

The Tradition of Ye GyanZin (ရေချမ်းစင်) in Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

Water is essential for all life. A Myanmar saying goes that humans can 'live seven days (without) rice, and one morning (without) water'. We continuously need water in our surrounding to support our lives. This is why Myanmar people take care to place many waterpots of cool drinking water (ye gyan zin) for the public. When ancient travellers in Myanmar went to one village or another, they were often thirsty and tired. So villagers would place water pots under the tree or in the public rest house along the route. The research questions this paper addresses are: (1) when did Ye Gyan Zin use in Myanmar? And (2) what is the impact of water on Myanmar culture? This problem will be solved by case study method. This paper will be focus how the water pot traditions are maintained in Myanmar.

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Keywords: the tradition, Ye Gyan Zin, case study method, maintain

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is the tradition of placing water pots (ye gyanzin ရေချမ်းစင်) for public use in Myanmar. Ye Gyan Zin is the drinking clay water pot stands on roadside under the shady trees. Myanmar donate the pure water with pot for the travelers along the route. If the travelers will be tired and thirsty on their ways, they can easily drink cool water under the tree or in the public rest house.

1.1 Aim

To analyze the tradition of placing water pots (ye gyan zin ရေချမ်းစင်) in Myanmar.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions this paper addresses are:

1. Whendid Ye Gyan Zin use in Myanmar?
2. Whatis the impact of water on Myanmar culture?

1.3 Hypothesis

The tradition of placing water pots (ye gyan zin ရေချမ်းစင်) is the impact of Myanmar traditional culture from Innwa period to present.

1.4 Background of Study and Research Design

In Myanmar saying that humans can 'live seven days (without) rice, and one morning (without) water'. Thus water is essential for our life. Many water pots can be found at the pagoda or the route of one place to another place of public rest house.

In that, Ye Gyan(ရေချမ်း) means cool and pure water. Sin(စင်) means a stand that is made by wood or bamboo or brickwork or steel.



Fig.(1) The donar described their name at the stand



Fig.(2) The tridition of water pot.

Some of the donar of the tradition of water pot's stand described with their name. There are one pot or two pot or three posts (3 represents Buddha, Dhamma and Monk) or nine pots (9 represents Buddha's divinity) or 24 pots (24 represents Buddha's doctrine). The donars of these water pots always care for cleaning pots and filling water by filter.



Fig.(3) The tradition of water pot at Innwa



Fig.(4) The donar fills the water into the water pot by filter

This research will be focused on case study method. The case study is an evidence-based, empirical approach that focuses on an intense investigation of a single system or a phenomenon in its real-life context.¹

The case study design is not controlled but rather is naturalistic within real contexts. While closely examining subjects/samples in the real-life situation, researchers can develop and refine the structural requirements necessary to establish credibility or internal validity in the case study design. Dimensions such as triangulation, use of logic models, and a case study database, are crucial for enhancing the quality of the case study.²

Thus, this paper will be focused on the case study of the qualitative research method.

1.5 Literature Review

Water is an essential for our life. The scientists' view of water can be found as follows.

Water is a transparent, tasteless, odorless, and nearly colorless chemical substance, which is the main constituent of Earth's streams, lakes, and oceans, and the fluids of most living organisms. It is vital for all known forms of life, even though it provides no calories or organic nutrients. Its chemical formula is H_2O , meaning that each of its molecules contains one oxygen and two hydrogen atoms connected by covalent bonds. Water is the name of the liquid state of H_2O at standard ambient temperature and pressure. Water covers 71% of the Earth's surface, mostly in seas and oceans. Small portions of water occur as groundwater (1.7%), in the glaciers and the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland (1.7%), and in the air as vapor, clouds (formed of ice and liquid water suspended in air), and precipitation (0.001%).³

So, water's chemical formula is H_2O and water covers 71% of the earth surface. Moreover, water consists in our body as follows.

According to H.H. Mitchell, Journal of Biological Chemistry 158, the brain and heart are composed of 73% water, and the lungs are about 83% water. The skin contains 64% water, muscles and kidneys are 79%, and even the bones are watery: Each day humans must consume a certain amount of water to survive. Of course, this varies according to age and gender, and also by where someone lives. Generally, an adult male needs about 3 liters per day while an adult female needs about 2.2 liters per day. All of the water a person needs does not have to come from drinking liquids, as some of this water is contained in the food we eat.

Water serves a number of essential functions to keep us all going:

- A vital nutrient to the life of every cell, acts first as a building material.
- It regulates our internal body temperature by sweating and respiration
- The carbohydrates and proteins that our bodies use as food are metabolized and transported by water in the bloodstream;
- It assists in flushing waste mainly through urination
- acts as a shock absorber for brain, spinal cord, and fetus
- forms saliva
- lubricates joints⁴

Thus human need to consume enough water in our daily life.

¹Dattilio, 2006, 195.

²<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249681169>

³<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water>

⁴<https://water.usgs.gov/edu/propertyyou.html>

Moreover, Union of Myanmar is Buddhist Country. So, most of Myanmar traditions and culture are based on Buddhism. The tradition of placing water pot comes from Buddhism. The benefits of water charity can be found in Myanmar Ministry of Religious Affairs' book of 'The teaching of Buddha'.

Charity means donation or giving away one's own properties to others. There are three kinds of charity: giving material offerings (**Amisa dana**), giving sanctuary and protection to animals (**Abhaya dana**) and giving doctrinal lectures (**Dhamma dana**). In dispensing the charity, volition (cetana) and the belief in kamma and its results (Saddha) play important roles. In growing paddy, the good rains in the beginning, in the middle and in the later part of the rainy season can produce a good yield of rice. So also in performing the charity, the accomplishment of three steps of volition can produce great benefits to the donors. These three steps of volition are:

1. Volition that arises before giving (**Pubbacetana**);
2. Volition that arises while giving (**Muncacetana**); and
3. Volition that arises after giving (**Aparacetana**).

It is very important to make the three-fold volition keen and pure. Whenever we perform any act of charity. I offer this pure and cool water to the compassionate Buddha who is endowed with the infinite accumulation of glory, merit (through the ten perfections) and wisdom. Owing to my deed of this merit, may I attain the Nibbana as soon as possible? If one does not drink water, he cannot live longer. He will become ugly, sad, weak and stupid. If one does not bathe, he will not be clean and fresh. Therefore, the donors of water can be endowed with longevity, beauty, wealthy, strength, wisdom, cleanness, fame and great retinue. They will be free from thirst.⁵

So, most of Myanmar perform charity of water. They believe that if they donate pure water, they can get ten benefits of donation of water. The above ten benefits in Myanmar as follows.

သက်ရှည်ဆင်းလှ ချမ်းသာရ
 ဗလဉာဏ်ပညာ။
 စင်္ကြာယ်သန့်ရှင်း ကျော်စောခြင်း
 ခပင်းခြေရံကာ။
 ရေမငတ်ငြား လျင်မြန်သွား
 ဆယ်ပါးရေကျိုးလာ။

If a person donates water, he will fulfilled longevity, beauty, wealthy, strength, wisdom, cleanness, fame, great retinue and free from thirst. This is Myanmar Buddhists belief of water charity.

Sayar Zaw Gyi's article of 'spring glory'⁶ described the tradition of water pot donation in Myanmar.

Therefore, Myanmar believe that if they do charity of water, they will get these ten benefits unless they pray. Although Myanmar people donate a pure water pot under the tree or publics rest house on the route, anyone do not analyze concerned with the tradition of water pot research. So this paper will be filled the little blank of the tradition of water pot charity.

2. Analysis of the placing of water pot in public place

The tradition of the placing of water pot can be found in public place. The donation of water can be found in Bagan period.

2.1 The placing of water pot in Bagan Period

Bagan period is about AD 1044- 1298. In Bagan period, the Myanmar script of water pot can be found in stone inscription.

No.	Ancient Myanmar Script	Modern Myanmar Script	Stone Inscription/Line
1	ရီ ချာ အိုဉ် လေ ဖြောစ	ရေချမ်းအိုး လေးဖြူ ဦး ဇာ်	ပေါ်တော်မူဘုရားကျောက်စာ (ကရ- □□)
	(They) sprinkle the (cool) water pot.	(They) sprinkle the (cool) water pot.	Paw Taw Mu Pagoda stone Inscription ⁷ (Line-19)

In Paw Taw Mu Pagoda stone inscription, we can find 'Cool water pot'. That point describe 'the water pot can be found in Bagan period'.

Besides, the donation of water can be found in Min Ananta Thu stone inscription.

⁵<http://www.nibbana.com>

⁶ Zaw Gyi, 2012, 13.

⁷ Tin & Luce. (1933). *Inscription of Burma (First Volume)*

No.	Ancient Myanmar Script	Modern Myanmar Script	Stone Inscription/Line
1	သွိုင် အရိယာတို့၌ ရိယံချသာ စိမ်သောငှာ ဥတ္တိဖွယ်သောရိယံ တွင်လေတူစအံ။	သခင်အရိယာတို့ ရေချမ်းသာစိမ်သောငှာ အုတ်တိဖွဲ့သော ရေတွင်းလေးတူး၏။	မင်းအနန္တသူ (လေးမျက်နှာဘုရား) ကျောက်စာ (ကရ-၀၀)
	(They) dig a well for noble monks blissful.	(They) dig a well for noble monks blissful.	Min Ananta Thu Pagoda stone Inscription (Line-22)
2	ဥတ္တိဖွယ်သော □ ထောင် ကာန်လေတူစအံ။	အုတ်တိဖွဲ့သော လေး ထောင် ကာန်လေးတူး၏။	မင်းအနန္တသူ (လေးမျက်နှာဘုရား) ကျောက်စာ (ကရ-၀၀)
	(They) dig a brickwork pond.	(They) dig a brickwork pond.	Min Ananta Thu stone Inscription (Line-22)
3	လိယံမျက်နှာလာလာ သော သူတို့၌ ရိယံအလို၌ ရစိမ် သောငှာ။ ဥတ်နှင့် မြယ်မြဲစွာဖွယ် သော ရိယံတွင်လေတူစအံ။	လေးမျက်နှာလာလာသော သူတို့ ရေချမ်းသာစိမ်သောငှာ။ အုတ်နှင့်မြဲမြဲစွာ ဖွဲ့သော ရေတွင်းလေးတူး၏။	မင်းအနန္တသူ (လေးမျက်နှာဘုရား) ကျောက်စာ (ကရ-၀၀-၀၀)
	(They) dig a brickwork well for the travelers from cardinal points.	(They) dig a brickwork well for the travelers from cardinal points.	Min Ananta Thu stone Inscription ⁸ (Line-27-28)

According to the stone inscription evident, 'ool water pot' (ရေချမ်းစင်) usage and the tradition of water donation can be found in Bagan period.

2.2 The placing of water pot in Innwa Period

Innwa period is AD 1364- 1554. The tradition of the placing of water pot can be found in Than WaRa pyo that was written by Shin Maha Rahhta Thara in Innwa period. Shin Maha Rahhta Thara was a famous monk author of Innwa period. Pyo is a Myanmar poesy type of long verses. In Than Wa Ra pyo, the episode of Than Wa Ra prince gets the throne, in Myanmar,

ဖို့ညိုမြေပင်၊ ခရီးတွင်မှ၊ စင်နှင့်ရေ ကြည့်၊ အိုးပြည့်တည်လျက်၊ ညွန့်ရှည်စိမ်းရှင်၊ ငှက်ပျောပင်လည်း၊ လမ်းခွင်နှစ်မြောင်း၊ သင့်အောင်စိုက်ထား

In this stanza, when the earldoms arrange to give the throne to the Than Wa Ra prince, they made the ground to be flatness for travelers and they set the full pure clay water pot, they planted the banana trees at the two road side.

The above Than Wa Ra pyo described the tradition of clay water pot in Innwa period. According to that point, the tradition of placing water pots (ye gyan zin ရေချမ်းစင်) can be found in Innwa period to present.

2.3 The placing of water pot in Naung Yan Period

Naung Yan period is AD 1598- 1751. The tradition of water charity can be found in Naungyan period. Naungyan period poet Taungdwin Shin Nyein Mei wrote 'When she miss Maung (her love)' (Ai Chin) poem. In Myanmar,

'မောင့်ကို လွမ်းတော့'

- ချစ်တဲ့သူငယ်လေ၊ သူငယ်ချင်းကောင်း ယောင်းမတို့လေ။
မိကိုလွမ်းလည်း၊ သောက်တော်ရေချမ်း၊ စားတော်ကွမ်းနှင့်
သွန်းတဲ့ညောင်ရေ၊ ပန်းသပြေနှင့် ပြေဖူးငဲ့ရှင်၊
ဘကိုလွမ်းလည်း၊ သောက်တော်ရေချမ်း၊ စားတော်ကွမ်းနှင့်
သွန်းတဲ့ညောင်ရေ၊ ပန်းသပြေနှင့် ပြေဖူးငဲ့ရှင်၊
မောင်ကလေးမောင့်ကိုလွမ်းတော့၊ သောက်တော်ရေချမ်း၊ စားတော်ကွမ်းနှင့်
သွန်းတဲ့ညောင်ရေ၊ ပန်းသပြေနှင့် ၊ မပြေပါလို့
သောက်တော် ရေအိုး၊ ကျွမ်းထိုးကောင်နှယ် အယိုးဖြူ
ငယ်နှမမှာလ၊ ကြုံရတယ်ရှင်။ ။
(တောင်တွင်းရှင်ငြိမ်းမယ်) အ

In this poem, the lady said to her best friend about her love-affair. When she miss her mother, she donated Buddha image to drink cool water, to chew paan and to vase with Eugenia (Tha Pyay flower). After that, she propitiated the missing of mother.

When she miss her father, she donated Buddha image to drink cool water, to chew paan and to vase with Eugenia (Tha Pyay flower). After that, she propitiated the missing of father.

When she miss her love(Maung), although she donated Buddha image to drink cool water, to chew paan and to vase with Eugenia (Tha Pyay flower), she did not propitiate the missing of her love. She felt as caddis-worm in the water pot.

According to this poem, we know the tradition of water charity to the Buddha image and the clay water pot

⁸Tin & Luce. (193). *Inscription of Burma (Second Volume)*
⁹ <http://m.facebook.com/notesofreaders/photos/a.779275945485169/1339212549491503/?type=3>

2.5 The placing of water pot in Colony and current Period

Colony period is AD 1885 – 1948. In 1905 (Myanmar year 1267), Wai Nay Ya Thukha water charity Team was built at Shwedagon Pagoda. It is situated at the north side of Shwedagon Pagoda. This team donated the tradition of clay water pot in the whole country.



Fig.(5)Wai Nay Ya Thukha water charity Team logo to the monks



Fig.(6)Wai Nay Ya Thukha Team donates the robes at the Sabbath days.

Now this team donates not only water pot but also water (plastic) bottles, water cooler machines, water pure machine in pagodas, monastery, schools, hospitals and clinics of everywhere in Myanmar and foreign countries.



Fig. (7) This team donates water pure machine



Fig.(8)This team donates water (plastic) bottles



Fig. (9)This team donates water pure machine

Moreover, this team donates golden robe to Shwedagon Pagoda and robes to the monks at the Sabbath days. This team always perform that donated water pots and water bottles to care for cleaning and filling.¹⁰

In 1990, Sayar Tin Moe wrote a poem ‘The cool water pot’s goodwill’ in Myanmar ‘ရေချမ်းစင်၏စေတနာ’ as follows.

- အေးမြရေချို၊ သောက်စေလို၍
စိမ့်ယိုမြေအိုး၊ ညောင်ရိပ်ဦးလျက်
ပျိုးပင်စိမ်းမွှေး၊ သဲဖွေးဖွေးနှင့်
လမ်းနဘေးက ရေချမ်းစင်။
- ခရီးပန်းလျှင်

- ရေချမ်းတစ်ခွက်၊ ကျောက်စက်အိုးမှ
သောက်ရမောပြေ၊ အားပြည့်စေ၏။
- လမ်းသွားလမ်းလာ၊ လူတကာကို
စေတနာရှေ့ပြေး၊ ကိုယ်လိုတွေး၍
ခမ်းအေးစေလို၊ ထိုကုသိုလ်တွက်
ဘာကိုမျှမတောင်း၊ ရေဖြည့်လောင်းသည်
ကျောင်းစာမတတ်၊ ဘာမတတ်နှင့်
တို့ရုပ်ရွာသား၊ ယာသမား၏
မြကွားမပါ၊ စေတနာသည်
မြန်မာဆိုမှ၊ မြန်မာတည်း။¹¹
(တင်ဦး ဝဇ၊ ဝ.ဝ.ဝ.ဝ.ဝ.)

¹⁰ <http://m.facebook.com/story.php?story-fbid=313244909030689&id=303498946671952>

¹¹ <http://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1460454807570163&id=100008169725210&set>

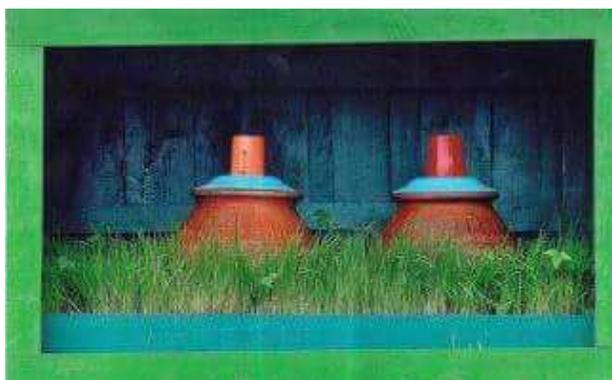


Fig.(10) The water pots with seedling and white sand

In this poem, there is a clay water seeping pot with seedling and white sand besides the route below the shade of banyan tree. If someone is tired, there is a cup of cool water from stone clay pot, to drink for full-bodied.

The farmers from our villager who is uneducated person, he thought that donates the water for every travelers to be cool with his sympathetic mind. He is absolutely Myanmar that is unboastful good will.

This poem described the Myanmar tradition of the placing water pot in public place. If the travelers will be tired and thirsty on their ways, they can easily drink cool water of these drinking water stand on any roadside. This is a symbol of Myanmar goodwill.

In the author Sin Phyu Kyun Aung Thein's book 'the tradition of Myanmar',

The placing of water pot in public place is the noble of Myanmar Culture. The tradition of the donation of rest house is also the noble of Myanmar Culture. This two are alongside donated or only one donated in Myanmar.¹²

Thus, the tradition of water pot and rest house can be found in public places in Myanmar. These are noble of Myanmar traditional culture.

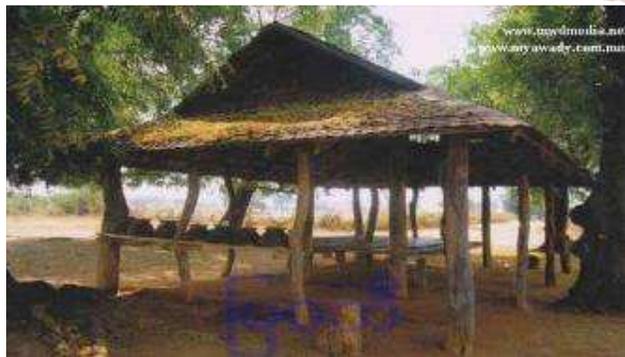


Fig.(11) The tradition of water pot and rest house.

The tradition of the water pot based on Sagaing mountain range to get water by Ashin Nyannissara. This is used by water pump from Ayeyarwaddy River to all of Sagaing mountain range for water charity of Ashin Nyanissara and givers.¹³

¹²အောင်သိန်း၊ □□□□၊ □□□□။

¹³စောမုံညွှန်း၊ □□□□၊ □□□□။

In current Myanmar, the tradition of water pot charity is maintained by Myanmar prove that Han Myint Aye said 'The earthen pot with moss/lichen to fill with water at my parent's home is very useful for the whole family. They used it as a water cooler. The pot doesn't need any power at all. It makes water cool and fresh. Nobody plants on it. Naturally, most of them spread out to grow. But someone at home has to fill with water every day and places it under the shade. I cordially invite you to visit my native village, Taungba Village, near Bagan.'¹⁴



Fig.(12) The earthen pot with moss/lichen

This showed to maintain the tradition of clay water pot in current Myanmar. Today Myanmar is to become modern developed country. In this situation, we must maintain our traditional cultures.

Finding

- 'Cool water pot' (ခေ့ချမ်းစင်) usage and the tradition of water donation can be found in Bagan period.
- The tradition of clay water pot can be found in Innwa period.
- The tradition of water charity gave to the Buddha image and the clay water pot can be found in Nyaung Yan period.
- In 1905 (Myanmar year 1267), Wai Nay Ya Thukha water charity Team was built at Shwedagon Pagoda.
- Now this team donates not only water pot but also water bottles, water cooler machine, water pure machine everywhere in Myanmar and foreign countries.
- The tradition of water charity transformed to the clay water pot to water (plastic) bottles, water cooler machine and water pure machine.
- The tradition of water pot and rest house are alongside donated or only one donated in Myanmar.
- Nowadays, Myanmar maintain the tradition of clay water pot.

Conclusion

According to the analysis of the tradition of water pot in Myanmar, 'cool water pot' (ခေ့ချမ်းစင်) usage and the tradition of water donation can be found in Bagan period. The

¹⁴ <http://m.facebook.com/story.php?story-fbid=2288996061344906&id=100007036026306>

tradition of clay water pot for public place can be found in Innwa period. The tradition of water charity is still the clay water pot at the whole Myanmar and nowadays it transformed to the donation of clay water pot to water (plastic) bottles, water cooler machine and water pure machine. Myanmar people believed that they donate the water, the donors of water can be endowed with longevity, beauty, wealthy, strength, wisdom, cleanness, fame and great retinue. They will possess ten benefits of water charity. Myanmar maintain the tradition of water pot at public place.

Therefore the tradition of water pot for public place is the symbol of Myanmar goodwill. The tradition of placing water pots (*ye gyan zin* ရေချမ်းစင်) is the impact of Myanmar traditional culture from Innwa period to present.

References

[1] စောမိုးညွှန်း။(၂၀၀၀)။*မြတ်နိုးဖွယ်ရာမြန်မာ့ရိုးရာများ*(ဒုတိယအကြိမ်)။ရန်ကုန်။ဉာဏ်ကြီးရှင်စာပေ။

[2] စိုးလှိုင်ဦး(တည်းဖြတ်)။(၂၀၀၀)။*သံဃာ့ပျို့*။ရန်ကုန်။ဗဟုစာအုပ်တိုက်။

[3] ဇော်ကျော်(နှင့်အများ)။(၂၀၀၀)။*ကံကော်မြိုင်စာတမ်း*(ပဉ္စမအကြိမ်)။ရန်ကုန်။ရတနာပြည့်စာပေ။

[4] အောင်သိန်းဆင်ဖြူကျွန်း။(၂၀၀၀)။*ကျေးလက်ရိုးရာမြန်မာ့ဓလေ့များ*။ရန်ကုန်။စာပေဗိမာန်။

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