The Tradition of Ye GyanZin (ကျပ်စွဲ) 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.

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

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This paper is the tradition of placing water pots (ye gyanzin ကျပ်စွဲ) 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.

1.4 **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 ကျပ်စွဲ means cool and pure water. Sin စင် means a stand that is made by wood or bamboo or brickwork or steel.
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 pots (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.

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.

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¹Dattilio, 2006, 195.
²https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249681169
³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water
⁴https://water.usgs.gov/edu/propertiesyou.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 (Muncetana); 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, cleanliness, 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.

If a person donates water, he will fulfilled longevity, beauty, wealthy, strength, wisdom, cleanliness, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Ancient Myanmar Script</th>
<th>Modern Myanmar Script</th>
<th>Stone Inscription/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>တုန်းရွက်မှု တစ်ခုလျက် တည်ထောင်ထား သို့မဟုတ် တည်ထောင်ထားသော တုန်းရေ ဖြစ်သည်</td>
<td>(They) sprinkle the (cool) water pot.</td>
<td>Paw Taw Mu Pagoda stone inscription7(Line-19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

5http://www.nibbana.com
7Tin & Luce. (1933). *Inscription of Burma (First Volume)*
According to this poem, we know the tradition of water charity to the Buddha image and the clay water pot.

### 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 Wa Ra 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, they dig a well for noble monks.

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 treesat 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 အယ်ဝထား) 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,

"When she miss Maung (her love)"

- When she miss her mother, she donated Buddha image to drink cool water, to chew paan and to vaso 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 vaso 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 vaso 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.

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4 Tin & Luce. (193). *Inscription of Burma (Second Volume)*

9 http://m.facebook.com/notes/reader/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.

![Image](image1.png)

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

![Image](image2.png)

**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.

![Image](image3.png)

**Fig.(7)** 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 ‘တောင်းခြောက်နေပြီး’ as follows.

- ၁ေစာ်အောင် နဂါးပဲးပြားစေဖျင် ကြည့်၍သွားပါသော ၊
  မျှော်လင်းသောအောင်ပြထားရပါသည်
  အောက်ကြည့်ဖြင့် အထောက်အမှန်နှင့်
- သွားပါသည်။

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11 http://m.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1460454807570163&id=10008169725210&set
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.

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

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 Nyannissara and givers.

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.

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 (ညီညာ) 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 (ညီညာ) usage and the tradition of water donation can be found in Bagan period. The
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, cleaness, 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 zin၀ရောင်) is the impact of Myanmar traditional culture from Innwa period to present.

References
[1] ရန်ကုန်။
[3] 立水栓 (stonewall) (plastic) bottles, water cooler machine and water pure machine
[4] ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ပေးသော ပြင်သစ်စီးမှ တွေ့ရသော

Internet Reference