





## The Pagan-Period and the Early-Thai Buddhist Murals: Were They Related?



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### [ *Abstract* ]

Flourishing in the Central Dry Zone of Burma during a period from the mid-eleventh to the late-thirteenth century A.D., the historical kingdom of Pagan was one of the major Buddhist centers in Southeast Asia. The significance of Pagan as an important pilgrimage site of the region, where numerous relics of the Buddha were enshrined, had been maintained until long after the fall of its civilization. It is evident that the artistic influences of Pagan, particularly in the architectural and decorative domains, had been transmitted to various other Buddhist civilizations in the area. This study provides a detailed analysis on the relationships between the mural tradition of Pagan and those of its neighboring civilizations in Thailand—of the Ayutthayā, Lānnā and Sukhothai schools—dating from after the Pagan Period in the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century.

Surprisingly, as the analysis of this study has suggested,

such relationships seemed to be trivial, more on a minor stylistic basis than on substantial ideological and iconographic grounds. They suggest that transmission of the complex idea and superb craftsmanship of the mural tradition would not have been maintained adequately at Pagan after its civilization, probably due to the lack of royal patronage. It would have been extremely difficult for foreign pilgrims who visited Pagan after its dynastic period to appreciate the surviving murals of this lost tradition in terms of their complex programs and associated symbolism. Also, there had been a new center of the Sinhalese Buddhism firmly established in the Martaban area of lower Burma since the mid-fourteenth century that outcompeted Pagan in terms of supplying the new Buddhist ideas and tradition. Its fame spread wide and far among the Buddhist communities of Southeast Asia. Later, these Buddhist communities also established direct contact with Sri Lanka. The Sukhothai murals and the Ayutthayā murals in the crypt of Wat Rāṭchaburana, dating from the fourteenth/fifteenth century, show obvious Sri Lankan influence in terms of artistic style and Buddhist iconography. They could be a product of these new religious movements, truly active in Southeast Asia during that time.

**Keywords:** Pagan murals, early Thai murals, past Buddhas, Buddha's biography, Mahāthāt Rāṭchaburī, Wat Rāṭchaburana

## I. Introduction

Flourishing in the Central Dry Zone of Burma between the eleventh and thirteenth century was the historical kingdom of Pagan. The proto-history of Pagan, however, extended back in time to well before the tenth century, as supported by some legendary accounts (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: page no.) and recent archaeological excavations (Hudson, Nyein Lwin and Win Maung (Tanpawady) 2001: 48-74; Hudson et al. 2002: 9-21). The historical period of Pagan began sometime during the mid-eleventh

century with the reign of one of its greatest kings, Aniruddha, whose name is found inscribed on a number of Buddhist votive-tablets discovered at Pagan and various other places in Burma, proposed to be under his sovereignty (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: 15-18; Vols. 2 & 3, plates 4-14). Pagan had enjoyed its civilization until the Mongols' conquest over its capital in A.D. 1287, followed by political unrest within the state (Than Tun 1988a: 103-114).

Being one of the most powerful Buddhist states of medieval Southeast Asia, Pagan during the peak of its civilization was linked into a wider trans-regional network of Buddhism by adopting the belief based primarily on the Pāli treatises from the Mon Country in Lower Burma and then directly from Sri Lanka (Luce, Vol. 1: 38-40), a center of Theravādin Buddhism, as well as the artistic tradition and Buddhist iconography from northern India. The latter cultural zone had its spiritual center in the Buddhist perception located at Bodhgayā, where the Buddha was enlightened. Establishment at Pagan in the early thirteenth century of an almost exact replica of the main sanctuary of Bodhgayā attested the importance of this holy site in the Pagan perception (Strachan 1989: 99-100). This could have meant transferring the sacredness of Bodhgayā into Pagan in the symbolic sense, given that this most holy Buddhist site, at that time, had fallen into ruin under attacks of the Muslim invaders. As a stronghold of Theravādin Buddhism in Southeast Asia—which was linked, at least in a symbolic sense, with the spiritual center of the Buddhist World—Pagan would have inspired other Buddhist traditions of the area in both the spiritual and materially artistic aspects. Even until long after the fall of its civilization in the late thirteenth century, Pagan still maintained its status as a "sacred" site, where numerous holy relics of the Lord Buddha had been enshrined, with its fame spreading wide and far. Attesting to this are several contemporary inscriptions recording the donations to the religion found at Pagan and associated with pilgrimage activities there after the dynastic period (see examples in Tun Nyein 1899; Luce and Ba Shin, 1961: 330-7). Influences of the Buddhist arts spreading from

Pagan to its neighboring contemporaneous and later civilizations have been detected—in the architectural and decorative domains—at Haripuñjaya, Lānnā, Sukhothai and Ayutthayā, in the present-day Thailand. The first was an early-Mon kingdom while the latter three belonged to early Thai.

Buddhist murals dating from the late-eleventh to the thirteenth century are found adorning the interior of numerous hollow pagodas or "cave temples" (in Burmese "gu-hpaya") that densely dotted the arid plain of Pagan. The murals illustrate various schemes of the Buddhist narratives—*Jātakas*, stories of the past Buddhas, life's episodes of Buddha Gotama, cosmological scenes, etc. (Bautze-Picron 2003; Poolsuwan 2014a)—under certain standard programs which provided complex symbolism for the temple (Poolsuwan 2012: 377-97). Later Pagan-Period murals, dating from the thirteenth century, slightly predated early Buddhist murals found in Thailand—of the Lānnā, Sukhothai and Ayutthayā Schools—dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. Unfortunately, no surviving example has existed to represent ancient Buddhist murals from Haripuñjaya in northern Thailand, with its civilization considerably overlapping that of Pagan. Early Thai murals adorned the interior of the religious structures of various types: the Khmer-inspired brick tower (prāng); the hollowed pagoda; the relic chamber within a stupa or a tower; and, the man-made meditation cave. Quite interesting is how the Pagan and the early-Thai murals were related. Did the Pagan tradition heavily influence the development of these early-Thai Buddhist murals? This study provides a detailed comparison—on the ideological, iconographic, and stylistic grounds—between these two groups of murals, with the pattern of their relationship elucidated and explained in the socio-religious context of the Buddhist networks in ancient Southeast Asia.

## II. Murals illustrating numerous Buddhas

Illustration of numerous Buddhas of the past constituted one of

the major narrative themes in the Pagan mural tradition. The theme is called "narrative" because of its association with some accounts provided on these Buddhas in several Pāli canonical and post-canonical texts. Past Buddhas were portrayed in the Pagan murals under three main schemes: the innumerable Buddhas; the 24 previous Buddhas (chronologically including the following: Dīpaṅkara, Koṇḍañña, Maṅgala, Sumana, Revata, Sobhita, Anomadassī, Paduma, Nārada, Padumuttara, Sumedha, Sujāta, Piyadassī, Atthadassī, Dhammadassī, Siddhattha, Tissa, Phussa, Vipassī, Sikhī, Vessabhū, Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, and Kassapa) who preceded Gotama, the present Buddha; and, the 28 Buddhas, with the three Buddhas who preceded Dīpaṅkara in the same world cycle (Taṇhaṅkara, Medhaṅkara and Saraṇaṅkara) and Gotama incorporated into a set together with the 24 previous Buddhas already mentioned.

The innumerable Buddhas normally exist in the Pagan murals, particularly in those of the thirteenth century, with their small figures seated *vajrāsana*, either in *dharmacakka* or *māravijaya* gesture, and arranged in various geometric and other artistic designs to decorate the temple's walls and ceiling <Figure 1>. Their existence normally accompanies a set of the 24 or 28 Buddhas, portrayed in the murals of the same temple, with seated figures of the latter occupying a prime location of the mural spaces, i.e. at an eye level of the shrine's walls or at the topmost part of the walls where a broad space was provided for the murals <Figure 2>. Each of the 24 or 28 Buddhas is normally provided with the mural and/or inscription narrating his biographical details, which are located immediately below the Buddha figure. He is sometimes accompanied by his chief disciple in the gesture of worship. As a rule, The Buddha is always depicted in the murals as greater in size to signify his elevated status.



**Figure 1.** Numerous past Buddhas, arranged in a geometric design, in the thirteenth century murals at the Pagan temple 539 (Tayok-pyi-hpaya-gyi).



**Figure 2.** Past Buddhas (Dīpaṅkara, Koṇḍañña, Maṅgala and Sumana) of the 28 Buddhas set, the shrine murals of the Pagan temple 447 (Le-myet-hna-hpaya).

The murals of the Pagan tradition normally illustrate the biography of each of the 28 Buddhas, comprising of the following episodes: the presence of his parents in a palace, his luxurious life in a palace, his renunciation using a specific vehicle, the

“Tonsure”, and his austerity practice before enlightenment <Figure 3>. Exceptions are for the first three Buddhas of the set, with each of them accompanied by a scene of monk assembly, located below his figure. Examples of this mural program can be found in the Pagan temple 447 (Le-myet-hna-hpaya) and several others. An inscription accompanying each past Buddha usually described the following records: his name, his body height, the length of his life, and the type of the Bodhi-tree under which he was enlightened. The murals accompanying a set of the 24 Buddhas usually illustrate the episode of each Buddha when he provided the Bodhisatta, Buddha Gotama in his previous lives, a prophecy for his enlightenment to come. Again, the Bodhisatta is depicted in the mural attending the Buddha, with the size of his figure much smaller than that of the Buddha, who presides in the scene. Portraying human figures in the mural scene in different sizes according to their hierarchy had been one of the major characteristics constantly preserved in the mural tradition of the Pagan Period. Examples of the 24 Buddhas illustrated in the murals under this narrative theme can be found in Pagan temples 539 (Tayok-pyi) and 585 <Figure 4>.



**Figure 3.** Biographical details of Buddha Paduma portrayed below his figure, in the shrine murals of the Pagan temple 447 (Le-myet-hna-hpaya).





**Figure 4.** Buddha Koṇḍañña providing a prophecy for the enlightenment to come of the Bodhisatta, the universe king Vijitavi, the Pagan temple 539 (Tavok-pyi-hpaya-gyi).

Most likely to be the immediate literary sources for biographical details of the 28 or 24 Buddhas narrated in the Pagan murals are the accounts provided in several Pāli canonical and post-canonical sources: the *Buddhavaṃsa* and its commentary, the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 73); and the *Nidānakathā* section of the commentaries of the *Jātakas* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 55: 2-153; Jayawickrama 1990) and the *Apadāna* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 70: 12-185). These early Pāli texts provide detailed biographies for only the last 24 previous Buddhas who issued prophecies for the enlightenment of the Bodhisatta. Each Buddha is provided with the following records: the caste he belonged to; the names of his city, parents, wife, son and palaces; the type of vehicle for his renunciation; the length of his austerity practice;

the variety of his enlightenment tree; his chief monk- and nun-disciples; his monk-escort; the number of major assemblies of his disciples; his height; his longevity; and other minor details. The names of the first three Buddhas (of the 28 Buddhas set)—whose existence predated Dīpaṅkara and who did not provide prophecies for future enlightenment of the Bodhisatta—are mentioned in the *Buddhavaṃsa* text, but without their detailed biographies accounted for in the text. Omission in the Pagan murals of the illustration of the biographical details of these first three Buddhas of the set could have been based on these Pāli accounts.

Stories of the innumerable Buddhas, with their representations found in the Pagan murals accompanying a set of the 24 or 28 Buddhas, can find their immediate literary source in one of the post-commentary Pāli texts, the *Sotattagī-nidāna*, compiled by Culla-Buddhaghosa, probably in Sri Lanka (Culla Buddhaghosa Thera 1983). Unfortunately, the exact date of compilation of this old Pāli treatise is not known. The text describes previous existences of Gotama when he was a Bodhisatta, concerning his intention of attaining the Buddhahood and his encounters with the innumerable past Buddhas and then the 28 Buddhas that followed. The names of these 28 Buddhas are the same as given above.

As described in the *Sotattagī*, the Bodhisatta's first intention of achieving enlightenment was happened during his existence as a hermit teacher; he jumped off a cliff to sacrifice himself to be the meal of a starving tigress about to swallow her own cub<sup>1</sup>). The same intension was repeated in his following existences: as a ship's captain, when he rescued his mother from a shipwreck by carrying her and swimming patiently across the ocean; and, as a king, when he experienced his inability to control a tamed elephant which ran away and went into a forest searching for a much-desired female elephant. The text also describes a story of

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1) This account is similar to what found in the older Sanskrit source, *Jātakamālā* (Āryaśūra 2010: 3-12), suggesting that *Sotattagī* was probably compiled in the atmosphere associated with the Sanskrit-based Buddhism, probably in the Abayagiri-vihāra monastic establishment of Sri Lanka.

the Bodhisatta, in this case a princess, on her encounter with Dīpaṅkara Buddha (during his previous existence as a monk-disciple of Buddha Purāṇa Dīpaṅkara), and the latter on his encounter with Purāṇa Dīpaṅkara Buddha, who provided him a prophecy for his future enlightenment. Some of these early episodes of the Bodhisatta are depicted in the Pagan-Period murals of the thirteenth century in temple 69 at Sale <Figure 5>. The murals offer a proof that the *Sotattagī* text was certainly known in the Buddhist context of the Pagan Period.



**Figure 5.** Early existences of Gotama as a Bodhisatta from temple 69 at Sale. From left to right: the Bodhisatta (a hermit teacher) jumping off a cliff to sacrifice his body for a starving tigress; the Bodhisatta (a ship's captain) saving his mother from the shipwreck; and the encounter of the Bodhisatta (a princess) with Dīpaṅkara Buddha in his previous existence, and the latter with Purāṇa Dīpaṅkara Buddha.

Also described in *Sotattagī* are encounters of the Bodhisatta with a large number of the past Buddhas: 125,000 to whom the Bodhisatta's intention for future enlightenment was demonstrated by wishing; and, 387,000 to whom his intention was expressed by vowing. These Buddhas did not yet provide prophecies for future enlightenment to the Bodhisatta and their existences predated the world cycle in which the first of such prophecies was issued to him by Dīpaṅkara Buddha. As already mentioned, there were three Buddhas preceding Dīpaṅkara in that world cycle who did not provide the prophecies to the Bodhisatta. This has made the total number to 512,003 (125,000+387,000+3) for the Buddhas to whom the Bodhisatta had expressed his intention for future enlightenment prior to the existence of Dīpaṅkara. Interestingly,

some biographical details of the first three Buddhas who immediately preceded Dīpaṅkara in the same world cycle, not accounted for in the earlier Pāli texts, are also given in the *Sotattagī*. The information provided on these three Buddhas in the text concerns the names of their parents and the varieties of their enlightenment trees. The same information found recorded in the inscriptions accompanying the figures of these three Buddhas in the murals of the Pagan temple 447 (Ba Shin 1962: 159-60), established in A.D. 1223 (Tun Nyein 1899: 103-4), also confirms usage of the text as one of the literary sources for the Pagan murals. It is therefore likely that the innumerable Buddhas commonly seen in the Pagan murals could have represented, in the literary context of the *Sotattagī*, the enlightened ones whom the Bodhisatta had encountered prior to the world cycle in which he first obtained the prophecy for his future enlightenment.

Illustrating a number of Buddhas in repetitive fashion is one of the major characteristics also found in early Thai Buddhist murals. The probably oldest surviving example of the kind is found adorning the shrine of the main tower (prāṅ) of mixed Khmer-Thai style at the Mahāthāt Rāṭchaburī. The tower has been stylistically dated to the fourteenth century (Woodward 1975: page no.), i.e. after the Pagan Period; the murals could be contemporaneous with the tower that houses them. The Mahāthāt Rāṭchaburī murals illustrate numerous Buddhas arranged in stacked-rows on all sidewalls of the square shrine of the tower <Figure 6>. The number of Buddhas on each wall exceeds 28. At the middle of the west wall of the shrine is a larger figure of the Buddha portrayed as seated *vīrāsana* under the Bodhi-tree; he is accompanied symmetrically on both sides by rows of standing disciples worshipping him. Each Buddha of the murals is portrayed seated *vīrāsana* in the *māravijaya* pose. He wears a monastic robe leaving his right shoulder bare. The Buddhas belonging to the same row are essentially identical. Differences are observed between rows in terms of facial features and decorative backgrounds of the Buddha figures. In some rows, the Buddhas are accompanied by the disciples, all portrayed with no obvious size-hierarchy.



**Figure 6.** Numerous Buddhas portrayed in the fourteenth century murals of the Mahāthāt-Rāṭchaburī, central Thailand.

No clear distinction is observed among these numerous Buddhas of the Mahāthāt Rāṭchaburī murals to confirm that they belong to the two different sets of past Buddhas as normally observed in the Pagan murals, i.e. the innumerable Buddhas and the 28 or 24 Buddhas, in accordance with the *Sotattagī* account. Also, neither inscriptions nor murals are found accompanying these Buddhas to describe their biographical details. Other Ayutthayā murals of a comparable pattern to the Mahāthāt Rāṭchaburī murals, in terms of illustrating numerous Buddhas, are also found in the shrine of the main tower at Wat Phrarām, Ayutthayā, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century (Leksukhum and Chayawatana 1981: 39).

Depiction of the clearly identifiable 24 Buddhas according to the Pāli texts can find its earliest representation in the Thai murals of central Thailand in the crypt inside the main tower of Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā. The temple and its main tower, as well as the crypt murals inside the latter, could be dated according to a later chronicle to A.D. 1424 (Klangphittaya 1967: 446). The Buddhas of the set are chronologically depicted in the murals, in complete agreement with the *Buddhavaṃsa* account, along a single row on top of the crypt walls <Figure 7>. Below the row of the previous Buddhas are mural depictions of various life episodes of the Buddha that we shall describe their details in the next section. Each previous Buddha—seated in meditation on his simple throne with recessed waist, under the Bodhi-tree—has his name inscribed on the lower part of the throne in exact

agreement with *Buddhavaṃsa*. Each Buddha is accompanied by the Bodhisatta, Gotama in his previous existence, who received a prophecy for future enlightenment from him. Depicted along rims of the four niches, on sidewalls of the crypt, is a set of small figures of numerous Buddhas <Figure 8>. They were portrayed identical in seated posture without inscriptions describing their names and biographies. The existence in the crypt murals of the two sets of previous Buddhas—i.e., the 24 and the innumerable Buddhas—reminds us of their association with the *Sotattagī* account. It was also a characteristic shared by the Burmese murals of the Pagan Period.



Figure 7. The first six Buddhas of the 24 past Buddhas set, top row, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.

Each of the 24 *Buddhavaṃsa* Buddhas in the crypt murals is portrayed seated *vīrāsana* in meditation gesture on a lotus flower, which is located on a low throne with recessed waist. The oval-shaped halo surrounds his body. No size-hierarchy is observed between figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisatta. All these characteristics deviated from the style commonly observed in the Burmese murals of the Pagan Period. On the other hand, they show more affiliation with the common style and pattern that had long been preserved in the mural tradition of Sri Lanka<sup>2)</sup>. Local characteristics observed in the Buddhas of the crypt murals at Wat Rāṭchaburana include the presence of *uṣṇīṣa*, not commonly shown in the Sri Lankan arts for the Buddha, and the

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2) The Buddha seated in *vīrāsana* meditation pose is most common in the Sri Lankan Buddhist iconography. See several examples of the Sri Lankan Buddhist murals, from the Anuradhapura Periods to later periods, that show the mentioned characteristics in Bandaranayake (2006).

radiance of a lotus-bud shaped figure located above the *uṣṇīṣa*, in contrast with the flame-like shaped figure normally adopted in the Sri Lankan prototype.



**Figure 8.** Past Buddhas depicted along rims of the niches on sidewalls of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.

Association between the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana and Sri Lankan art is also confirmed in some of the narrative murals on the Crypt walls below the row of the 24 previous Buddhas. Most obvious is the Buddha during his meditation retreat in the second week after enlightenment at Animisa cetiya <Figure 16>. The Buddha of the scene is standing and gazing without blinking at his enlightenment throne under the Bodhi-tree. He puts both of his hands on his chest with palms completely inward; his ankles are crossed. His whole body is surrounded by a curved halo. This hand gesture of the standing Buddha can find its definite prototype in the Buddhist arts of Sri Lanka, for example, the well-known Gal-vihāra stone sculpture, dating from the twelfth century (Devendra 1956: 126-136; Prematilleke 1966: 61-66). A similar curved halo surrounding the Buddha is also commonly found in the Buddhist murals of Sri

Lanka from the Anuradhapura Period onwards (Bandaranayake 2006: 80). Another piece of evidence is a depiction in the crypt murals of a Buddha's footprint enshrined on top of the mountain, which is most likely representing the well-known and highly-revered Buddhapāda on top of the Sumanakūṭa Mountain in Sri Lanka (Figure 26). It was included in a set of the sixteen holy sites (Soḷosmsthāna) usually depicted in the Buddhist murals of the island.

Early murals from the Lānnā Kingdom in northern Thailand are found adorning the crypt inside the main stupa and the man-made meditation cave at Wat Umong-Therachan, Chiang Mai. Building a man-made meditation cave at Wat Umong would have been an influence from Pagan, where numerous earlier examples had existed. According to a later chronicle, the cave was constructed during the reign of King Kue Nā in the second half of the fourteenth century (Penth 1981: 30-42). The cave murals of Wat Umong are merely decorative, showing the designs proposed to be associated with the older Pagan pattern (Jongjitngam 1998: 67-90) and the contemporaneous Chinese motifs found in the late Yuan and early Ming porcelains (Krairiksh 1995: 173).

Providing an exact dating of the main stupa of Wat Umong is extremely difficult. Architecturally, the stupa shows obvious affiliation with an older Pagan prototype, for example, the Sapada-zedi (Pagan monument 187), dating from the twelfth century (Pichard 1992: 292-3). No consensus has yet been arrived at whether the building was originally constructed during the reign of King Mang Rai in the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century, according to a later chronicle (Leksukhum 1995: 101), or was an addition to the temple compound during the reign of King Muang Kaeo in the early sixteenth century (Poolsuwan 1996: 60-64). The murals of the crypt inside this main stupa, which were certainly contemporaneous with the original construction of the stupa, have been discovered accidentally after local treasure hunters broke into the crypt a few decades ago. The crypt was then sealed up again, soon after a survey of its interior was made, fortunately with some photographs of the murals taken.



According to the survey information (Laohasom 1998: 15-24), the crypt is cubic in shape. Adorning all its sidewalls are murals illustrating numerous Buddhas. They were portrayed as identical in the *māravijaya* pose, in stacked rows, without inscriptions or narrative murals accompanying their figures. The number of the Buddhas has been estimated to be 28 only on the east wall of the crypt, where the murals were best preserved. Whether they really represent the 28 *Buddhavaṃsa* Buddhas remains a question since they could be as well a part of the larger set including the Buddhas portrayed under the same pattern on other crypt walls. The Buddhas of the murals show some characteristics associated with the classic Lānnā and Ayutthayā styles (Leksukhum 1995: 232-4; Poolsuwan 1996: 60-64). The presence of the Ayutthayā influence in the murals may suggest their association with the tradition of illustrating innumerable Buddhas, as evident at Mahāthāt Rāchaburī and Wat Phrarām, probably spreading from central Thailand to the Lānnā kingdom.

The Illustration of numerous Buddhas is evident in the Sukhothai murals found in one of the hollow pagodas at Wat Chedī-ched-taeo, Srisatchanālai, Sukhothai, possibly dated to the mid-fourteenth century (Griswold 1967: 43). These Buddhas were portrayed in the murals in their *māravijaya* posture, with worshipping devotees accompanying them (Leksukhum 2006: 132, figs. 123 & 124). No obvious size-hierarchy is observed between the figures of the Buddhas and the devotees. Each devotee wears a crown of conical shape, decorated with ornamental rings. All these figures have a curved halo surrounding their heads. The designs of the crowns and halos show definite Sri Lankan influence. The total number of the Buddhas in the Wat Chedī-ched-taeo murals could not be accurately estimated due to poor condition of the murals, although the iconography might suggest their representation of the 24 Buddhas who provided prophecies for the Bodhisatta, also portrayed accompanying them. The narrative theme of the 24 Buddhas had gained popularity in both the Sri Lankan and the Pagan mural traditions. Closer stylistic affiliation of the Sukhothai murals with those of Sri Lanka than Pagan, however, suggests inclination to the first

tradition. The other Sukhothai murals illustrating numerous Buddhas, which have almost completely disappeared, were found in a hollow pagoda at Wat Khao-yai, Srīsatchanālai, and in the tunnel inside the brick wall of the image house (*mondop*) at Wat Sī Chum, Sukhothai (Leksukhum 2006: 131).

### III. Murals narrating the biography of Gotama Buddha

Life stories of Gotama, the present Buddha, constituted one of the main narrative themes in the mural tradition during the Pagan Period (circa eleventh to thirteenth centuries AD). Adorning the interior of the Pagan temple 1605 (Patho-hta-mya) are the oldest murals of the theme surviving at Pagan. The temple and its murals have been dated by Luce (1969, Vol. 1: 302-3) to the late eleventh century, based upon the usage of Sinhalese reference sources and Old Mon captions for the mural narration<sup>3)</sup>. The murals in the ambulatory corridor of the temple describe, in a chronological order, a complete biography of Buddha Gotama from his nativity to mahāparinibbāna (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: 302-9; Poolsuwan 2014a). The early episodes of Gotama in his last existence narrated in the murals were based principally on a particular Pāli source, the *Nidānakathā* section of the *Jātakas* commentary (Luce 1969, Vol. 1: 302-9). The text accounts for detailed episodes of Gotama in his previous existences as a Bodhisatta, receiving prophecies for his enlightenment to come from the 24 previous Buddhas, and in his last existence up to the third year after his enlightenment, when he received the donation of the Jetavana Monastery from the rich man of Sāvattī, Anāthapiṇḍika (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 55: 2-153). The latter part of the account was an immediate reference source for the murals of the ambulatory corridor of the Pagan temple 1605. The shrine murals of the same temple illustrate episodes of the Buddha when he preached various

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3) The Patho-hta-mya temple is, however, mentioned in later Burmese chronicles for its construction by Caw Rahan in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Pe Maung Tin and Luce 1960: 54).

*Suttas* and laid down the *Vinaya* rules for the Saṅgha and his other miscellaneous episodes, which were not necessarily arranged chronologically; all were based on the Pāli canonical and commentary sources (Luce 1969 Vol.1: 302-9).

The narrative themes of the Buddha's life illustrated in the murals of the early Pagan Period —i.e., a chronological series from the Jātaka-nidāna, the Buddha's preaching various *suttas* and laying down the *Vinaya* rules, and some other miscellaneous episodes which are not necessarily chronologically arranged—can also be seen in temple 1323 (Myinkaba Kubkyauk-gyi), dating from the first half of the twelfth century (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: 373-83). The narrative themes of the Buddha preaching various *suttas* and of his miscellaneous episodes are portrayed in the corridor murals of the Pagan temple 1192 (Naga-yon-hpaya), probably dating from the late eleventh century (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: 311-21). Another early example of the Pagan murals illustrating the Buddha preaching various *suttas* and laying down the *Vinaya* rules, in close agreement with the Sinhalese Pāli Canon, is also found at the Pagan temple 374 (Alopyi-hpaya) (Luce 1969 Vol. 1: 388-91), tentatively dated to the first half of the twelfth century.

A more variety of Buddha's episodes, also based upon the Pāli sources, was illustrated in the Pagan murals of the thirteenth century. Following are a few examples: illustrations found in monuments 539 and 664 of the Buddha demonstrating a twin miracle at the beginning of the third week after enlightenment, according to the *Atthasālinī* text (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 75: 7-39), instead of at the beginning of the second week, as described in the *Nidānakathā* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 55: 124-5) <Figure 9>; depictions found in monuments 482, 585 and others of the incomparable donation Asadisadāna, provided to the Buddha and his 500 disciples by King Pasenati and his Queen, Mallikā, as described in a commentary of the *Dhammapada* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 42: 262-9) <Figure 10>; the Buddha taking a boat trip to Vesālī, where he preached *Rattana-sutta*, according to a commentary of the *Rattana-sutta* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 39: 219-75), found in the murals of the Pagan temples 482, 585 and others

<Figure 11>; a depiction found in the murals of temple 585 of a child, Piyadassī, the Great King Asoka in his previous existence, donating a handful of earth-dust for alms to Buddha Gotama, as described in *Lokapaññatti*, an old Pāli text probably compiled in Sri Lanka or Burma (Saddhammaghosa Thera 1985: 96-97) <Figure 12>.



**Figure 9.** Twin miracles of the Buddha at the beginning of the third week after his enlightenment (left), and his preaching of the *Abhidhamma* on the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven (right), west wall, north vestibule, the Pagan temple 539 (Tayok-pyi-hpaya-gyi).



**Figure 10.** Asadisadāna (the incomparable donation), provided to the Buddha and his 500 disciples by King Pasenati, ambulatory corridor, the Pagan temple 539 (Tayok-pyi-hpaya-gyi).



**Figure 11.** Boat trip of the Buddha to Vesāli, east wall, south vestibule, the Pagan temple 585.



**Figure 12.** A child, Piyadassī, the king Asoka in his previous existence, offering a handful of dust for alms to Buddha Gotama, the Pagan temple 585

Another narrative theme of the Buddha's biography which had gained much popularity in the Pagan mural tradition since the mid-twelfth century onwards describes the "Eight Great Miracles" of the Buddha at different localities within the "Middle Country" of Jambudīpa, the Southern Great Continent. The Pagan iconography of these Buddha's episodes shows close affiliation with its prototype in the Buddhist art of northern India during the Pāla Dynasty. The original Indian set of the miracles of the Buddha comprises the following: the Nativity at Lumbinī, the enlightenment in the shade of the Bodhi-tree at Bodhgayā; the first sermon at Varanasi; the twin miracles at Sāvatti; the descent from the Tāvātimsa Heaven at Saṅkassa; the taming of the Nālagiri elephant at Sāvatti; the monkey's donations to the Buddha at Vesālī; and the Mahāparinibbāna at Kusinārā. Modification from the Indian prototype is observed particularly for the monkey's donation scene in which the elephant in service to the Buddha was also included, most likely for the scene to represent the *Pāṛileyya* episode of the Buddha at Kosambī, as described in a commentary of the *Dhammapada* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 40: 78-93). The Buddha left the disunited Saṅgha of Kosambī to stay in solitude at Rakkhita Forest, where he was served by the monkey and the mighty elephant. The other Buddha episodes of the set can readily be found in other Pāli texts<sup>4</sup>).

Scenes of the "Eight Great Miracles" of the Buddha are distributed in the Pagan murals either on the back wall of the shrine surrounding a halo depicted on the back wall behind the principal Buddha image (Pagan temples 1580, 2103 and 2157) <Figure 13> or in the vestibules at locations surrounding the principal Buddha image of the temple's shrine (Pagan temples

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4) These reference sources are as follows: nativity, enlightenment and preaching of the first sermon from the *Jātaka-nidāna* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 55: 2-153); yamaka-pāṭihāriya and descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa Heaven from the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 42: 287-322); Buddha's taming of the Nālagiri elephant in *Cūlavagga of the Vinayapiṭaka* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 9: 296-99); and, the mahāparinibbāna lengthily detailed in the Mahāparinibbānasutta (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982, Vol. 13: 233-36).

447, 534, 539, 664, 676 and others). As a rule, the enlightenment of the Buddha under the Bodhi-tree, already signified by the principal Buddha image of the shrine, is omitted in the mural representation of the Buddha's miracles.



**Figure 13.** the “Eight Great Miracles” of the Buddha depicted behind the principal Buddha image, the Pagan temple 2157

Usually found accompanying the “Eight Great Miracles” scenes of the Buddha in the thirteenth century murals at Pagan are scenes of the Buddha's retreat in the vicinity of the Bodhi-tree during the “Seven Weeks” immediately after his enlightenment. The Buddha stayed during his first week on his

enlightenment throne under the Bodhi tree. In the second week, he stood, at Animisa-cetiya, gazing without blinking at the enlightenment throne under the Bodhi-tree. The Buddha walked in meditation all through the third week at Ratanacañkama-cetiya. He meditated in the “Jewel House”, Ratanaghara, created by the gods, in the fourth week. During the fifth to seventh weeks, he stayed respectively at the Ajapala-nigrodha, Mucalinda and Rājāyatana trees. The “Seven Weeks” scenes are always located on the inner side of the vestibule walls closer to the shrine while those of the “Eight Great Miracles” on the outer side of the same walls <Figure 14>. The Buddha’s episode during his first-week retreat at the Bodhi-tree, represented by the principal Buddha image of the shrine, is omitted in this mural representation. Scenes of the Buddha’s episodes at the other six stations were arranged in a layout of the temple, in such a manner that represents their directions from the Bodhi-tree, symbolized by the enshrinement of the principal Buddha image at the center of the shrine. This has created the symbolism for the Pagan temple to represent the Middle Country of Jambudīpa, with its center at the Bodhi-tree surrounded in the inner circle by the stations of the Buddha’s retreat and in the outer circle by the localities of his “Eight Great Miracles” (Poolsuwan 2012: 377-97).



**Figure 14.** the Twin Miracle vis-à-vis the Buddha’s retreat during the second week after enlightenment, east wall, north vestibule, the Pagan temple 539 (Tayok-pyi-hpaya-gyi).



Illustration of biographical details of Gotama is evident in the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā, below the row of the 24 previous Buddhas already described in previous section. Portrayed in two tiers on the crypt walls are scenes of a complete biography of Gotama in his last existence. On the east wall of the crypt are scenes of his early life-episodes, three in the upper tier and four in the lower one. Each scene is contained within a rectangular frame. The middle scene of the upper tier, the largest scene on the wall, portrays the Buddha seated in meditation under the Bodhi-tree and accompanied symmetrically on both sides by several divinities <Figure 15>. This could represent the Buddha's enlightenment and his meditation retreat during the following week. To the left of the enlightenment scene in the same tier is probably a scene of the Buddha's nativity which has been much eroded. To the right of the enlightenment scene, in the same row, is a scene of the Buddha's meditation in the second week after enlightenment at Animisa-cetiya; the Buddha in standing pose is gazing at the enlightenment throne under the Bodhi-tree and performing the hand gesture, already described, which is closely associated with the Sri Lankan iconography <Figure 16>. Scenes on the lower tier of the wall comprise, from left to right, the following episodes of the Buddha: his conception into the womb of Queen Maya <Figure 17>; unidentifiable episodes due to decay state of the mural; Channa and the horse Kānthaka in sorrow after leaving the Bodhisatta <Figure 18>; and the miraculous existence of the four treasure troops at the time of the Bodhisatta's birth (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 55: 90) <Figure 19>.



**Figure 15.** Buddha's enlightenment and his meditation in a week following, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā



**Figure 16.** The second-week retreat at Animisa-Cetiya, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā



**Figure 17.** Conception of the Bodhisatta into the womb of Queen Māyā, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



**Figure 18.** Sorrowing Channa and Kanthaka after leaving the Bodhisatta, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



**Figure 19.** The four treasure troops spontaneously in existence at the Bodhisatta’s birth, east wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.

Scenes of the Buddha’s retreat from the third to the seventh weeks after enlightenment are portrayed on the south wall of the crypt. Their order is not strictly chronological along the tiers. The other three scenes on the same wall, each illustrating the Buddha in his seated posture and accompanied by devotees, could not be clearly identified on the iconographic ground for their narrations.

Three of the eight narrative scenes on the west wall of the crypt can be identified for their representation of the Buddha’s miraculous episodes: his first sermon <Figure 20>, his taming of the Nālāgiri elephant <Figure 21> and the Buddha with the Pārileyya elephant attending him <Figure 22>. Although, these three episodes of the Buddha, together with the Buddha’s nativity and enlightenment in the murals of the east wall, belong to a set of the “Eight Great Miracles” of the Buddha, there is no clue, on the iconographic ground, that the other scenes of the set were also provided in the crypt murals. In the *Pārileyya* scene, only the elephant is portrayed accompanying the Buddha, in agreement with one of the Pāli canonical sources, the *Vinaya-Mahāvagga* (Mahāmakutarāvidyālaya 1982, Vol. 7: 449-94). This contrasts with the Pagan iconography for the same Buddha’s episode in which both the elephant and monkey are attending the Buddha,

according to another Pāli text, a commentary of the *Dhammapada* (Mahāmakutarājavidyālaya 1982 Vol. 40: 78-93) <Figure 23>.



**Figure 20.** First sermon, west wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



**Figure 21.** Taming the Nālāgiri elephant, west wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



**Figure 22.** Parileyya, the Buddha is served by the mighty elephant, west wall of the crypt, Wat Ratchaburana, Ayutthaya.



**Figure 23.** Parileyya, the Buddha is served by the monkey and the mighty elephant, the Pagan temple 600 (Maung-von-gu).

Among the seven scenes on the north wall of the crypt, only three can be identified for their narrations. The middle scene of the upper tier illustrates the Buddha's mahāparinibbāna <Figure 24>. Probably the Buddha taming Ālavaka demon is depicted in the first scene of the lower tier <Figure 25>. The third scene of the same tier depicts a Buddha's footprint enshrined on top of the mountain, most likely representing the Buddhapāda on top of the Sumanagūṭa Mountain in Sri Lanka <Figure 26>, which, according to the *Mahāvamsa* text (Geiger 1912: 8), came from the Buddha himself.



Figure 24. The Buddha's mahāparinibbāna, north wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



Figure 25. Taming Ālavaka demon, north wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.



**Figure 26.** The Buddha’s footprint on top of the Sumanagūṭa Mountain in Sri Lanka, north wall of the crypt, Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā.

Overall, the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana narrate a complete biography of Gotama Buddha from his conception to mahāparinibbāna based on the Pāli sources—i.e. the *Nidānakathā* of a commentary of the *Jātakas* and others—a phenomenon also observed in the Pagan murals. However, marked differences on other aspects between these early-Thai and the Pagan-Period murals do not suggest intimate relationship between the two groups of murals. In contrast to the Pagan tradition, no size hierarchy is obviously demonstrated in the crypt murals between figures of the Buddha and those of the devotees. The size hierarchy of the figure of the Buddha portrayed vis-à-vis that of the Nālāgiri or the *Pārileyya* elephant is much more pronounced in the Pagan murals than in the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana. The arrangement of a complete set of the “Seven Weeks” scenes in the crypt murals does not suggest its direct association with the Pagan pattern, in which the first-week episode of the Buddha, represented by enshrinement of the Buddha symbol at the center of the shrine, is surrounded by scenes of his retreat at the other six stations. Also, the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana do not illustrate a complete set of the Pagan’s “Eight Great Miracles” of the Buddha, with the enlightenment of the Buddha represented by his symbol at the center of the shrine. The iconography of the *Pārileyya* scene of the Wat Rāṭchaburana murals, portraying the elephant attending

the Buddha without the monkey included in the scene, was based on a different Pāli source from that which the Pagan iconography of the scene was adapted for. Lastly, the enlightenment scene of the crypt murals shows the Buddha seated in meditation pose under the Bodhi-tree and attended by several divinities, in contrast to the Pagan scene of the Buddha's episode in which the Buddha seated in *māravijaya* under the Bodhi-tree is attended by only two gods, i.e. Brahmā holding a parasol and Sakka blowing his auspicious conch trumpet, Vijayuttara <Figure 27>. These two gods could not be identified in the enlightenment scene of the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana.



**Figure 27.** The Buddha's enlightenment in the Pagan iconography. He is accompanied by Brahmā holding a parasol and Sakka blowing his auspicious conch trumpet, Vijayuttara, the Pagan temple 2171 (Ananda-gu-hpaya-gyi).



On the other hand, the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana demonstrate much more affiliation with the art style and iconography from Sri Lanka, as seen, for example, in the characteristics of the 24 previous Buddhas, the iconography of the Buddha in the Animisa scene and the depiction in the murals of one of the most sacred site of Sri Lanka, the Buddhapāda on top of the Sumanakūṭa Mountain. It is interesting to note that the tradition of adorning the sealed crypt, inside a stupa, with the Buddhist symbols had been constantly preserved in the Buddhist culture of Sri Lanka. It could have served as a progenitor for execution of the crypt murals at Wat Rāṭchaburana. The crypts adorned with murals have been discovered in the excavations of several important stupas in Sri Lanka, for example, Mihintaḷē dating from the eighth century A.D., Mahiyaṅgana from the ninth to eleventh century A.D. and Sutiyaḡhara from the twelfth century A.D. (Bandaranayake 2006: 73-79). Also contained in the *Mahāvāṃsa* text, compiled in Sri Lanka during the fifth century A.D., is a description of the Buddhist symbols for interior decorating of the crypt of the Great Stupa at Anurādhapura, constructed by King Duṭṭagamaṇi (Geiger 1912: 198-208). Found depicted in the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana, which are in agreement with the *Mahāvāṃsa* account, are the following Buddhist narratives: the episodes of the Buddha during his “Seven-Weeks” retreat after enlightenment; his first sermon; his encounter with the Nālāgiri elephant; his encounter with the demon Āḷavaka; the mahāparinibbāna; the Jātaka stories (depicted in the crypt murals inside the niches and on the lowest part of the crypt walls); and the early life episodes of the Buddha before the enlightenment. This may suggest that the design of the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana was based on the Sri Lankan text and tradition. The strong Sri Lankan influence observed in the crypt murals of Wat Rāṭchaburana could have been a result of direct contact between Sri Lanka and Ayutthayā during the first half of the fifteenth century. Such contact is evident by the arrival at Ayutthayā during the mid 1420s of a group of monks who had their higher ordination in the Mahāvihāra lineage of Sri Lanka (Ratanapañṇā Thera 1968). This was about the time the Wat Rāṭchaburana was established. They launched the

*upasampadā* (ordination) of the new Sinhalese lineage at Ayutthayā, in which *Mahāthera* Sīlavissuddhi, the tutor of the chief queen of king Boromarājā II of Ayutthayā (A.D. 1424-48), the founder of Wat Rāṭchaburana, and another *thera* named Saddhammakovida received their higher ordination.

#### IV. Discussion

The importance of Pagan as one of the major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Southeast Asia did not come to an end at the twilight of its civilization in the late thirteenth century. There is evidence that religious activities had continued at Pagan until well after its dynastic period, although probably at a more limited scale than during the peak of its civilization (Than Tun 1988a: 103-16; for donation inscriptions after the Pagan Period found at Pagan see Tun Nyein 1899). Restorations of some major Buddhist monuments of Pagan had been the meritorious duties of later Burmese kings (Stadtner 2005: 26). Pilgrims from various other Buddhist lands visited the holy monuments at Pagan, as evident, for example, in the case of the *Mahāthera* from the Lānnā Kingdom who made several such visits and donations to maintain the Shwe-zigon Pagoda at Pagan (Luce and Ba Shin 1961: 330-7).

Inspirations from Pagan are evident in the arts and architectures of several of its neighboring civilizations. Usage of the Pagan style *clec* in stucco adornment of the niches could be observed in several Haripuñjaya, Lānnā and Sukhothai religious structures—for example, the Kūkut Pagoda in Lamphun dating from the twelfth century, the main Pagoda of Wat Pāsak in Chiang Rāi dating from the fourteenth century, and some Sukhothai pagodas at Wat Chedi-ched-taew dating from the mid-fourteenth century (Leksukhum 1995: 37 and 179; 2006: 54-55). The radiating arch technique used in construction of religious buildings would have spread from Pagan to gain its popularity in medieval Lānnā from the fourteenth century onwards. Building a man-made meditation cave at Wat

Umong-Therachan in Chiang Mai, probably in the fourteenth century, would have been under influence of the Pagan prototype. Also proposed as the inspirations from Pagan and found in central Thailand are some stucco motifs at Prāng-sam-yod and Mahāthāt Lopburī, dating from the thirteenth century (Poolsuwan 1996: 19-20), and the existence of a stupa finial crowning the roof of an entrance passage into the main stupa or tower, as seen at Wat Prasrīsanphet and Wat Rāṭchaburana, Ayutthayā, dating from the fifteenth century (Leksukhum 2007: 55).

Surprisingly, as the investigation of this article has suggested, influences of the Pagan tradition on development of the early Thai murals—of the Ayutthayā, Sukhothai, and Lānnā schools—seemed to be trivial and mostly on minor stylistic basis (as found, for example, in the cave murals at Wat Umong, Chiang Mai) rather than on the more substantial ideological and iconographic grounds. Several of the early Thai murals show much more affiliation, on the other hand, with the artistic style and iconography from Sri Lanka. The phenomenon would reflect the nature of the religious relationship between Pagan, after its dynastic period, and other Buddhist centers of Southeast Asia.

The Pagan Kingdom did not lose its glory suddenly and entirely after its capital was conquered by the Mongols in A.D. 1287. Attempt was made from the Yuan Court to restore the royal lineage at Pagan under the Mongol's sovereignty (Than Tun 1988a: 103-14). Internal weakness, due to conflicts within the royal court and loss of control over the fertile agricultural area at Kyauk-se to the Shans, would have accounted for rapid deterioration of the Pagan's power during the course of the fourteenth century (Than Tun 1988a: 103-14). The cease of royal patronage on religious activities and learning would have made the intellectual atmosphere of the Buddhist community at Pagan deteriorated considerably. Also, during the mid-fourteenth century, a new Buddhist center was established for the Sinhalese Order at Martaban in Lower Burma. It out-competed Pagan in terms of providing the Buddhist education, ordinations, and trans-cultural networks. Its fame spread wide and far among the Buddhist communities of Southeast Asia, who later established direct

contacts with Sri Lanka themselves (Jayawickrama 1978: 84-85). The Sukhothai murals of Wat Chedi-ched-taeo and the Ayutthayā murals of Wat Rāitchaburana showing obvious Sri Lankan influences could have been a product within the milieu of religious affinities with Sri Lanka. It is important to note that Central Burma, where Pagan is located, was a backwater for movements of this new Sinhalese Buddhist order during a period from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century due to the growth and prosperity in the area of the local Buddhist sect, the *Arañ* (Than Tun 1988ab; Poolsuwan 2014b). Probably only in the aspect of its being a “sacred land” worthy of pilgrimage, that Pagan, after its dynastic period, could have its religious significance maintained and recognized in broader setting of the religious network of Southeast Asia.

Pagan murals were executed under complicated designs and narrations, based on various Pāli literary sources, and were associated with the complex symbolism unique to the Pagan culture. This suggests that their artists belonged to a learned community, with their knowledge and artistic skills systematically passed on from generation to generation. Without the maintenance of such intellectual atmosphere in a long run—probably due to lack of royal patronage and resources since the early fourteenth century onwards—the complicated knowledge and artistic skills that formed the Pagan mural tradition had to come to terms with their eventual decline.

Foreign pilgrims who visited Pagan had their devotions rather limited by time and interest to the sacred Buddhist sites of the area, normally regularly maintained, which are much fewer in number than thousands of the ordinary ones left unattended after the Pagan Period. Usually, in these rather neglected temples could be found the original murals of the Pagan Period which had escaped whitewashing generously provided in repeated restorations of the temples. Although existing at Pagan, these original murals would not have attracted much attention of foreign pilgrims, who brought back with them some inspirations from Pagan. Also, without appropriate explication, pilgrims after the Pagan Period would have had a hard time appreciating the

meaning of the murals of this lost tradition. The situation might be different in case of the temple architectures and their other simpler decorations that could attract the attention of foreign viewers more instantly. This may partly explain why transmission of the artistic influences from Pagan into its neighboring Buddhist civilizations was truly selective, between the mural tradition on one hand and the architectural and other decorative domains on the other.

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