The researcher will divide this chapter into four sections: firstly, buddhist rites and rituals, secondly, influence of Buddhism on the various Buddhist festivals of Ta'ang community, thirdly, other influence of Buddhism on the Ta'ang community, and finally, concluding remarks.

#### **4.1 Influences of Buddhism on the Various Buddhist Festivals of Ta'ang Community**

There are many Buddhist festivals in the Ta'ang community. As we know most of the Ta'ang tribes believe in Buddhism, and the culture and traditions of Ta'ang are influenced by Buddhist tradition. Whenever Ta'ang people celebrate some occasions, they follow the Buddhist tradition in the celebration. No matter how big or small the activities are, the influence of Buddhism exists in the activities of the Ta'ang tribe. Ta'ang also believe that Buddhism significantly influences and is of much importance in their life style.

#### **4.1.1 Influences on New Year Festival**

Buddhist people in Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar celebrate the Buddhist New Year in April. In Ta'ang region, Ta'ang people celebrate the New Year festival like any other ethnic group in Myanmar. New Year is known as Thingyan in Myanmar. In Thingyan Yet or New Year's Day, old Myanmar people and some of the young generation such as high school teachers and doctors from the government hospitals go to the monastery to receive the five precepts from the monk. Some of them become ordained as a monk or a nun. Palaung people believe that celebrating Thingyan or Buddhist New Year is good for performing good deeds (good kamma) and abstain from bad things (bad kamma). After celebrating Thingyan or Buddhist New Year, minds of the people become pure, helping them to live their life peacefully. Mile comments the New Year celebration in Ta'ang community as follows.

At the beginning of the water-feast in April, children pour water on the hands of their parents, and the parents wash their faces with their wet hands. This is a ceremonial washing, and when it is finished, the parents with their children carry bamboo joints full of water, in order to pour it over the images in the court of the monastery. All images of the Buddha that are not too heavy are carried out of the image-house for the occasion, and all day a long procession of people of all ages may be seen

climbing to hill from the spring or steam. They pour the water over the images, then go down the hill again for more.<sup>84</sup>

At the present time, at the first day of Thingyan (known as Songkran in Thailand), most of the children offer the water to their parents. They wash their parent's hands with pure water. The parents share their merits with their children so they can acquire long-lived, beauty, happiness, power, and a good education. After that, they carry the Buddha image to the monastery, and pour water over the Buddha images. As we know the word Thingyan is a Myanmar word translated from Pali language. It comes from the Pali word *sankanta* and means changing. People hope that in the new year, positive changes will occur. During the time of Thingyan festival, Myanmar people use to take their children to the monastery along with them to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. Daw Khin Myoe Chit described the importance of Thingyan festival as follows.

Novitiation is of vital importance in a Buddhist family. Boys are sent to the monastery where they stay for a week or more. Their head is shaved and they wear yellow robes. They go for alms rounds with their black alms bowls and keep precepts. Parents consider it a great privilege to novitiate their sons: that is, in fact, giving their own flesh and blood into the Buddhist order of the Sangha. Those who do not have sons of their own, novitiate other people's sons so that they do not miss doing this deed of great merit. A novitiation ceremony can be simple or it can be done with all the trimming of folk music troupes and processions. There

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<sup>84</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A study of the Palaungs of the Shan State**, Oxford, 1924, p.239.

is such a wealth of tradition and custom in the colourful processions that are part of the Thingyan festival scene.<sup>85</sup>

In Thingyan festival, there are many families who would like to support the little boys to become a novice or ordain as a monk. In fact, the little boys wear yellow robes and receive food from the donators. Thingyan festival is a good occasion for accumulating merits. Some of people go to the monastery in order to take meditation and make the mind peaceful. Some people visit elderly men and women to pay respect and offer new clothes, food, and make an offering of water. In the Ta'ang region, the monks from the monastery are invited to recite the Dhamma in order to protect the village or the city. People in Ta'ang region believe that after the monks recite the Dhamma, the village and the city will be safe by the power of the Buddha's teaching.

Actually, Ta'ang had no Thingyan before Myanmar Thingyan has influenced the Ta'ang region. Sean Ashley has mentioned the origin of Thingyan in his thesis research: "the Palaung or the Ta'ang themselves do not have their own myth concerning the Thingyan festival, and recount an abbreviate version of the lowland myths. In Burma, the origin myth for the Thingyan festival is similar to that given by Rajadhon. However, myth has a preface wherein the king of the gods."<sup>86</sup> In the Ta'ang tradition, there is no record on Thingyan festival. This festival comes from Burmese tradition. Thingyan did not belong to their own culture but it was introduced by the Burmese people. However, nowadays the

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<sup>85</sup> Daw Khin Myoe Chit, *Flowers and Festival Round the Myanmar Year*, Yangon, 199, P. 22.

<sup>86</sup> Sean Ashley, *Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand*, Simon Fraser University, 2004, P. 49.

tradition of celebrating the Thingyan festival became a part of Ta'ang culture.

#### 4.1.2 Influences on Vassa (warso) Festival

Vassa or (warso) is very important for the Buddhist monks and the Buddhist people because in “Buddhism rain retreat plays an important role for the Buddhist monks. It can be said like the year for the Buddhist monk because due the observance of rain retreat the Buddhist monks get one more year. But it should be asked first, what is rain retreat? How the Buddhist monks observe and so on are the important questions to emphasis in this paper. Rain retreat is called vass v sa in Pali. Its literal translation is “the place (for the monk) for entering upon the rainy season”. It is called ‘Waso’ in Myanmar. Rain retreat is mainly concerned with the Buddhist monks. But the Buddhist monks also advise novices to stay at one place to focus on their study or practice depending on their monastery type (either a learning center or a meditation center). It is observed in Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and other contries where the Theravada Buddhist monks dwell.”<sup>87</sup>

In Myanmar, the Vassa festival is usually celebrated in the fourth month of the Myanmar calendar. It is the beginning of the Lenten season. Myanmar people are very proud to celebrate Vassa festival. They believe that the month of vassa is a holy time in a monk's life. Buddhism has

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<sup>87</sup> <https://ariyajoti.wordpress.com>, **Rain retreat (vass v so) for Buddhist monks**, August 8, 2013,

strongly influenced the Vassa festival of Ta'ang community in Myanmar. Buddhist people offer robes, flowers, candles, and other requisites to the monks. In Myanmar language, the robe in warso season is well known as warso thingan (was so robe). that is dedicated to the monk in order to make the healthy in learning Buddhist teaching, practice the vipassan meditation and developed Buddhism. The flowers are known as warso pan (warso flowers). Offering the flowers is to encourage the person who has nothing to offer to the buddha statue and monks. The candles are known as warso phayaund dine (warso phayund dine- warso candle is to dedicate to the wisdom of the Buddha. On the other hand, Ta'ang people belief that offering candle can make you knowledge more perfect and higher. Sometimes they even offer large amounts of food to the monks. That food could be called warso son. In the warso season, most of the staffs under the government get the day off. Those staffs have the chance to receive five precepts from the monks and listen to a Dhamma talk. Daw Hkin Myoe Chit makes a following statement about the influence of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals.

In Myanmar, there are 12 months in a year. In each month, there are Buddhist holidays or activities. Warso is the fourth month of the Myanmar calendar. Warso is the time of soberness, self-restraint, and religious consideration for Ta'ang people. The people in the villages and cities come to the monastery and bring something to offer to the monks for using in the season of warso. As we know, in Theravada Buddhism it is considered a wholesome deed to pay respect to an elder monk or an elder person, so the monks or the lay people in Ta'ang community pay respect to their elders. Firstly, the monks and novices pay respect to the head monk. Secondly, all young monks, novices and lay people pay

respect to the old monk. Finally, lay people pay respect to little novices. In the early morning, all the people prepare the food and offer to the monks. For the young boys it is very interesting because they wake up at 3 AM and wake other people to prepare the things in order to offer to the monks.

The Warso festival is good for reminding Ta'ang to abstain from drinking alcohol because during this festival Ta'ang young people are busy making donation to the monks and elderly people. Khin Myoe Chit mentions in her book that "Waso is the time when people meritorious deeds, especially *d na* (generosity) *s la* (moralconduct) and *b van* (development of good deeds) dhammassavana (listening to the dhamma talk) and practice contemplation and self-denial. People make it a point of fasting and observing special precepts one day in the week. Even habitual drinkers take a vow of abstinence, for the seas, at least. It is good in a way for people to be reminded of the need for self-discipline. However, the Lenten season is not as dull as it sounds. Even as the senior citizens are making preparations for offering to the monasteries, the young people busy themselves with organization music troupes. On the full moon day people flock to the monastery with offerings, and of course, there will be music troupes in attendance."<sup>88</sup> According to the statement of Daw Khin Myoe Chit, the culture of Warso festival in Myanmar is similar to the culture of Vassa festival in Thailand and other Theravada Buddhist countries.

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<sup>88</sup> Daw Khin Myoe Chit, **Flowers and Festival Round the Myanmar Year**, Yangon, 199, p. 36.

### 4.1.3 Influences on Thadingyut Festival

Thadingyut festival is a very popular festival in Ta'ang community that is influenced by Myanmar culture. Buddhism strongly influenced Thadingyut festival of Ta'ang. In Burma, there are many interesting festivals such Thingyan, Waso, Tabaung, and Kason. Those Burmese festivals influenced Ta'ang culture and Ta'ang festivals. Milne who writes about the "home of an eastern clan", mentioned the festival only by the English calendar and does not include the name of Thadingyut. However, his research on this festival is related to Thadingut. Below we can see how he described this event.

The Buddhist year has its fasts and its festivals. That are three months of fasting, the Buddhist lent, which begins about the middle of July, at the time of full moon, and lasts for the lunar months: in these three months there are no marriages. At this time the lay people should fast at least four times in each month, the monks and nuns more often. It is no easy to fix the exact date of the fasts as each month begins with the new moon. The great festivals are always held at full moon, in the middle of the lunar month. In October, at the end of the long fast, there are illuminations, especially in the neighborhood of the monastery and all who have lanterns carry them.<sup>89</sup>

In Ta'ang region, from the time Vassa or Warso until Thadingyut, marriage activities are not allowed to be celebrated. It will be from middle July until the middle of October according to English

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<sup>89</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with buddha: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand**, (Canada: Simon Fraser University, 2004), p. 43.

calendar. During three months, most of people celebrate only Buddhist festivals on the full moon days. On the full moon day of the month, the elders of Ta'ang people come to stay at the monastery to take meditation from five in the morning until eight in the evening. Some of Ta'ang people just fast at home. They don't take meditation. At the last day of taking fast, all the young people organize some food and drinks for offering to the people who was fasting and taking meditation. Sean Ashley mentioned this festival according to the English calendar. Nowadays, most people are familiar with English calendar but Daw Khin Myoe Chit described the festival of Thadingyut according to Myanmar calendar as follows.

In Myanmar, Thadingyut is celebrated in the seventh month of the Myanmar calendar. It states the final of the Buddhist lent. During the festival of Thadingyut, Ta'ang people light the candles, offer the flowers and the golden robe to the Buddha images. Buddhist people in the Ta'ang region believe that the festival of Thadingyut is referred to the Buddha's return after he went to the Deva world. This festival is to welcome the Buddha to the human world. Some of the young generation sing Buddhist songs in order to honor the Buddha. In the Ta'ang region, all the monks are invited together in a monastery to pay respect to the elder monks.<sup>90</sup>

In Thadingyut festival, there are many ceremonies to be celebrated such as Kathina offering ceremony, Lighting the candle ceremony, and Pavarana ceremony. Here the researcher will describe Kathina ceremony in the festival of Thadingyut. Kathina offering

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<sup>90</sup> Daw Khin Myoe Chit, **Flowers and Festival Round the Myanmar Year**, Yangon, 199, p. 91.

ceremony is very interesting for the Buddhist people. Ven. Sengindra mentioned that “Kathina ceremony is a festival of offering robe to Buddhist monk who has stayed in a temple for the whole rainy season. The background of this tradition accounts that at the time of the Buddha, thirty monks from Pava were journeying to see the lord while the Blessed one was staying in Savatthi city but they were unable to reach Savatthi in time as vassa (Day of entering the Buddhist lent) was approaching. They, thus, enter vassa on the way.”<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Influences on Luckni Festival

Buddhism has strong roots in Ta’ang region, and it has greatly influenced Ta’ang Luckni festival. Luckni festival is a New Year that belonged to only Ta’ang people. In Ta’ang region, Ta’ang people keep five precepts, pay respect to the triple gems. In some areas, “they even abstain from picking up the fruits and vegetable for the curry. The festival is an important occasion for the Ta’ang or Palaung to see friend, family, and for some younger men and women, to find romance. Part of the festival such as luckni which is great directly toward the Ta’ang or Palaung, with as sermon given exclusively for them.”<sup>92</sup>

In his festival, there some similarities and dissimilarities with Myanmar new year festival which usually held in the Ta’ang region. The similarities which the ta’ang people act as Burmese tradition such as

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<sup>91</sup> Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, **A Study of the influence of Buddhism on the life Sha People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010, p. 60.

<sup>92</sup> Sean Ashley, **exorcising with buddha: Palaung buddhism**, (Canada, simon fraser University 2004), p. 42.

paying respect to the buddha, the dhamma, and the sangha. On the luckni festival, Ta'ang young people go to the oldest people and receive some advises for the the oldest people. Moreover, the influence of dhamma such as tilakkhana tree (training), noble eightfold paths and the four noble truths will be impact to the ta'ang people according to the traditional luckny day but dissimilarities which are abstaining from pick up the fruits form the original plant and believing that the plant has a life as human being.

Moreover, New Year festival which is Myanmar New year was introduced to Ta'ang by the Burmese. Every year, when new year is about to begin, Ta'ang people follow the custom of the Burmese. For example, during the festival, people go to the monastery for cleaning the temple compounds and washing pagodas with water. They take precepts from the preacher who is senior of those temples and for the young, they offer food and water to the elderly people. When they go to play with the water, in their mind they always wish that people who will be poured with water will be happy and can enjoy a long life. They strongly believe that doing good is for the benefit of the good life while doing bad will cause bad things to occur.

#### **4.2 The Buddhist Rites and Rituals of Ta'ang Community**

Buddhist rites and rituals are a part of Ta'ang people's life. They influence the daily life of the Ta'ang community. Nowadays, Ta'ang young generation is very keen to practice the teaching of the Buddha and listen to the paritta. There is a significant influence of Buddhism on the wedding, funeral and other activities of the Ta'ang community.

### 4.2.1 Buddhist Paritta Chanting Ritual

Paritta chanting is very important to Buddhist people in the Ta'ang region. Paritta chanting can be used when entering a new house because when a new house is completely built, Ta'ang people invite the monk to chant the paritta for their new house. Before they enter their new house, they offer it to Sangha. After finishing the paritta chanting, the Sangha returns the house to the owner. Kentung Sangha Association described the paritta chanting as follows. On the day of celebration of entering new house, the house owner invites Buddhist monks and village elders to receive the donation, and they offer breakfast in the new house. Some families offer their new house to the Sangha community as a residence for three days or a week in order to acquired good fortune before they move in. While the new house belongs to the Sangha, monks and novices are invited to do their daily routine at new house as their own monastery. These traditions have been originated in the Ta'ang community.<sup>93</sup>

During paritta chanting, the monks recite Mangala Sutta and Metta Sutta in every ceremony. These two suttas are very familiar to the Ta'ang tribe because they listen to them at every ceremony. Talking about the reason why these suttas are useful, it is better to concentrate on the meaning of them. Soan Gia describes the meaning of those suttas thus: "Mangala means blessing, prosperity or auspiciousness. The blessing that the Buddha enunciated in mangla sutta consists of thirty-eight kinds. They are graded from the most fundamental to the highest

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<sup>93</sup> Kengtung Sangh Association, Chiangtung: **Its way of life**, (publication of Wat Tha Kradas, Thailand: 1995), p.69.

spiritual attainment, the realization of Nibbana. Each one is useful and directly relevant to our life.”<sup>94</sup>

For instance, the first blessing tells people “not to associate with the foolish” here the foolish is person who thinks, speaks and commits evil deeds in order to destroy the benefits of others. So, if one associates with that kind of person, one will be influenced by his evils. Ta’ang people believe that listen to the paritta is to give them happy life. Mangala sutta will give them positive guidelines, each blessing makes them more perfect and brings them closer to the final goal.

Moreover, Metta sutta also influenced Ta’ang culture and the daily life. Monks in Ta’ang region normally recite this sutta at wedding ceremonies and common donation ceremonies. Ta’ang people highly respect paritta chanting and invite Buddhist monks to chant in their home when they feel unhappy. However, Ta’ang people do not understand much about the background of paritta chanting. They respect paritta for it is recited in Pali language. Ta’ang young monks nowadays try to teach Pali language to the students in order or them to understand the meaning and learn how to recite in Pali. This understanding of Pali language makes Ta’ang students strongly believe in Buddhism and practice the Buddha’s teaching. The paritta chatting ritual also helps to turn away the Ta’ang people from believing in gods and worshiping them.

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<sup>94</sup> Soan Gia, **Summary of Mangala Sutta**, (Yangon, 2006), p. 53.

#### 4.2.2 Wedding Ritual of Ta'ang Community

Buddhism has a significant influence on the wedding ceremony of Ta'ang community. Before Ta'ang people start to celebrate the wedding ceremony, they usually invite monks to bless the bride and the bridegroom. First, the blessing is given by the monks to the bride and the bridegroom, then the laypeople offer food, robes or other things that are useful for the monks. After the bride and the bridegroom received the blessing, they take five precepts and listen to the Dhamma talk given by the monks. After that, parents and elderly people bless the newly married couple. As we know, Ta'ang people have a strong faith in Buddhism, and they often come to listen to the paritta chanting, especially the Mangala Sutta. Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri described the usage of suttas at the wedding ceremonies as follows.

Religious rite is, however, regarded as one of the parts of marriage ceremony to fulfill the couple's happy live. This practice may be derived from the belief in Buddhism which is disclosed in Sigalvada sutta of Digha Nikaya about the duty of both husband and wife. The Buddha was not against the family life so the Blessed one, for the happiness of the householder, compared wife to corpse and goddess, husband to corpse and god alike.<sup>95</sup>

To accomplish the couple's peaceful lives, religious rite is made one of the activities in the wedding ceremony. The duties described in Singalova sutta of Digha Nikaya, especially the duties of husbands and

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<sup>95</sup> Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, **A Study of the influence of Buddhism on the life Sha People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010, p. 53.

wives are used for the wedding ceremony of the Ta'ang community. Singalova sutta shows the people that the Buddha accepts the family life in the right way but not in the wrong way. Nowadays, young Buddhist monks give Dhamma talks to married couples according to the Buddha's teaching in Singalova sutta. They explain each Pali word from this sutta to the people who come to join the wedding ceremony.

In the Ta'ang region, whenever a wedding is celebrated, the bride and the bridegroom must listen to Buddhist verses chanted by monks. The groom enters the room and sits on a cushion in front of the monks. The bride does the same and sits to the left of the groom. The couple leans forward with flowers in their hands and bows as Buddhist verses are chanted by elders and monks to show their reverence to the Triple Gem and to their parents. After the chanting laypeople offer alms to the monks.

#### **4.2.3 Funeral Ritual of Ta'ang Community**

The funeral in the Ta'ang region is a religious rite that is carried out by Buddhist monks. The role of the monks is to chant and give Dhamma talk to the laypeople. The funeral in Ta'ang region is very similar to the funeral of Tai or Shan tradition. According to Tai traditions the funeral ceremony is also carried out by the monks. Ven. Sengindra described the custom of funeral ceremonies in Shan State as follows.

The dead body is kept a few days at home and Buddhist monks are invited to come and chant twice a day until cremation day. The auspicious day is chosen for the cremation because Shan hold the belief that sending corpse to cemetery on inauspicious day will bring bad luck,

danger, and devils to relatives and to the village. On cremation day, monks, relatives and non-relatives and in the community, are kindly invited to participate and help funeral ceremony. The dead person's family and participants receive the five precepts after lunch in order to perform the religious rite. On the cremation day, relatives of the deceased make great offerings to Sangha in the hope that the soul of the dead will receive the profit that they dedicate to according to one of the Dhamma recitations (discourse on the result of giving food) on the day which explains that Dana give to the Sangha for the dead has much benefit.<sup>96</sup>

After a person died, we usually keep the dead body for three days. During three days, the family of the dead person invites monks to chant for the person who is death. The monk recites verses and gives a Dhamma talk to the family in order to explain the application of asubha kammattana in daily life. The villagers who are participating in the funeral ceremony take five precepts. In some areas of Ta'ang region, participants do not only take five precepts but also practice asubha kammattana and take meditation during the funeral. These actions are very similar to what Milne has described about the customs of Palaung or Ta'ang.

On the day of the death and for six days after, the Buddhist scripture are read by elder men in the entrance-room of the house.<sup>97</sup> At the end of the day of funeral, the family invites all villagers to the

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<sup>96</sup> Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri, **A Study of the influence of Buddhism on the life Sha People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar**, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2010, p. 52.

<sup>97</sup> Leslie Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaungs of the Shan States**, Oxford, p.300.

monastery to listen to the Dhamma given by the monk. The family brings things to offer to the monk in order to dedicate merits to the person who is death. They place the things in front of Buddha image and invite the monk to chant the verses for the person who passed away. They think that if a person has led a good life, there is no reason to deplore his dead. For this reason, the monk was invited to the entrance house funeral. The roles of Buddhist monks very much influenced the funeral ritual of Ta'ang.

### **4.3 Other Influences of Buddhism on Ta'ang community**

Every ethnic group in Union of Myanmar tries to develop their communities by their own system. Ta'ang tribe also develops Ta'ang community such as education development, community development and economic development.

#### **4.3.1 Influences on Ta'ang Culture**

Ta'ang or Palaung people value their culture and custom. Ta'ang or Palaung tribes respect their own culture such as material cultures and spiritual culture. The Buddhist teaching: which five precepts, Triple Gem, D na, S la and B van has influenced material and spiritual culture. Buddhist teaching could be express in the language, songs, music, literature, scripture, architecture, law, tradition, morality, religion, philosophy of manner. On the other hand, the researcher beliefs that Ta'ang ethnic community are constantly maintaining their own culture and by what they do, and what they express culture. Lesline Milne has described the reason of the Ta'ang ethnic group believe in Buddhism that "Ta'ang ethnic community insist on that believe in Buddhism can help

people get rid of the evil and go to the paradise after they die. If there is no belief in Buddhism or commit a sin, people shall be in the hell after they die, so people usually value good deed highly and believe in Buddhism with piety.”<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, in the part of wedding cultural ceremony, the funeral ceremony, and even the musical tradition, the teaching of Buddhism has influenced. there are many traditional holidays related to Ta’ang or Palaung culture. In the book of Zhipeng Cheng, the author mentioned the Ta’ang or Palaung Buddhist culture on wedding cultural ceremony as follows.

Ta’ang or Palaung traditional wedding is very grand. All the villagers have to participate the wedding ceremony. The wedding takes about three days. On the first day of wedding ceremony, the host pours wine to the elderly villagers which means wedding ceremony usually begins. After meal, the bridegroom will give the cigarettes to the guest. But the guest will not accept the cigarettes until they are satisfied with the relating of the romance which told by the newly-weds. At the midnight of the wedding, the singing group composed by guys will go to the bride’s home to pick her up. When the bride is talking with her parents, she will be very reluctant and hug her parents crying. After they arrived at the bridegroom’s house, all the young people at the wedding ceremony will be engage in singing overnight. In the next day they go to the monastery and asking for precepts , offering food and listen to the dhamma talk<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Leslin Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clam A Study of the Palaung of the Shan States**, Oxford: Clarendon press, (1924), pp. 313-334.

<sup>99</sup> Zhipeng Cheng, **Journey Through the world of De’ang Ethnic Minority**, Kunming, China, 2008, p. 86.

Turning to Ta'ang or Palaung in Myanmar, to compare with the wedding ceremony between Ta'ang Palaung of Myanmar and China, it is a little different because in the Ta'ang or Palaung tradition in Myanmar, the bride and the groom pay respect to the elderly people without offering them wine and the young people go to the bride's house in the daytime but not midnight.

To describe the similarities of the wedding ceremony of Ta'ang in China and Ta'ang or Palaung in Myanmar is necessary to know the wedding of Ta'ang or Palaung in Myanmar. Nowadays, Ta'ang in Myanmar mix their culture with Myanmar culture 30 percent because Myanmar culture usually based on Buddhist culture. Almost all Ta'ang people follow Buddhism. That is why Ta'ang or Palaung people tried to mix their culture with Myanmar Buddhist way. It could be said that the similarities of wedding ceremony of Ta'ang in China and in Myanmar consist in paying homage to the Buddha and paying respect to parents and the elder villagers during the wedding ceremony event.

### **4.3.3 Influences on Education**

In Myanmar, there are several systems of education such as the system of monastic education and the system of public education. Monastic education is controlled by the Sangha community and offers knowledge on the theory of Buddhism to the monks, novices and young lay Buddhist people. Monastic education could be found in two historical periods. They are monastic education under the king Mindon and monastic education under the British rule. Dhammasami described monastic education that influence the education as follows.

Providing education for society was the major means of recruitment into the Order. This was because ordination was a prerequisite for higher study. During the time of the Buddha, ordination was motivated by a desire for salvation; but, centuries later, when Buddhism had been established outside India, study became the primary motivation. This was true in the Pyu kingdom from the time of the arrival of Buddhism, perhaps at Beikthano, and certainly at Sri Ketra, right up to the early twentieth century. Monasteries were the only places to which people could send their children for education. Education at that time in principle meant the study of morality as understood in the Buddhist religion; it was about “the development of moral and spiritual character” here and hereafter. “Mere learning devoid of this purpose was considered worthless”.

Throughout Buddhist education the dominant theme was therefore kamma, the teaching on the intention behind our actions. Kamma taught one about good and bad actions and taking responsibility for those actions. Education in the monastery was to instill a sense of that responsibility in the student. Kamma, being the law of causality, also applied to the whole existence of living beings. People in the higher strata of society had accumulated much good kamma in the past and their present privileged position reflected that. Those in the lower strata, on the other hand, had not accumulated much good kamma, or perhaps may have even done some bad kamma, which was now reflected in their life. To get to a higher level in society, one had to increase one’s good kamma, and the conventional means for doing that was to follow the Five

Precepts to be generous; and to cultivate respect towards the Sangha, teachers and elders.<sup>100</sup>

In the Ta'ang or Palaung region, it was very hard to find a monastic school to let the children study especially from in the two periods of King Mindon and during the British rule. Ta'ang or Palaung young generation had to study Yuan brought from Kying Tung.<sup>101</sup> In the present time, the founder of monastic educational schools provides the school for non-government education which means it is free of charge to the new generation of Ta'ang or Palaung, which is important for those who cannot afford to attend the government schools. Moreover, monastic education took place in both monastery and lay school.<sup>102</sup> In the Ta'ang or Palaung regions, there are many government schools and universities for the young students to attend without payment.

#### **4.3.2 Influences on Ta'ang's Traditional Beliefs**

Religious belief is one of the most important parts of the Ta'ang or Palaung people's lives. In the Ta'ang or Palaung region, there are many religions to practice in their daily life such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism but some people of the Ta'ang or Palaung tribe believe in their own traditional religion, which includes believe in gods and ghosts. In Nam Hsan, where ninety per cent of the population belongs

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<sup>100</sup> Dhammasami, **Between Idealism and Pragmatism a Study of Monastic Education in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present**, University of Oxford, 2004, p.37.

<sup>101</sup> Leslin Milne, **The Home of an Eastern Clam a Study of the Palaung of the Shan States**, Oxford: Clarendon press, (1924), p.23.

<sup>102</sup> Helen James, **Governance and Civil in Myanmar: Education, health, and environment**, New York, 2005, p. 78.

to Ta'ang or Palaung, they pray to the gods and some ghosts for calling back the soul of the person whose soul is lost. As the Ta'ang or Palaung people live in the highest mountains surrounded by forests, whenever they get sick, they mostly bring some rice, flowers, the smallest stones and sometimes meat to offer to gods or ghosts in order to get free from sickness. In the last thousand years ago Ta'ang or Palaung people believed in gods and ghosts.<sup>103</sup> They still think that this is their own traditional religion.

Local doctors mention that the reason why Ta'ang or Palaung people still believe in gods and ghost in order to cure the sickness is that there is no hospitals and clinics in the Ta'ang or Palaung region.<sup>104</sup> Ashin Thuzata, the author of the book on culture of Ta'ang or Palaung in Namhsan, described the belief in gods and ghosts as a faith but not only a mean to cure the sickness.<sup>105</sup> Currently, in northern Shan State 80 per cent of the population's religious beliefs consist of believe in Buddhist teaching. Only 20 per cent consist of beliefs in gods and ghosts. The researcher thinks that Buddhism in northern Shan State is not a pure form of Buddhism but still mixed with traditional religion and activities such as preparing offerings for the gods in a Buddhist ceremony.

In the thesis of Sean Ashley, it is mentioned about the spirit of Buddhism in Namhsan region. Ta'ang or Palaungs believe in a personal spirit known as Karphraw which remains continuously throughout rebirth

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<sup>103</sup> Zhipeng Cheng, **Journey Through the world of De'ang Ethnic Minority**, Kunming, China, 2008, p. 86.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Hattaw, **People of Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary**, Singapore, 2004, p.218.

<sup>105</sup> Ashin Thuzata, **The culture of Ta'ang or Palaung in Namhsan region**, Yangon, 2013, p. 46.

cycles.<sup>106</sup> A belief in a personal spirit is similar to the Ta'ang or Palaung belief in gods and ghosts.

When local people get sick, a traditional health worker made a symbol of the spirit by a bamboo stick or any other material thing in order to submit to the god and the ghost.<sup>107</sup> The local sick people address this spirit not only to cure their sicknesses. As the researcher observed, the traditional local health workers address the spirit to cure only simple sicknesses. Nowadays, most of young people learn about the teaching of Buddhism from middle and lower parts of Myanmar such as Mandalay, Yangon and Ayeyawady. The theory of Buddhism is brought to the Ta'ang region, the Dhamma practice is developed in the places where the Ta'ang or Palaungs live. Government builds hospitals, primary schools, high schools, universities and monasteries in every city of Ta'ang or Palaung regions.<sup>108</sup>

#### **4.4 Concluding remark**

As a conclusion remark, in this chapter the researcher has briefly mentioned the influences of Buddhism on the various Buddhist festivals of Ta'ang community. Under this topic, the researcher described influence of Buddhist Buddhism on the New Year, Vassa, Thadingyut, and Luckni festivals. Under the title of Buddhist rite and ritual in Ta'ang

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<sup>106</sup> Sean Ashley, **Exorcising with Buddha: Palaung Buddhism in Northern Thailand**, Mount Allison University, 2004, P. 34.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Hattaw, **People of Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary**, Singapore, 2004, p.218.

<sup>108</sup> Helen James, **Governance and Civil Society in Myanmar: Education, Health and Environment**, London, 2005, p. 157.

community, the researcher described paritta chanting, wedding ritual, and funeral ritual. Under the title of other influence of Buddhism, the researcher described influence on the culture, education, and on the traditional beliefs of Ta'ang. All the resources that the researcher used in this chapter are from a Study of the Influence of Buddhism on the Life of Shan People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar, The Home of an Eastern Clan: A Study of the Palaung of the Shan State, History of the Sudhamma Buddhist Order of Monks, Theravad Buddhism in the Reing of King Mindon, Palaung History and Metropolitan Musem Journal, The Influence of Buddhism on Thai Culture by Tangkuptanon, and A study of the Influence of Buddhism on the Life of Shan People in Eastern Shan State of Myanmar by Suvannasiri.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

This research has explained the story of Myanmar, history of Ta'ang tribe, history of Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism in the Ta'ang region, and the influence of both kinds of Buddhism on Ta'ang festivals. Through this research, we can become acquainted with culture, traditional beliefs, rites and rituals, education, and the customs of Ta'ang.

Firstly, the history of Myanmar in Tagaung period in order to identify historical background of Myanmar, it is necessary to go back to the historical period of the Pyu country and Bagan period because most Myanmar people consider that the beginning of Myanmar takes place from Pyu people and Bagan period. The original Ta'ang people come from Chinese Yunnan; this tribe spreads over several Myanmar provinces including the Shan States. The religion of Ta'ang people is originally from Kyington, eastern Shan State.

Secondly, Buddhism is the major religion of the Ta'ang community. Theravada Buddhism has a long history in the region of Thathone. Buddhism was brought by Buddhists from different areas, such as India, China, and several regions of Myanmar. According to some Myanmar folklore beliefs, Buddhism came to Myanmar first among the

Asian countries. Some people believe that Thathone, which is known as Suvannabhumi, is the first place where Buddhism had been firstly introduced to Myanmar. In the Ta'ang region there are two sangha sects (nikayas), namely Sudhamma nikaya and Yuan nikaya.

Finally, both Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism had influenced Ta'ang culture, festivals, rites and rituals. Before Theravada Buddhism and Yuan Buddhism had influenced the Ta'ang community, Ta'ang people followed their own traditional beliefs such as Kar-Bu and Kar-Nam. After Buddhism had influenced their lives, most of Ta'ang people believe in Buddhism and apply the teachings of Buddhism in their everyday lives. At the present time, Ta'ang people develop Buddhism in their region by learning Pali and setting up Buddhist schools for the young generation. In Ta'ang region, there are many novices, monks, and nuns who graduate from Buddhist schools held by Myanmar government.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Further Research**

In the present research the author collected and analyzed information on the influences of Buddhism on the Ta'ang festivals. In Myanmar there are many small ethnic groups like the Ta'ang tribe. For further research, the author would like to suggest reading the books on the influence of Buddhism on the life of Shan people, Palaung Buddhism in northern Thailand, the influence of Buddhism on Thai culture, a study of the Palaung of the Shan State, and history of Palaung to get more information related to this study.

Due to this further research has limited in some extra for more interesting point still cannot be perfectly done. So that the researcher would like to suggest for the possible research name future study as follows.

1. A Study of Impact of Kamma and Rebirth of Buddhism to the Life of Ta'ang People in Myanmar.
2. A Study of Comparative of Yuan Buddhism and Taravada Buddhism in Ta'ang Community.
3. A Study of Impact of Taravada Buddhism on Culture of Ta'ang In Thailand.

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