

## V. Representative List of the ICH of Humanity

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We don't have the representative List of the ICH of Humanity to UNESCO but we would like to present some lists of the ICH of humanity of Myanmar as follows;

### **ICH of Myanmar**

#### **A. Hot Air Balloon Festival in Taunggyi (Taunggyi Mie Pone Pwedaw)**

In the record of Myanmar history, the launching of hot air balloon custom had around the Myanmar. But the competition of hot air balloon had been held only in Taunggyi since 1953. Nowadays, the festival is spread to Pin Oo Lwin. The neighboring areas of Taunggyi are participated in Taunggyi Mie Pone Pyan Pwe. The members of Buddhist community believe that launching hot air balloon is a symbol of paying homage to the lord Buddha. Just like this belief, Taunggyi Mie Pone Pyan festival is held by religious belief. Nowadays, the festival is changed gradually the basic idea religious belief by adding the competition character.

The festival has two kinds of competition as day time competition and night time competition. Day time competition is laughing the figures of animals. This competition is for the younger generation. They are observing the art through practical experiments. Night time competition is called Seinnapan and Meekyi. This competition is difficult because all the competitors should do the same time and same task. All competitors should be unity. The main component of all the competition is Shan paper. It is not only the natural resource but also local product. It is made by hand using traditional method.

The successful operational conditions of a hot air balloon greatly depend on the expertise of the leader or expert, who acquires such knowledge and skills not from theoretical training but from experience and practical work. Day time competitions are for the younger generation. It is the basic of the night time competition. The objectives of competitions are made for the youths, to train the youths to be able to perform traditional practices representing both social and cultural

symbols and to make the younger generation value and appreciate the cultural heritage.

Mie Pone Pyan festival is a very popular festival even in the whole Myanmar and beloved tradition which is embraced by locals and tourists alike. Within the community, the festival will have social and cultural functions. All of the competitors are not the same level. They are various social status, unequal education level and different religious beliefs. The festival represents the unity of competition team, the meaning of religious festival, the exploration of natural resource and the promotion of the local product. Every hot air balloon is designed by the vision or aim of the team. Design represents will be clearly on display. Each of the participating team uses a specific and meaningful hot air balloon to express their aim.

## **B. Myanmar Orchestra**

It has been created and utilized for royal ceremonies such as succession, auspicious and inauspicious ceremonies since the Inwa Period (AD. 14<sup>th</sup> century). Saing Waing (Drum Ensemble) is known as Part Waing in the Inwa Period. Part Waing is composed with a set of small drum, brass gong circle, Bamboo clappers, oboe, and cymbals. At the end of the Inwa period and the beginning of the Kuonbaung period, it is extended as Saing Waing. King Tharawady (1199-1208), who had a very keen interest in music, and the sculptors created drum ensemble stage and let the musicians play music there. It comprises a set of small drum, brass gong circle, gong circle, Bamboo clappers, oboe, timing bells and clappers, short drum, big drum, cymbals, double headed drum on a stand and drum ensemble consisting of six graduated drums.

In Yadanabon period (1870s), it was stated that Pat-ma-chaun ensemble was added to the drum ensemble. During the Yadanabon period, especially in the ear piercing ceremonies, and the naming ceremonies of the princes and princesses, it was performed. The titles such as Nay Myo Kyaw Zwar Khaung, Nay Myo Kyaw Thu, Dei weindar and Ywa Zar were conferred on the musicians who performed at these ceremonies.

In 1904, the gong ensemble was introduced. Since Baydar(1910s) decorated his ensemble stand with sculpted images of dragons(Naya

dragon or Pyinsayupa dragon, or common dragon), all done in mosaic. Myanmar has endowed the use of Saing Waing with roles: auspicious and inauspicious performance. Nowadays, it is also used for religious, social, cultural ceremonies and traditional sport such as playing cane-ball, art self-defense and boxing. Furthermore, its entertainment can be seen in the ceremonies of National level such as commissioning of roads and bridges and opening of dams and dykes. Thus, it is important to identify for Myanmar nationals' indigenous knowledge, Myanmar intangible and tangible Culture.

Formerly, the Kings, royal community, and rural people are invented and enhanced it. Today, it is maintained and promoted to National level, State level, Regional level, and Township level as National cultural heritage especially intangible and tangible cultural heritages. They transmit this knowledge and skill generation to generation.

### **C. Myanmar Traditional Lacquerware Art**

It focuses on Myanmar Lacquer ware art practiced in Bagan and Nyaung Oo area, Myanmar. Lacquer ware workers, Lacquer ware shop owners and teachers of Technology School of Myanmar Lacquer ware were interviewed to illustrate Myanmar's intangible culture. Myanmar lacquer ware art is produced in the cities of Bagan, situated in Old Bagan area and New Bagan area, Upper Myanmar.

Myanmar people of the whole country, Southeast Asia and Asia: Royalty and nobility in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, China, Japan and Europe: Royalty and nobility in France, Denmark have been used lacquer ware.

Myanmar lacquer ware making is one of the Ten Myanmar Traditional Arts which have long been existed in the country. It is called in Myanmar "Pan Yun". The names of other nine arts also have the prefix "Pan" which is the same word for flower. Any article or object covered with a hard bright and smooth varnish called lacquer which is a vegetable product is called lacquer ware, because this varnish can be applied to plain or carved surface of paper, bamboo, wood, brick, terra cotta, stone fabric even metal. Recently glazed objects covered have been produced. Historically, the lacquer ware art and technology were made in the Bagan era about A.D 1044-1287 (King Anawratha's reign).

The production of Myanmar lacquer ware art varies according to the raw materials it used. Most of the types of the Myanmar lacquer ware are: bamboo lacquer ware, wooden lacquer ware, horse hair lacquer ware and Japan lacquer ware. There are five techniques of decoration the lacquer ware. These are; plain lacquer ware, incised lacquer ware, gilt lacquer ware (Shwezawa ware), relief moulded lacquer ware (Thayo) and glass mosaic and gilt lacquer ware (Hmansi Shwecha).

Mostly used designs are: geometrical, acheik or wavy pattern, floral, scroll or arabesque. Moreover, four main basic styles of Myanmar traditional drawing are applied in lacquer ware decoration. They are: Kanou', Kapi, Gaza and Na-ri. All are Pali words. Motifs are lotus, orchid mythical animals, demons and devas. Symbols of nine planets and twelve signs of Zodiac are the artists favorite. Scenes and episodes from Jatakas stories, well known folk tales and fables, pagoda legends and Nat (spirit) stories are depicted in panels. Enough space is left on the object for inscribing the artist's name and the date or for any letter the buyer may wish to have it inscribed.

After carrying all the processes, the lacquer ware is marketable throughout the country and to overseas. Most of the objects of lacquer ware that can be seen in Myanmar household are: the lacquer ok which is used to put the pickle tea leaves and food, the lacquer betel box, the lacquer tray, the lacquer cup. The lacquer ok of the pickle tea leave is important and useful item for the Myanmar family. They use it as their daily affair and entertaining their guests. Moreover, the lacquer ok is also used for offering the food to the Buddhist monks. This custom stands as the social dignity of Myanmar and the eating habit of the pickle tea leave maintains as the cultural heritage of Myanmar. The lacquer betel box is also important item of Myanmar family. The function of the lacquer betel box shows the hospitality, friendship, generosity and social dignity of Myanmar culture. The chewing habit also stands as the cultural heritage of Myanmar. The lacquer tray is also useful for Myanmar family. It is used as the entertaining for the guests with putting cold drinks or water. Moreover, when they celebrate the ceremonies, they use the lacquer tray putting with some prizes. Therefore, the lacquer tray is also the ideal item for the traditional Myanmar art and craft. The lacquer cup is also important object for the Myanmar family. It is used as the daily utensil and religious affair. When the Myanmar Buddhist people worship to the Buddha, they use the lacquer cup. Moreover, in the

upper area of Myanmar country, the smell of thitsi from the lacquer cup changes the flavor of water. The functions of lacquer were correlate with their social values and social life. There are a few existing lacquer-making families striving to save the craft in the face of many threat-huge investment of time and money, low returns, and lack of interest for continuing the craft among the younger generations.

#### **D. Myanmar Marionettes**

##### **1) History and Present State of the Myanmar Marionettes**

Myanmar string puppet dates back several centuries. Many authors in Myanmar believed that puppet shows were entertaining both in the court and public in Bagan Period. Solid evidence await 400 years later.

Many cultural activities and religion were based on influences from the neighbors. But it was a long time in the whole course of Myanmar History that denied Ramayana play, until 18th century.

Ramayana play had been so popular in India, Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries. But very lately in Myanmar. It means some of the influences were denied of and not all were accepted. Similarly, some scholars wrote that Myanmar puppetry can be independent development. They quote Buddhist texts which suggest that marionettes were already in use by the time of Gautama ( 403-483 BC ).

So, Myanmar marionettes seem to be an our original art indeed. There is no evidence of any influences coming from India or China. It belongs to the Burmese genius.

Myanmar string puppetry has had a long history, since the 11th century, Bagan period. But the first records were found in 1444, 15th century. It was a grand celebration for commemorating the completion of the Htupayon Pagoda, Sagaing, Upper Myanmar, by the King Narapati. 40 years later (1484), Shin Mahar Rahta Thara, a famous poet monk described about the puppets in his famous poem ' Buridat Linkar Gyi". Similar reference is found in another poem of the same monk poet, composed in A.D 1529. The poem was titled "Than Wara Pyoe".

The art was gradually matured, presentation becoming of a high standard to be included as part of the court reception, for visiting

embassies and known as ‘A Myint Thabin’ which literally means, “performance on the high level”.

The Royalty did not at first allow human dancers on the stage and thus lifeless marionette dancers had a great opportunity to be on a high level stage, above the Royal audience. The human manipulators and singers were hidden and obliged to perform behind the handrail. Female artists were not allowed then to present themselves on stage. Accordingly, men had to impersonate women characters. So, artists performed as women impersonators were later known as ‘Yoke Thay Minthami’, female puppet dancers.

Myanmar marionettes enjoyed the rare and powerful privilege of being speakers of both king and man. It was not only for entertainment, but also a highly esteemed art by all classes. Marionettes were a means of making people aware of current events, a medium for educating the audience in literature, history and religion, a display of life style and customs.

In the countryside, they were the media when there were no newspapers. Puppet troupes travel from town to town, and the puppeteers gather information and gossip from many places, as well as from the capital city. They relay the news through the speeches of the comedian puppets, so that the country people in remote villages also heard about the city life and the latest scandals. The comedian puppet handlers were the most important members of the troupe, and their impromptu jokes, songs and poetic speeches were much admired. That was a way of getting news as well as learning about history and literature.

At the same time they functioned as mouthpieces for the people in the days of royalty, tiny hands in state and social affairs. These small dolls-Yokethay, enjoyed greater freedom of speech, dress and movement than live performers. This freedom allowed the puppets to speak to the king or court what others dare not say. Thus, a great many wrongs were righted, and many lives saved through the speech of the puppets. They therefore played a significant role in the development of dance and dramatic arts.

So, puppet show in 17th century was among the court entertainments and even some troupes were already running among the public

winning popularity. Puppet plays were traditionally all performing only ataka stories of Buddha.

Marionettes became very powerful in the 18th century during the reign of king Bagyidaw.

Myanmar puppetry reached the highest stage of development in the Kongbaung period, when Myanmar culture flourished. In the Kongbaung period, during the reign of Bagyidaw, Tharyarwadi Min, Mindon Min and Thibaw Min, Myanmar puppetry reached the level of highest stage, in an unparalleled achievement of Myanmar culture.

1821 to 1885 was a high time for the Myanmar puppetry. With royal patronage, puppet troupes prospered. Many troupes emerged with the patronage from the officials and the rich.

The king established his own puppet troupes to perform in the courts. The best puppeteers and the vocalists were selected from every corners of his realm to serve him. Many talents competed to win the king's selection. So, during the reign of king Mindon in the kongbaung Dynasty, there used to be 4 types of marionette troupes:

- (1) Mahar Sin-Daw-Gyi (The Grand Imperial Stage)
- (2) Sin-Daw- Galay (The lesser Grand Imperial Stage)
- (3) Thami-Daw-Myar-Sin (Puppet Theatre of the Princesses)
- (4) Win- Sin (or) A Yat-Sin (The Courtyard Stage)

which entertained the commoners meant for the general public.

Many troupes performed plays not only from Buddhist's 550 Jataka stories, but also from Zimme Pannatha (Chiengmai Pannasa ), episodes from the Burmese History and tales and fictions.

Many went down to lower Burma where British rule assured security and better economy. That time, river way was the only means of transportation. Large number of puppet troupes floated down river and camped on the way like Hin-Thada, Nyaun-Done, Day-Da-Ye and then Yangon. There, they staged their first shows to welcome the clients from the countryside. When new Yangon - Pyay railway was opened in 1877, more puppet troupes came down by river to Pyay and

proceeded along the railway line to perform in Paun-De, Kyoe-Bin-Gauk, Min Hla, Let-Pa-Dan, Thone-Ze, Oakkan, Kyi-Myin-Daing, Pazun-Daun and Yangon.

In 1885, when the last Myanmar king “Thibaw” was taken away, artists and craftsman had lost their most important sponsor, the court. There was none to hire the puppet troupes. They found themselves in a bad situation and survival was difficult. They had to survive by making compromises to please the new customers, foreign rulers. And marionettes had to face the challenge from other fields of entertainment, and also accept the western influences, such as circuses from India, live theatrical performances, A Nyeints, Zats, films and other forms of entertainment.

A Nyeint was a performance by girl’s clowns and musical accompaniment. They sing, dance and perform plays that lasted to midnight only. It was such a light performance. Zats were a large group organized into a hundred or 80 members with a grand orchestra. Elaborate dances and spectacular operas were the essence of the Zats. It ran the whole night. A Nyeints and Zats were all beginning more popular. But the puppet troupes were beginning to suffer a decline.

So, the decline of the puppet theatre had begun by 1910 and many companies were beginning to disband. When a new royal patron came up, the puppets revived again and this the later generation took it for an invention. Competition stimulated inventions diversity. New puppet figures appeared on the stage. Animals like buffalo, dog, frog, fish and snake etc and human like Chinese, Indian, European, etc.

A puppet looks like Tarzan would sometimes made an appearance accompanied by a European hunter with a Rifle, which was fired with a loud bang. An English lady with her little dog was to encounter the Garuda and Nagar. Playlets which showed characters in modern dress that drove cars, rode motorcycles and flew in an airplane become popular during the first half of performance and were sandwiched between brief appearances by the traditional puppets.

So, experimentation with new ideas was only beginning from the late 1890s. Until the 1870s, many of the puppets were worked with very few strings and acted merely as a focal point for the vocalist.



Audiences came to listen to rather than see a performance. More strings were added to puppets and manipulatory skills increased further. But despite the inclusion of new acts and although there was a brief revival, it could not compete with other forms of entertainment.

In 1960, there were only 5 active marionette troupes in Yangon, including the 'Shweibo Tin Mg' troupe, the only one to continue enjoying popularity, during that period. When Shweibo Tin Mg died in 1976, the troupe was disbanded, though his daughter tried to continue for two years. In 1981, only three small troupes were known to exist in lower Myanmar. Myanmar people had lost interest and indifference to the survival of the puppet theatre. The all night shows were also a thing of the past.

In 1990, we, Mandalay Marionettes found Master U Pan Aye and U Mya Thwin, who are the outstanding students of Shweibo U Tin Mg. First, we founded the Mandalay Marionettes Theatre and arranged a special marionettes show for the visitors, tourists in Mandalay to give them an idea of ancient Myanmar culture.

Then we organized and reestablished the disbanded Shweibo Tin Mg's group especially for all-night shows for local people. And enjoyed the popularity of performing at the pagoda festivals in villages like in the olden days.

Since 1995, the government annually celebrates a national contest for the fine arts at the National Theatre in Yangon. Including puppetry contest. The contestants are divided into different categories such as amateurs, professionals, women, young talents, etc. This is an encouraging sign that the art of traditional puppetry is still being cultivated. The new generations are also striving heart and soul for the revival of this brilliant tradition.

## **2) Structure**

A normal size of a puppet is 28 inches high. ( About 2 feet- 1 cubit+ 1 span of fingers ). A human puppet comprised the head, upper torso, arms, forearms, and hands, lower torso, thighs, legs and feet.

The torso made in 2 sections was joined at the waist by a string. Heavier parts of a puppet are its torso, and the head. Generally a head

is hollowed out from the back. Thicker parts of torso are hollowed out from the back and from the bottom to decrease weight. The lighter a puppet is the better to manipulate. So a sculptor has to take care to keep a puppet as light as possible. Keeping the weight of a puppet to a minimum enables a puppeteer to go on manipulating for a long time without rest.

The height of a puppet is important because an observant eye can detect a disproportion of it. A well proportioned puppet was determined by its head or double length of hands. Seven and a half times of the head is the height of the puppet from top to toe. Half of the height is the arm length from the shoulder to the tip of the middle finger. These ratios of anatomical formation are the standard measures of the Royal Troupe.

### **3) Puppets**

In making the puppets, human, horse and Nats are to be made of Yamanai (clog wood). Yamanai wood is rare but strong and light, growing in the cool hilly regions of Upper Burma. This wood was considered so auspicious that in the days of the monarchy, it was used for the construction of the throne used in the most prestigious ceremonies. Old Craftsmen of old would search the jungles for the perfect tree, estimating if it could yield all or almost all of the 30-puppets needed for a troupe. It was a superstitious belief that almost all characters, at least the principals, must be obtained from one single tree. When found, it would be ringed, and left to season or dry. On an auspicious day, chosen by the astrologers, the tree would be felled, and blocks cut to the size of each puppet. The upper part was marked on each log, so that the marionettes might not be 'upside down', so to speak.

These were left to season again. The more orthodox puppeteers would float the logs in water. The side that surfaced was considered female, while the immersed side was considered male.

Ayegayit (*Millingtonia hortensis*) was used for the hermit, king, and the four ministers. Other characters were made from Ma-U (*Anthocephalus cadamba*), Letpan (*Bombay malabaricum*) and Thanat (*Gareinia elliptica*). Characters were carved accordingly complete with the appropriate sex organs. These original instructions on the use of

the correct kind of wood for each puppet were issued by the first Thabin Wun (minister), after consulting works on astrology and divination.

Puppets are made by six specialists who produced the complete character; that is, they sculpted, gilded, painted, embroidered, sewed and strung it. The head, limbs and necks are made by one sculptor and the torsos are made by another. Firstly, the heads, limbs and necks are to be brushed by the sand-paper to become smooth. Then, to be painted by the painter. First paint is with the white water colour. Then they are to be dried. They are applied layer by layer, 3 to 4 coats. When they are dried, it is to be brushed again with the soft sand-paper to get a level smooth. Then, to be painted with the white oil colour for 3 coats at least.

Next process is to paint the face, with drawing eyes, eyebrows, mouth and the claws. After that, the heads are studded with long strands of hair. Only human hair could be used, but nowadays, because of the scarcity of the real hair, only the black threads are used. The strands are studded into the small holes, drilled in the head and secured by tiny slivers of bamboo.

Next step is making guy ropes to string the puppets and the handle. To string the marionettes, a short length of string is twisted and doubled, so that it curls tightly around itself and ends knotted together, creating a small loop at the tip that can be widened at will. These so-called guy ropes are to be pulled through the holes of the wood pieces. And there are 5 guy ropes for the basic strings, called the 'life strings' to attach to the cross-bar.

The crossbar (handle) is to be drilled with 6 holes for the 5 basic strings.

Second part is, to fix the joints. Generally, a human puppet is made up of 17, 18 to 19 pieces or 13 joints, divided into 3 sections. The head and short neck of a puppet were joined to the upper torso by a circular piece of wood called a 'Le Khwai', which was thick in front but sloping towards the back. A string, fixed to the neck passed through it and into the base of the head.

It is very important to take a great care especially to join the arm to get a flexible dancing. So, for the arm joints, the strings between are to be stuffed and wrapped with the cotton. And so for the joints of the forearm, thigh and the knees also. They are to be wrapped with a great care, adjusting the both sides to have equivalence. The torso made in two sections was joined at the waist by a string.

The last part is to clothe and string the puppet for finishing. The prince of princess puppets must be dressed like human beings. After clothing, the puppet must be strung with dancing strings. Firstly, the basic strings are to be attached to the crossbar. So, 5 guy ropes are to be pulled through the crossbar. One more guy rope is in the middle hole of the crossbar to hang the puppet. Five guy ropes, hang from the crossbar are to be connected by long strings to the two at the temples, the two at the shoulders, and the one at the base of the spine.

The dancing strings are the ones connecting the limbs. Long strings with knots at either end are pulled through the twisted loops of the pairs of guy ropes at hands, knees, arms and feet, thus connecting each pair. The tension of the twisted guyropes must be tight enough to hold the knots securely. The puppet is unstrung easily just by widening the loops and slipping out the knots. It takes about 20 days to finish a dancing puppet from beginning to the end.

#### **4) Strings**

All human puppets have these strings, although non-dancing puppets may have none on the feet. The prince has strings on both heels and toes; the princess does not usually have one at her toes, for she must never dance with her feet thrushing out towards the audience, a most impolite gesture, even for a wooden lady. The heel string however, is useful to flick back the long train, which is a part of the choreography for women dancers.

The Zawgyi and Ogre puppets have only the knee strings to move their feet and although the dance of the ogre is not complicated, the Zawgyi's steps are fast and acrobatic, so that it takes great adroitness and experience for one to be a good 'Zawgyi- handler". Any puppeteer, skilled in this part is considered the best in his field.

Puppeteers are most reluctant to show one another how their own puppets are strung. One artist might challenge another to try out his puppet and securely tie a knot to make the puppet stiff and difficult to move. When his rival has given up in frustrating, he would securely pull (tweak) the knot loose with his toe, and show of his artistry.

## **5) Myanmar String Puppet**

### **How to Manipulate a Myanmar String Puppet**

So, a normal size of a puppet is 28 inches high, about 2 feet. A human figure is divided into 3 sections with 32 to 45 strings attached to the appropriate parts. But, now only 12 strings are strung to be easy to manipulate.

There are 2 strings attached the temple from the crossbar, making the head nod and move. A distinctive feature of Myanmar puppet. And 2 strings at the shoulder and one at the base of the spine. These so-called 5 guy ropes are the basic strings, taking the weight of the marionette, called the life strings, for the slightest movement of them give a puppet 'life' making the bosom fall and rise as if breathing.

The dancing strings are the ones, connecting the hands and legs. There are 3 methods of manipulating the Myanmar marionettes. Single string handling, double strings handling and triple strings handling.

Single string handling is used to walk and dance the puppet. It is connected to the knees of the puppet. Normally, when manipulate such kind of characters like Ogre and Alchemist, we use this technique.

Double strings handling is used to show the gesture, manner or the action of the puppet. And for the jerky dance. And to pick up the pearl beads or the scarf princess and the pasoe of the prince puppet. Double strings are the ones connected to the arm and palm. So, they are the arm string and the palm string.

Triple strings handling is used when both hands and feet are desired to dance. Triple strings are the arm string, palm string and the leg strings, those 3 strings are to be held together but the arm string is to be twisted clockwise by thumb.

We use this technique for the prince, princess, lady votaress and the pavotaress and the page boy to get a beautiful dance. When manipulating a Myanmar mrionette, the handle must be held in the left hand and the strings are to be held in the right hand. [ The way to hold the handle is like this].The handle (crossbar) must be on the index finger( forefinger). Set the middle finger free and the back crossbar must be between the thumb and the folded ring finger and little finger. It is important to hold the handle in correct way. Grasping the strings with all fingers is the wrong way of handling.

Even with non-dancing puppets, a puppeteer's talent is judged solely on how alive a puppet appears in his hands from the moment the crossbar is held.

The hip string of the puppet must be placed on the middle of the palm and is to be controlled by the ring finger not to fall down.

The liveliness of a puppet entirely depends on the movement of the left hand. Even the slightest movement of the left hand with the life strings, give the puppet 'life", nodding, tilting head and making the bosom fall and rise as if breathing. In this way, movements of the head can be manipulated with the appropriate movement of the handle.

When holding the string in the right hand, the thumb must be streched out. The string is to be on the thumb and it goes under the index finger and again on the other 3 fingers. The strings are to be adjusted on the hand to get center.

One important thing is, the left hand, which is holding the handle must be streched out straight, lifted high enough. Let the feet of the puppet touch the floor, standing tall, so that the puppet would not be looking awkward. So, you have to be strong enough to keep lifting and manipulating the puppet without rest.

### **The Feature of the Myanmar String Puppet**

In order to make the puppet look alive, the handle must be kept moving, manipulating. So also, the head of the puppet as well must be moved in accordance with the speech or music.Among the four varieties of puppets, namely the glove puppet, rod puppet, shadow puppet and the string puppet, Myanmar puppet falls into the last

category- string puppet. The string puppet is the most capable of presenting human movements.

Myanmar marionette show is not a fun-fair kind of show such as the Punch and Judy of the West. It is not designed for juvenile amusement. It is not a side show. It is not even light entertainment. It is the real thing, a serious art presenting full length dramas to adult audiences. It is a whole night affair with beginning, middle and end, so that the marionettes are no longer toys or dolls but serious substitutes for human. Myanmar puppets are entirely different from the puppets of neighbouring countries in style, form of dance, connection of parts, dress and handling. The puppets are specially designed to enable them to perform dancing movements rather than characteristic stage movement.

In fact, Myanmar puppetry embodies in itself, the different arts such as dancing, singing, painting, sculpting and costume designing. Movements are coordinated with the song that is sung or played. For the puppets of major characters, the singer, or the actor and the manipulator are different persons performing in a synchronized manner. Because the singer, the puppeteer and the musicians three persons all work together in precise timing and step, puppetry is often referred to as an art that employs two or three persons having a single mind ( Three bodies-one soul ). It is not easy for a person with just two hands to manipulate a puppet with 16 to 30 strings, making it move precisely with the music. Moreover, it is difficult to coordinate movement, music and speech in order to present a deep feeling of romance, sadness, humor, hatred and admiration.

Emphasis was on the dialogue, relying on the poetry to describe the scene. Words are his means. Not ordinary words, but words of the poetry with elegant phrases, which could insinuate themselves through the ears of the audience to their imagination so that in no time, whatever their eyes may be seeing, their mind's eyes are seeing, not a stick, but a snake.

The traditional had no 'curtain'. Traditional puppetry relied entirely on 'captured imagination'. With the captured imagination so grippingly that, the marionettes are no longer dolls but human beings as large as life, on a stage, as large as nature. Even the strings were forgotten. The puppets became real men and women acting in real life

dramas. Because each marionette was possessed by the spirit of its manipulator.

Until the 1870s, many of the puppets were worked with very few strings and acted merely as a focal point for the vocalist. Audiences came to listen to rather than see a performance. So, a vocalist was senior to a manipulator, because no matter how cleverly the puppeteer worked his puppet, it was the voice that held the audience's attention.

## **6) Function of the Myanmar Marionettes**

In the past, puppetry was a popular entertainment for the Myanmar kings and queens. But it was not only for entertainment, but also a highly esteemed art by all classes.

Myanmar Marionettes enjoyed the rare and powerful privilege of being speakers of both king and man. Marionettes were a means of making people aware of current events, a medium for educating the audience in literature, history and religion, a display of life style and customs. At the same time, they functioned as mouthpieces for the people in the days of royalty, tiny hands in state and social affairs. These small dolls- Yoke Thei enjoyed greater freedom of speech, dress and movement than live performers. They therefore, played a significant role in the development of dance and dramatic arts.

The ancient people admonished their children by telling the stories in the puppet show. The main purpose of letting the children see the puppet show of those days was for their civilization and intellectuality. It is said that there were some very selfish people who changed and mended their wrong ways and did the social welfare after learning the lessons from the puppet show. So, the puppeteers and the dramatic artists of those days were enlisted in the educational service. It means the puppeteers were the functionaries, who enable the public civilization.

Marionettes, not only educated the audience, but also gave the warning with dialogues or jokes to make the remedy of unsuitable matters. So, the puppeteers had to always keep trying to know every matter in the state or the area of the puppet show and they put it in their dialogue and jokes. When the public dare not apply some matters to the king directly, they tried to send it to the king's ears through the Grand



Imperial Stage of the king, using their wisdom. In this way, marionettes were the public forum and they could function for the good of public. The Myanmar Marionette show is a night-long affair. It is divided into two sessions. The first is largely devoted to attracting the audience to the show.

Second part of the puppet show always began with four ministers within the palace. That part was known as the foundation of the kingdom. In days of few newspapers, they passed on news of current affairs, discussions on the finer points of religion and secular texts and on the affairs of government, with their wide knowledge. That part was considered to have freedom to discuss as the public forum.

Puppeteers who were late for a performance were punished by the Lord Mayor. Once, a minther vocalist, U Thar Pyaw was late for a Royal performance. U Thar Pyaw was the most famous mintha vocalist during the king Mindon and soon became the King's favourite. The monarch, who happened to hear him was so impressed that he commanded him to join the ranks of the court puppeteers. He also appointed him Thabin Wun, thus replacing U Wun, the previous incumbent under the deposed Pagan Min.

U Thar Pyaw was punished by the Lord Mayor for his being late. The Mayor had him fettered with leg irons and thrown in jail. When King Mindon arrived at the theatre, he was confronted by the shackled figure of the little Mintha, hopping back and forth across the stage with a song wailing piteously.

'No gold anklets did Mama adore me, No gold anklets did Papa adore me, Here, I stumble, iron anklets did the Mayor adore me!' And there was another case then. Every appointment of the nine district ministers never lasted long and were dismissed within a year. So that the new nine district minister asked the Thabin Wun for help. U Thaw created a plot of that case in a scene of the next royal performance. He let the district minister who was travelling on horseback, ride backward. When the Hluttaw Minister saw it and asked the reason of sitting backward, U Thaw explained that it was because, to be easy to dismount on the arrival of his dismissal. When the king heard that joke, made out the order not to dismiss the nine district ministers without his order.

Moreover, the warriors of that time had to serve their service at any time with mental and physical hard work. So, Thabin Wun U Thaw had to contrive to send it into the King's ears. So, in a puppet play, U Thaw plotted a joke and let the jester boil water. Another jester suggested that-'Hey, why don't you put the tea pot on the warrior's back to boil it fast, instead of that piece of wood?'

By that joke, after the show, the king made out the order not to ill-treat and torture the warriors.

And there was another thing also. When a warrior died, his wife was ordered to be with the march on behalf of her husband so, U Thaw plotted a question to minister, after the four minister's discussion in the puppet show.

1st Minister

'Could you tell me the meaning of the word 'Mi Ni Tat Par? (Tat = Army / Par = be with)

2nd Minister

'Mi Ni Tat Par' means ' Comparison in Grammer"

1st Minister

'No! When a warrior died, his wife was ordered to be with the March on behalf of her husband. So, this is just asking you whether you know that about Mi Ni" The king ordered to let Mi Ni go back home after hearing that joke in the puppet show.

In this way, the rare and powerful privilege of being speakers of king and man, freedom allowed the puppets to speak to the king or court what others dared not say. And, a great many wrongs were righted and many lives saved through the speech of the puppets.

So, this is how the Puppetry took the responsibilities in the olden days.

## **7) Myanmar Zat and Myanmar Marionettes**

Myanmar marionette plays certainly preceded the Myanmar Zat. Not only preceded the Myanmar Zat, but also superseded them in public esteem. The reason why marionettes found favour with the Myanmar public of those days may be the same reason why the ordinary

Myanmar Zat was so late in coming; only in the late 18th century during the Kongbaung period.

If we look at it more closely, the Myanmar people are the modest people. A man and a woman, unless husband and wife are not supposed to be seen even walking along the street in company, be they old or young. Familiarity between sexes is so frowned upon by society that even the simulation by actors on the stage of courtship is not easy to swallow.

When the Myanmar Zat made its appearance and courtship was enacted on the stage, many eyes could not bear to look at it. There lies the reason why the marionette show developed to such a high level and found such popularity in Myanmar, quite beyond the reach of similar shows in other countries, even Java with its Shadow Plays. Wooden figures doing duty for flesh and blood, morality is satisfied. Even Myanmar people's modesty cannot take exception to little figures of wood play-acting on the stage.

## **8) The Role of the Puppet Vocalists**

It was on the puppet stage that Myanmar drama, dancing music and singing reached their high watermark. The reason why Myanmar singing and dancing reached high watermark in traditional puppetry was the division of functions. While the puppeteer concentrated on the visual of dancing and acting, the audio part was in charge of another who could put his or her soul into singing and speaking, but a good carrying voice was essential. So that this is unique among the fine arts of the world.

The majority of puppeteers such as Mintha and Minthami were the persons who had very good voice. The quality of Mintha and Minthami had to be adept in the three areas such as 'Ah-Sou (singing). Ah-Pyaw (dialogue), Ah-ngou (crying) or weeping". In Ah-ngou, his voice could not only sing in mellifluous sound but also had a powerful voice. Some could masterfully sing the songs because of his ability of astute. They showed ability in Ah-pyaw with intonation upon their literary knowledge. In Ah-ngou, they could attract with dialogue and singing to cry the audience during the moment of distress. Thus the master puppeteer appeared with the excellent ability in dialogue, performance, singing, missing and supporting role in the Myanmar

plays. So, a vocalist was senior to a manipulator because, no matter how cleverly the puppeteer worked his puppet, it was the voice that held the audience's attention.

### **9) The Achievement of the Manipulators**

The measure of the manipulators' achievement is the fact that the marionette sets the standard of the Myanmar dance. It is a well-known fact that live actors and dancers have had to model their gestures and dance movements on marionettes worked by famous manipulators. The manipulators were so skillful that, the marionettes were not considered to be stringed wooden dolls; rather they were seen to be life-like human substitutes. A talented puppeteer could make human dancers feel great envy. As a result, human dancers created a form of dance which imitated the movement of puppets. So, the Ah-yoke-kyoue ka (dance of the stringed ones) was even executed by dancers at court and performances for the common people.

### **10) The Number of Puppets of a Puppet Troupe**

The number of puppets of a puppet troupe was 28, on the stage. The number was decided by the Thabin Wun, as a symbolic of the 28 attributes, which made up the human body, as mentioned in the "Abhidama-Pitaka", a work on psychological and metaphysical aspects of Buddhism. (OR) Elements that inhabit 31 towers of existence. {And there are 8 more optional puppets that may be added }

### **11) Creation of the World (Sin Taing Gyin )**

Myanmar believed that the world was destroyed 64 times by the 3 elements of mii (fire), lay (wind), and yai (water). The burning of the earth began with the appearance of 7 suns and is said to have occurred 56 times. Strong winds then wrought destruction once. Torrential rains, in turn, devastated the earth 7 times, during which time waves and water spouts assumed such gigantic proportions that the highest level of the spirit world of the Brahma was inundated.

Life is said to have appeared after each annihilation, only to be destroyed. These cataclysmic events were announced from backstage by the clashing of the cymbals 7 times. The gong was then struck once, followed by the rapid rhythm on the drums, the sound symbolizing the

impact of the huge raindrops on the swirling waters. This sequence was repeated three times by each instrument to represent the destructiveness of the elements.

After the music of destruction subsides, the music of creation follows suit, ushering in a nat votaress which enters from the middle entrance. Her appearance indicates that a new world had been created. Only experienced veteran puppeteer can manipulate the nat votaress because his puppet had to perform all dance steps and postures and sing all appropriate songs of the 37 nat spirits of Myanmar Pantheon. It is said that in olden days the nat votaress puppet had as many as 60 strings attached, by which it could make almost all human movements.

The nat votaress also pays respects to the stage, which is called “Sin Taing Gyinn” in Myanmar. She pays respect to the king of the celestial abode, guardian spirit, local authorities and the audience. The spirit medium was replaced by the Apyoudaw on the second and third night.

## **12) The Beliefs of Puppeteers (Giving Life to the Wooden Puppet Figures- Lamaing Tin)**

The beliefs of puppeteers were by and large shared by live performers. The theatrical arts have their own “Protector Nat”, or “Lamaing”. A Lamaing nat is the spirit concerned with a specific place or act. There is, for example, a mountain Lamaing, a forest Lamaing, a water Lamaing, a forest Lamaing and so on.

There is also a theatre Lamaing, and the patron Nat of timber is said to take a special interest in the welfare of puppets, since they are made of wood. When the spiritual rapport, required among puppet singer, puppeteer, and musician is achieved, it is known as the “Lamaing stick”. A special rite is necessary “to give life” to the wooden puppet figures. It is called “Lamaing Tin”

Lamaing is a guardian nat-spirit to be propitiated for success, in cultivation, hunting and performing arts. “Tin” means to offer something to propitiate. It is a sort of consecration bananas, coconut, pickled tea, glutinous rice, fried fish, rice cake and spring of thabyai (Eugenia) are offered to propitiate the Lamaing who will thus put life into the puppet figures.

Both the manipulators of the puppets and puppet figures pay homage (shikhou) many times to the Lamaing. Nat for his favour and help in all performances, while the music of the Lamaing is played. Then, the consecrated puppet figures are now believed to be “animated” as such they are regarded as alive and the puppeteers treat them as they were thier children. The puppeteers have now parental duty to look after the welfare of their children puppets. The puppets are now ready for performance.



▲ Myanmar Marionette



▲ Myanmar Marionette (Grand Drama) Contest

## **E. Myanmar Harp (SAUN:)**

### **1) Back ground history of Myanmar Harp**

The harp is one of the earliest musical instruments of the world. World musicologists believe that the Harp was a musical instrument used by ancient man who hunted with bows and arrows. Harps now being used by people of the contemporary world fall into two types the bow shaped type and the trangle shape type. Of the two the bow shaped harps are said to be the earlier type.

In Myanmar, ancient chronicles say that harps were being played as early as in the Pyu Period. In February of 802 A.D. Sri Khettra despatched a Pyu music and dance ensemble to Chan-ann the city of the Tang Dynasty of China. Tang Dynasty chronicles say that the Pyu musicians had with them two harps with pheasant's head shapes, two harps with corcodile's head shapes, one flat harp in the shape of a dragon's head, one flat harp in the shape of rain clouds, two flat harps of big gourds, one flat gourd-harp with a single string and one small flat gourd-harp.

Among rock relief sculptures found on the walls of the Ananda pagoda built by king Kyansittha in A.D 1084-1113 is a harp which indicates that the harp was in general use in those days.

Myanmar musicians of the old days acknowledged that the harp music the more prominent and more prestigious than drum music, xylophone music and the migyang saung is called chrocodile zither music.

At the beginning of Konbaung period ( 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D), some harpists had the name of their harps engraved on the back of the resonator: there were such names as, Karaweik Than ( the voice of Karaweik bird ), Mya Chu Than ( the voice of an emerald jingle ) and Ziwazo Than ( the voice of swift bird ) etc.

The king of Toungoo Nat Shin Naung who ascended the throne in the year 971 M.E (Myanmar Era), A.D 1609. King Bagyidaw who ascended the throne in the year 1181 M.E, A.D 1819. King Tharrawaddy, also known as Shwebo Min who ascended the throne in the year 1199 M.E, A.D 1837. Western palace Queen Ma Mya Lay and Myawady Wungyi



(Minister of Myawady city) U Sa played harps. This means that from kings right down the royalty and court officials played harps in Innwa period (14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D) and Konbaung period ( 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> Century A.D).

Some historical researchers say that Myanmar harp began with 7 strings and is used 13 strings until the down of Konbaung period. And then the harpist U Nyein added one more string in the late of Konbaung period and the harpist U Ba Than added two more strings in the year of 1960s. So Myanmar harp has played with 16 strings from that time to now.

Myanmar harp strings are strung and fastened to the arm of the harp by means of fastening cords or by means of pegs pushed through the arm it is called Let yone. In the old days, fastening cords were tied to the arm in a special kind of knot to prevent the cords slowly slipping down. The present way of making such a knot is of a reef-knot method.

The strings of the harp are raw silk twisted to different thicknesses. They are tuned not with pegs but by adjusting the tautness of the strings through loosening or tightening the tassels round the neck.

The part where the neck joins the sound box is shaped like a leaf of the saga: (champac) while the stern is shaped like bowl. The tip of the neck is shaped like the leaf of the banyan tree. The neck is made of sha: (acaciacatechu) wood. The sound box is covered with a membrane of deer skin.

Holes are perforated along the ridge to hold the ends of the strings. The intervals between the holes need to be of correct proportion, otherwise, the harp tends to be out of tune and also lacks proper form. Hence, the ridge is a critical component of the harp.

Today Myanmar harp is being used not merely as musical instruments they are also being used as artifacts to decorate the top room of dwellings. This is being done by way of honouring a musical instrument that has played an important role in development of Myanmar Culture. More sophisticated musical gaegets may emerge time passes, but the harp will ever remain as a heritage of Myanmar musical traditions.

## 2) Myanmar Harp

The body of Myanmar harp resembles the shape of a boat and its arm or curvature is similar to a bow. Myanmar harp, unlike those from other foreign lands is a stringed musical instrument significant in the Myanmar way. The structure of Myanmar harp conveys two portions, the arm portion and the body section.

A harp may have various forms of arm, essential to the instrument. The arm may take the shape or curvature of Thazin flower (*Bulbophyllum auriculatum*), or of sitting posture of a monkey or oval shape mirror of that of scepter or may have similarity to the form of a fish hook.

- Thazin (*Bulbophyllum auriculatum*) flower arm means the structure of the arm is constructed somewhat as the curvature of bending at its tip.
- Monkey sitting arm means to say the bending posture of a monkey sitting when one sees from the side.
- Round mirror arm refers to the bending shape seen in the middle portion of such a mirror.

Out of these three kinds of arm, monkey sitting posture arm was widely used in the past. This was because that in using such type of harp it is learnt that the development of tightening and loosening of strings is less due to the loop of string tethered to the neck of harp or to the arm is fast and tight. Nowadays, as tabs are fitted for tuning the instrument, beautiful Thazin curve arms are found to be using popularly.

The arm of harp has to be made with Shar-wood this means catechu wood. Catechu is hard and fast type of wood. As it cannot be carved into bends or curves, one has to look for a half trunk, half root cut tree for making a Myanmar harp. The root is meant to use in internal section of the body and the trunk is made into an arm with its end carved out the shape of banyan leaf called (Nyaung Ywet) circumference of the arm measures 1.25 inches while it usually must have 39-inches in length when the body of harp holds the length of 28 inches.

Nyaung Ywet is carving made at the end of the arm in the shape of a banyan leaf.

### **3) Body of Harp**

The body of harp resembles the shape of a boat. According to old saying, the badauk wood collected from gumkino tree (pterocarpus macrocarpus) grown on highland is more preferable in making Harp. On preparing for construction, a piece of gum-kino wood having 6.5 inches circumference, 30 inches length has to be taken out and after marking it with lead pencil the shape of a harp, it has to mould out by using knives, saws and gouges at various sizes. In shaping the upper part of the body, carving is done by the use of small size and larger size of gouge, leaving space for the rims of instrument.

In carving the body, the bow or front portion takes the shape of leaf while the stern or tail portion has to carve as the bottom circular shape of a bowl. Afterwards, the rims of instrument are smoothed out while the body of harp is kept thick at 3-places and at other 3-places it is much thinner. This notable factor was prescribed to follow in making a harp so as to enjoy good tuning in playing the instrument. And besides this makes the body of harp lie still and steady when it rests on the laps, keeping in front of the breast of player.

3-thick places (or sections) means to refer to the front portion (or bow section), back portion (or stern section) and the bottom part where thickness instrument must have approximately (0.25 inch). 3 thin places or sections mean to refer to the left-hand side, right hand side and side walls of the body of harp and shall have thickness of about (0.18 inch). The leather, covering the body must also be thin suitably. And besides, string bar must also be thin. In accordance to the finishing touch made in construction of a harp, flat surface of front portion or its bow measures 6.25 inches while the flat surface of the tail portion (on its stern) must have a width of approximately 5.25 inches.

### **4) Sting Bar (Khin tan or Mhin yoe)**

String bar is made of gum-kino wood. String bar is a flat piece of the mentioned wood containing holes to fasten strings of harp. The length of this bar has 28 inches commonly used harp. Its height must

be 0.75 inch. The string bar must be placed in the body of harp before it is covered with the leather. The extreme (end) of this bar lying at the stern of harp must bore a hole and also the stern of harp must be banded to tie up the string bar with a screw. Sometime it may be tied up with strings. Thickness of string bar must be approximate (or 0.31 in). The middle portion of string bar having a length 14.5 inches lies above the leather coverage, the stern portion 4.5 inches, and the bow portion 9 in must be under the leather coverage of the harp. The middle portion of the bar (lying over the leather coverage) must bore 16 holes to fix strings through them.

### **5) Skin (Thayae)**

In ancient period, deer skin was used for covering the body of harp. The old saying remarks that the skin from the belly of a doe which already gave birth to a mirideer is the best for the use. But the deerskin being getting scarce as time passes, goat skin replaces the former.

### **6) Decorate Loop (Babyin:)**

Decorate Loop is made either of gum-kino wood or at teak. In tuning the harp, the tuner places it in between his calf and lap when bending his knee while he is sitting cross-legged. The tuner uses the loop in such a way when he ties to tune up the strings forcibly.

### **7) Lacquer (Thayoe)**

For decoration of harp two Kinds of lacquer and used. Lacquer is produced from lacquer tree one lacquer is brown while the other is black. When producing lacquer the required amount of black juice is heated over the intense fire till it becomes thick and starchy. The thick lacquer must be mixed with charcoal till it becomes neither soft nor stiff. Then it must be placed on an even surface and a wooden roller has to be rolled upon it till it becomes a starchy stage. It reaches to glass mosaic stage and it has to be placed on flooring with ash to get good and hardened. The required glass mosaic (lacquer) must be prepared all at once, at the same time.

## 8) Assembling

When all materials and parts are ready in assembling a harp, the arm has to fit at the top of the body, for combination of accessories, the bow (front portion) the end of arm and decoration loop, two holes must be bored to tie up with screws. When covering the body with leather fixed with string bar, the leather, cover should have an extra length of 2-inches. Rivets (0.5 in: size) must be pressed in two rows at the lower place standing one inch from the rim of the body. It must be dried under the sun, letting it to receive moderate heat. When it is dried rivets controlling for the timbering must be taken out and extra leather coverage must be cut out. Then mixture of brown lacquer and burnt paddy husk must be applied to the whole body of harp (except surface of leather). Then it must be kept dry. After that a brown lacquer must be applied about one inch wide over the rim of harp. In this way glass mosaic fancy flowers are laid out. Then it is kept for about two nights in a den about 4 feet deep and 6 feet wide for drying it up. When glass mosaic gets dry brown lacquer has to be applied twice and the black has to apply one coat. Let it dry and it gets the desired result, it shall be decorated with gold leaves. Under this stage it shall be kept one night and the next step shall be application of red mercuric sulphide over the leather.

After all these have been done, finishing up glass mosaic embedded gilding, on the right side of the stern, at the middle portion, between front section of the arm and string bar (left and right) four holes have to be made for releasing music through them, size of holed shall be narrow at stern and those at the middle and front portion (bow) shall be wider. These holes bear various names. The two holes at the front portion are called "Angel Holes" while the middle one is named as the "King Hole" and the one at stern is known as "Nostril".

After all these preparations the prescribed number of silk (or) nylon strings from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> string, are tied to the arm tightened by the loop at string called "Bwekyo" and the strings are fitted to the holes in String bar. Thus all Strings are well fitted at the arm, placing them in respective holes in string bar. Then, after tuning the strings till the player gets the desired perfect tune he or she now possesses a glass mosaic building harp ready to play.

## **9) The playing techniques of Myanmar Harp**

When playing, the harp player sits cross-legged on the floor and rests the front of the body of the harp in his or her lap, with the arch on the harp player's left and the rear of the harp's body angled slightly upwards so that the strings are almost horizontal. The fingers of the left hand are braced against the outside of the arch and moved agilely up and down. A stopped tone is produced when the left thumb nail is pressed against the string from the inside to increase its tension and thus raise its pitch. The thumb and forefinger of the right hand, either separately or together, pluck the strings at their center while the right elbow rests on the top of the rear of the harp body outside of the strings. The left thumb may be used to pluck the bass of the harp figuration while the right thumb and forefinger pluck the melodic pattern. A skilled harpist promote clarity by jumping the string just sounded while sounding the next string. This jumping may be done with the middle finger, the palm of the hand, or the forefinger just after the activation when a staccato note is desired.

## **F. Chinlone**

### **1) Meaning**

Chinlone, basket rounded or rounded basket, means "cane-ball" in Myanmar. The ball is woven from rattan, and makes a distinctive clicking sound when kicked that is part of the aesthetic of the game.

### **2) History**

Chinlone is over 1,500 years old and was once played for Myanmar royalty. Over the centuries, players have developed more than 200 different ways of kicking the ball. Many of the moves are similar to those of Myanmar dance and martial art. Some of the most difficult strokes are done behind the back without seeing the ball as it is kicked. Form is all important in chinlone, there is a correct way to position the hands, arms, torso, and head during the moves. A move is considered to have been done well only if the form is good.

Myanmar is a predominately Buddhist country, and chinlone games are a featured part of the many Buddhist festivals that take place during the year. The largest of these festivals goes on for more than a

month with up to a thousand teams. An announcer calls out the names of the moves and entertains the audience with clever wordplay. Live music from a traditional orchestra inspires the players and shapes the style and rhythm of their play. The players play in time to the music and the musicians accent the kicks.

Chinlone is the traditional sport of Myanmar. Chinlone is a combination of sport and dance, a team sport with no opposing team. In essence chinlone is non-competitive, yet it's as demanding as the most competitive ball games. The focus is not on winning or losing, but how beautifully one plays the game.

Both men and women play chinlone, often on the same team. Adults and children can play on the same team, and it's not unusual to see an elder in their 80's playing.

In addition to the team style of chinlone, which is called "wein kat" or circle kick, there is also a solo performance style called "tapandaing". This solo style is only performed by women.

To play chinlone well, the whole team must be absolutely in the moment – their minds cannot wander or the ball will drop. All serious players experience an intensely focused state of mind, similar to that achieved in Zen meditation, which they refer to as jhana.

Chinlone is one of a family of football games played throughout the world. It is related to similar games in Southeast Asia known as takraw in Thailand, sepak raga in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, sipa in the Philippines, kator in Laos and da cau in Vietnam. A competitive variation of the game played over a net, called sepak takraw was developed in Malaysia in the 1940's. The origins of chinlone may be related to the ancient Chinese game of cuju or tsu chu, which is acknowledged by FIFA as being the oldest form of soccer. A similar game is also played in Japan where it is known as kemari. Chinlone is also related to the family of sports played by kicking a shuttlecock; know as jianzi in China and Taiwan, and jegichagi in Korea. And there is some evidence to suggest that a variation of these games traveled across the Bering Straits and influenced Native Americans, who also played a variety of games keeping a ball up with the feet. These games are thought to be the origin of footbag, also known as hacky sack.

However, nowhere in the world has the level of extraordinary foot skills and dexterity been combined with artistic expression and spirituality as in the Myanmar game of chinlone.

### **3) About the Game**

A team of six players pass the ball back and forth with their feet and knees as they walk around a circle. One player goes into the center to solo, creating a dance of various moves strung together. The soloist is supported by the other players who try to pass the ball back with one kick. When the ball drops to the ground it's dead, and the play starts again.

Chinlone is acrobatic freestyle kicking with a 12cm woven ball of rattan (cane). The goal is to keep the ball in the air without using hands, playing individually or in a group of up to 6 players. It serves as a popular form of recreation for men, women, boys and girls of all ages (quite literally!) in Southeast Asia. The ancient and traditional pastime became an official sport in 1908 with the adoption of rules for competition, and today players from around the world gather annually to the Mandalay Waso Chinlon Festival, now celebrating over 75 years. Players use six points of contact with the ball: the top of the toes, the inner and outer sides of the foot, the sole, the heel, and the knee. The game is played barefoot or in chinlone shoes that allow the players to feel the ball and the ground as directly as possible. The typical playing circle is 6.7 meters (22 feet) in diameter. The ideal playing surface is flat dry, hard packed dirt.

### **4) Team Style ("wein khat" or circle kick)**

A team of six players pass the ball back and forth with their feet and knees as they walk around a circle. One player goes into the center to solo, creating a dance of various moves strung together. The soloist is supported by the other players who try to pass the ball back with one kick. When the ball drops to the ground it's dead, and the play starts again. To play chinlone well, the whole team must be absolutely in the moment – their minds cannot wander or the ball will drop. All serious players experience an intensely focused state of mind. Both men and women play chinlone, often on the same team. Adults and children can play on the same team, and it's not unusual to see elders in their 80's playing.



### **Solo Style ("tapindaing")**

This solo style is only performed by women.

### **5) Chinlone Music**

There is a traditional orchestra (Sein Wein) that provides musical accompaniment to the games. This special chinlone music derived from ancient Burmese battle music, inspires and energizes the players.

As the players respond to the music, the musicians accent the kicks musically with drums and cymbals.

There is also an announcer who calls out the names of the moves done by the players and entertains the audience with clever wordplay and jokes.

### **6) Audience**

The audience cheers and encourages the players, and there is never any booing because there are not two sides. They love to see great saves and will even applaud if a player loses the ball after making an extraordinary effort.

Another way they show their appreciation is by sending small tips of money to be pinned on the back of the player's shirts – during the game. The announcer says the name of the tipper and which player the tip is for. It's considered a great honor to receive tips in the circle.

There is nothing but pure love and respect in the audience.

### **7) Benefits of Chinlone**

#### **Fitness**

It develops cardiovascular health and stamina. It increases the flexibility of your core muscles, legs, hips and back. It also improves speed, agility and coordination. There is also a huge improvement in the sense of balance as the game is played while in the air.

**Ambidextrous**

Though most players are primarily right or left footed, most try to be ambidextrous with their feet. Being able to use both feet will give you more options to play with and more ways to be creative.

**Focus**

The importance of being able to focus intensely on one point will be familiar to sports people and martial artists. You need to be absolutely in the moment. If your attention drifts away from the ball even for an instant, chances are you will lose it.

**Trance**

Players experience something like trance or a kind of altered state at times when they play, referred to as 'jhana' (a Pali word referring to a state of mind that comes about from intensely focusing the mind on one point, usually during sitting meditation). The word 'Zen' comes from 'Jhana'.

**Teamwork**

Chinlone offers a pure experience of team play, without competition. Each player on a chinlone team is equally necessary, irrespective of experience, gender, ages etc.

**Endless Creativity**

Every team or player tries to impress the audience and give them the most beautiful play they can with endless improvisation, creativity and many styles of play. Creativity is at its best when it is played alone as the ball has to be handled with different sets of moves.

**8) Myanmar's own "keepy-uppy"**

Rather than winning or losing, the essence of *chinlone* is style. The object is not merely to keep the ball in the air for a long time, but the elegance and difficulty of the moves – some of the trickiest are kicks behind the back where the player is unable to see the ball. Form is everything. Just like in classical dance, there exist desirable positions for the torso, angles for the limbs and gestures for the hands.

Chinlone festivals are held across the country, the largest of them lasting weeks and attracting hundreds of different teams. The matches are held on circular, beaten-earth rings and accompanied by

live commentary from an announcer who calls out the names of the players each time they strike the ball, and entertaining the crowd with witty word play as he does so. Live Myanmar music provides an inspirational soundtrack: the best teams are able to kick and move in time, gaining extra admiration for keeping in rhythm with the orchestra.

Both men and women play *chinlone*, as do children, and there's no age limit – it's not unusual to see three or four generations of players in the same team. A solo performance version of the sport also exists called *tapandaing*. Travelling on luxury steamboats on the Ayeyarwaddy River you might catch a demonstration by one of the country's top performers, such as Su Su Hlaing, Myanmar's number-one woman Chinlone player, Ko Maung Maung, undisputed master of the notoriously difficult "mandala move".

## 9) Preservation of Chinlon Game

In Myanmar, we are preserving the playing Chinlon by opening the Chinlone Camp and holding the Chinlone Festivals as follows;

### **Mystic Ball Chinlone Camp**

- Learn from and play together with the best chinlone players in the world
- Experience the essence of team-play and team spirit in a fun and loving context.
- See the best chinlone teams and playing at the amazing Waso Chinlone Festival, which will be going on at the same time as the chinlone camp.

**Place:** Mandalay, Myanmar

**Date:** June 11 – July 8, 2009 (The camp runs for 4 weeks.)

**Fee:** USD700/week

## **Instructors**

### **1) Ko Maung Maung**

Widely recognized as a great player and one of the best chinlone teachers in the country. He has trained a number of the top players, including his son Aung Soe Moe. He regularly travels around the country teaching, and has also traveled to Japan to teach chinlone. Ko Maung Maung is one of the featured players in Mystic Ball and also Greg's main teacher.

### **2) Su Su Hlaing**

The greatest tapandaing (solo performance style) performer in the country and one of the top women circle players. Su Su has taught many young girls the difficult art of tapandaing. She has performed in Singapore and Thailand, and is featured in Mystic Ball.

These are two of over a dozen of the best chinlone players in the world – who will be teaching and playing together with the students.

## **Translators**

There are translators to help with your training and for when you go to the festival.

## **Special Events**

- Daily shuttles from the hotel to the Chinlone Festival
- Lunch with Chinlone Elders
- Dinner with players
- Trip to U Bein's Bridge and surrounding temples
- Circle play with chinlone music
- Lunch at Su Su's house with her family
- Drive through Amarapura
- Honoring the Elders Ceremony at Mahamuni – last day of festival
- Trips to places in the film
- Boat party trip

- Tapindaing Performance by Su Su
- Special Performance – Dream Lovers Team

### **Spirit of the Game**

The spirit of this game is playful and fun. You start playing and before long, everyone is laughing as they play. Chinlone is a funny game – it's almost impossible to keep the ball up for long with the feet, especially when you are trying to do extraordinary moves with the ball. But the moments when everything comes together are intense and magical.

### **Anyone can play**

You don't have to have special coordination or agility to learn how to play chinlone, anyone can learn to play. It's not a sport that demands any special physique, any special equipment, or any special environment. Moderately fit is enough, if you can dance – you can play chinlone. At Mystic Ball Chinlone Camp, the moves are broken down into a series of steps. You work at your own speed and learn new moves when you feel ready.

### **Different skill levels can play together**

One of the unique things about chinlone is that a beginner can play quite comfortably with the most advanced player and everyone can still enjoy the game. The difference in skill makes no difference at all in the play since the object of the game is to keep the ball in the air, which can easily be done by a beginner who has learned the basic kicks. The beginner may use the most elementary kicks while the advanced player may use the most complicated ones he knows.

### **Playing alone**

Chinlone can also be played alone. I can't think of another ball game that you can play alone and actually be doing the sport. The pull of gravity provides a constant challenge and that means you can have an interesting and exciting play all by yourself. Even when I'm playing alone, I often get a move or a string of moves or a save that is completely different or beyond anything I've gotten

before. I still get the same thrill today from learning a new move or making an amazing save as I did twenty years ago. I continue to learn new moves and to refine ones I already know.

Mystic Ball Chinlone Camp is organized to make your learning process effective and enjoyable. You'll improve faster and become a better player because right from the beginning you are practicing in the correct way.

The camp is divided into two parts - the morning sessions will focus on learning individual skills and the afternoon sessions will be devoted to learning how to play on a team.

### **Individual Coaching**

You'll receive individual coaching to help you learn how to play in the circle as soon as possible. Basic skills with the ball as well as more advanced ball skills will be taught in a step by step way. You'll learn moves that you can use when it's your turn to solo in the center of the circle.

There is an ideal form to aim for with any of the traditional moves. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics: good form is connected to good mechanics. If you want to become a good player, it's essential to start off learning the proper form and technique. I know from experience how easy it is to develop bad habits and how hard it is to change them. Without an understanding of proper technique, it's possible to strain your lower back or other parts of your body.

We'll show you how to practice on your own so that you can continue to improve your skills at home.

### **Team play & Coaching**

The really exciting and fun part of chinlone happens when you play on a team. This is when you get to do any fancy moves you know and try any of the new moves you've learned during the individual sessions.

You'll learn the 'etiquette of the circle', which allows players to

know when they should kick the ball and when it's their turn to solo. You'll gain an understanding of how to support the soloist and how to play in the center of the circle when it's your turn to solo.

You'll get the feeling of how the game is played in Myanmar. This is important because chinlone is not played the way hackey sack is played, nor the way soccer players juggle a soccer ball. Chinlone has its own rhythm, flow and form. You will naturally absorb a lot of this just from seeing the playing up close, especially at the festival.

### **See the best Teams & Players**

It's like the World Cup of chinlone – except of course that there is no competition! Teams come from all over the country to perform and socialize at this festival. More than a thousand games will be played and you can be sure of seeing the very best chinlone teams and playing. The chinlone festival takes place on the grounds of the Mahamuni Pagoda, the most famous temple in Mandalay. Admission to the festival is free. The playing starts at 9 am every day and goes on non-stop until midnight. The atmosphere at the festival is intense and happy.

### **Mang Styles of play**

You'll see players with many different styles - some are shockingly quick, some are smooth and elegant, others are incredibly acrobatic. The older players – over 60, have a different style than the younger players; men and women tend to have different styles as well. Some teams are able to play the ball so that it seems to move in slow motion, almost floating, while other teams pass the ball so fast you really have to pay attention to follow the action.

### **Excitement & Tension**

Every ball that stays up for a long time creates its own excitement and tension. Sometimes you can feel the whole audience holding its breath – as a player pulls off an extraordinary move or makes an almost impossible save to keep

the ball alive.

### **Holding the Waso Chinlone Festival**

The Waso Festival is a time for making offerings to the Buddha – usually flowers and incense. It falls on the month of June . The chinlone festival is a chance for the players to make their offering to the Buddha by playing chinlone. Every team pays a small fee to play in the festival and this money is then given as an offering to the pagoda. There is no greater honor for a chinlone player than playing in the Festival. 2013 will mark the 85<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of the Waso Chinlone Festival.

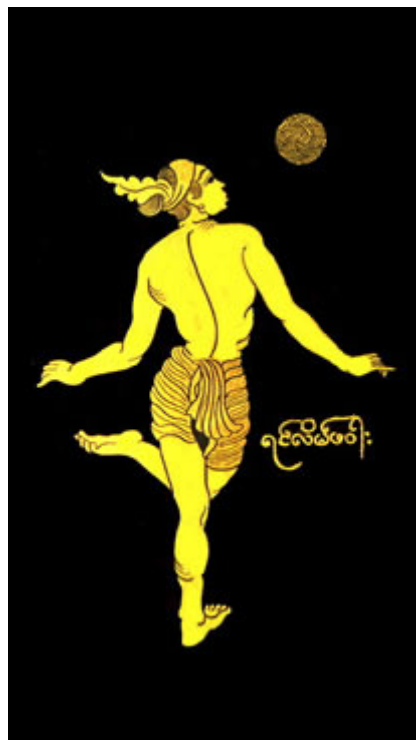




▲ Myanmar Chinlone



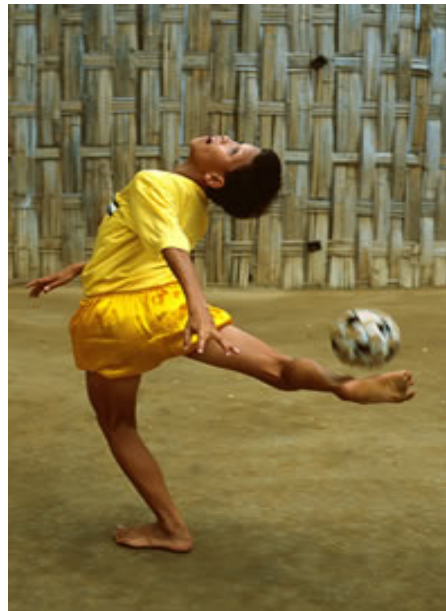
▲ Myanmar Chinlone



▲ Playing style of Myanmar Chinlone



▲ Female solo playing style of Myanmar Chinlone



Male solo playing style of Myanmar Chinlone ▲



▲ Playing Wein Khat

## **Traditional Festivals in Myanmar**

Myanmar is a country where traditional festivals are usually held in every month. These festivals are usually held in the big cities as well as in the small villages. The name of Myanmar months are Tagu, Kason, Nayon, Waso, Wagaung, Tawthalin, Thadingyut, Tazaungmon, Nadaw, Paytho, Tabodwe, Tabaung. Here monthly traditional festivals are mentioned below Thinkyan pwe, Nyaun-ye-thun-pwe, Sardaw pyan pwe, Waso Thingan Kut-hly pwe, Saryaetanmai pwe, Hle-pyaing pwe, Mi-htun-pwe, Kahtain pwe, Sarsodaw pwe, Myinkhin pwe, Htamanei pwe, Thaepon Sadi pwe.

### **(1) Thingyan pwe (Water festival)**

This festival falls in April (Myanmar month Tagu) and is usually celebrated for 5 or 6 days after Myanmar New Year started. Tagu is the first month of the Myanmar calendar. It falls in March and April on the Gregorian calendar. Myanmar new year festival is Thingyan Festival. It is held in the month of Tagu ever year. That has been the tradition since Tagaung Period and it become prominent in Bagan Period.

Water is a symbol of coolness, clearness and cleansing of dirt and grime. The festival of Thingyan that is made most merry and enjoyable with pouring or throwing water on one another is taken as one that cleanses one and all of all dirt and grime of the old year and cools and clears the minds of the people for the new year.

Merry-making at Thingyan festival is intermingled with noble and pure activities of doing meritorious religious deeds in accord with the teachings of Buddha Dhamma.

### **(2) Nyaun-ye-thun-pwe (Water pouring festival to banyan tree. where Buddha attained great enlightenment)**

This festival usually falls in May, Myanmar month Kason. Kason is the second Myanmar month and comes in April-May. It is a sacred month for Myanmar Buddhists.

The full-moon day of Kason was the day hermit Sumeda heard from Dipankara Buddha that he would one day be a Lord Buddha, the day embryo-Gautama Buddha was born, the day he saw Four Noble Truths; the day Maha Bodhi Tree grew for him and the day of his Pari-Nibbana.



So this day is commemorated by Myanmar Buddhists as Buddha Day. The main activity on this festival day is pouring water at the 'bo' (Bodhi Nyaung) tree.

From days of yore to this day, bo tree watering ceremonies are held at numerous pagodas in the country on this day. It is one of the traditional cultural festivals of Myanmar people.

### **(3) Sardaw pyan pwe (Examinations in religious scriptures festival)**

This festival falls in June, Myanmar month Nayon. Nayon is the third month on Myanmar calendar, in the hot season, and falls in May-June.

In the second Innwa Period, under the reign of King Thalun, in the year 1000 began the practice of holding examinations in religious scriptures in Nayon with aims at propagation of Pariyatti Sasana.

It was followed by the holding of novitiation and ordinations, ceremonies in the next month of Waso.

Nowadays, Pahtamabyan examinations, Dhammacariya Examinations, Tipitaka Dhara Selection Examinations, Abhidhamma and Vissudhi Magga Examinations were held every year with presentation of prize and certificates, for the flourishing of the Sasana.

Moreover, in this month of Nayon, what is called Maha Samaya Day was observed in commemoration of Lord Buddha's preaching of Maha Samaya Sutta to celestial beings from ten thousand solar systems.

### **(4) Waso Thingan Kut-hlu pwe (Waso yellow robe offering festival)**

This festival falls in July, Myanmar month Waso. Waso is the fourth Myanmar month. It is part summer and part monsoon. It falls in June and July.

The full-moon day of Waso is significant as the day the embryo-Buddha was conceived, the day He preached the first sermon of Dhamma Cakka, the day He performed the miracles. The day also marks the beginning of the Buddhist Lent of three months when members of the Sangha go into the rains retreat.

It is a time of ordination and novitiation into the religious order, with these events held since the days of ancient Myanmar monarchs for the flourishing of the Sasana.

There is also a practice of young men and women going on outings of gathering flowers to be offered at Buddha images.

A significant practice of Waso is the offering of monk's robes to members of the Sangha for use during the Lent and so these robes are called Waso robes. Likewise there are also big candles called Waso candles offered at this time of the year. Among lay people it is also a time to offer elders cakes, fruits and other offertories.

#### **(5) Saryaetanmai pwe (Lot-drawing offerings of meals and alms festival)**

This festival usually falls in August, Myanmar month Wagaung. It is the fifth Myanmar month. It is in July-August, the rainy season, when rivers are in spate.

In the time of Buddha, when the Lord was staying at Weluwun Monastery in Yazagyo, some disciples supplicated to him the matter of individual disciples having some difficulty to donate meals and alms for all the Sangha at the monastery at the same time, whereupon Buddha laid down a way of disciples drawing lots to determine which monk to offer meals and alms. Thus began the practice at this time of the year to hold lot-drawing offerings of meals and alms to the Sangha, although the exact time for such offerings is not definitely prescribed.

In ancient times, this month was also time for the festival of propitiation to the two nats of Taungbyone. This nat festival has been in vogue since Bagan times to the present day. This is also the time for holding of boat races in olden days.

#### **(6) Hle-pyaing pwe (Boat racing festival)**

This festival usually falls in September, Myanmar month Tawthalin. Tawthalin is the sixth month on Myanmar calendar. (August-September). It is a hot month, hot enough to kill small prawns.

The surfaces of water are like mats, free of waves. So it has been a tradition to hold regatta festival since the times of ancient Myanmar kings.

It was graced by the king himself aboard golden Pyigyimon Barge, adorned by figures of fifty kings on each side, as a symbol of a hundred kings owing allegiance to the monarch.

It was not just pageantry but an occasion for demonstrating the naval prowess of the Tatmadaw of ancient Myanmar kings.

The tradition was nearly dying out until the government revived it with traditional regatta festivals held on Kandawgyi Lake.

**(7) Mi-htun-pwe (Lighting festival , to celebrate the Buddha descent from tavatimsa by lighting candles and lanterns.)**

This festival usually falls in October, Myanmar month Thadingyut. Thadingyut is the seventh Myanmar month (in September-October) towards the end of the rainy season.

Lord Gautama Buddha preached The Abhidhamma to Madaurmi Nat (reincarnate of His Mother) in Tavatimsa Abode of celestial begins for three Lenten months and returned to the abode of men on the full-moon day of Thadingyut. The King of Celestials created gold, silver, ruby stairways for him. Buddha took the middle ruby one radiation six hues of aura. The nats came along by the right gold stairways and the brahmas by the left silver stairways.

On account of that, Myanmar Buddhists celebrate the full-moon day with multi-coloured illuminations. It is also called Tavatimsa Festival after the Tavatimsa Abode of the nats and the Myinmo Lights Festival after the Mount Myinmo there.

For the Sangha it is the time for what is known as Pawayana, which means inviting, entreating, urging. In practice since the times of Buddha, it is to beg on another for forgiveness of any action that might have displeased any other among Sangha. There is also the practice among lality of paying obeisance to parents and elders.

**(8) Kahtain pwe (Kahtina robe offering festival)**

This festival was usually celebrated in November, Myanmar month Tazaungmon. It is the eight Myanmar month (in October – November) time



for Kathina, Matho Thingan offering, Pantthagu offering, lotus robe offering, lighting and Shin Malai festivals.

Kathina monk's robes are offered at this particular time of the year. It is held mostly communally. Matho thingan meaning non-stale monk's robes are ones made overnight and offered before dawn. Pantthagu offering means leaving offertories at any public place for anyone's taking. Lotus robes mean those with golden lotus designs offered to Buddha or at pagodas. Tazaungmon is for another lighting festival, taken to be astrologically most opportune. Shin Malai festival originated in Shin Malai's preaching of Wesandara Jataka on the full-moon day. It is marked by making floats in the shape of barges, putting on it a thousand fruits, a thousand flowers, a thousand lumps of rice and a thousand lights to go round before offering at pagodas. It is also called the barge festival or thousand-ful festival. It has been on the wane. There is also a practice of eating salads of mezali leaves with belief that it is medicinal particularly at this time of the year.

#### **(9) Sarsodaw pwe (Celebration in honour of the literati festival)**

This festival was usually celebrated in December, Myanmar month Nadaw. It is the ninth Myanmar month at the onset of the cool season, with misty mornings in November-December.

In ancient days the seasonal festival was for propitiation to nats, till it waned. The 1300s saw the coming into vogue of a celebration in honour of the literati (Sarsodaw) at this time of the years. It might perhaps have some connection with the day dedicated to writer, poet and playwright U Ponnya after Konbaung Period. The first recorded celebration dedicated to the literati was found in 1944.

In the present day, it is time for presentation of National Literary Awards by the state.

#### **(10) Myinkhin Pwe (Equestrian festival)**

This festival usually falls in January, Myanmar month Pyatho. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> Myanmar month in the middle of the cool season (December – January).

In ancient times it was the month for the equestrian festival held for virtually the whole month, as it involved competitions in horsemanship, bowmanship,

lancing and sword fighting, shooting and martial arts. It was in effect an occasion to select heroes.

It was found to have begun in 674 ME under the reign of Pinya Thihathu but researchers in Bodaw Paya's reign held that it began in the reign of King Nyaungyan in Inn-ws Period.

### **(11) Htamanei pwe**

This festival usually falls in February, Myanmar month Tabodwe. Tabodwe is the 11<sup>th</sup> Myanmar month, very cool, in January and February. It is the time for seasonal festival of making Htamanei, a food preparation of glutinous rice, oil fried coconut flakes and other condiments. It is prepared in huge pans by young stalwarts in the community under the guidance of master chefs in communal activity. It was found to have started in the latter part of Nyaung-Yan (second Inn-wa Period). It is still in vogue at this time of the year today. Often there are competitions in making Htamanei within communities. Another less known festival in Tabodwe is called Mee-pone-pwe to mark the offering of fire for warmth in the extreme cold. It was known to have started in Bagan Period. It is on the wane now, except in some rural areas.

### **(12) Thaepone Sadi pwe (Festival of sand pagodas)**

This festival was celebrated in March, Myanmar month Tabaung . It is the 12<sup>th</sup> Myanmar month, falling in February March. In ancient days it was a time for what was known as festivals of sand pagodas, in which people built sand pagodas on the sandbanks and hold festivities on the occasion. Now the practice is on the wane, except in some cities and towns in upper part of the country, but the time is still held sacred for holding of Buddha Pujayanti ceremonies, that is, occasions for rededication of the pagodas.