

**History  
of  
Dhammikarama  
Burmese Buddhist Temple**



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**Penang, Malaysia  
B.E. 2347 - 2535  
A.D. 1803 - 1991**

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# Editorial

Gotama Buddha, after His Enlightenment in 588 B.C gave His first discourse (Dhammacakka) at the Deer Park in Isipatana, near Benares.

From then on Buddhism has marched forward for 2579 years today expounding the Dhamma to all parts of the world.

Buddhism progress peacefully with compassion and loving kindness, conditioning the cultural and spiritual life of great nations.

In the search for Truth, the Dhamma opens the path towards happiness and the eternal bliss in Nibbana.

It was in 1803 that Buddhism first came to the shore of Penang, then called “ Prince of Wales Island ”. It was then that a piece of land was bought for “ a Burmese Temple or a place of Public Worship ”.

It is now 188 years that the wonderful event happened. The great Teachings of the Buddha was received with joy and His Dhamma had guided thousands towards the path of Truth - The Middle Path.

Today this first Temple of the Buddha in Penang, from a small beginning, has blossomed into a great centre of learning, wisdom and happiness through His Disciples.

This record sets forth to give the insight into the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang, over its 188 years of existence.

We are indebted to our Chief Monk, Venerable U Pannavamsa, for the wealth of information and spiritual guidance in presenting this book.

To the elderly, it will be a joy for recollecting happy places and happy events.

To the young, it will be an encouragement to propagate development in the spiritual advancement of Buddhism.

Generally, it will be for the good and benefit of one and all to know about this great Temple.

We seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

## Literary & Publication Committee

Patron	Venerable U Pannavamsa
Religious advisor	Venerable U Sumanacara
Chairman	Mr. Tan Cheng Guan
Hon. Secretary	Mr. Yeap Theam Kwee
Asst. Hon. Secretary	Miss Tan Kim Boey
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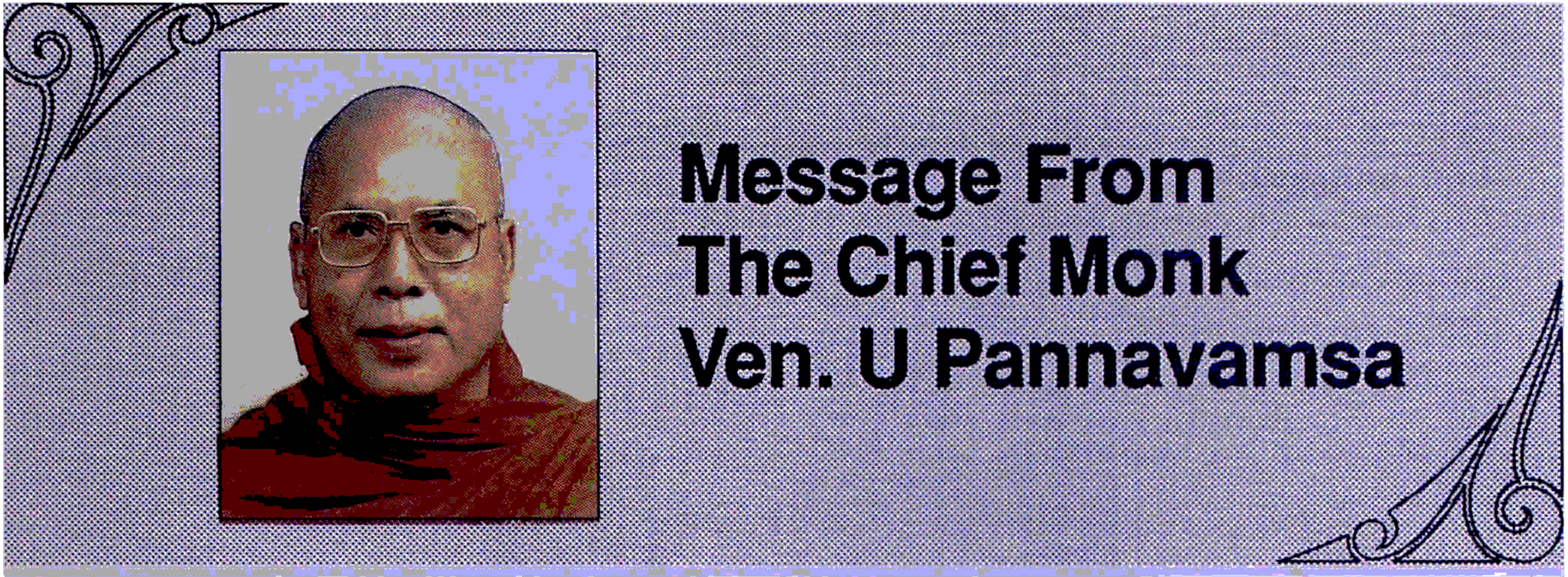


Group photograph of the temple literary and publication committee

From left to right:-

Sitting Yeap Theam Kwee, Tan Cheng Guan, The Venerable U Pannavamsa, Ong Ewe Teong, Chew Keat Hoe

Standing Tan Kim Boey, Cindy Hor, Chuah Ban San, Tan Cheng Chui, Liew Chean Seong, Lim Bok Hin, Saw Boo Pheng, Cheah Ah Leng, Shirley Chia.



Upon my arrival in 1970 the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple was antiquated and the Chief Monk was also an ageing elder who had tried to do his best for the Temple. Even as a new comer I already spawn the idea of developing this Temple not only materially but also spiritually together with the co-operation of the devotees.

This has firmly arisen in my mind ever since and I have often wondered with myself that if such a recording of the history of this temple is not done it would be a piteous waste of the noble tasks and invaluable effort of the former Chief Monks and their earnest devotees. With the present developments of the Temple now in full swing, the opportune moment has arrived. This ripe atmosphere has also produced a bumper crop of enthusiastic supporters and devotees eager to see this project becoming a success. This being so, if I do not do what I have to do, this opportunity may not come this way again. Therefore Buddha said, “ Ajjeva kiccam katabbam” meaning do not delay doing good things, but to do it right now !

Artifacts of Buddhist culture and religious items have been found in many ancient temples elsewhere, especially in Kedah and Kelantan which are centuries old. Excavations for development project accidentally stumble into these valuable historical finds , showing that Buddhism flourished very much earlier before, in Peninsula Malaysia. Our Temple have several ancient cultural items. In June 1974, an official from the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur visited our Temple. After viewing the cultural items, he requested for some of the items for display at the museum. We donated 18 selected items to the National Museum.

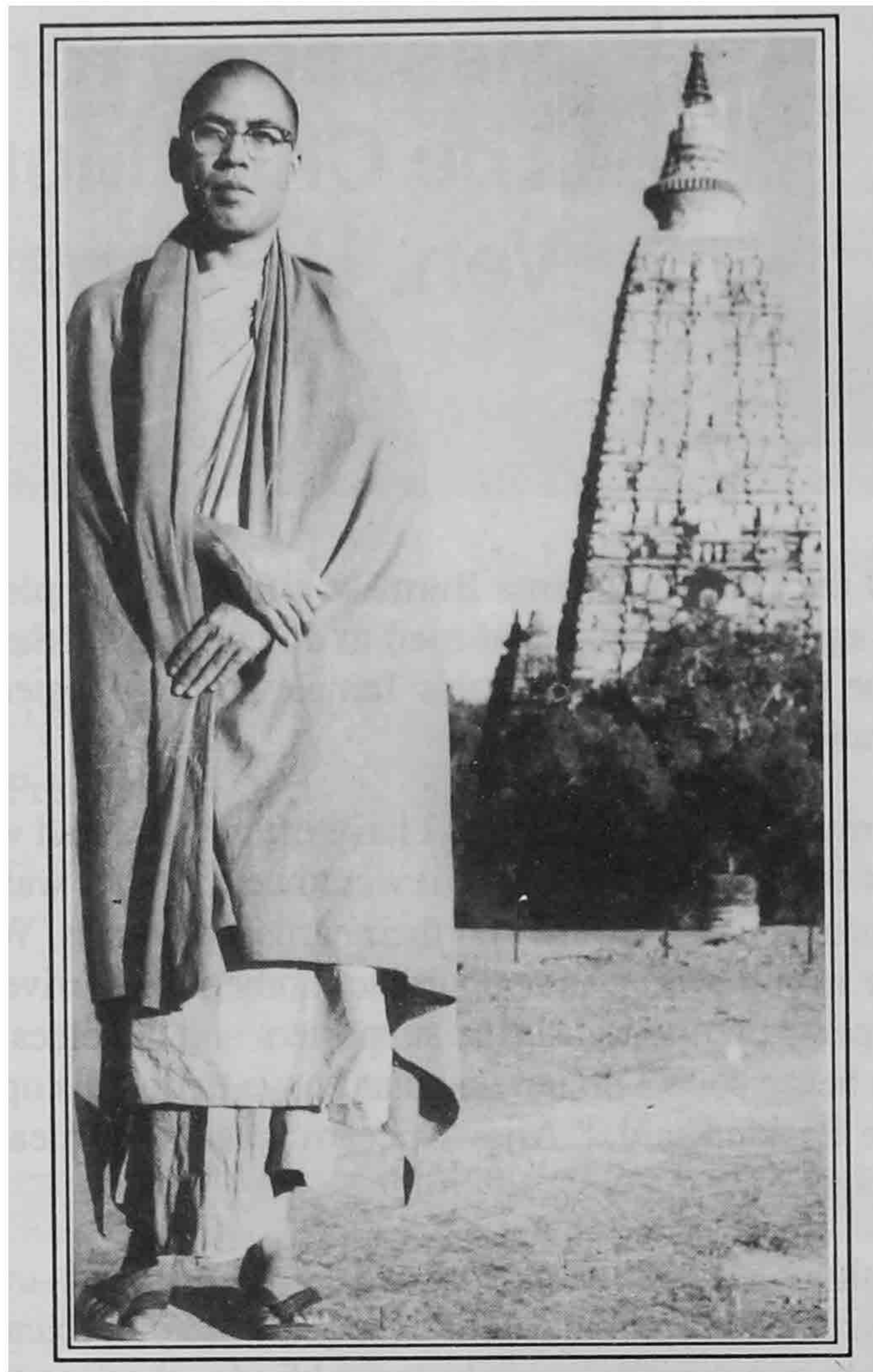
The Penang Historical Heritage authority has also stated that the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple is one of the fifteen historical sites to be preserved. The compiling and producing of this Historical Book will give a good insight into the past for the future generation; the commendable examples and guidance to refer to and obtain information from.

In conclusion, I would like to express my high appreciations and warm congratulations to the Buddhist Literary and Publication Committee, the Editorial Board, the generous supporters, devotees and well-wishers. For their contributions and dedication to the Temple, may all be well, happy and peaceful!

With metta citta,

Venerable U Pannavamsa  
Chief Monk Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple  
Burma Lane, Penang, Malaysia





**“AFTER SEVEN WEEKS OF INTENSIVE MEDITATION  
AT BUDDHAGAYA, THE PLACE OF SUPREME ENLIGHTENMENT,  
I MADE A FIRM DETERMINATION THAT I MIGHT BE  
SUCCESSFUL TO CHERISH AND DEVELOP THE  
BUDDHA’S DISPENSATION ALL OVER THE WORLD”**

**DATED: 5TH JULY 1960**



It was about 1970 that I became actively involved in Buddhism. Now at over 74 years old, I fully see the beautiful Buddhist world of truth and happiness.

In the 1930s when I was young, I first visited the Temple. I remember the celebrations, the maze erected on the Temple ground, the dimly oil lit passage etc.

Today the Main Shrine is well known; so is the Arahant Upagutta Shrine, where many had their wishes fulfilled, particularly in the field of education.

Visitors had remarked that the Temple is so peaceful and very beautiful.

The way of life to a Buddhist is the way of the Dhamma, rich in compassion and wisdom. The Buddha said “ He who practise my Teaching best, reveres me most ”. He also advised that “ when anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, accept it and live up to it. ”

To the young, may they carry on the good work of their elders and make this Temple, already with years of beautiful tradition, a glorious place of worship.

May all receive the blessings of the All-Compassionate Buddha, enjoy good health and live a long happy life.

“ Health is the highest gain. Contentment is the greatest wealth. The trusted are the best kinsmen. Nibbana is the highest bliss.”

(Dhammapada 204)

With metta citta :

Ong Ewe Teong  
Patron;  
Chairman, Board of Trustees  
Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang



## Message From The President, Temple Management Committee Mr. Cheah Jin Teong

I feel greatly honoured to be invited to write a message as President of the Temple Management Committee. The compiling and printing of the historical book, of the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple is indeed a mammoth task and is the first ever of its kind to be published by this Buddhist temple. There are so many Buddhist temples with ancient artifacts of religious and historical values lying in ruins, buried by the passage of time.

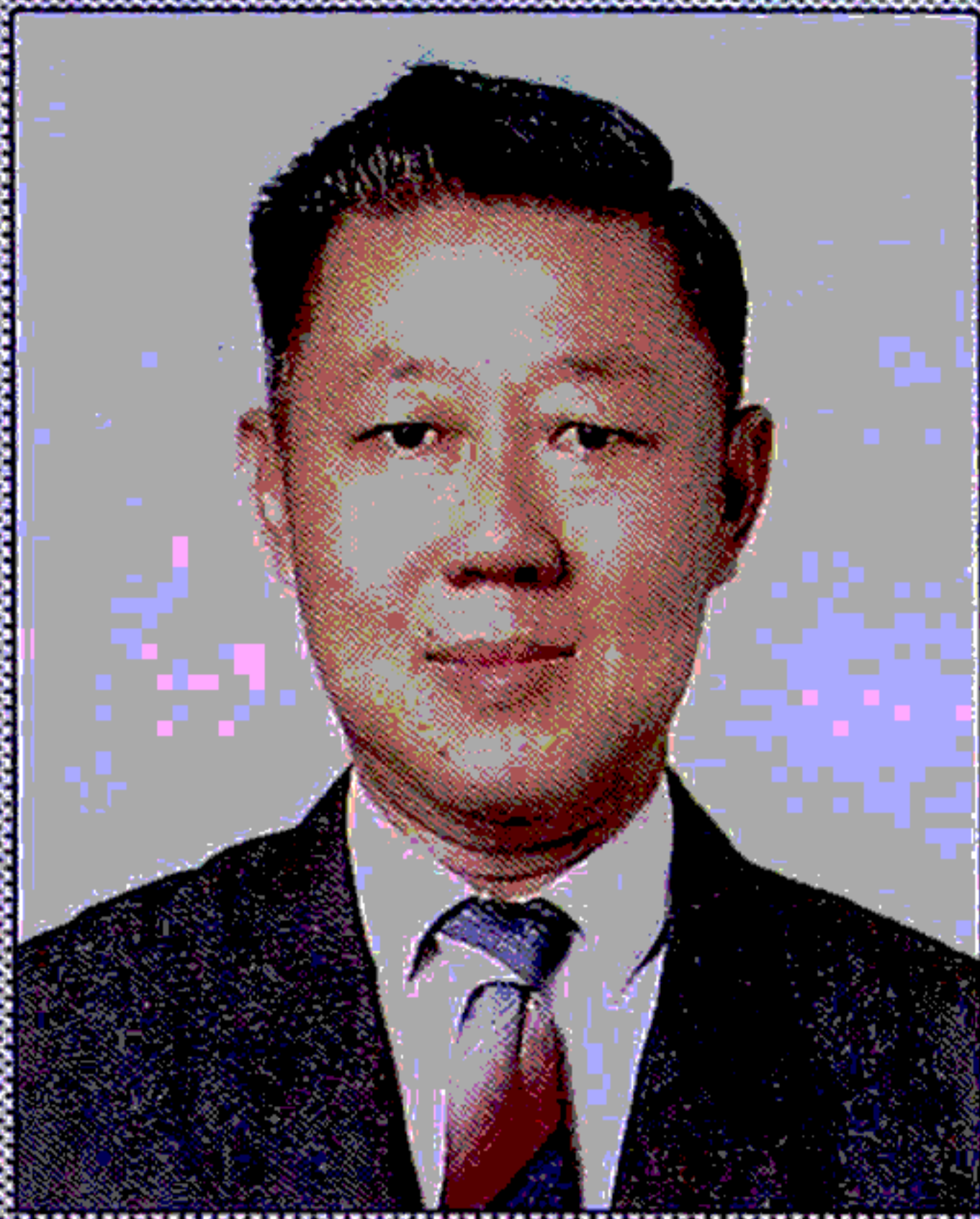
It is therefore hoped that the example of publishing our own Temple records will inspire other Buddhist temples to do the same. With so much religious treasure troves around, it may perhaps be not a bad idea to start our own Buddhist archive, to preserve and store documental record and even a complimentary museum to preserve historical items.

The success of this laudable project is ensured by the Chief Monk, none other than the Venerable U. Pannavamsa who is at the helm as religious Patron. Mr. Tan Cheng Guan, the Chairman of the Literary and Publication Committee and Mr. Ong Ewe Teong, the Publication Editor are both to be heartily congratulated for their keen enthusiasm and leadership. Good teamwork and splendid co-operation of their wonderful colleagues share the happy success. The generous donors also deserve special mention.

On behalf of the Temple's Management Committee, I would like to place on record our sincere regards and deep admiration to all involved in this project and extend to them a big " SADDHU " !

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cheah Jin Teong". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Cheah Jin Teong  
President,  
Temple Management Committee , 1990/1991



**Message From  
The Chairman,  
Temple Buddhist Literary And  
Publication Committee  
Mr. Tan Cheng Guan**

The idea of publishing a Historical Book on the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang is unique. First, being the oldest Buddhist temples, it has an illustrious age of being one hundred and eighty-eight years old dating back to the year 1803. This means it has survived two World Wars and seen countless changes at home and abroad. Undoubtedly, its magnificent historical accounts recorded in the historical book filled with authentic research is certainly a priceless reading pleasure to its readers.

**BUDDHISM IS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION**, one which has brought peace of mind, happiness and harmony to the myriad millions of beings in its long history of more than twenty-five centuries. It is suitable for anyone who has a mind to perceive the **TRUTH** and who wishes to live his life meaningfully for the benefit of others as it teaches one to have a realistic view of both life and the world.

**Sabba dannam, dhamma danam Jinati** - It means the Gift of Truth excels all other Gifts. Much of this Excellent Gift is found in this Book

Being the oldest Buddhist Temple with a hundred and eighty eight years in existence the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple has certainly a long history to be recorded. The idea of writing and compiling this history book was mooted by the present Chief Monk, Venerable U Pannavamsa several years ago but because of his tight schedule locally and abroad it was kept in abeyance.

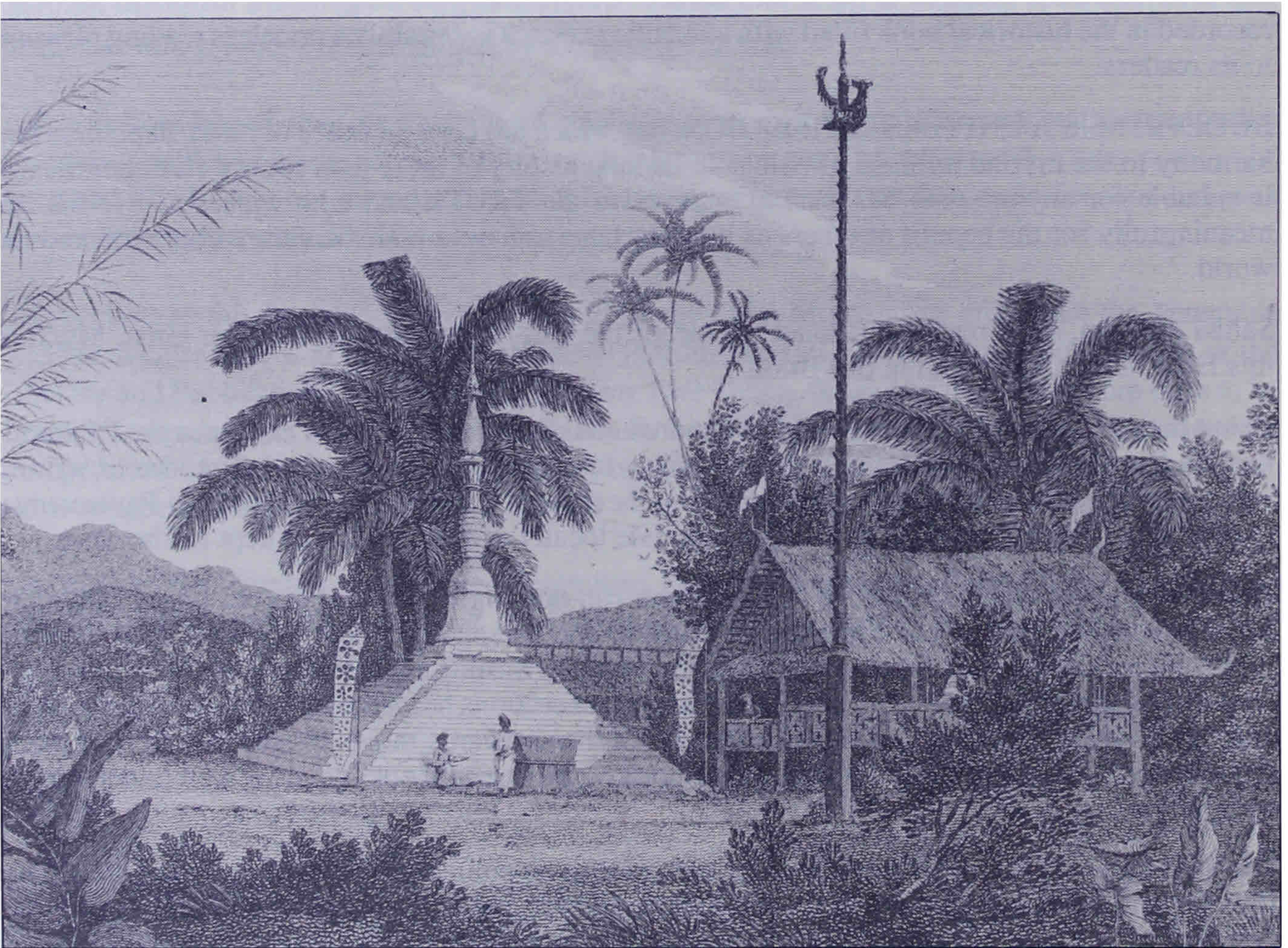
However, in mid August, 1991, the Chief Monk can no longer withhold his pet project anymore and instructed me to convene a meeting of which he will personally attend. To his pleasant surprise, the response was very much better than expected. Without wasting anymore time, the Ad-hoc Temple Historical Committee was set up with all the important sections headed by the Administrative panel and the Editorial Board as the nerve centre. From then onwards things moved swiftly and many requirements that go to make up the commemorative Historical book, are now well under way to completion.

The Historical book will be the first of its kind ever to be published by this ancient temple whose many magnificent and unique events, if not recorded will just pass away into oblivion. I take this opportunity to tender my grateful thanks to all those without whose generous support and help, the printing of this Historical Book will not be possible. By the Blessings of the Triple Gem, may they always be well and happy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tan Cheng Guan'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial 'T' and 'C'.

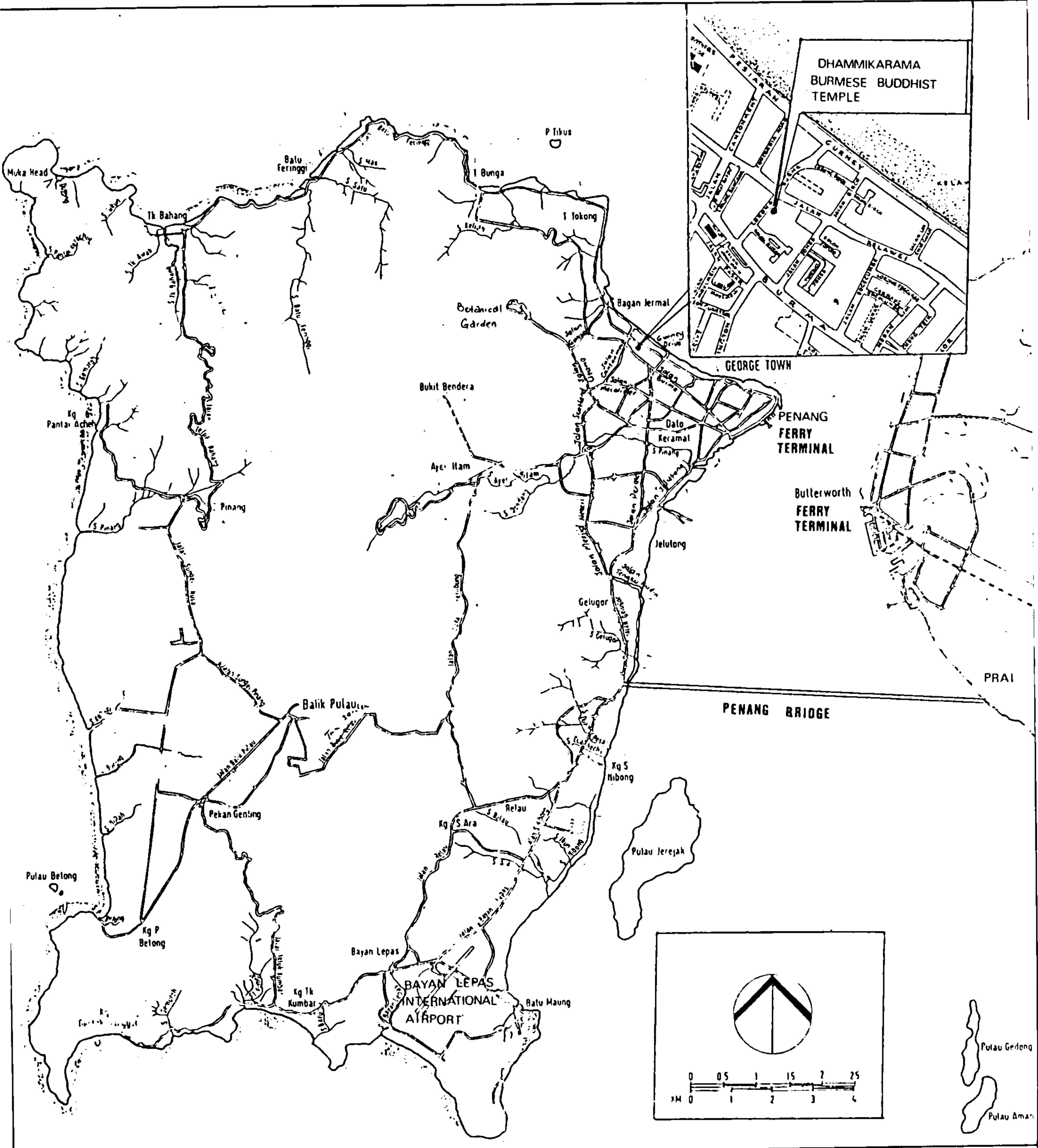
Tan Cheng Guan  
Chairman,  
Temple Buddhist Literary and Publication Committee

# Temple And Its History

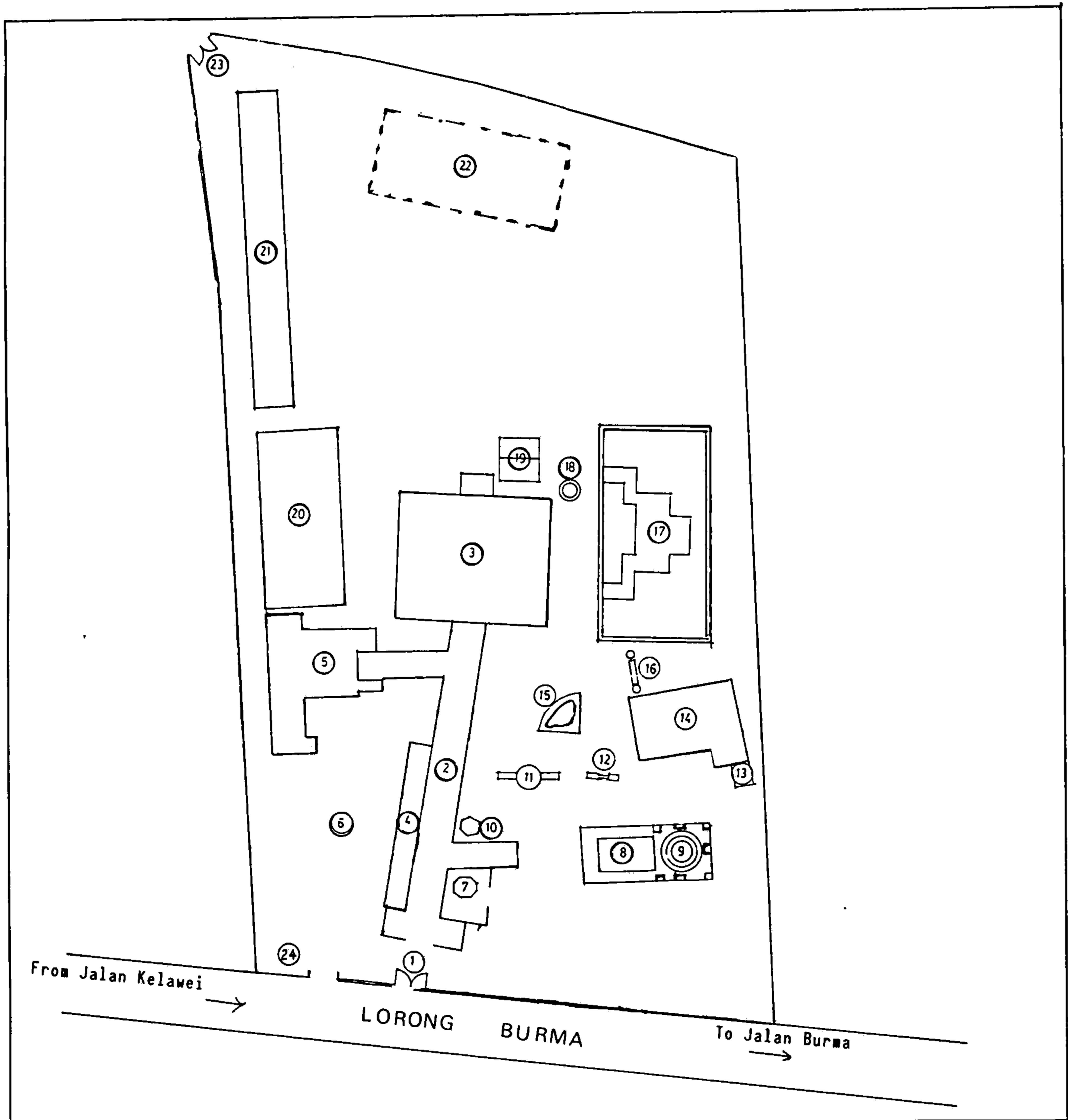


EDWARD H. LOCKER. Burmah Temple at Prince of Wales Island. 1805. Engraving. 1811. 14.1 x 20.0 cm  
(By courtesy of Penang Museum)

# Location And Directory Plans



**DHAMMIKARAMA BURMESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE  
BURMA LANE, PENANG, MALAYSIA  
LOCATION PLAN**



### Directory Plan Of Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple

#### Key

- |                         |                             |                                    |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Main Entrance Arch   | 9. Pagoda                   | 17. Arahant Upagutta Shrine & Pool |
| 2. Decorated Archway    | 10. Buddha Wonder Pavilion  | 18. Historical Well                |
| 3. Main Shrine Hall     | 11. Pancarupa Monument      | 19. Sunday School/Office           |
| 4. Souvenir Stalls      | 12. Bell Carriers           | 20. Vimal Dining Hall              |
| 5. Chief Monk's Quarter | 13. Memorial Of Chief Monks | 21. Sila Bhavana Lodge             |
| 6. Car Park             | 14. Sunday School Building  | 22. Multi Purpose Hall + Library   |
| 7. Bodhi Tree           | 15. Decorated Pond          | 23. Rear Entrance                  |
| 8. Sima Hall            | 16. Historical Site Tableau | 24. Car Park Entrance              |

## **History Of The Temple**

Before Captain Francis Light founded the Island of Penang then known as the Prince of Wales's Island in 1786, the Island was already inhabited. Villages were formed along the Eastern sea-shores. One particular village of interest was located somewhere around the present Pulau Tikus area. It was known as " Kampong Ava " in those days. The majority of the inhabitants were Burmese in origin.

After the Island was officially taken over by the East India Company, the British brought in surveyors from Burma to map out Georgetown. Some came with their families.

In the early days, the British had to rely on the army for the security, apart from the Punjabis, Pathans and others ; the arrival of the 70th Burma Rifles in Penang complete the formation of the Federated Malay States Police Force. The Burmese Regiment was later stationed at Taiping.

By this time, the Burmese community had grown to a large number and it was felt that a proper place of worship was necessary for them to carry out their religious obligations. One lady named Nonya Betong purchased a piece of land on Lot 372 Section 4 Georgetown from George Layton for only 390 Spanish dollars. The land is bounded by the present Lorong Burma, Jalan Kelawei , Jalan Jones and Solok Burma.

The Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple was officially founded on the 1st day of August, 1803. The temple ground was then known as Nandy Moloh Burmese Temple or a place of Public Worship. One simple attap building served as a temple as well as a monk's quarters. At that time, it was the first and only Buddhist temple in Penang. Up to the present, it is the only Burmese Buddhist Temple in Malaysia.

Two years after the temple was founded, the original pagoda was constructed in 1805. In 1838, the present pagoda was constructed over the original pagoda.

The present Sima Hall, a square shaped single storey Chinese type brick building was also constructed together with the pagoda in 1838.

The original Main Shrine Hall building was a wooden structure with raised floorboards and Chinese tiled roof. It was built in 1840.

Between 1840 to 1970 , a period of 130 years, there was very little improvement to the temple.





LT. WALFORD THOMAS BELLAIRS. R.N.. A "Burmah Pagoda" at Pulo Penang, 1846, Watercolour 17.2 x 26.0 cm.  
(By courtesy of Datuk Lim Chong Keat)



LT WALFORD THOMAS BELLAIRS R.N.. Burmese Temple, Penang. 1846. Pencil & wash 15.5 x 22.9 cm  
(By Courtesy of Datuk Lim Chong Keat)

## **New Boundary Wall And Main Entrance Archway**

The old Temple wall along Burma Lane, Penang, was renovated in February, 1984.

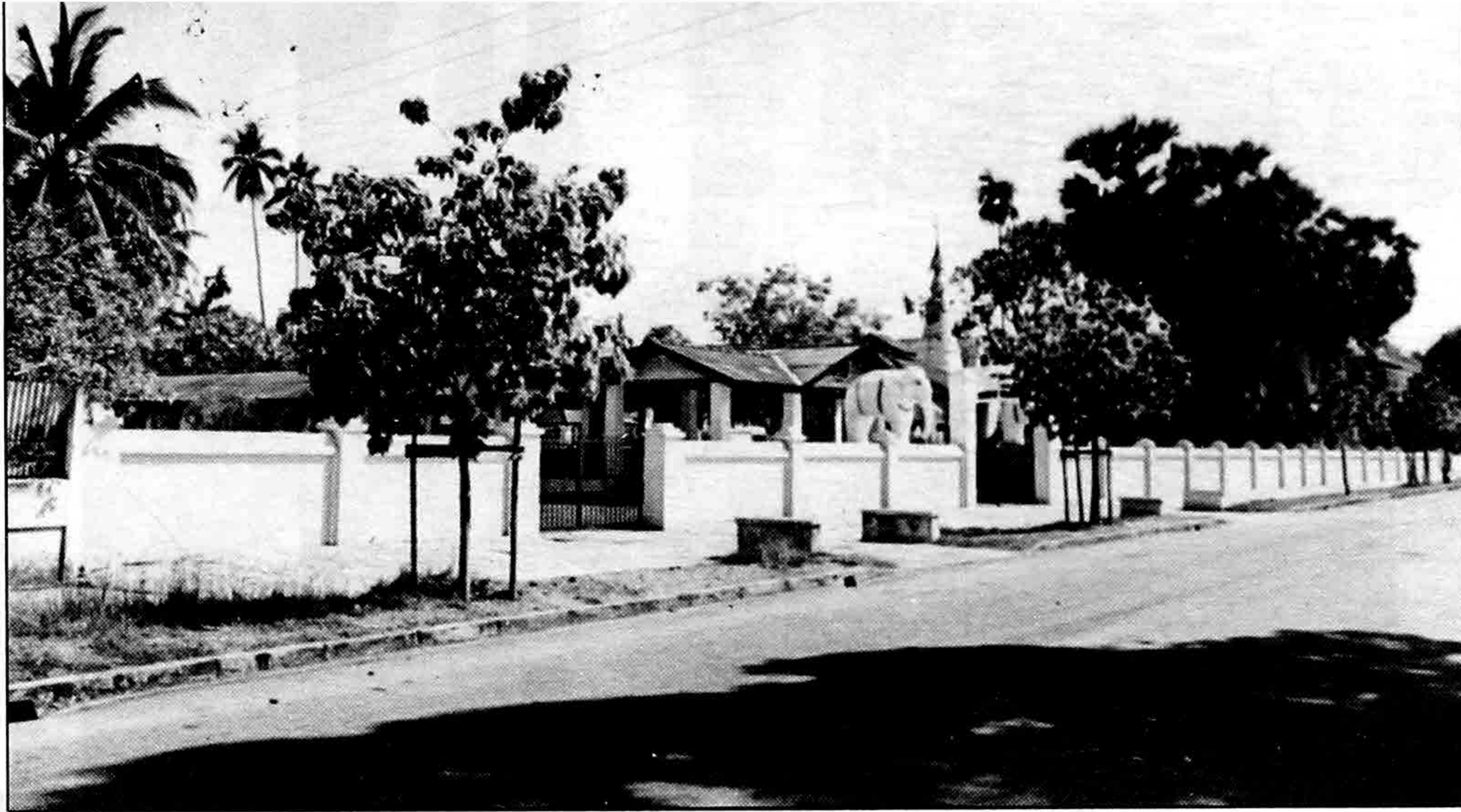
The walls and pillars, the grills and fittings, and the electrical installations were done separately by a team of contractor, foundry artisan and electrician.

The lamps on the top of the pillars were bought from Thailand.

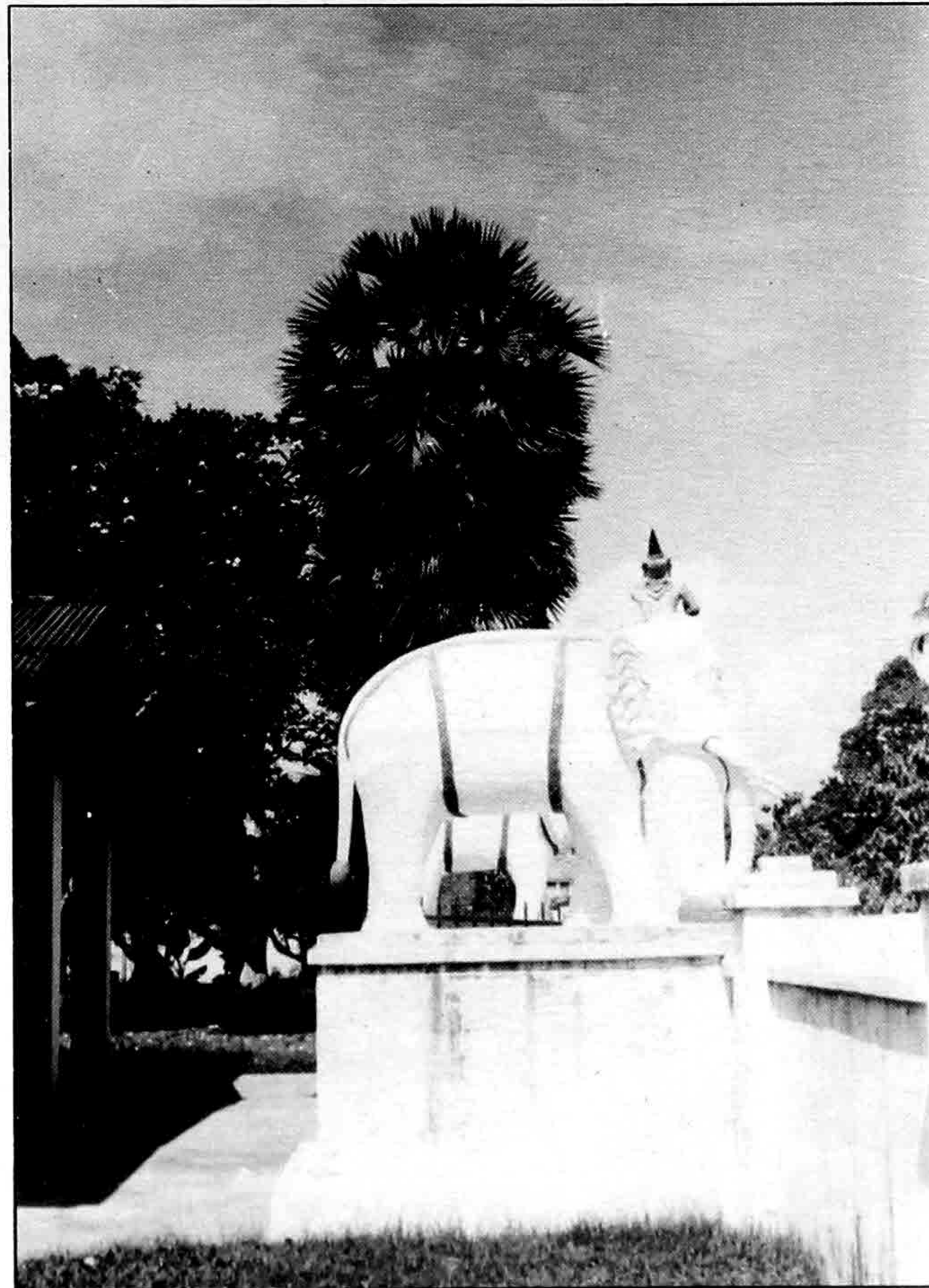
When the main-gate was constructed, coins and precious articles were put into the foundation by devotees, followed by a religious ceremony.

The “ Golden Umbrella ” at the top of the gate, donated by Mr & Mrs Ong Ewe Teong, was blessed by monks of the International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation on Vesak Day, 4 th May 1985. It was installed by the Late Ven. U Seittara on the 24th of October 1985, after a religious ceremony , followed by a dana(gift).

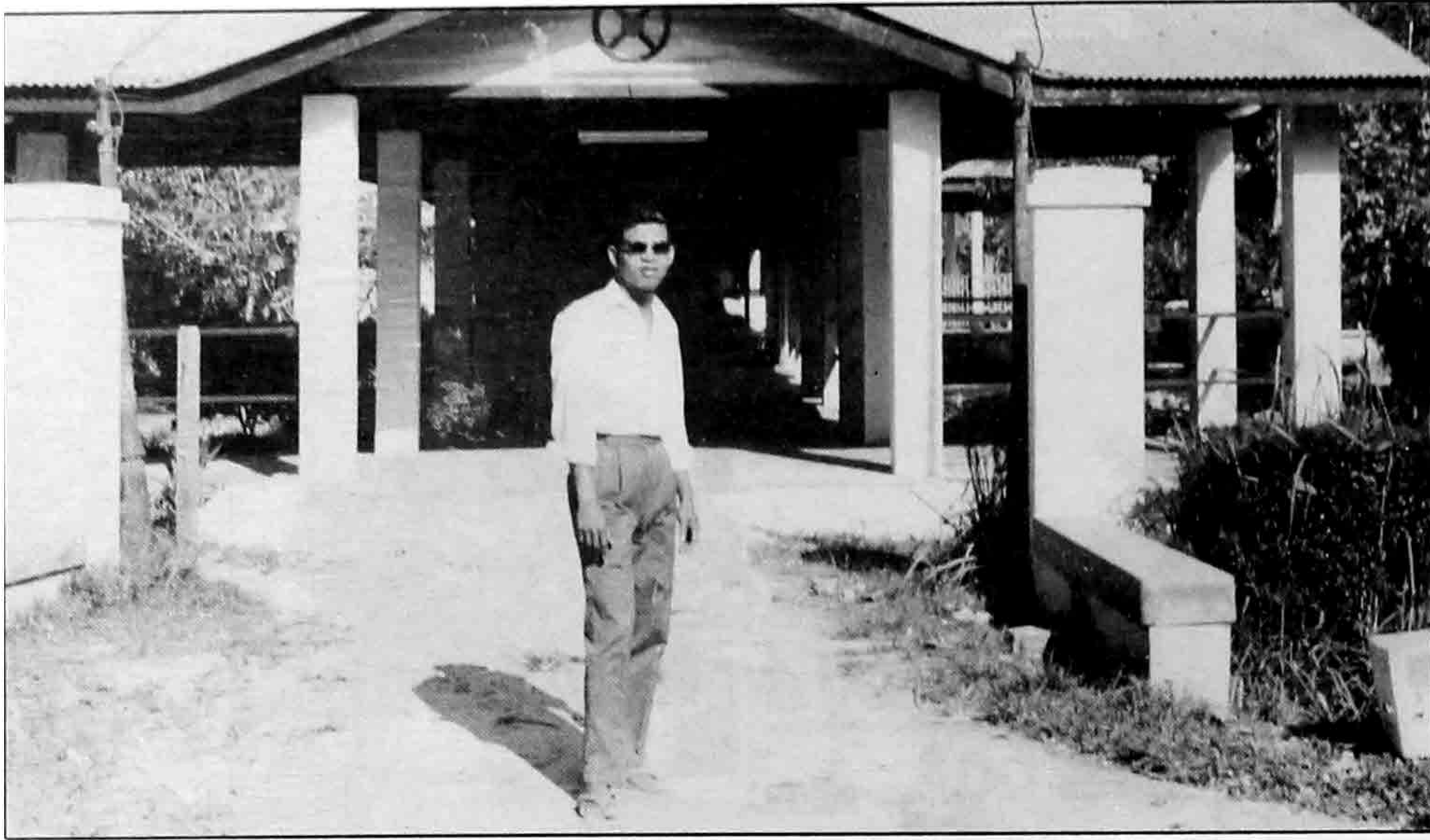




The old main entrance



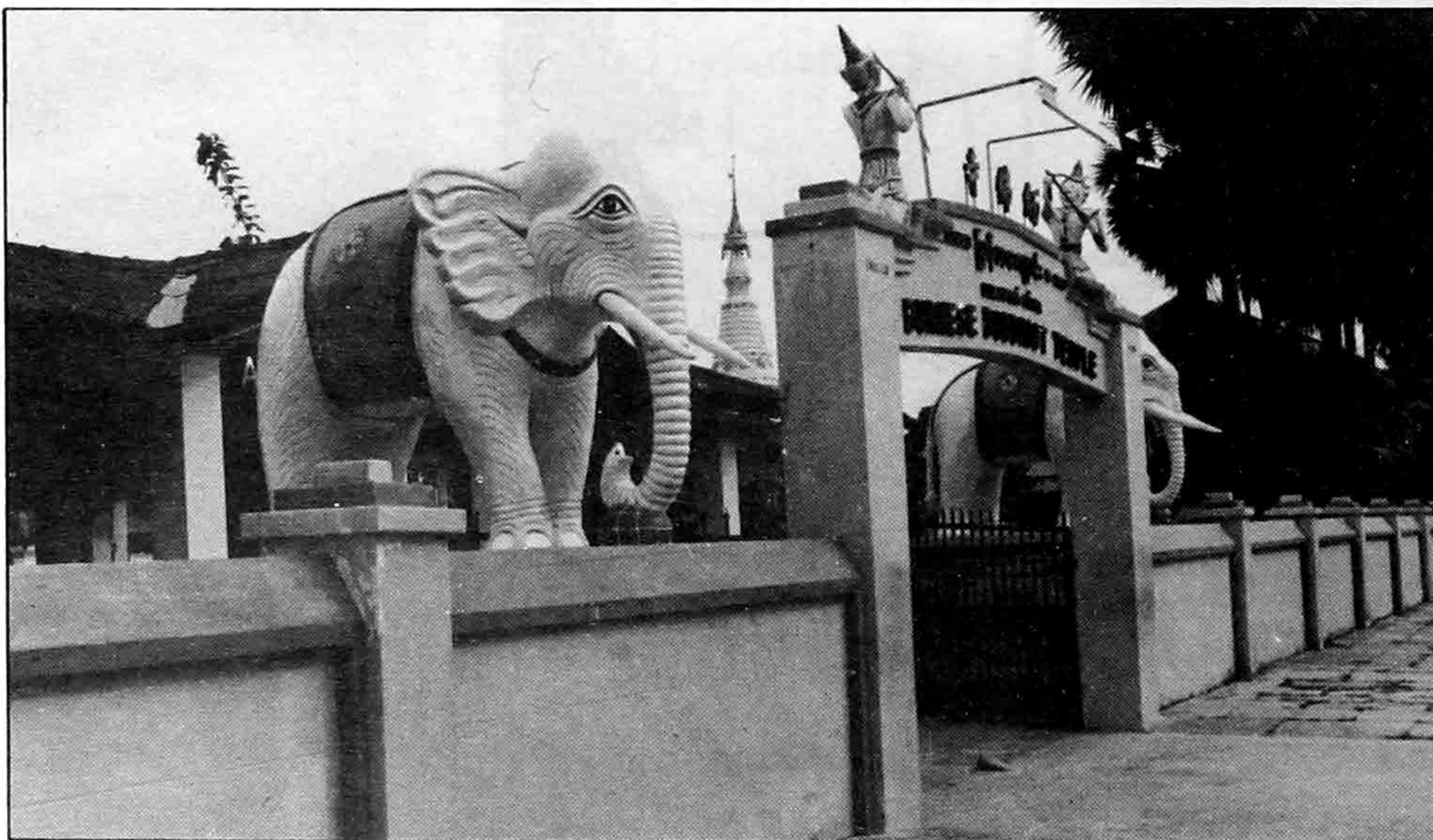
The elephant at the main entrance



The old main entrance



The old main entrance



The elephant at the main entrance



Installation prayer for the new main gate  
(Golden Umbrella)



The present main entrance

## Beautification Of The Covered Walkway

Work on this project commenced on the 5th of February 1990. It was to be carried out in stages when funds permit. First, the roof was raised three feet. Then, the square brick pillars were altered to round columns. The wooden railings were replaced with porcelain balusters with terrazzo railings. Later terrazzo flooring with suitable designs were added and ceiling was installed along the covered walkway. Finally, decorations were added to the columns and concrete decorative panels were fixed between them. The whole project took 18 months to complete on the 3rd of August, 1991.



The covered walkway

## Bodhi Tree

The Bodhi tree was presented by Mr. Tan Aun Phaik of the Subha Group. It is a sibling taken from the Bodhi tree at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka.

The tree was planted by Mr. Yeoh Phee Tin, the then Vice-Chairman of the Temple Management Committee. The Consecration ceremony was carried out by all Venerable Chief Monks of Buddhist Temples in Penang on 2nd September, 1979.

The mosaic base around the Bodhi tree was built from donations contributed by devotees on 2nd September 1979 and the eight marble shrines together with the Buddha images facing the eight cardinal points of the compass was built in 1989. The glazed porcelain balusters around the compound were added in 1990.

The Bodhi tree is regarded as the tree of Veneration under which the Buddha sat and attained Supreme Enlightenment. It is also highly respected by Buddhists and a source of interest to the visitors as well.



Planting of the Bodhi tree by Mr Yeoh Phee Tin





The original Bodhi tree shrine



The present Bodhi tree shrine

## Significance Of Sima

Sima is a Pali word, which means a specific limited area and marking a boundary line. It is to be used for the meeting of monks and for conducting the religious ceremonies according to the Buddhist discipline.

There are two kinds of Simas, namely, Badda-sima and Abadda-sima. Badda-sima means the specific place where ceremonies conducted by the group of the senior monks in the Kammavaca, the words of the actional order according to the monastic discipline. It is also used for meeting of monks to conduct the religious matters.

Abadda-sima means the usual place which is also used for the meeting of monks to perform certain religious matters.

If it is intended to perform a higher ordination or others, the following five factors are very important:-

1. the Sima ,
2. the group of monks,
3. the eligible person,
4. Paligrammatically to recite Natti, declaration in Kammavaca.
5. Paligrammatically to recite the Kammavaca, the words of actional order.

### THE MARKING OF A BOUNDARY LINE

The marking of a boundary line can be one of the eight kinds namely, mountain, stone, forest, tree, road, hill, river and water. Out of these, stone and water are generally used, but the stone is more appropriate.

Sima is the main cause to endure Buddha's dispensation or Buddhism, because, it is so important for conducting the religious matters in the monastic order.



Side View Of Sima Hall

14950



Front view of Sima hall



Buddha images in the Sima hall



The Buddha, as a young Prince Siddhattha at the age of 16, drawing the bow to show His extraordinary skill



The guardian lion, a ferocious beast is submissive and docile in front of the Buddha

## Significance Of Ceti (Pagoda)

Ceti is a Pali word, which means a sacred shrine or pagoda for paying the deepest homage.

There are four kinds of Cetis, namely, Dhatu-ceti, Dhamma-ceti, Uddissa-ceti and Paribhoga-ceti.

Dhatu-ceti means the relics of the Buddha. It consists of the remains of the Buddha after his cremation.

Dhamma-ceti means the teaching of the Buddha, expounded during forty five years of his ministry in sixth century B.C.

Uddissa-ceti refers to the images of the Buddha for paying homage to contemplate on his virtues.

Paribhoga-ceti consists of the personal requisites of the Buddha like his robes, bowl and so on.

These four cetis are worthy of respect, wherever they are enshrined. Whoever pays homage to a ceti, may make a wish and it will be fulfilled.



The Temple Ceti (Pagoda)

## Historical Granite Tablet

Originally the tablet was located somewhere near the pagoda area. It was moved to the present site in front of the Sima Hall. It is engraved with Burmese script of Pali and Burmese language.

### Translation Of The Script

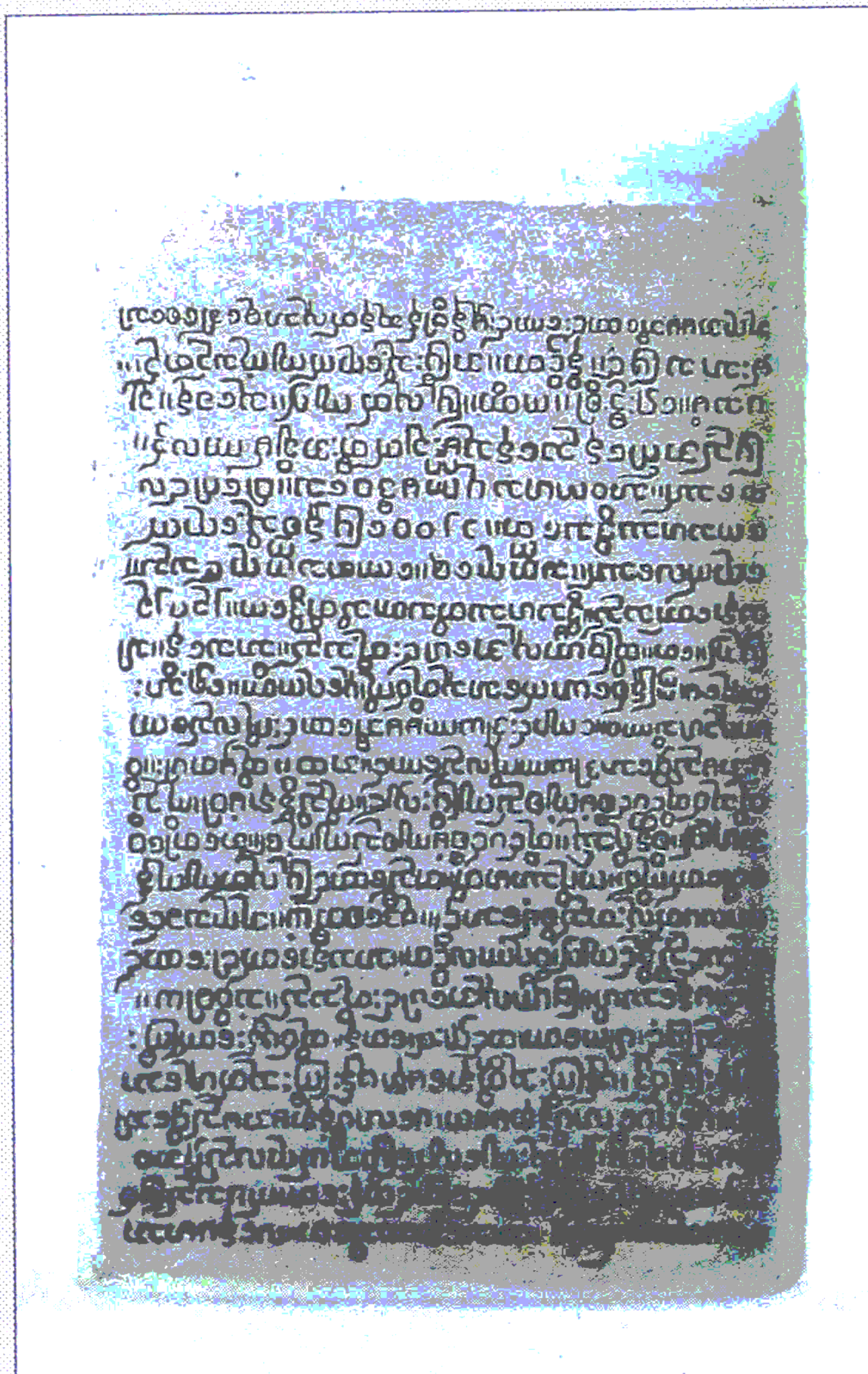
*May the teaching of Buddha shine  
forever like the moon and sun  
May all auspicious things be always blessed.*

*The Venerable U. Sutti and the Buddhist  
devotees consulted among themselves  
to erect a pagoda for the purpose  
of preserving Buddhism forever.*

*Mr. Ko Nyein and Mdm Mah Bee Tong  
initiated to erect a pagoda with the  
full support of all Buddhist devotees.*

*The pagoda was erected on Tuesday  
3.00 p.m Burmese Era 1200  
Full Moon day of the month of  
Wagaung in B.E. 2382. (1838 A.D)*

*The construction of the Pagoda was carried  
out successfully.  
May all heavenly and human beings be  
rejoiced at the merits of Mdm Mah  
Bee Tong (donor) and attained Nibbana  
(peaceful happiness).*



The Historical Granite Tablet

## Panca-Rupa Guardian Protector

This world guardian and protector is unique as it is rare. It is usually believed that this guardian protector of the world is ideally suited for its role because it has the quality of the five best animal combination superbly blended to make the one rare beauty in him.

Firstly, it has the trunk and the tusks of the elephant which is well-known for its strength and docility to perform tasks for man.

Secondly, it has the four hooved legs and two agile ears of the horse, famous for its speed with keen sense of hearing and also easily harnessed for use of man.

Thirdly, it has the lion-faced toe (chimera) with the deer's horn depicting royal ferocity and quiet gentleness.

Fourthly, it has the body and the tail of the fish which holds sway in the domain of the watery element.

Fifthly, it has the two powerful wings of the Roc (garuda) which is the king of the birds in the air.

From the above, it is noted that the Panca Rupa Guardian Protector has power on earth, in the water and also in the air. Therefore, in this Burmese Temple, the two Panca-Rupa Guardian Protectors are depicted as guarding the world in the form of the globe in the centre.



Panca-Rupa guardian protector

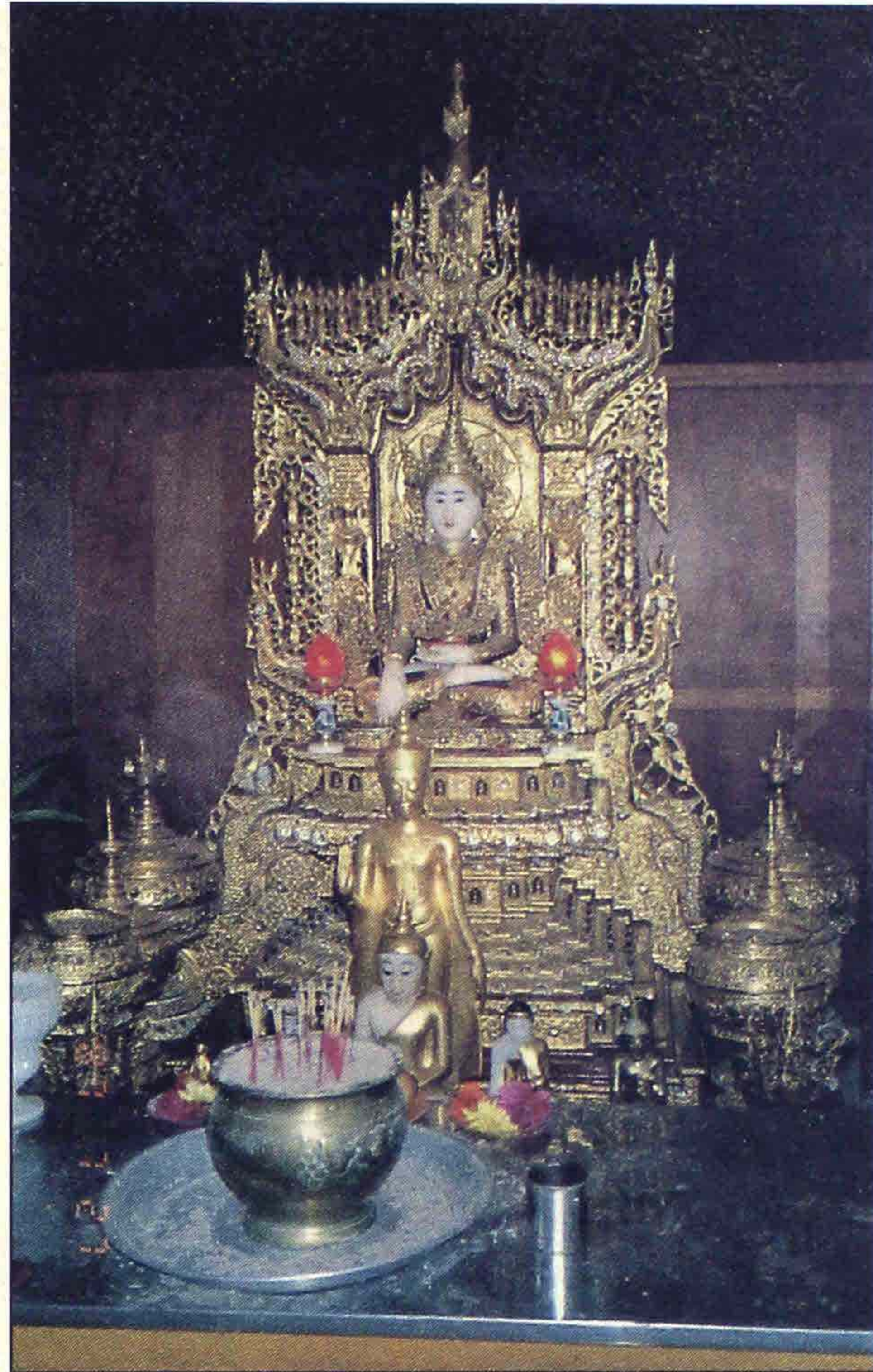


## **Main Shrine Hall**

On the 3rd of November 1987, this 147 years old plank building was partly taken down. Renovation and extension works were carried out to the building. A new Buddha image in the Dharmmacakkra Mudra posture was constructed by Burmese and local craftsmen. The other images of Arahant Sariputta, Arahant Mogallana, Ghatikara-Brahma and Sakka-Devaraja were also constructed in the Shrine Hall. The interior walls were well decorated with Buddhist Art Sculptures. Painting was done by a special artist. The whole project was completed within a year.

On the eve of the Opening Ceremony on the 12th of March 1988, thirty eight Theravada and Mahayana monks from the various Buddhist Temples in Penang conducted an All-night Chanting in the new Shrine Hall. This chanting started off with the Chinese monks followed by the Thai monks and then Sri Lankan monks and ended with the Burmese monks.

On the following day, the official opening ceremony of the new Shrine Hall was conducted. It was followed by the Consecration of the new Buddha Image Ceremony. In the evening, there was a big procession round the pagoda and Sima Hall by Buddhist devotees. The following night, oil lamps and lotus candles were lighted along both sides of the corridor. The three-day celebration concluded the official opening of the new Shrine Hall.



The Buddha image in the main shrine hall



The original main shrine hall



At the opening ceremony of the main shrine hall



At the opening ceremony of the main shrine hall



New Buddha image in the new main shrine hall



Other images in the new main shrine hall

## **The Burmese Bell**

The Burmese bell is by classification a gong and literally it means a brass drum. The sound produced by striking a Burmese bell is clear and pleasant. The proper way to strike a Burmese bell is to hit it at the tapering base on either side to produce a clear, pleasant and ringing sound. A hit in the middle base will give a loud metallic sound .

The Burmese Buddhists strike the bell to invite people to participate in meritorious actions and again to share their merits with others at the end of their ceremony. The flat heart-shape of the Burmese bell is the token of the heart of the Dhamma, so eagerly sought by the Buddhists.



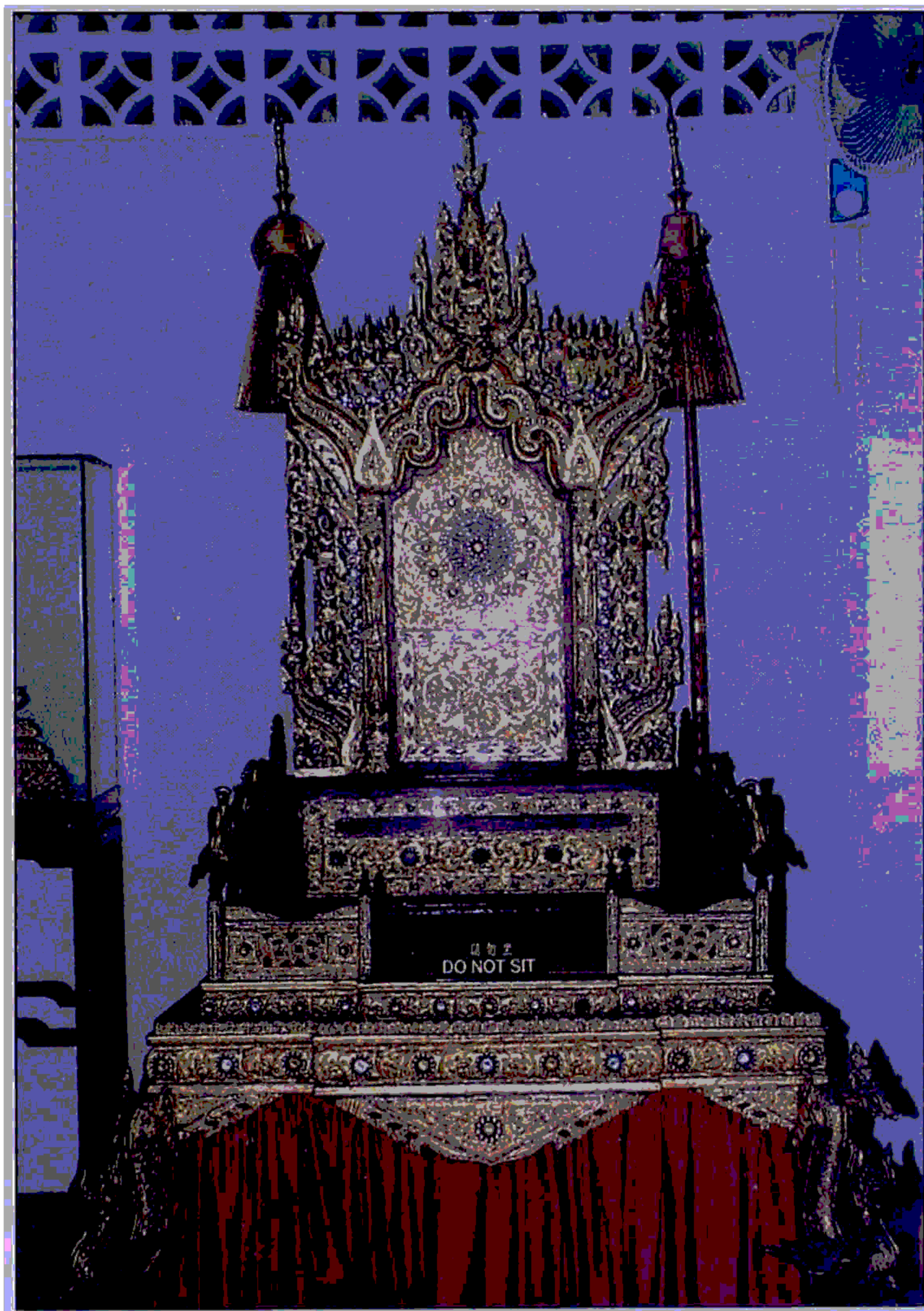


The Burmese bells in the main shrine hall

## ***Dhamma Throne***

The Dhamma Throne is usually a magnificent, decorated grand seat, used by the Venerable Monk who is giving Dhamma lectures on festivals and religious occasions. It is widely used as a mark of profound respect to the Buddha-Dhamma.

The Dhamma Throne was brought over by boat from Burma to Penang in 1975. Monks were invited to sit on the Dhamma Throne to expound The Buddha's teachings to the devotees. Although the Dhamma Throne is now not in use, it is being preserved as an antique Buddhist treasure which is of traditional value.



The Dhamma Throne in the main shrine hall



## Standing Buddha Image

There is a river flowing between two border towns, one named Kothaung on the Burmese side and on the Thai side is Ranong.

One day, the Chief Monk of Kothaung, Venerable U Obhasa gave Mr. Winiyapong of Ranong a beautiful standing Buddha image.

Mr. Winiyapong took the Buddha image home and daily paid homage for about six months. One night, Mr. Winiyapong had a strange dream. In his dream, he said he heard the Buddha Image said that it wanted to go and stay in the Burmese Buddhist Temple in Penang. Next morning, Mr. Winiyapong pondered about his strange dream. Is there a Burmese Temple in Penang? He himself had never been to Penang. Therefore, no action was taken.

After some time, he had the same dream for three more occasions. Mr. Winiyapong just could not ignore his strange dreams anymore. First he made enquiry about Penang and was told that there is a Burmese Buddhist Temple there. Then he made all necessary arrangements to bring the Buddha Image from Ranong by special transport to Penang.

The Standing Buddha Image arrived at the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple on the 12th of March, 1989, exactly one year after the consecration of the Buddha Image in the Main Shrine Hall.

The presence of the Standing Buddha Image has attracted many devotees and tourists to the temple.



Standing Buddha Image in the main shrine hall

## Arahant Upagutta

One day the Buddha addressed Venerable Ananda, “ In the city of Mathura, O Ananda, 100 years after I have entered Nibbana, there will be a merchant of perfume named Gupta. He will have a son called Upagutta. He shall play the part of the Buddha. By his instructions many shall destroy the corruption of evils”. Arahant Upagutta was also mentioned in the Chinese Mahayana text to be the Fourth Patriarch.

According to history, Siri-dhammasoka (Emperor Asoka) was always plagued by Mara (the Evil One) whenever he was doing some good acts, so much so that he was frustrated. Emperor Asoka then sought the advice of some Arahants. However, the Arahants recommended him to seek out and beg for help from Arahant Upagutta, who was known to be sojourning in the ocean. As such Emperor Asoka was helpless but one of the Arahants intervened and on behalf of Emperor Asoka invited the Arahant Upagutta from the ocean. Thereafter, Emperor Asoka was able to carry on his good works without any interference by Mara anymore. Under the auspices of Emperor Asoka, the Third Buddhist Council was held . Emperor Asoka also ordered his ministers to build a pillar at each of the Holy places namely Lumbini Park, Kapilavattu, Isipatana and Kusinara. Emperor Asoka’s pillar can still be seen in Isipatana (Sarnath) today.

Arahant Upagutta who is believed to be still abiding in the ocean, has helped many people to overcome their troubles and problems, especially the seafolks who always invoke His blessings for their safety in the sea and voyages across stretches of water. Arahant Upagutta is also known to possess the power that can overcome all obstacles, problems and fulfilling of wishes on examinations, sickness, including exorcising of evils.

In the Penang Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple, a small wooden Arahant Upagutta Shrine surrounded by a small pond, was erected long ago by the Venerable Monks and Burmese travellers, in order to pay respects and to show gratitude to the Arahant. These travellers who came by boat and had landed safely on the island, would pay respects and make offerings to their Patron Saint at the Shrine. An annual celebration is held every December to enable the devotees to show their gratitude when their problems are solved and their wishes fulfilled.

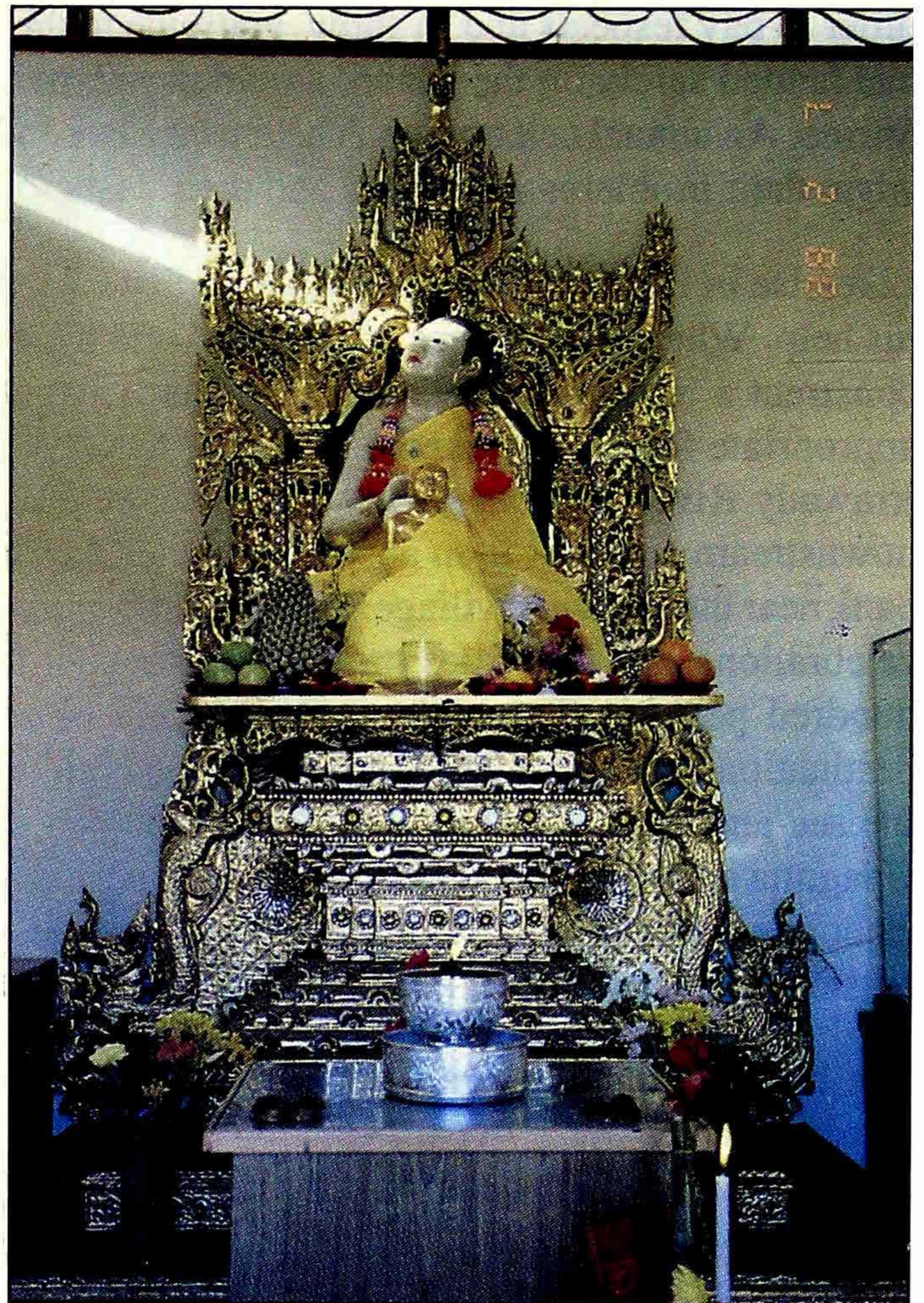
Likewise in Burma, often the people in distress will make a vow to the Arahant Upagutta to ask for his help. When their wishes are fulfilled and their difficulties overcome, the grateful devotee will construct a beautifully decorated Arahant Upagutta shrine on a very large wooden raft. After an appropriate festival or ceremony lasting for days or weeks, this shrine raft will be released on the Irrawady River, to float slowly downstream. The people of the towns and villages located at the downstream consider it an auspicious omen to see and meet this shrine and will tow it to the river bank near their town or village. During that period the local people will be busy holding thanksgiving celebrations and festivities on the said Arahant raft, which was strongly built to contain about a hundred persons. Then this raft will again be released to float downstream, from one riverine destination to another, where similar festivals and ceremonies are being held. Finally the raft reaches the sea and stays afloat as far as the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean. The present Arahant Upagutta shrine has been reconstructed into a modern three pinnacled tall pagoda surrounded by an elaborate wishing pool with fountains. It is said to be the only Arahant Upagutta shrine existing outside its homeland Burma.

It is believed that the Arahant is still living somewhere in the ocean. Hence, his shrine is always surrounded by water. As for looking up at the sky, Arahant Upagutta is actually looking at the position of the sun to determine the time of the day. As a monk, he does not take food after midday.



The original Arahant Upagutta hall

The present Arahant Upagutta





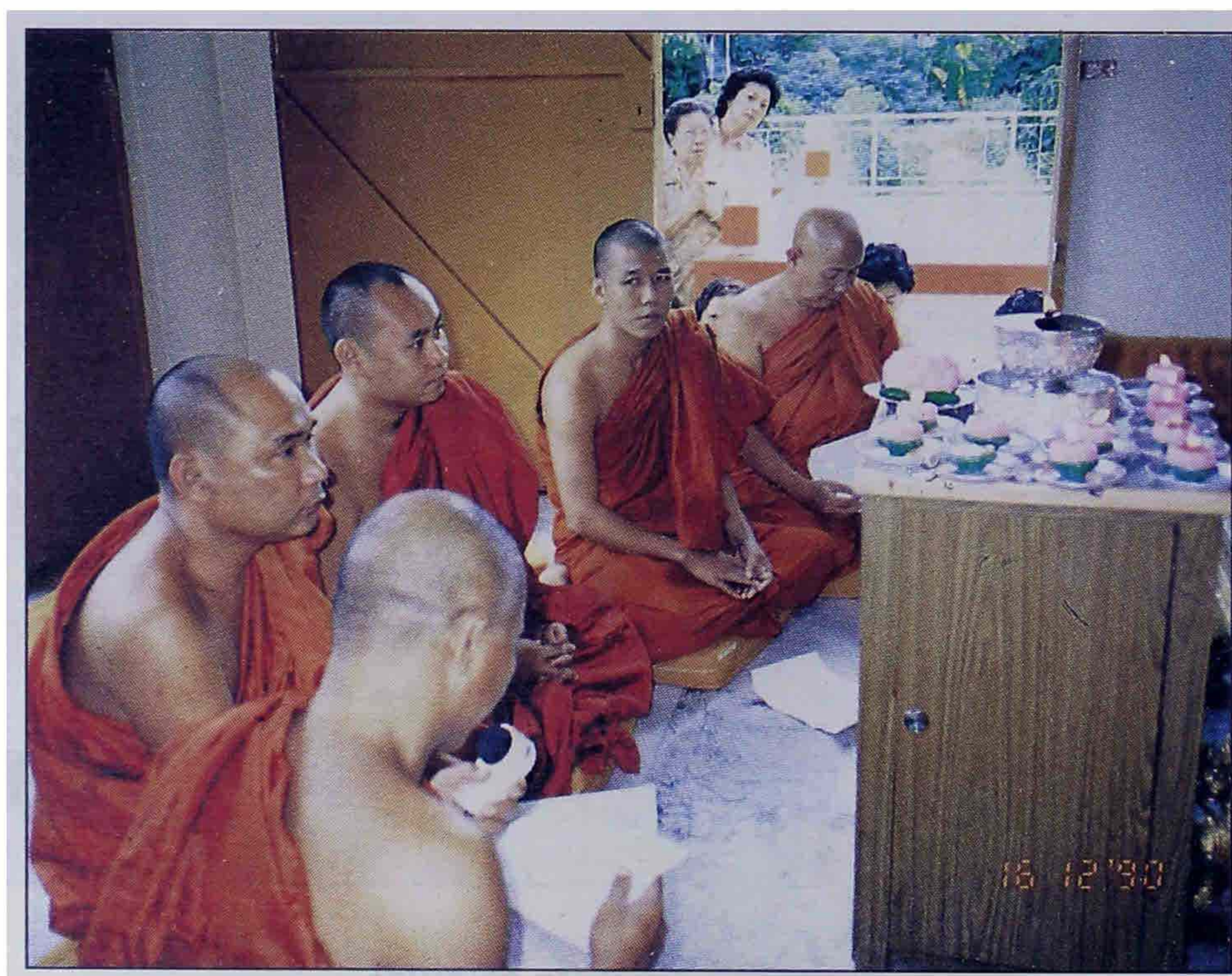
Arahant Upagutta festival

## Arahant Upagutta Shrine

Prior to 1976, the Arahant Upagutta Shrine was just a simple timber building supported on wooden stilts in the middle of a muddy water-lily pool. More often than not, wild grass had overgrown to such a thickness that the water-lily plants were weaned to almost extinction, and it was impossible then to see the fishes swimming in the pool.

However, despite the poor and crude conditions, the old Arahant Upagutta Shrine had been attracting many visiting devotees and became well-known as the “ Wishing pool.” This is due to the fact that many devotees had their wishes fulfilled after having made their vows before the Arahant Upagutta .

Being one of the special features of the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in Penang, the old Arahant Upagutta Shrine caught the attention of the present Chief Monk, Venerable U Pannavamsa for priority development. Through his painful efforts the wooden shrine and the muddy pool were transformed into the present magnificent structure. The reconstruction works commenced in 1975 and the concrete structures were completed in 1976. However, the decorative works and paintings took many additional months to complete by artists specially engaged from Burma and Thailand.



Chanting in the Arahant Upagutta shrine



The original Arahant Upagutta shrine



The present Arahant Upagutta shrine

## Discovery Of Ancient Deity

On Vesak Day of 1976 at about 2.00 p.m , a ceremony was conducted at the original Arahant Upagutta shrine. It was a small wooden building on stilts standing on a 20 feet by 30 feet pool. After the reciting of prayers, workmen began to demolish the building. At the later part of the day, excavation work commenced for the construction of the present Arahant pool. Later some workmen found a wooden idol buried about two metres deep in the ground. They called the Chief Monk to see the object. It was carefully taken out and washed. It revealed a Burmese wood carving of a deity which was partly damaged. As it is an ancient object which was unearthed from the temple ground, the Chief Monk had decided to have it repaired and repainted. It is now placed in the new Arahant Upagutta Shrine Hall.



Image of the ancient deity

## Surassati ( Medawgyi)

This Surassati is the deity who looked after the Tripitaka (the three baskets of Buddha's teachings).

People pay respect to this deity to fulfil their wishes. She possesses supernatural powers in the granting of wishes.

### STANZAS

Pali

Translation

OM . PITAKATTAYA SAMPUNNNAM ;  
SABBA SIDDHI SUKHA VAHAM ;  
JIVHAGGE ME NISIDITVA ;  
MAM DHARETU SURASSATI .

THE GODDESS OF SURASSATI  
REALIZED THE THREE  
BASKETS OF BUDDHA'S  
TEACHING AND BROUGHT THE  
ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ALL  
HAPPINESS.  
MAY SHE ABIDE AT THE TIP OF  
MY TONGUE AND ATTEND TO ME.



Image of Surassati



## Old Historical Temple Well

This well is just as old as the temple. Being the only source where drinkable water supply could be obtained in the early days, this well was very important to the temple as well as the local inhabitants staying near the temple. It has been in use until pipe water supply was introduced by the Penang Municipal Water Department in the late nineteenth century.

After the Second World War, the well was temporarily covered up by the temple authority and was almost forgotten.

It was during the Visit Penang Year in 1988 that the restoration of the old temple well was carried out. A brass plaque was put up for the benefit of visitors and tourists to the temple.

In 1990, the Management Committee installed an electric pump to the well. Now, it is also being used to water the plants and occasionally used to fill up the water of Arahant Upagutta pool during the dry seasons.



Old historical temple well

## **Historical Memorial Tableau - Visit Penang Year 1988**

The installation of our beautiful historical marble memorial tableau was made possible at a State “ Visit Penang Year Meeting ” in 1988. Through the State Special Features Committee under the chairmanship of Datuk Lim Chong Keat, fifteen new tourist destinations were identified for more focus and attention from both local and foreign tourists. Penang Development Corporation was the sponsor to set up the historical information boards on those new sites for tourists’ knowledge.

Initially our temple management committee was approached and the ball was set rolling for the construction of a proper historical memorial as our temple was the earliest Burmese temple ever built in Penang (1803). A donation of \$500 was made by the Penang Development Corporation for the project. The biggest contributor however, came from Lam Ah Marble Company. A special Italian marble piece was provided gratis by their directors for this particular purpose.

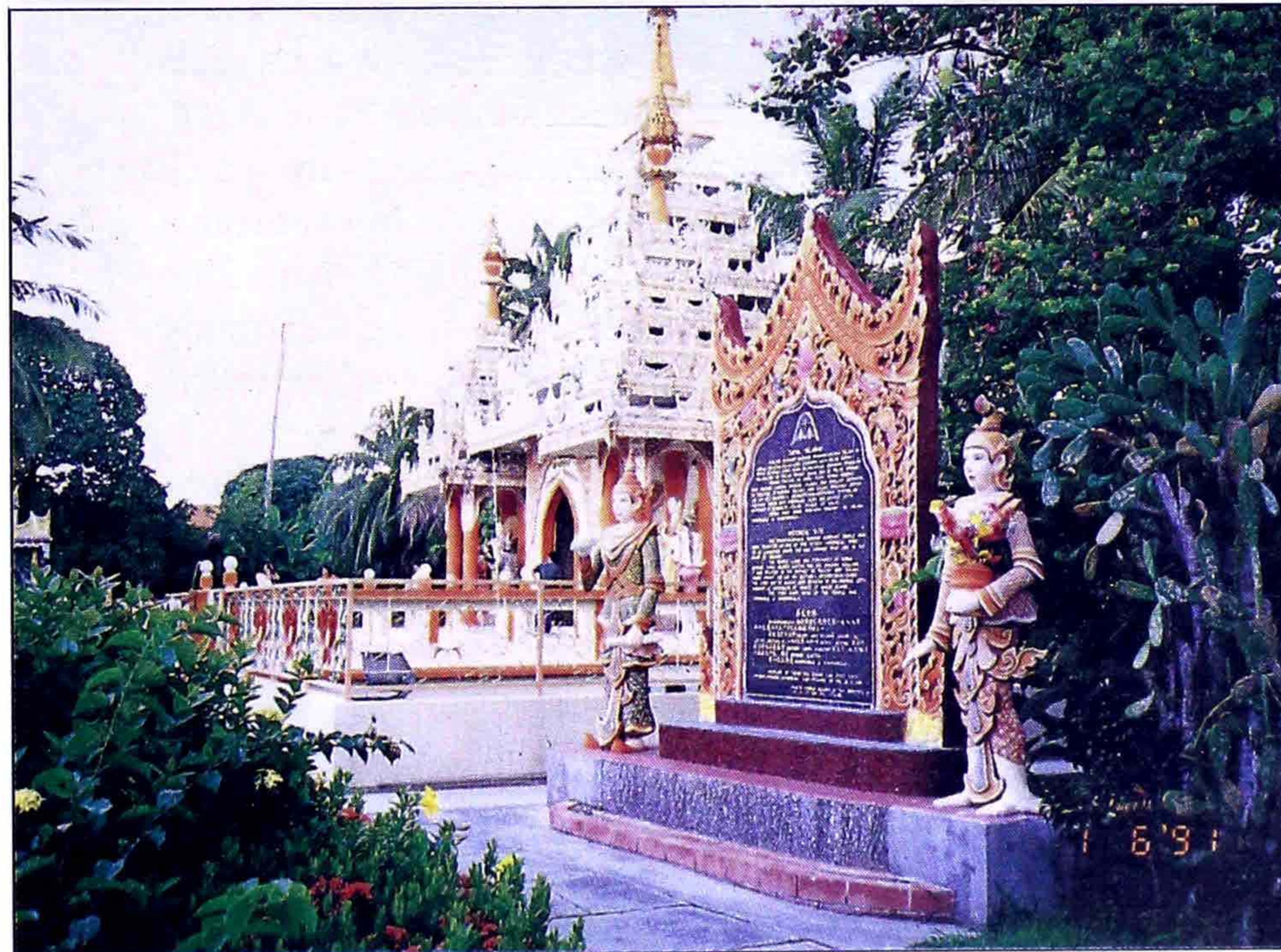
Arrangements were also finalised with Wat Chaiya Mangalaram to hold the opening ceremony of a historical poster together at the corner of Burmah Lane and Kelawei Road. His Honourable, Dr. Sak Cheng Lum, State Executive Councillor for tourism in Penang kindly graced the function. Other distinguished guests included Datuk Lim Chong Keat, Mr. Ong Ewe Teong, Chairman of our temple management committee , Mr. Sook Buranakol, Chairman of Wat Chaiya Mangalaram Management committee, our Chief Monk, Venerable Pannavamsa and Venerable Chow Khun Vithetdhamma-Nad the Chief Monk of Wat Chaiya Mangalaram and management committee members of both temples.

The historical marble memorial tableau was officially unveiled by His Honourable, Dr. Sak Cheng Lum.

In the subsequent months, a skilled Burmese sculptor was brought in by our Chief Monk to construct a deva and a devi on both sides to the memorial.



**Group photographs of Temple Management Committee and the distinguished guests**



Historical marble memorial tableau

## **New Building Projects**

It was in mid November, 1987 that the Chief Monk decided to develop the rear portion of the temple. The land has been left unused and is subjected to flooding during heavy rain. Devotees seldom venture beyond the kitchen area.

When the architect accepted to prepare the drawings for the temple, the Chief Monk formed two committees for the project namely the Fund Raising Committee under Mr. Chuah Ban San and the Technical Building Committee under Mr. Chew Keat Hoe. Without further delay both committees set to work.

The Building Plans were approved by the City Council on the 13th of June 1990. Tenders were called on the 16th of March 1991. Before work commenced, a ceremony was conducted at the site of the proposed double storey meditators building which was named “ Sila Bhavana Lodge ”. In the evening on the 27th of April, 1991 there was an oil-lamp lighting ceremony which was followed by Chanting of Parittas by Venerable Monks from various temples. Next morning on the 28th of April, 1991, a Foundation Stone-Laying Ceremony was conducted. Actual building work commenced on the 22nd of May, 1991.

The construction of the Vimal Dining Hall commenced on the 8th of September, 1991 Both buildings will be completed by early 1992.



All night oil-lamp lighting -  
commencement of laying of the foundation stone for  
the preceptees' and meditators' building



Laying Of The  
Foundation Stone For  
The Preceptees'  
Building



The All-night oil-lamp lighting at the new building site



The Sila Bhavana Lodge building under construction



Almost completed Sila Bhavana Lodge building

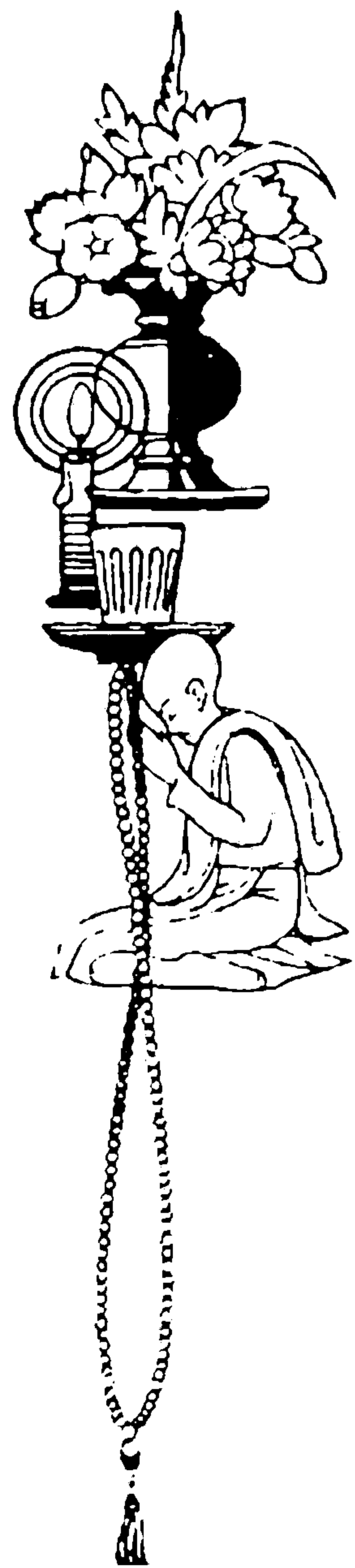


**SANGHA**

**AND**

**RELIGIOUS**

**CEREMONIES**



## Chief Monks of the Temple

The list of Chief Monks of Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in chronological order is as follows :-

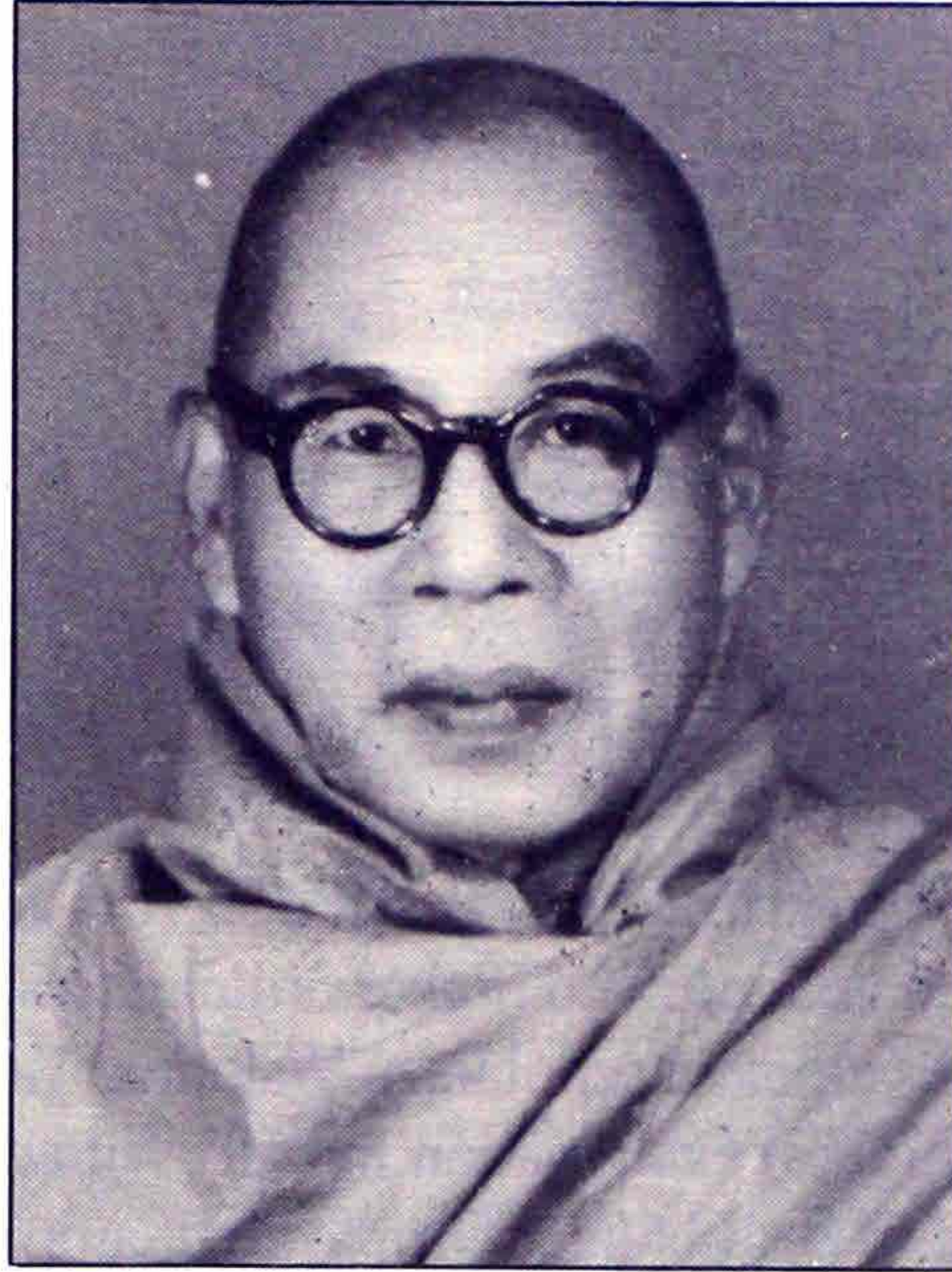
1st Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Nandamala	1803 - 1842 (39 yrs)
2nd Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Sutti	1842 - 1865 (23 yrs)
3rd Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Vicara	1865 - 1897 (32 yrs)
4th Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Nanavamsa	1897 - 1922 (25 yrs)
5th Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Jagara	1922 - 1957 (35 yrs)
6th Chief Monk	The late Venerable U Vimala	1957 - 1972 (15 yrs)
7th Chief Monk	Venerable U Pannavamsa	1972 - present

## VENERABLE U JAGARA



Venerable U Jagara was born in 1882 in Tavoy, Burma. At the age of 16, he became a Novice Monk. He took his Higher Ordination at the age of 20. After coming to Penang together with Venerable U Vimala in 1920, he became Chief Monk of Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in 1922. He passed away on 19th January, 1958 at the age of 76 years old.

## VENERABLE U VIMALA



Venerable U Vimala was born on 12th March 1890 in his native place of Tavoy in Burma. He became a novice monk at the age of 12. When he was 20 years old, he was ordained as a Bhikkhu (Buddhist monk). He studied Buddhism diligently under several well-known teachers.

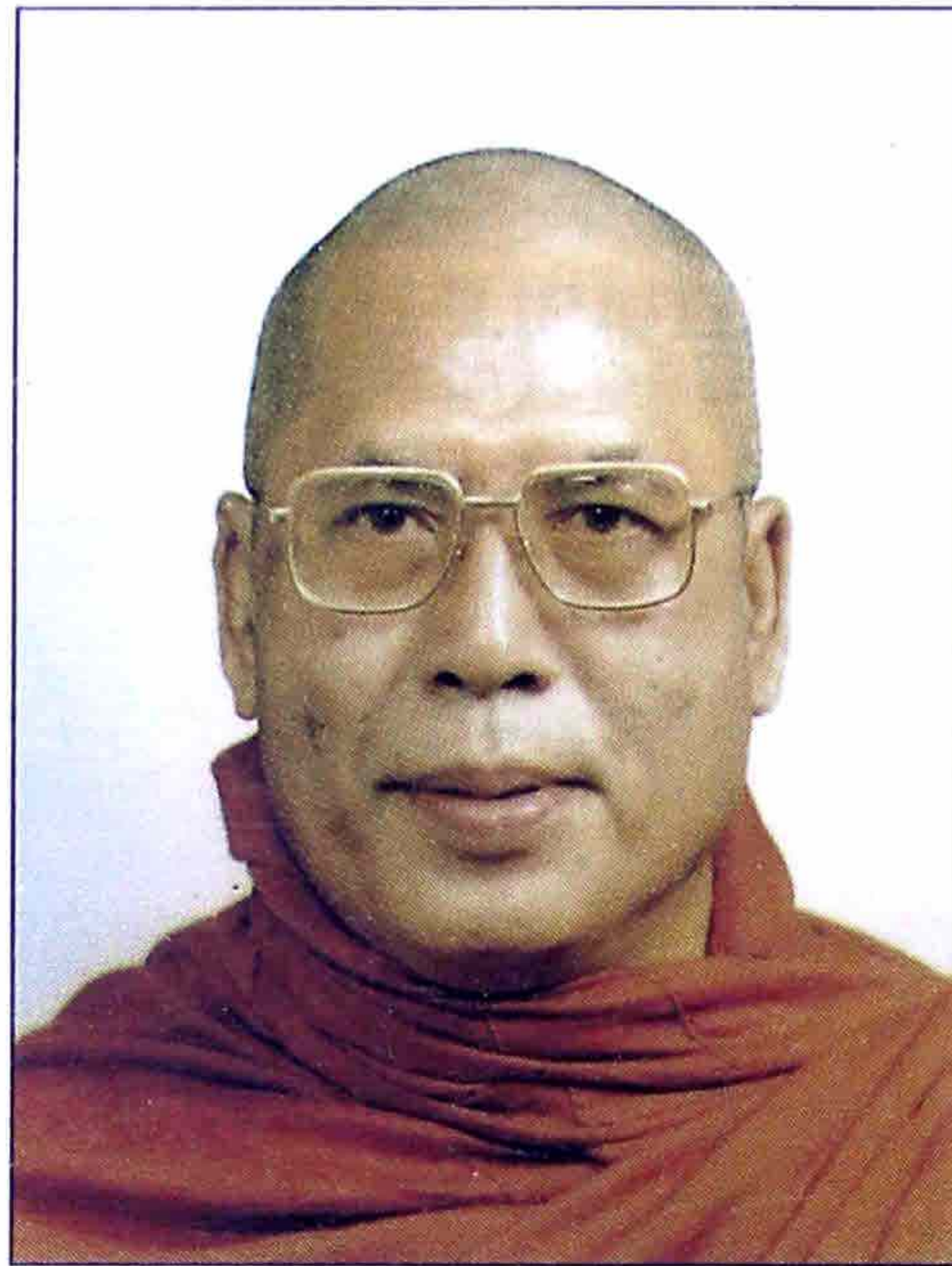
In 1919, he decided to leave Burma. He walked all the way from Tavoy to Bangkok. In Bangkok, he stayed in Wat Palote for some time.

The Chief Monk, Venerable U Nanavamsa of Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple Penang requested the Chief Monk of Wat Palote, Bangkok to send some monks to Penang to assist him.

The Chief Monk of Wat Palote sent two monks, Venerable U Jagara and Venerable U Vimala to Penang. Both of them came by walking from Bangkok to Penang though the railway facilities were already available at that time. They arrived at Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in 1920.

He carried out his missionary duties devotedly in Penang and became Chief Monk in 1957. He passed away on 14th October 1972.

## VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA



Venerable U Pannavamsa was born at Wakema, Burma, on 10th January, 1928. He was ordained as a novice at the age of fourteen and received higher ordination as Bhikkhu in 1948. He studied Pali and Buddhism under various eminent scholars in Wakema, Yandoon and Mandalay. In 1953, he passed Dhammacariya, the highest examination in Pali, with distinction. The government of Burma awarded him the degree of Sasanadhaja Siripavaradhammacariya. Later he was selected by the government of Burma for missionary work in Coco Island and later went to Sri Lanka. After that he went to the Andaman Islands, India, to reside and perform missionary works. He successfully organised and founded the Andaman Buddhist Mission and undertook the teaching of Buddhism and meditation. In 1963, he was selected by the government of Burma to perform the missionary work of the South India Buddhist Association with its headquarters in Madras. He was empowered to supervise thirteen branches of Buddhist missionaries in Southern India.

Venerable U Pannavamsa served as a lecturer at the Aungmingalasiddhi monastery, Rangoon, from 1965 to 1969. He was selected by the Government of the Union of Burma to succeed the resident Chief Monk of the Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang, Malaysia. During his stay in Malaysia from 1970 - 1979, he served as a religious adviser to the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia and as chief examiner of the Malaysian Buddhist examination syndicate. He founded the Sunday Buddhist Institute there, an organisation for the study of Buddhism and meditation. At the end of 1979, he went to Los Angeles, California, and successfully established the Burma Buddhist Monastery there. At that time he also became a lecturer in Abhidhamma at the University of Oriental Studies, Los Angeles. The Venerable was selected as vice-president of the Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California.

In view of Venerable U Pannavamsa's tireless effort and support, the International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation was successfully founded on the full moon day of May 1985 in Penang, Malaysia. On 14th June 1985, the Venerable U Pannavamsa organized a Buddhist Association to build a new temple by the request of the Buddhist community in Singapore.

In 1986, the Venerable U Pannavamsa founded a new Buddhist monastery in Sydney, Australia. A year later in 1987, a new Buddhist Temple in Chicago, U.S.A was founded. Following this, another Temple in Toronto, Canada, known as The Mahadhammika Buddhist Temple was established.



## ***Vesak Celebration***



The word “ Vesak ” is the short form of “ Vesakha”. It is in fact the name of a Buddhist month but as a festival it falls on the full-moon (fifteenth) day of the said lunar month which usually comes in the month of May. Vesak is celebrated as the most sacred day for the Buddhist all over the world. It is also the Thrice-sacred Day, commemorating the Birth, the Enlightenment and the Final Passing (Maha-parinibbana) of The Buddha.

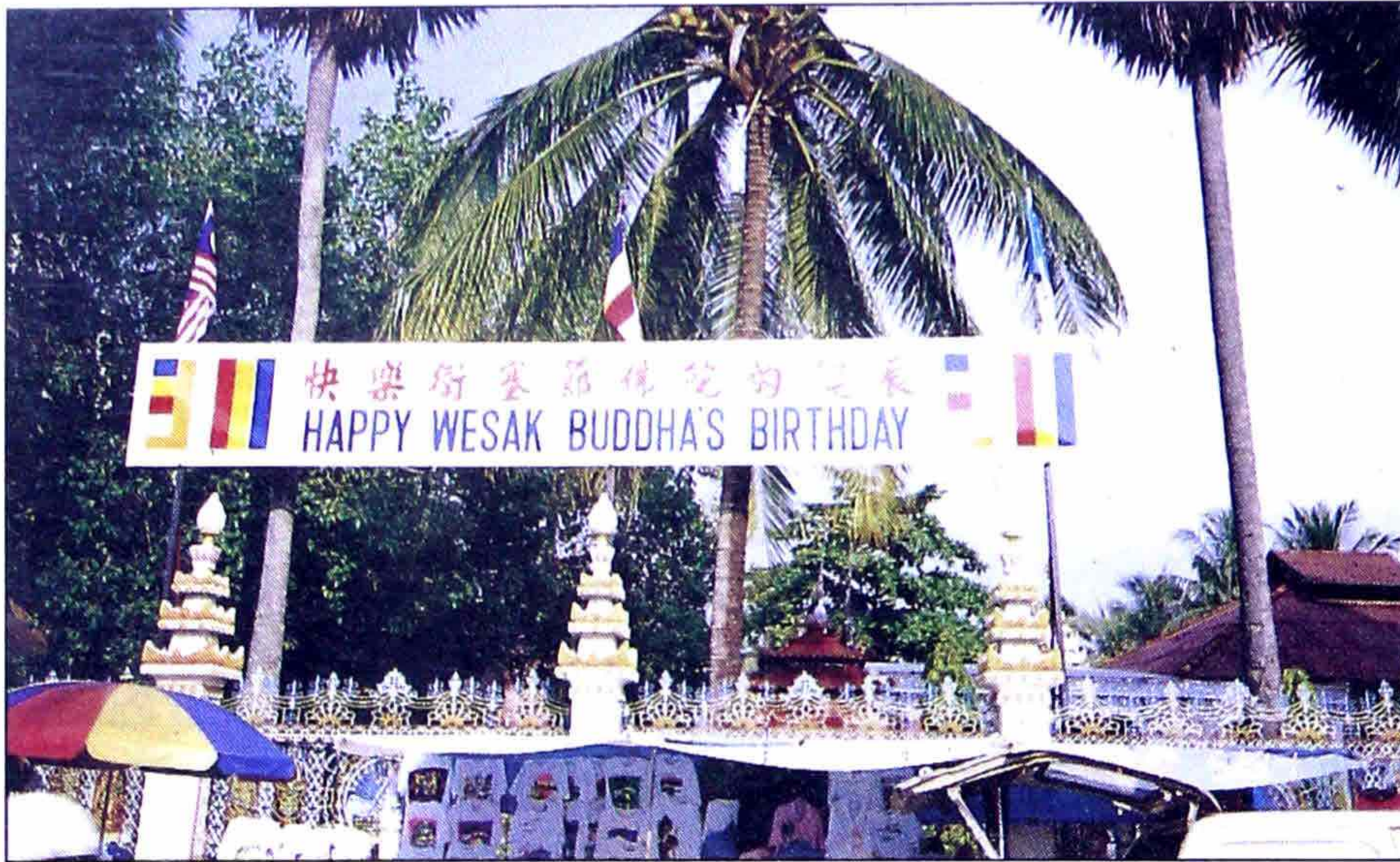
During the Buddhist Era (B.E) 2500, an International Buddha Jayanti (Buddha’s Victory) celebration was organised and it was officially recognised, among other things, that Vesak be celebrated as the Thrice Sacred Day of the Buddhist and that efforts were made to uphold the practice of Dhamma in its purity. In conjunction with this theme and effort, Chattha Sanghayana (Sixth Buddhist Council) was held in Burma to recite and revise the Buddha’s teachings (Dhamma) to restore it to its pristine purity and long-lasting preservation. Everywhere else Vesak was celebrated on a grand scale the world over.

It is during Vesak that Buddhist are especially full of joyous veneration and devotion. Every Buddhist temple and shrine will be gaily decorated with the six-coloured Buddhist flags (symbolic of the Buddha’s aura) when he meditated on the Patthana (Conditional Relationship) section of the Abhidhamma (Buddhist Higher Teachings), bantings and lanterns/lights. The devotees throng the temples and shrines, taking with them flowers, fruits, candles, jossticks and other things in the hands to offer the Buddha as their token of respect and gratitude. Many devotees observe and practise precepts and meditation more seriously in their respective level. Many acts of charity and public social services, such as visiting the old folks homes, spastic children centres, hospitals and orphanages, are performed at that period.

Holding of Dhamma talks (Buddhist Lectures) are also an important part of the Vesak celebrations. The talks usually touch on the significance of Vesak and other Dhamma qualities for the devotees to learn and practise; such as generosity, compassion, loving-kindness and other noble selfless services. In their home shrine, the Buddhists are also busy cleaning and decorating them befitting the occasion - duly spruced up with new fresh flowers, fruits, jossticks and candles or any other coloured lights, giving inspirations of religious joy and upliftment. In every Buddhist Temple will be held Blessing services for universal harmony and world peace.

In Penang, Vesak celebration has a long history and is said to have been held in the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple and the opposite Wat Chaiyamanglaram Buddhist Temple in Burma Lane. Early Vesak celebrations were organised and keenly participated by Buddhist who came from especially Ceylon, Siam and Ava all ancient names for Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma respectively.

Vesak in Penang is now celebrated on a grand scale, with a mammoth procession with thousands of Buddhist in participation and many thousands more lined-up spectators alongside the route which winds through the capital city of Georgetown on Vesak night. It is an awe-inspiring and popular event held annually, much anticipated by the Buddhist devotees, festive-loving friends and tourists.



Vesak celebration held at the temple

Float for Vesak procession



Decorated Buddha float for the Vesak procession

## **Soon Dawgyi (Offerings To The Buddha)**

The Festival of Lights also known as Soon Dawgyi is celebrated on the Full Moon Day of Assayuja or October. This day is of special significance to the Buddhist, not because it is the last day of the Buddhist Lent, but because it highlights one of the most important event of the Buddha's life.

During the seventh rainy season after His Enlightenment, the Buddha went to the Tavatimsa Heaven to preach Abhidhamma (Higher Teaching) to His mother and other gods. His mother who died seven days after His Birth had been reborn as a god by the name of Santussita. On the Full Moon Day of October, the Buddha descended to earth at the city of Sankassa, now known as Sankisha-Basantapur Etah district, Uttara Pradesh in North India.

According to Buddhist chronicle, the Buddha came down by a triple flight of stairs, the central one being overlaid with gems, and flanked by two others, the one finished in gold and the other in silver, all done by the gods themselves at the behest of Sakka, the lord of Tavatimsa Heaven.

The Buddha was accompanied by a multitude of brahmas (higher celestial beings) and devas, all in their celestial robes but the resplendent glory of the Buddha, surpassing their radiance, lighted up the whole firmament. The whole earth bound procession was seen by the human, deva-loka (lower heaven) and twenty of the brahma-loka (Higher heaven) which were made visible to them by the Buddha's spiritual powers (loka vivarana patihariya)

The Festival of Lights marks this important event, and the illumination of a myriad of candles, oil lamps, electric and neon lights, lanterns and also balloons rising skywards, in all colours and shapes human beings can contrive, are in respectful memory of that marvellously brilliant night our ancestors witnessed 2500 years ago.

This important event forms a favourite motif in Buddhist art. Sankassa, because of this sacred association, comes to be an important place of pilgrimage. History has recorded that the famous Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hshien and Yuan Chwang visited this holy place and left with interesting accounts of the important shrines, stupas and monasteries built there in the heyday of Buddhism.

In the presence of His former mother and other gods, the Buddha propounded Abhidhamma for the first time. So, the Festival of Lights has a two-fold significance. The illuminations are not merely physical in nature, they denote the preaching of Abhidhamma which gives intellectual and spiritual light to many beings, human and celestial, ever since that memorable visit of the Buddha to the Tavatimsa Heaven.

The Buddhist Pali canon has three main divisions:

- (1) Vinaya which deals with the discipline of the members - male as well as female of the Buddha's Order ,
- (2) Sutta which deals with the discourses of the Buddha ,
- (3) and Abhidhamma which deals with the Ultimate Things .



According to Buddhism, the Abhidhamma is the domain proper of Buddhas (Buddha-visaya) and its initial conception in the Buddha Gotama's mind took place in the fourth of the seventh week. The Buddha dwelt in Abhidhamma thought during the entire week as a result of which His body for the first time became radiant and shed six coloured rays, when he reflected on the Patthana - Conditional Relationship, which are now represented by the authorised Buddhist banner.

What is meant by Abhidhamma ? Abhidhamma is a philosophy in as much as it deals with the most general causes and the principles which govern all things. It is also an ethical system because it enables one to realise the ultimate goal, Nibbana. And because it deals with the working of the mind, with thought processes and mental factors, it is also a system of psychology. Abhidhamma is therefore generally translated as the Psycho-ethical-philosophy of Buddhism.

In the Abhidhamma Pitaka all the basic doctrines of Buddhism are systematically elucidated from the philosophical, psychological and physiological standpoint.

In " Our Knowledge of External World " Bertrand Russel writes : " A complete description of the existing world would require not only a catalogue of things, but also a mention of all their qualities and relations."

It is interesting to note that the first book of Abhidhamma, the Dhammasangani contains a systematical " catalogue of things " together with their qualities, or better, " functions " and the last book, the Patthana, treats of the relations or the conditionality of these things.

In the Abhidhamma, vigilant students will meet with most valuable contributions not only to the theoretical understanding but also to the practical realisation of the Buddhist doctrine. Although the highest Buddhist goal is Nibbana or the attainment of the cessation of suffering or unsatisfactoriness associated with the ever-recurring lives in this mundane world, peace of mind is certainly the immediate concern of those caught in the "madding crowd's ignoble strife ". The understanding and the practice of the Buddha Dhamma will surely give them peace of mind right here and now.

On this festive occasion, children and adults go to pagodas, monasteries and temples to make offerings of light, flowers and alms. It is a religious festivity, a social custom and a thanksgiving occasion all rolled into one so that this is indeed a joyous occasion noted for lights, flowers and alms.

May this bright, beautiful and blissful festival prevail for a long time to come! May the Buddha Dhamma illumine our minds and give us peace of mind and peace in this world !





Soon Dawgyi (Offerings to the Buddha)

# Kathina Celebration

The last day of the rainy season brings the annual Kathina celebration which provides an opportunity for the Buddhist to earn the highest merits in the eyes of The Buddha. These merits are attained in the donation of the Kathina robes and other requisites to the Sangha (Community of Buddhist monks). Kathina is a Pali word denoting an enduring wholesome state, which is attained from the praise of The Buddha and the noble ones.

## Historical Account

Kathina was first permitted by The Buddha out of profound compassion for the thirty monks of Bhaddavaggi royalty. These monks were all Ariyas but not yet Arahants who undertook dutanga (an ascetic practice). They started walking from their native city of Pava to the city of Savatthi, where they wished to pay homage to The Buddha who was staying at the Anathapindika's monastery in the Jeta Grove.

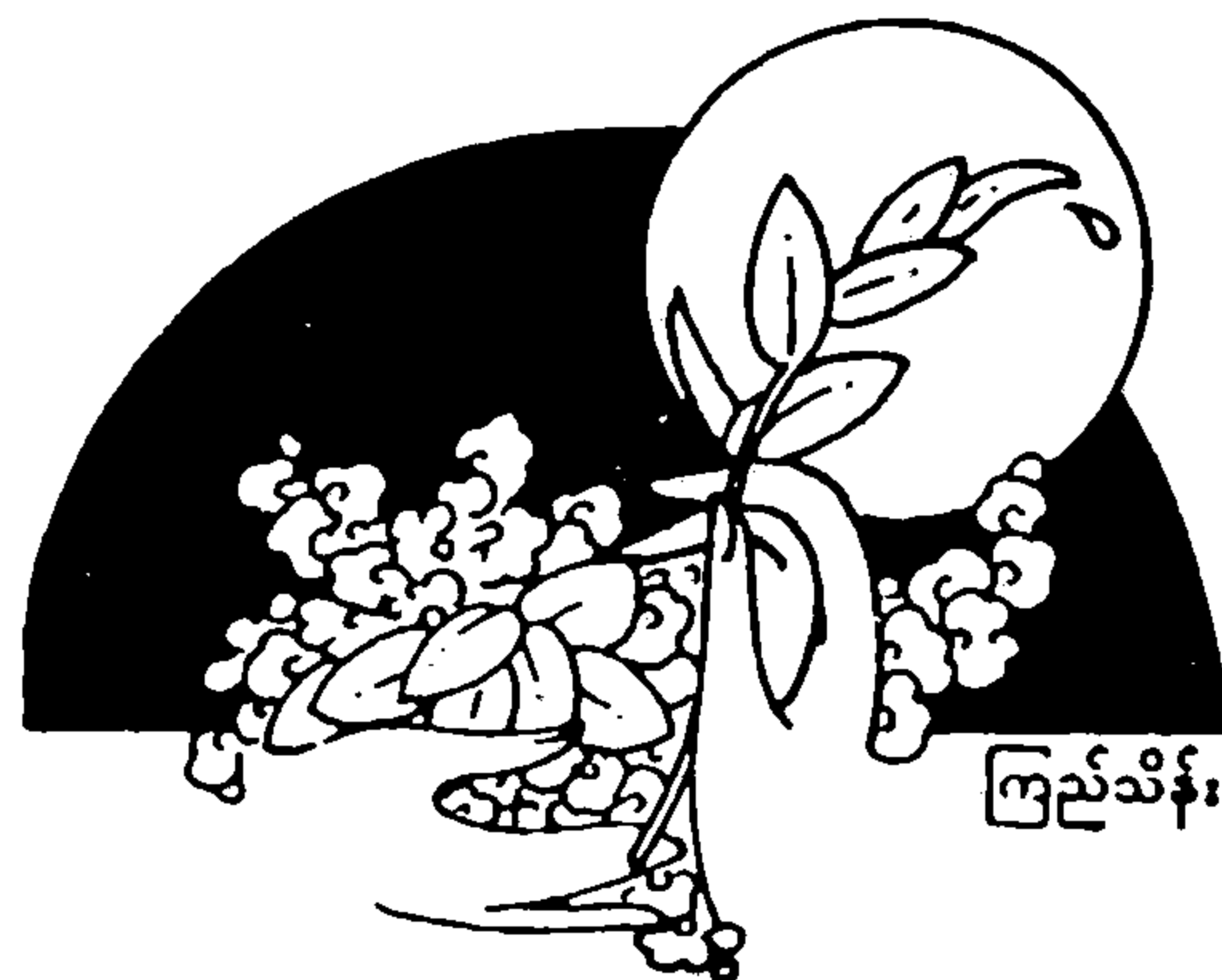
However, they were unable to reach Savatthi for the beginning of Waso, (the monsoon or rainy season). Travel by the Buddhist monks were drastically limited during this season, so they resided at Saketa for the observance of the Buddhist lent for three months. After the last day of the lent or the rainy season, the monks continued on their journey.

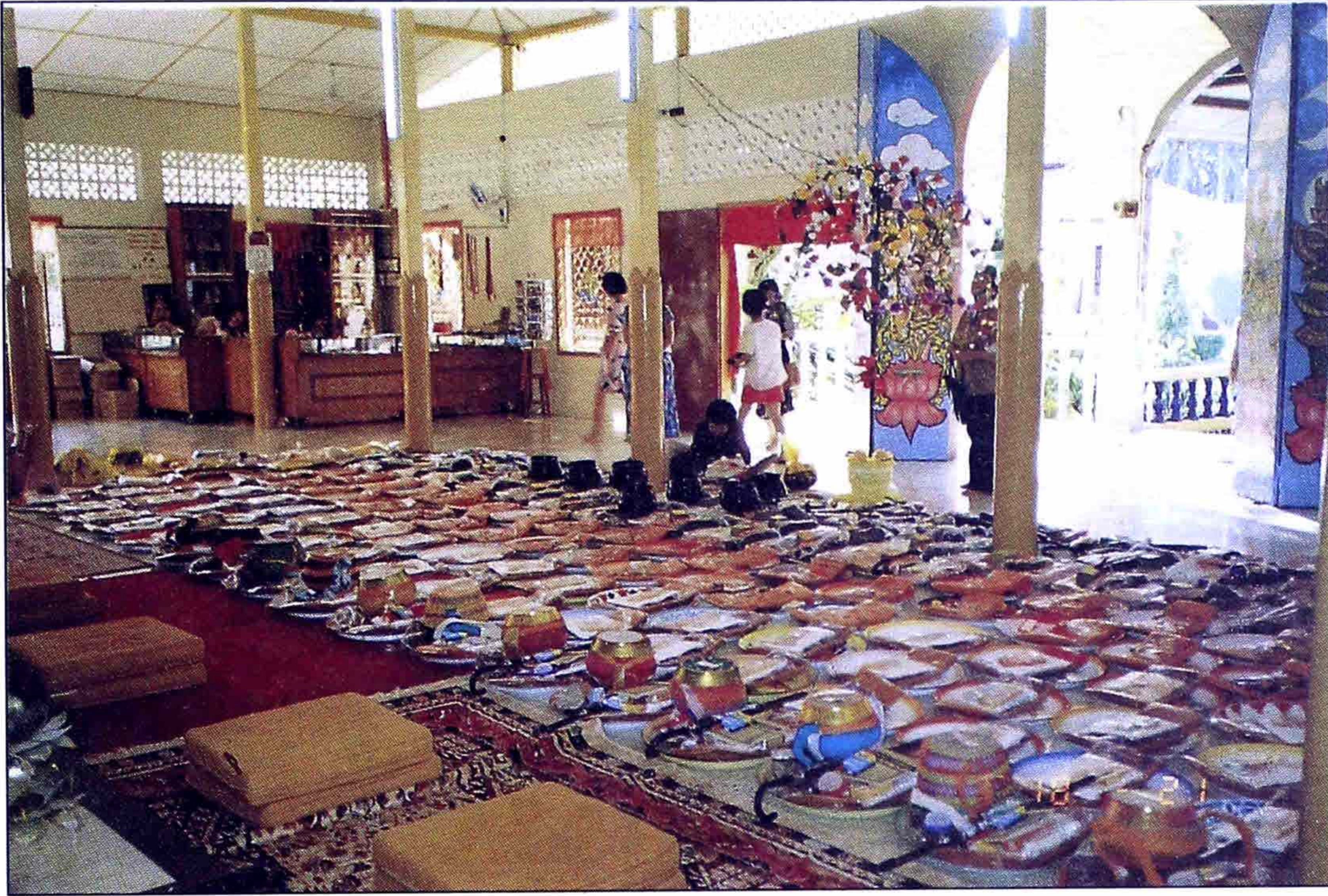
As part of their ascetic practice, these monks were not allowed to have many robes. They were allowed three robes only, which were the under, upper and double. The robes they wore, soaked up water and mud from many rivers and puddled fields which they crossed on their way in the heavy rains. They eventually arrived at Savatthi and wearing their soiled robes, paid their respect to The Buddha.

Aware of the hardships endured by the monks, The Buddha was moved by profound compassion to better their situation. He thus permitted his devotees to attain a great merit by offering Kathina-robes to the Sangha between the full-moon day marking the end of the rainy season and the next full moon day. This period overlaps the months of October and November.

## Significance

Buddhism recognizes many kinds of Dana (Meritorious acts). Generally, the merits accrue to the donor only. The Kathina-dana - the offering of Kathina robes is unique in that it produces lasting benefits for both the donor and the recipient of the acts of merit. The Kathina-dana is the only act of merit in Buddha-sasana that the donor can perform in the interests of the monks, providing relief, exemption and exoneration from provisions of Vinaya-discipline. Thus the Kathina-dana earns considerable praise from the Noble Ones, especially The Buddha.





Union Kathina



Union Kathina procession



Union Kathina



Sanghikadana



Offering to the Sangha

# The Water Festival

The Water Festival is annually celebrated in the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple since the temple was founded. In the Pali language the Water Festival is known as “ SANKANTA” or in Sanskrit it is called “ SANKRANTA ” whilst in Burmese it is called “THANKYAN” which means changing from one place to another. This festival is usually celebrated in the month of April of each year.

According to the book “SURIYA SIDDHANTA” - The Astrological Manual also mentions the twelve months making up the year. During this period the sun also travels in the twelve signs of the Zodiac stopping at each month completing the cycle round taking three hundred and sixty five days six hours, twelve minutes and thirty five seconds to do so. In doing so, there is the first change from the completion of the twelve round .

It brings the new year for celebrating the occasion with much happiness and joy. In Buddhist countries many people celebrate the festival by performing wholesome actions like practising charity, observing precepts and contemplating meditation. The bathing of the Buddha image is symbolic of a purifying act, some eagerly offer candles, lamps, josticks, flowers and fruits in the Buddhist temples and shrines in their striving to do good for that special day. These wholesome actions may be performed by an individual or in a group.

Therefore, in the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple, this festival is an annual affair and is preceded by a dana (performing charity ). This is followed by a Buddhist sermon/lecture whereby some aspects of the Dhamma (Buddha’s teachings) are expounded to a big crowd of devotees. Then comes the bathing of the Buddha image in a specially erected pavillion, where there is a big jar of scented water filled with fresh flower petals. The Buddhist monks first bathe the Buddha image with the said scented water and are followed by the devotees and laities.

After this, the enthusiasm of the jovial crowd can no longer be contained. The showering of water onto each other to usher in the New Year has commenced. The more elderly and well mannered usually ask for forgiveness (if not already done so) and say some auspicious greetings, before they splash one another with water. Water is symbolic of merits, showering and sharing with each other to cool down their defilements.

The merry making is further highlighted by a team of tom-tom beaters, who encourage the people in the festive crowd to dance and sway to the rythm of their drums.

By late evening the revellers in the temple become tired and exhausted usually terminating their celebration with the washing of the Temple used by them. So ends the festival, the revellers tired but happy, hoping for a better next year.





Human “water buffalo”  
during water festival  
celebration

The elderly  
devotees doing the  
rambong







Splashing time during water festival celebration

# Ordination Of Buddhist Monk

In Buddhism, ordination of Buddhist monks is always regarded as a special event of a Buddhist monastery. In accepting ordination to become a Buddhist monk, he is actually deciding a positive change in his life - from the home to a homeless life of a recluse.

What really happens in a Buddhist ordination that makes it so special and important? Let us now see it in the following aspects : -

## 1. Physical outlook

- a) he has to have his head shaved and also his beard and moustache ,
- b) he has to give up his layman's attire or clothes,
- c) he has to wear the saffron robes of a Buddhist monk.

## 2. Activities

- a) he must be prepared to live harmoniously in the temple,
- b) he must be actively interested in studying and later in teaching the Buddha- Dhamma,
- c) he must be prepared to learn and practise Buddhist meditation,
- d) he must be prepared to give selfless service to the Sangha when needed and to devotees of his temple,
- e) he should try to accomplish much in his practice of meditation,
- f) he should try to help in cleaning and maintaining the room and temple he resides.

Granted that he has convinced himself by accepting the above-mentioned conditions he still has to procure the eight requisites of a monk which are

- 1) the Double Robe (for Higher Ordination only)
- 2) the Upper Robe
- 3) the Under Robe
- 4) the Almsbowl
- 5) the Razor
- 6) the Needle (and thread)
- 7) the Belt
- 8) the Water Strainer (sieve)

Equiped with these items, he is ready to be initiated as a Buddhist monk if accepted by the Chief Monk of a monastery. He will be duly told about the two kinds of ordination for Buddhist monks, viz that of a novice (samanera) monk and that of the Higher Ordained monk (Bhikkhu). To qualify for be Higher Ordination one must be at least twenty years of age. The novice monk is expected to observe Ten Precepts whilst the Higher Ordained monk (Bhikkhu) will undertake to observe the Two Hundred and Twenty Seven Precepts.

After obtaining permission from his parents or guardian the layman proceeds to the monastery on the appointed day and time usually accompanied by his parents or guardian, family, relatives, friends and temple devotees. Then, the Chief Monk as well as other monks will take part in the ordination ceremony. At that time the monk to be is expected to recite softly and meditate on the first of the constituent parts of the body namely the hair of the head, body hair, nails, teeth and skin as he is being shaved. This leads to his reflection that these parts are mere filth, as regards colour, shape, smell and location. After having his head shaved and washed he then squats on the ground floor

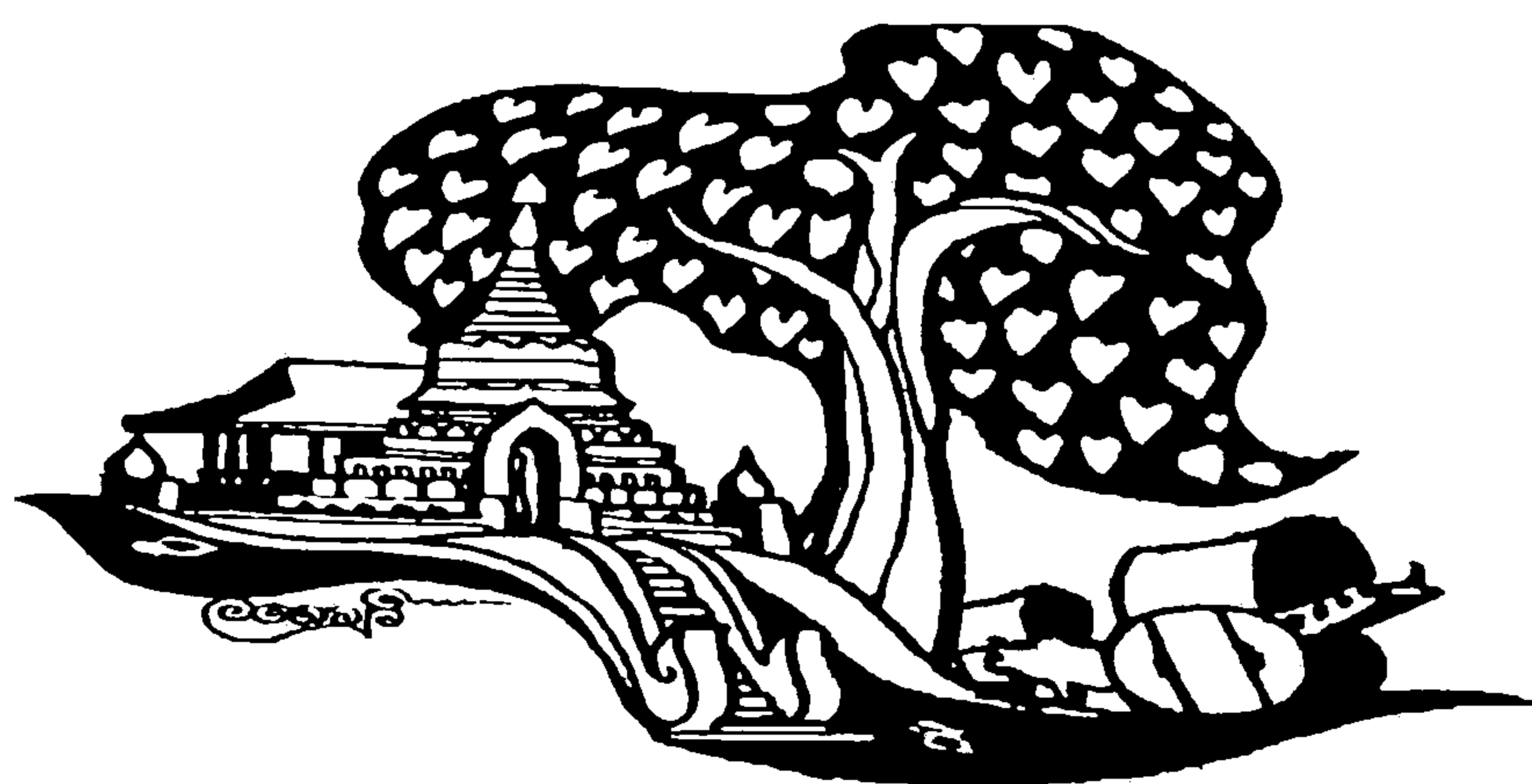
with palms folded together, he hands over the yellow robe to the Chief Monk and requests to be initiated as a monk; reciting the formula in the Pali language. Following this he again recites another formula three times to beg the Chief Monk to return his yellow robe so that he is ordained as a monk.

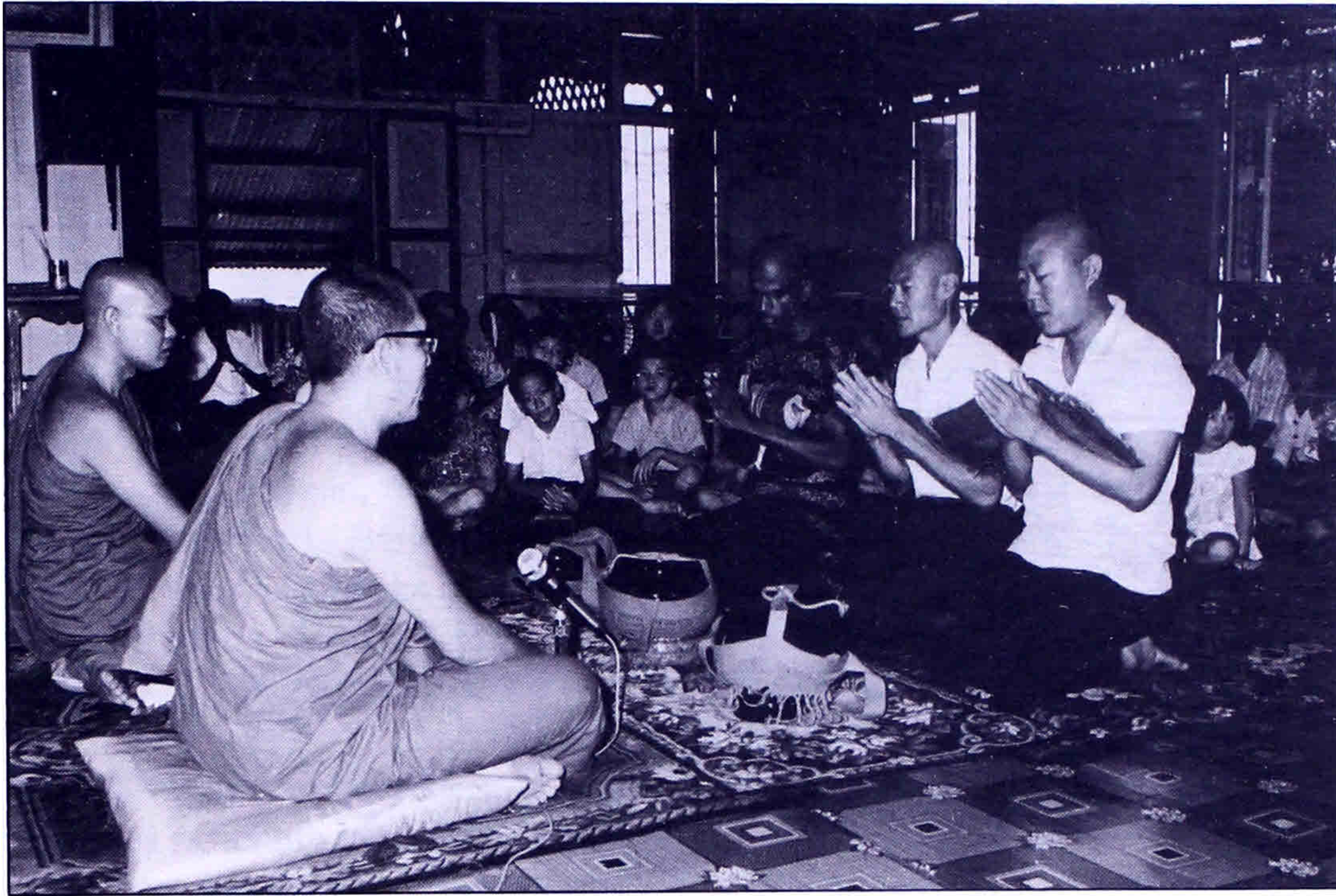
After having received and put on the yellow robe, the new monk takes Refuge in the Three Jewels and the Ten Precepts for the Novice Monk whilst the Higher Ordained monk will have to observe Two Hundred and Twenty Seven Precepts. In the next step of the ceremony the new monk recites yet again another formula to the senior monk to become his Preceptor/Teacher, who will usually and kindly exhorts him to behave well in order to inspire respect and fulfil the three-fold Teaching (that is, Pariyatti= learning, Patipatti = practising and Pativedha = realisation)

The new monk promises to act according to his preceptor's advice. In accordance with the practice laid down by the Buddha, it is normal of the Preceptor to excuse the new monk for performing certain duties as a disciple to enable him (new monk) to learn the Text and practise the Dhamma.

The Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple has also its fair share of performing Ordination Ceremony since its inauguration way back in 1803. Many have been ordained in this Temple and there will be many more to come. Some have come again and again to be ordained for as many as five times but it is hoped that one day some may stay on permanently and happily as monks even if it is just to carry on the Buddhist tradition. Although the ordination to become a monk is not compelled to be a life-long one, every encouragement should be given to a prospective novice (especially local) monk, to stay on as long as he wishes if not for life.

The Buddhist monk's ordination have always been dramatic and fascinating because of the instant change you see in a person. Devotees and tourists alike often take keen interest in the ordination of monk (especially western tourists who are ever-ready to record it on film). Finally, you can say that ordination is like recruitment of Buddhist monks and therefore we must ensure that Buddhist ordination remain often and popular, so that there will be no shortage of Buddhist monks. It is now a periodical affair taking place several times within a short period.





Lay devotees taking the precepts to become novice monks



Novice monks paying respect to the Chief Monk



Devotees offering of alms food and other requisites  
to the Chief Monk

## International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation

In May 1985 a group of 13 Burmese Sayadaws (Buddhist monks) representing 7 countries met in Penang, Malaysia to establish the International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation. These Sayadaws were representative of many Burmese Buddhist monks living outside Burma in order to teach the Buddha-Dhamma to people in many different parts of the world. It was an historical event for these Burmese monks meeting together for the first time to discuss their activities, share their experiences and to establish this organisation so that they could continue to work together.

There are many Burmese monks who have lived for many decades abroad. Even though some of them have had to face many problems and difficulties in their work, they still remain in their adopted countries dedicating their lives to working for the Buddha-Dhamma and for the preservation of the tradition and monasteries. Yet few people, even few Burmese, realise that these monks exist and are so dedicated to their work. Countries in which these Sayadaws are active include India, Japan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the UK and the USA. Some have been living abroad for over fifty years preserving Theravada Buddhism in the Buddhist tradition and its monasteries. It is most important that the lives and works of these monks be publicised so that others, both now and in the future, can share in their responsibilities, enabling the Buddha-Dhamma to continue and to spread over the centuries.

This was the reason behind the setting-up of the 'International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation' which was officially established on the 3rd of May 1985, Vesak full moon day in Penang, Malaysia. The meeting was sponsored through the generous dana (gift) of the devotees of the Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang, Malaysia.

Devotees of the Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang were present at the first part of the meeting, where Mr. Ong Ewe Teong, the then Chairman of the Temple Management Committee, delivered the welcome address on behalf of the Temple.

Another meeting was held on the 5th of May 1985, at the Bellevue Hotel, Penang Hill, Penang where the Committee Members were elected: President Sayadaw U Vepulla (Japan), Vice Presidents Sayadaw U Nyanika (Thailand) and Sayadaw U Jagarabhivamsa (India), Hon. Secretary Sayadaw U Pannavamsa (U.S.A/Penang) and others.



International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organisation



**TEMPLE**

**DEVOTEES**

**AND**

**THEIR**



**ACTIVITIES**

## Meditation Course

The early Meditation Course was organised by our Chief Monk, the Venerable U Pannavamsa in the beginning of the 1970s, in the Temple premises due to the request by the devotees. But like most educational and practical night courses, the beginning was always enthusiastic which normally lasted for some period, but then gradually dwindled. The 'ON' and 'OFF' Meditation Courses did not survive well, until the beginning of 1987 when the younger generation of devotees began to swell in number, and interest in Buddhist Meditation were again re-activated. Fresh request was made by the young and also old devotees to our Chief Monk, the Venerable U Pannavamsa to conduct a new Meditation course in the old Main Shrine Hall.

So, in March 1987, the new Meditation Course was formed with a large number of members. The course was conducted on every Wednesday night from 8.00 p.m. to 8.45 p.m. by our Venerable U Pannavamsa and followed by his enlightening lectures on Meditation or the expounding of the Dhamma. In the absence of our Chief Monk, a Resident Monk would act on his behalf.

The mode of practice taught by our Chief Monk was the combination of the Samatha (i.e. Calmness) and Vipassana (i.e. Insight) based on Anapanasati (i.e. Mindfulness of Breathing). The method is to first focus one's attention on the breathing-in and the breathing-out, where the air strikes at the tip of the nostrils or on the upper lip. After having thus gained the concentration, one has to be mindful of the movement of air conscientiously. If the mind wanders during meditation, it should be guided back until a good level of serenity is achieved, and with this as the basis, the meditator can then switch on to the insight (Vipassana) meditation.

The members of the Meditation Course continued to practise enthusiastically. The meditation group also lent their support to propagate the Dhamma by publishing books and newsletters containing meditation articles for free distribution. Under the guidance of the Venerable U Pannavamsa, the 'Manual of Buddhist Ordination' was published in the middle of 1989 by the "Samatha- Vipassana Meditation Group, Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple", Penang, Malaysia.

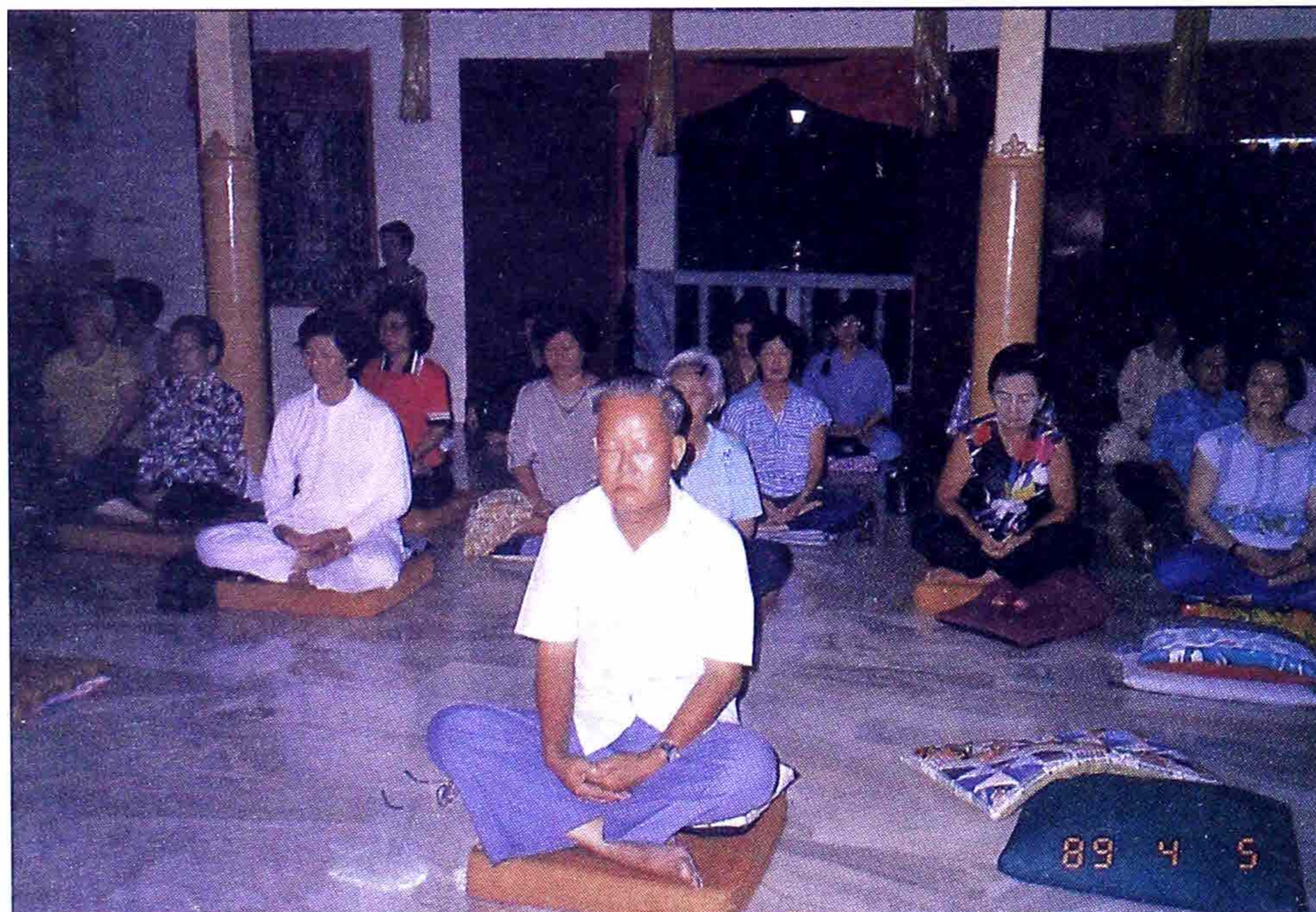
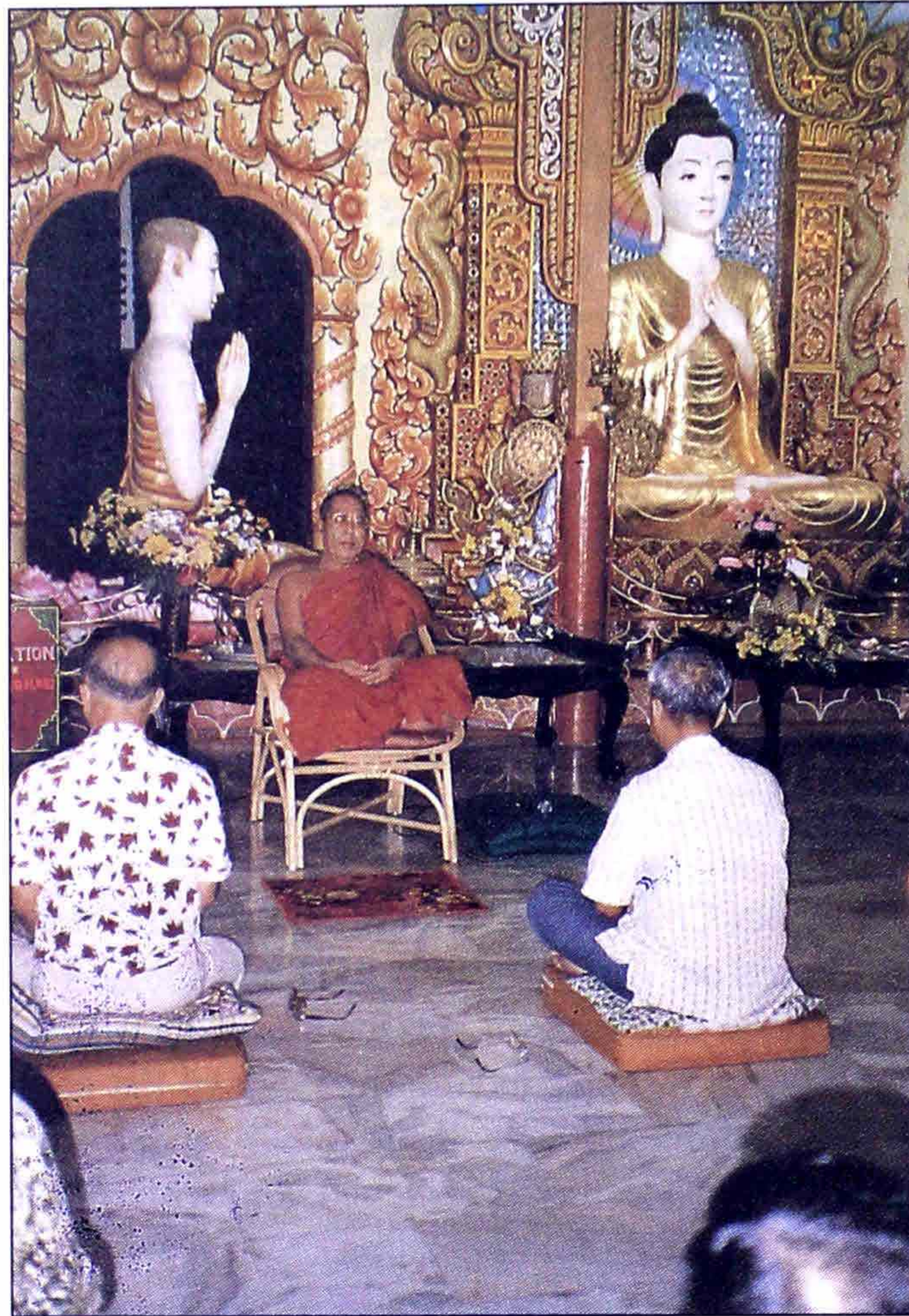
In December 1988, under the direction of the Chief Monk, the Meditators Welfare Fund Committee was also formed with him as the Spiritual Director and Patron, and the Ven. U Karunika to act on his behalf during his absence. The purpose of such an organisation is to see to the welfare and fellowship of the members. By June, 1989, the Welfare Fund has a good response, and up till the present, still remains healthy.

The object of the Fund is to provide a token sum in the event of sickness or in the event of death, in cash or in kind, to the member's family as a mark of condolence and sympathy. Goodwill visits are also made to members who are sick at home or in the hospital in order to foster a closer relationship. Similarly, condolence services, usually accompanied by Monks from our Temple are conducted for the bereaved family in case of death. Many members and close devotees benefitted from this social section as it is meant to promote good fellowship amongst the Buddhist Fraternity.

The Meditation Course members also take keen interest to practise the Dhamma in the practical aspect by organising several Sanghikadanas in the Temple or in the member's house. Retreats of several days were also organised for devotees with successful and very encouraging results.

Midnight meditation sessions are also normally held on Chinese New Year's Eve with members and other devotees participating.





Meditation session

## **Sunday Dhamma School**

Since its inauguration on the 2nd of September, 1973 the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple Sunday Dhamma School has been carrying on as usual. The Sunday Dhamma School still keeps on giving Buddhist education to children, teenagers as well as adults. The Sunday Dhamma School was founded by the Venerable U Pannavamsa with the help of dedicated Dhamma teachers like the late Mr. Wimal Lim Hock Joo and Mr. Swas Tan Teik Ee from the Mahindarama Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple and Mr. Dhammapala Tan Cheng Guan. Thus the Dhamma classes were held for the children, the teenagers and seniors.

Soon the attendance became more and more and some additional Dhamma teachers were needed to manage the new classes. Among them was Mr. Billy Lim Say Teong who is still helping the Sunday Dhamma School. As the Sunday Dhamma School progressed and improved the Chief Monk Venerable U Pannavamsa who is also the Principal, appointed a Management Committee to serve and guide the smooth running of its activities.

Among the first to be introduced to the Sunday Dhamma School was the school's devotional chanting services which today still precede the School Dhamma classes. Other facilities such as the Buddhist library, indoor games and refreshment catering were soon included. Further developments were achieved when the Sunday Dhamma School joined in and competed in several Buddhist contests and competitions during the Vesak Festival held annually. Some prizes, trophies and shields were won by its teams.

On the academic front, the Sunday Dhamma School students took the Malaysian Buddhist Examination Syndicate examination and were successful scoring good passes at the various levels. Several of our students also scored good achievements in the Universities graduating in Engineering and Science. A number of them found good jobs outstation as well as overseas. Airline hostess and medical nursing have also attracted our students and so do banking and other commercial establishments. The Chief Monk not only encourages Buddhist education but also in the upgrading of individual life, according to the modern way of living.

Until recently the Sunday Dhamma School has always been the back-up reserve to help and serve in any Temple festivals or functions that take place several times a year. Due to the Chief Monk's good guidance and careful planning ceremonies and festivals that are now organised require the minimum manual assistance in line with advanced modern technique. However, with an up and coming younger crop of students, it is hoped that the Temple will not be short of volunteers in future.

It has been traditionally fortunate that the Sunday Dhamma School usually goes for an annual school picnic organised and planned by its Management Committee. Various places of beauty and of educational interest are included for our visiting students to see and learn.

With such love and caring the Sunday Dhamma School receives, it will be impossible for it to fade away into oblivion, but only to progress and improve for generations to come.

Amid the progress and improvement that the Sunday Dhamma School have achieved all these years which will surely lead to further progress and development later on, one should not forget that all these are the results of the selfless efforts from a group of dedicated Dhamma Teachers. They were :-

Mr. Tan Cheng Guan	Mr. Yeoh Eng Chin
Mr. Swas Tan Teik Ee	Mr. Tan Eng Hup (Music)
Mr. Lim Say Teong	Mr. Chua Chin Hin
Mr. Wimal Lim Hock Joo	Mr. Chua Chin Seng
Mr. Ng Sen Yew	Mr. Ben Oon
Mr. Cheah Boo Eng	Mr. Ch'ng Keong Leah
Mr. Khoo Boo Eang (Music)	Miss Seow Phaik Im
Mr. Chin Yong Kooi	Miss Lim Joo Choo
Mr. Tan Loke Aun	Miss Teoh Hwee Seng
Mr. Lim Say Aun	Miss Tan Mei Lee
Mr. Tony Tan	Miss Marina Lim Siew Ching
Mr. Alan Loh	Miss Annie Khoo
Mr. Raymond Loh	Miss Juliana Khoo
Mr. Frankie Yeoh	Miss Tan Jat Yeen
Mr. Lai Yen Por	Miss Kok Kee Har
Mr. Peh King Sing	Miss Cheah Bee Khoon (Music)
Mr. Yeoh Eng Hock	Miss Ng Gook Chin
Mr. Mun Thian Shoon	Miss Yeoh Yu Ping
Mr. David Soo Kim Pheow	Mrs See Chim Guan
Mr. Lee Hock Teik	Mdm Jenny Lim



Inauguration of Sunday Dhamma School, 2nd of September 1973



Sunday Dhamma School building



Sunday Dhamma School Chinese New Year party



Sunday Dhamma School children queuing for their lunch

## **Visit Of His Excellency U Nu, The Former Prime Minister Of The Union Of Burma And His Entourage**

The former Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, His Excellency U Nu, who was on a visit to the then Malaya, paid a courtesy call at the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in Penang in the year 1957.

The visiting Prime Minister was met on arrival by the devotees and shown round the Temple after being introduced to the Venerable Chief Monk and resident monks. After an exchange of friendly greetings, the Prime Minister and his entourage were later entertained to a tea-party .

Group photograph  
of His Excellency U Nu  
his entourage  
and the temple officials



Group photograph  
of Mrs. U Nu,  
wife of His Excellency  
and lady devotees

## Visit Of The Burmese Deputy Prime Minister

On Vesak Day, 4th of May, 1985, the Burmese Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Thura Tun Tin, accompanied by Deputy Minister, His Honourable Dr. Maung Shein and the Burmese Ambassador to Malaysia, His Honourable, U Thein Toe, visited the Burmese Buddhist Temple, Penang.

They were received by Mr. Ong Ewe Teong, the then Chairman of the Temple Management Committee, and were taken to meet the Chief Monk Venerable U Pannavamsa, and other members of the Burmese Sangha, at the Main Shrine Hall. The Deputy Prime Minister and entourage paid homage to Buddha and the monks.

His Excellency Thura Tun Tin donated M\$500.00 to the Temple. The delegation had tea in the Temple before they left.



Visit of The Burmese Deputy Prime Minister

# LIST OF TEMPLE OFFICIALS

**YEAR 1971**

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONKS

VENERABLE U VIMALA  
VENERABLE MAHA PRASAD  
VENERABLE SRI TUN  
VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE  
MR. CHEAH SENG CHEONG

TRUSTEES

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
PRESIDENT  
VICE PRESIDENTS

DR. YEOH GUAT HONG  
MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MR. MAUNG TEE  
MR. KHOO CHONG HIN  
MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE  
MDM KHOO PHAIK AING

HON. SECRETARY  
ASST. HON. SECRETARY  
HON. TREASURER  
ASST. HON. TREASURER

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

MR. TAN AUN PHAIK  
MR. TAN THEAM HEE  
MR. TAN CHONG OH  
MR. TAN KWAN JIN  
MR. SEE CHIM GUAN  
MR. MAUNG CHAN TUN  
MR. MAUNG TOOLSERAM  
MDM LEE ENG CHEE  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG  
MDM LIM SUAN HOON (KOW NYA)  
MISS TAN GOAY MENG  
MISS TAN GOAY MENG



Group photograph of temple officials 1971



## YEAR 1972

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONK

VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
VENERABLE SRI TUN

TRUSTEES

MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE  
MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MR. TOH WEE SENG

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
HON. SECRETARY  
HON. TREASURER

MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. TOH HOCK HOE  
MR. TAN KIM ENG

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DR. YEOH GUAT HONG  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG  
MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE  
MR. PINJOE  
MR. THAM KOK THYE  
MR. TOH WEE SENG  
MR. SEE CHIM GUAN  
MR. MAUNG TEE

## YEAR 1974

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONK

VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
VENERABLE SRI TUN

TRUSTEES

MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MR. TOH WEE SENG  
MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRPERSON  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
HON. SECRETARY  
HON. TREASURER  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DR. YEOH GUAT HONG  
MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. TOH HOCK HOE  
MR. TAN KIM ENG  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG  
MR. MAUNG TEE  
MR. SEE CHIM GUAN  
MR. THAM KOK THYE  
MR. PINJOE  
MR. TOH WEE SENG  
MR. MAUNG CHAN AYE

**YEAR 1980/86**

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONKS

VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
VENERABLE U SUNDARA  
VENERABLE U NYANIKA

TRUSTEES

MR. YEOH PHEE TIN  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MR. TOH WEE SENG  
DR. YEOH GUAT HONG

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
CHAIRMAN  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
HON. SECRETARY  
HON. TREASURER

MR. ONG EWE TEONG  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MRS. MARY JAYADEVA  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MR. TOH WEE SENG  
MR. TAN CHENG GUAN  
MR. LIM SAY TEONG  
MDM KOK KEE (MAH CHEE)



Group photograph of temple officials 1980/86

## YEAR 1987/1989

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONKS

VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
VENERABLE U NYANIKA  
VENERABLE U KARUNIKA

TRUSTEES

MR. EU ENG KIAT  
DR. YEOH GUAT HONG  
MR. ONG EWE TEONG  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
HON. SECRETARY  
HON. TREASURER

MR. ONG EWE TEONG  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MISS MAK PHAIK IMM  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DATIN MARY RITCHIE  
MR. TAN CHENG GUAN  
MDM KOK KEE  
MR. LIM SAY TEONG  
MISS LIM JOO CHOO  
MDM TAN GAIK CHOO  
MDM GRACIE TAN  
MR. CHUAH BAN SAN  
MR. CHEW KEAT HOE  
MR. GOH HOCK LYE



Group photograph of temple officials 1987/89

**YEAR 1990/1991**

CHIEF MONK  
RESIDENT MONK

VENERABLE U PANNAVAMSA  
VENERABLE U SUMANACARA

PATRONS

MR. ONG EWE TEONG  
MDM. YEOH GUAT CHENG  
DATIN MARY RITCHIE

TRUSTEES

MR. ONG EWE TEONG  
MR. EU ENG KIAT  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

MR. CHEAH JIN TEONG

VICE PRESIDENT

MR. TAN CHENG GUAN

HON. SECRETARY

MDM GRACIE TAN

HON. TREASURER

MR. CHEW KEAT HOE

ASST. HON. SECRETARY

MISS TAN KIM BOEY

ASST. HON. TREASURER

MISS CINDY HOR

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MR. LIEW CHEAN SEONG  
MR. CHUAH BAN SAN  
MISS CHEAH AH LENG  
MR. LIM SAY TEONG  
MR. YEAP THEAM KWEE  
MISS CHEAH BEE KHOON



Group photograph of temple officials 1990/91

**PICTURES**

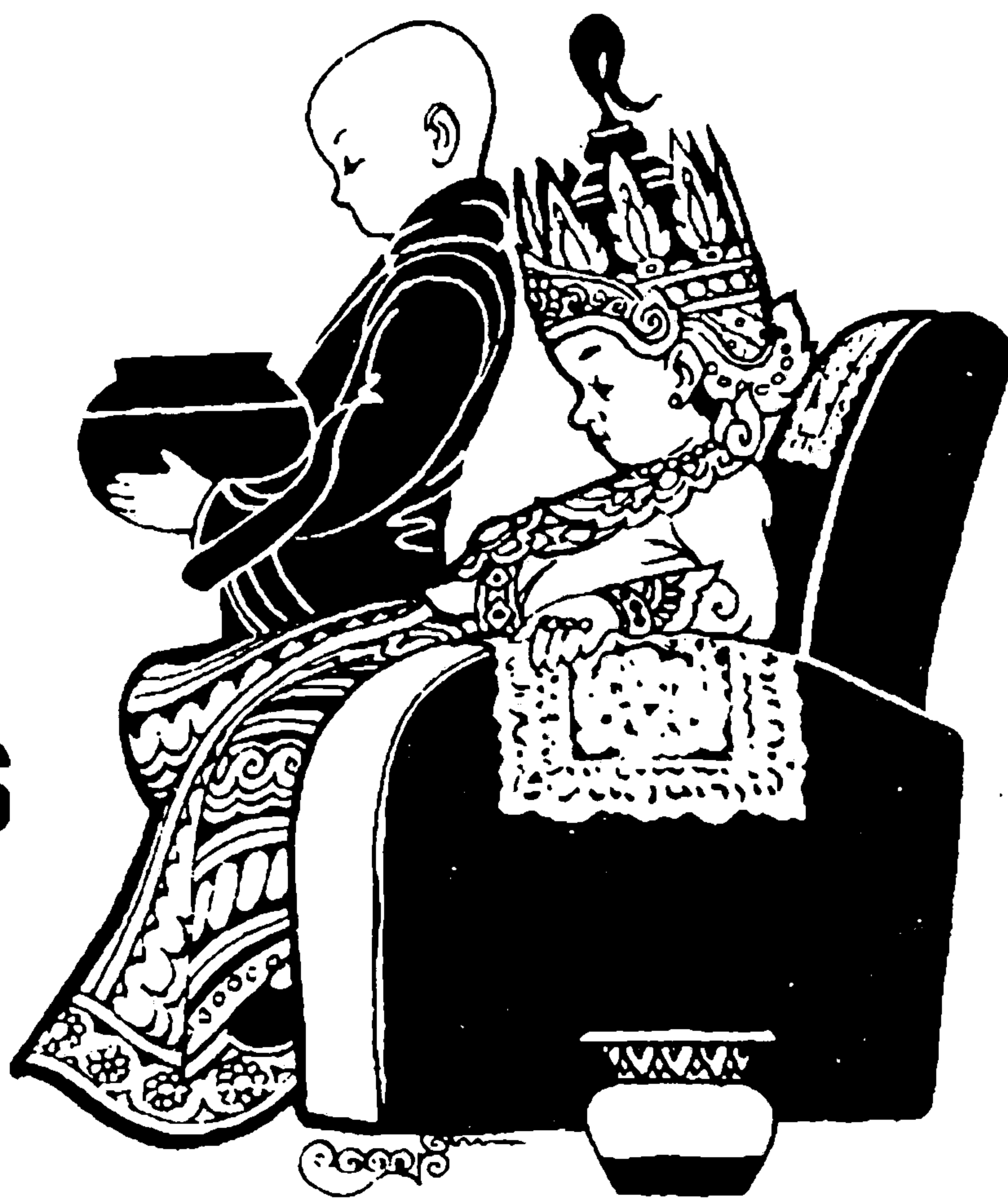
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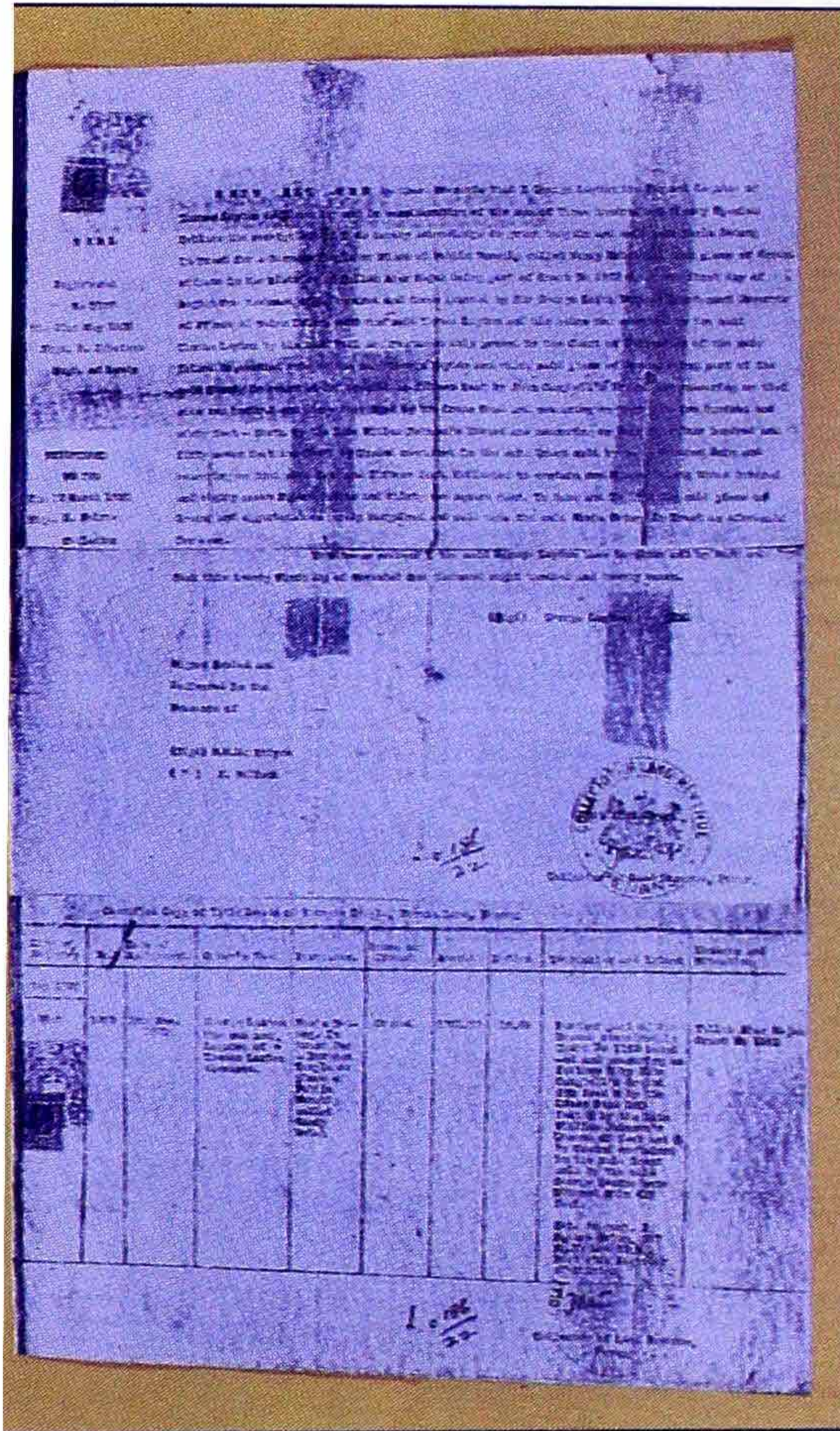
**REFLECTIONS**

**AND**

**MEMORIES**

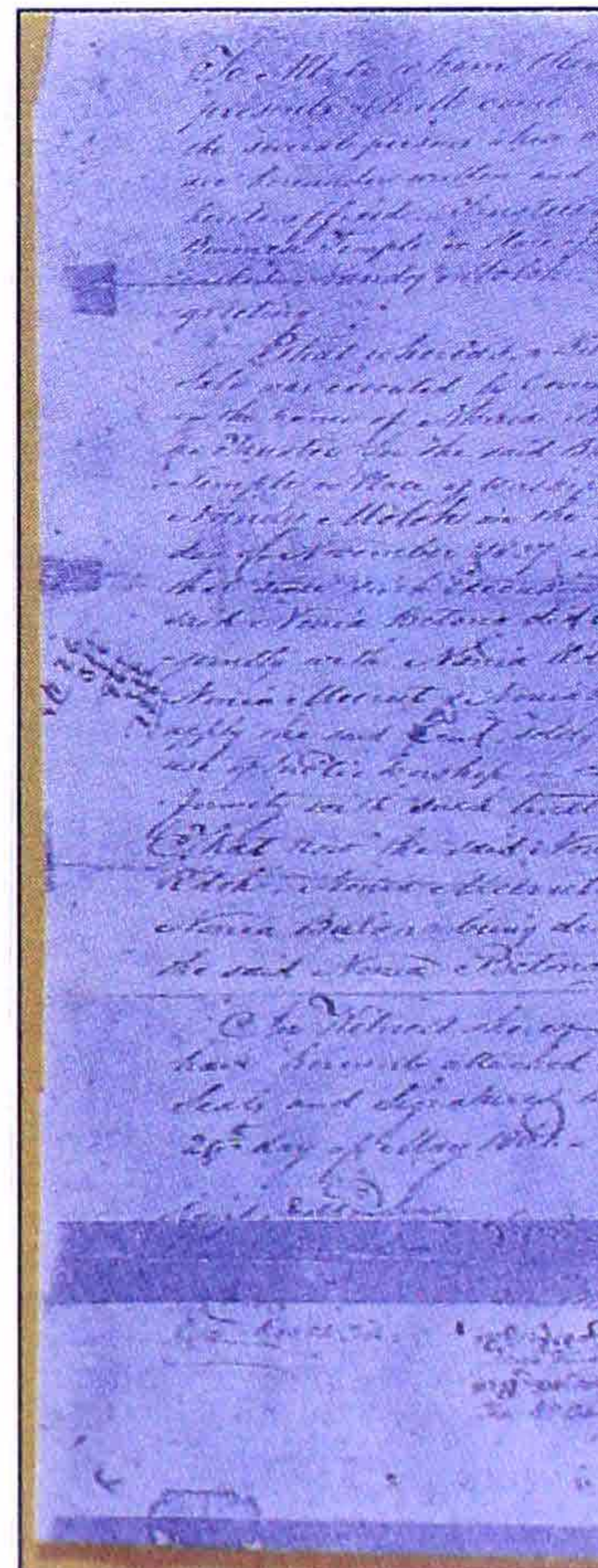


# Temple Artifacts



Title deeds

Registration of trustees





Buddhist Scripture  
on palm leaf

Buddhist artifacts



# All Night Chanting

Opening ceremonies



Commencement of lotus candle lighting

Lighting of candles







Arranging of candles

## Rains Retreat Ceremony



Monks accepting invitation to observe  
Vasshana(Buddhist Lent)



Offering of robes to monks

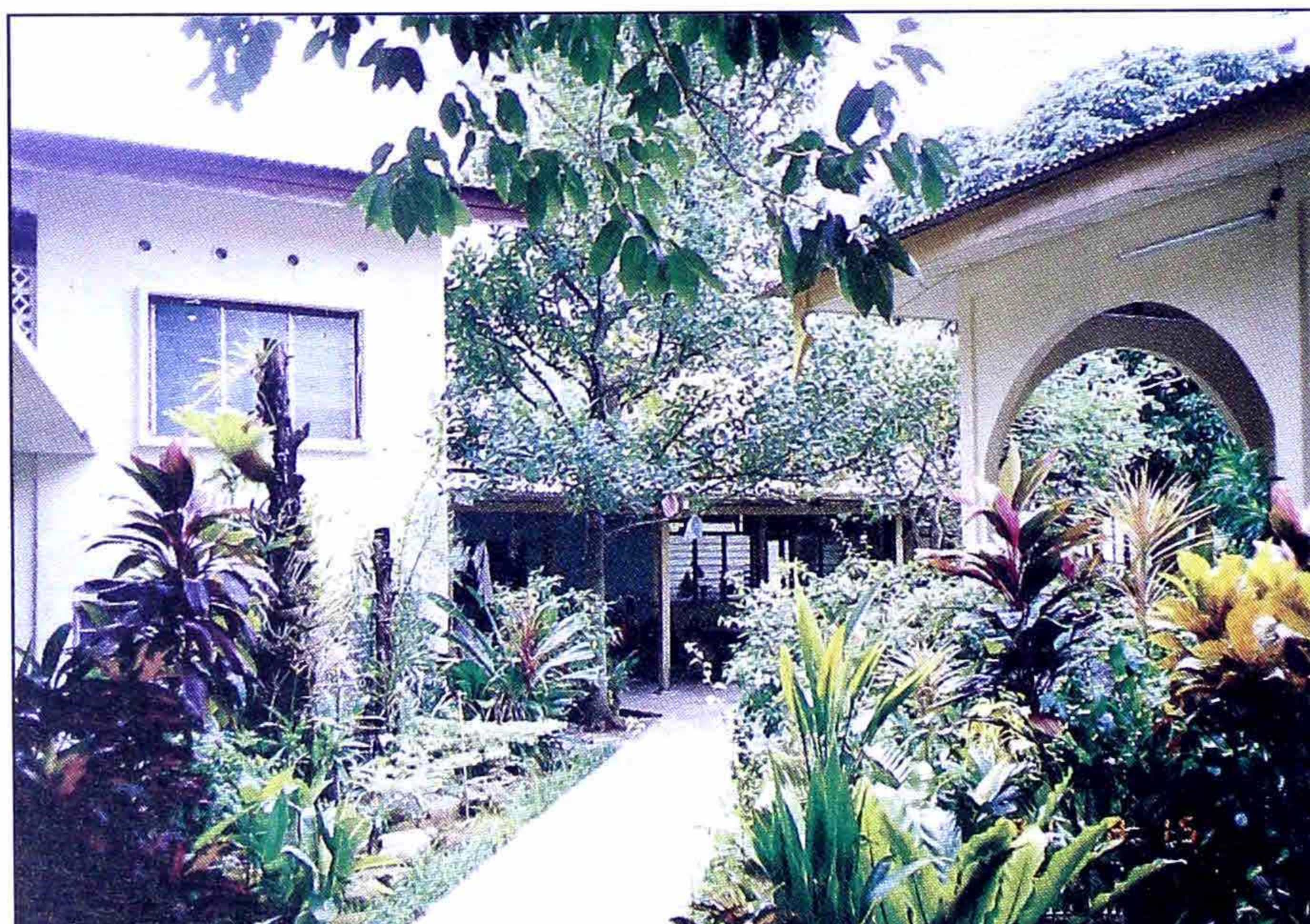
# Blessing Ceremony For The Construction Of Vimal Dining Hall

Opening ceremonies



Commencement of lotus candle lighting

The old dining hall



## Consecration Of Buddha Image At The Main Shrine Hall

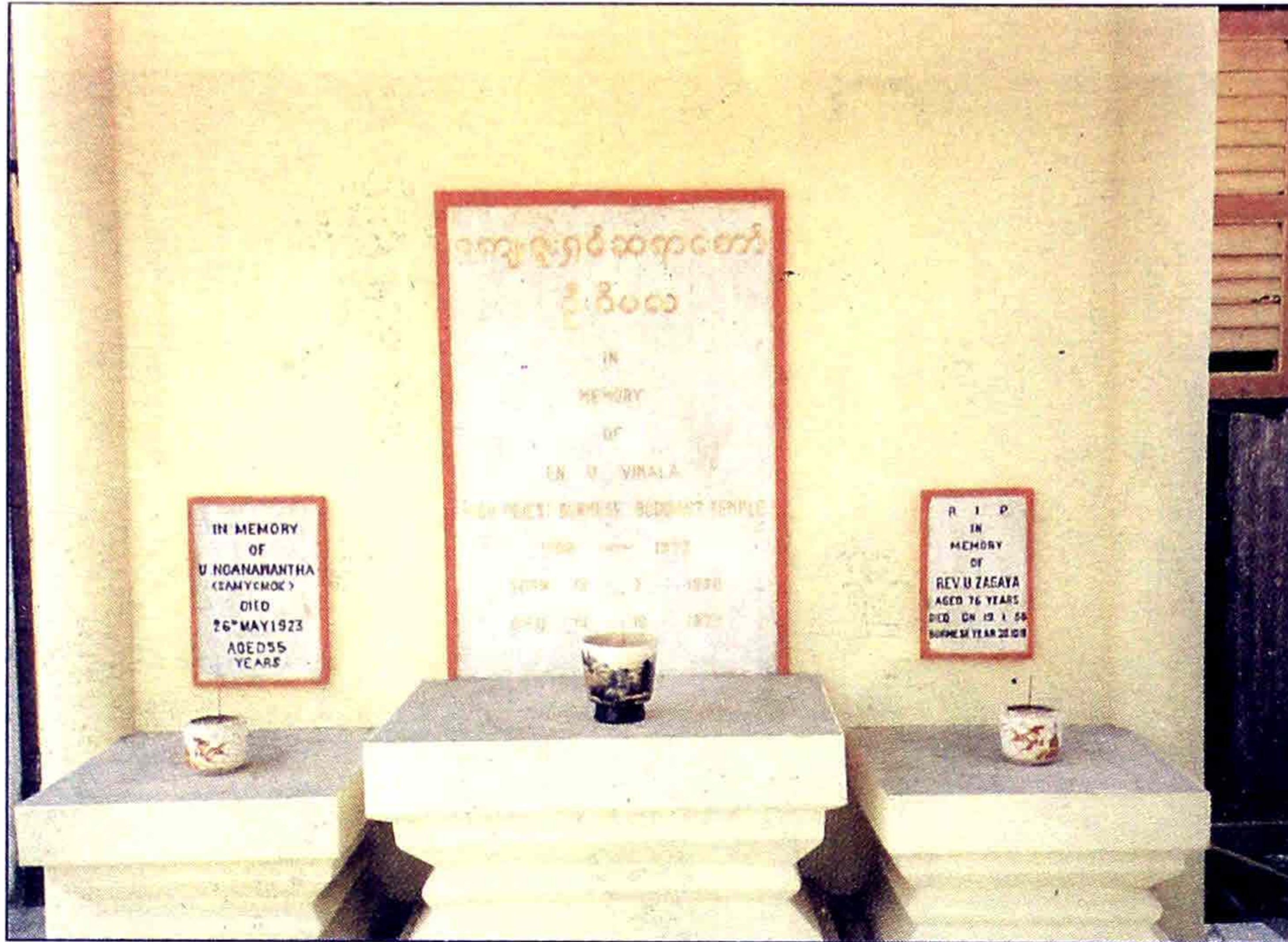


All night chanting by Chinese monks



Ceremony starts .....

## Memorial Of Chief Monks

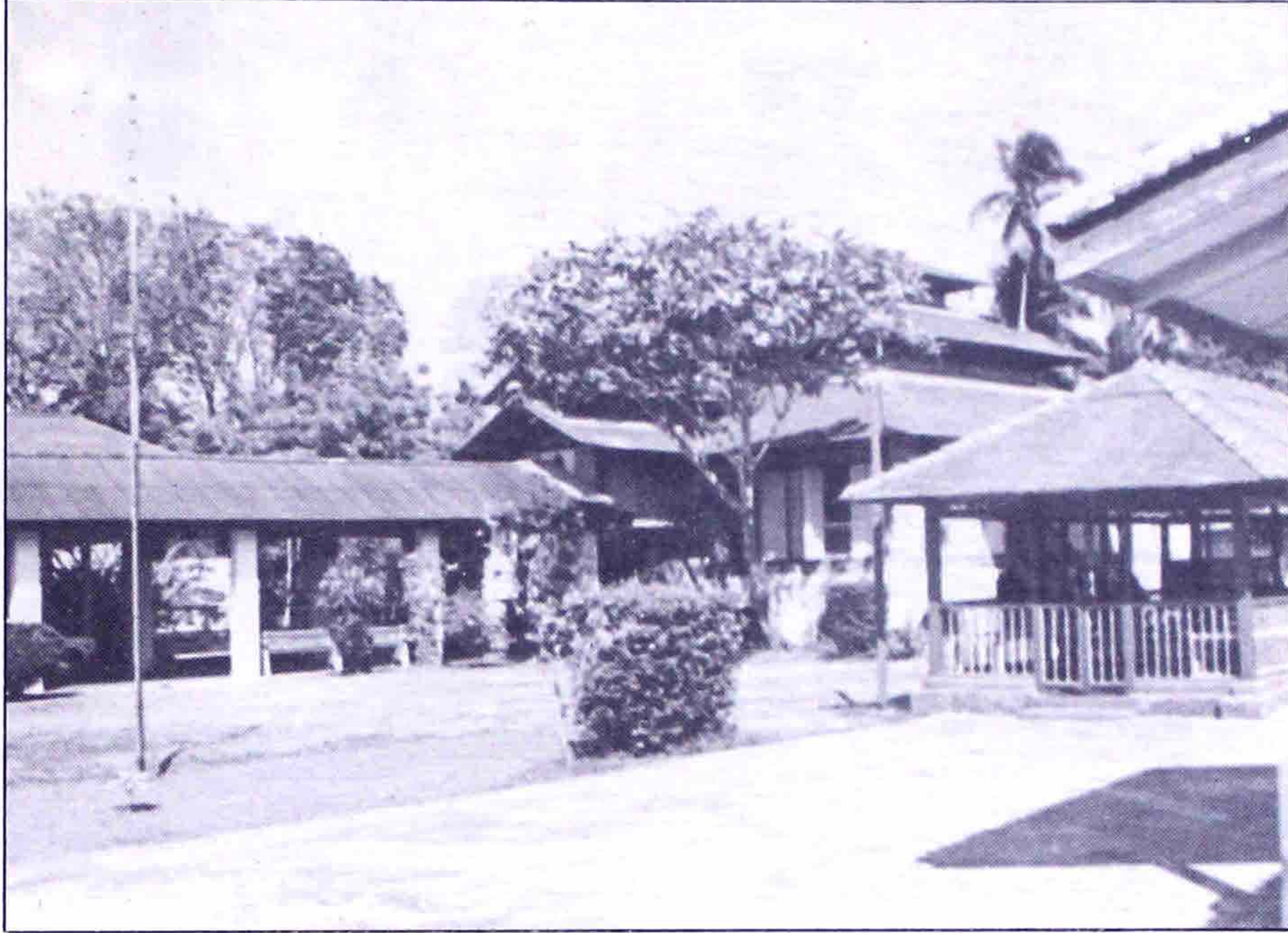


Present monument



Monument of Chief Monks

## Main Shrine Hall



The old main shrine hall

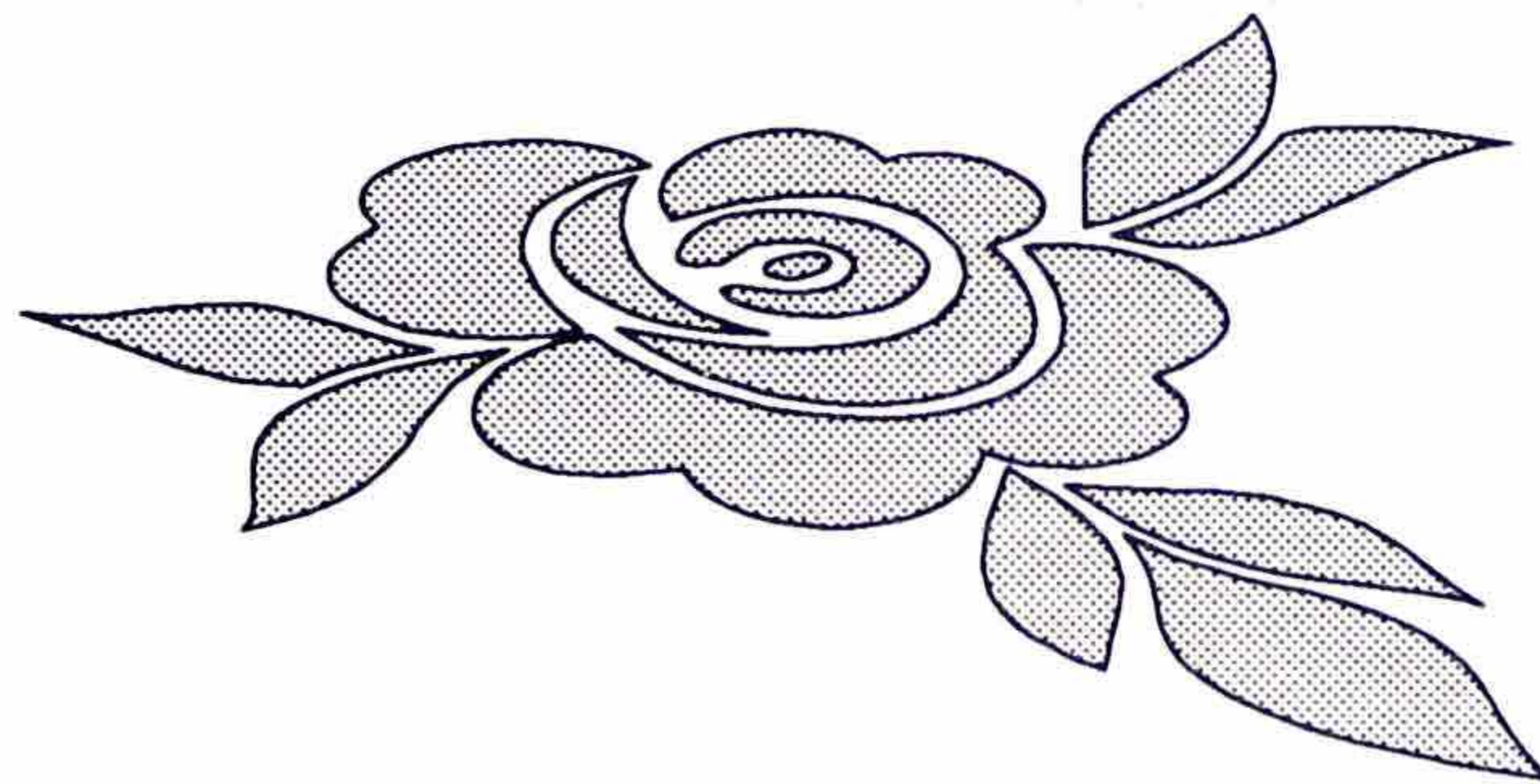


The present main shrine hall

## Former Residence For Monks

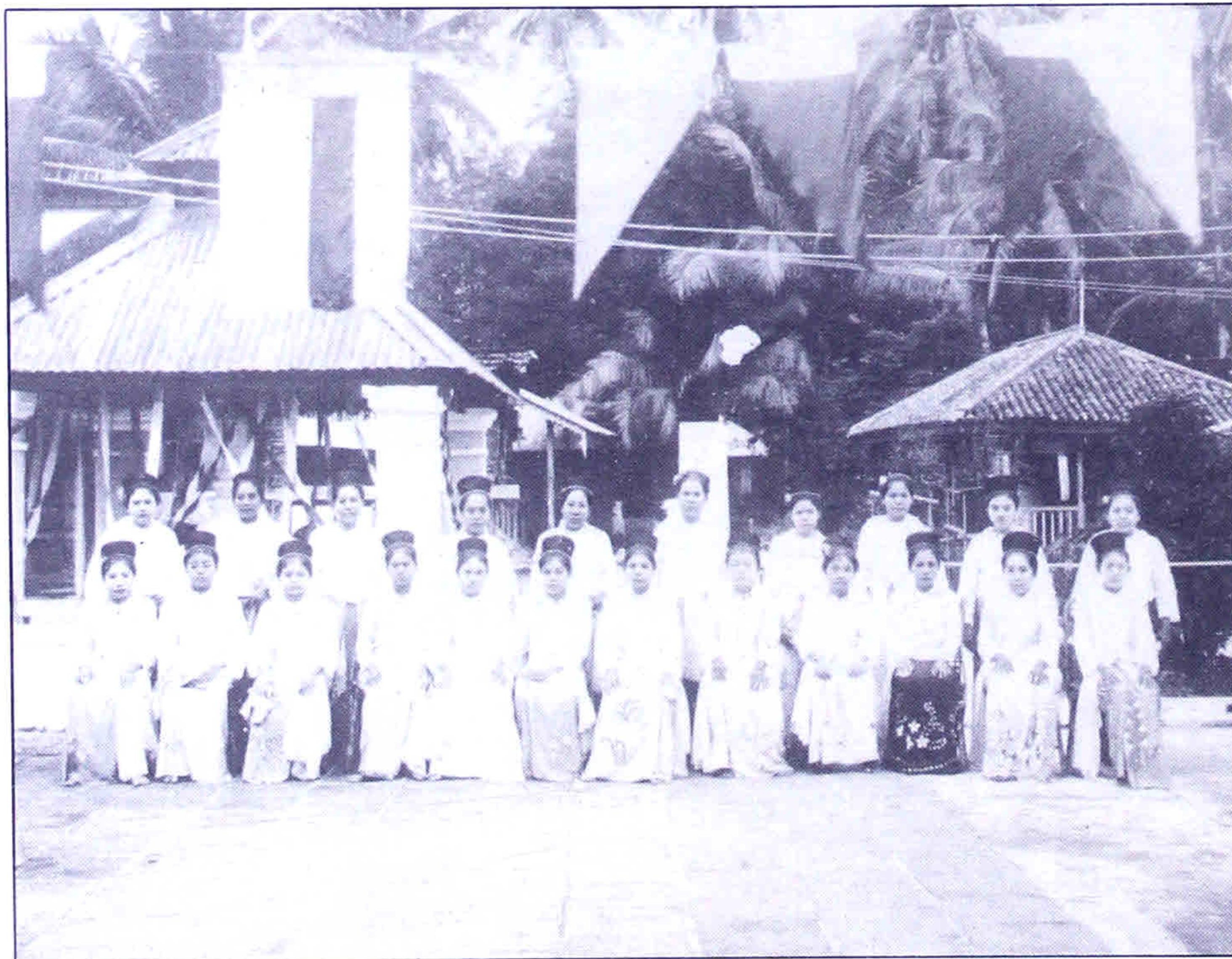
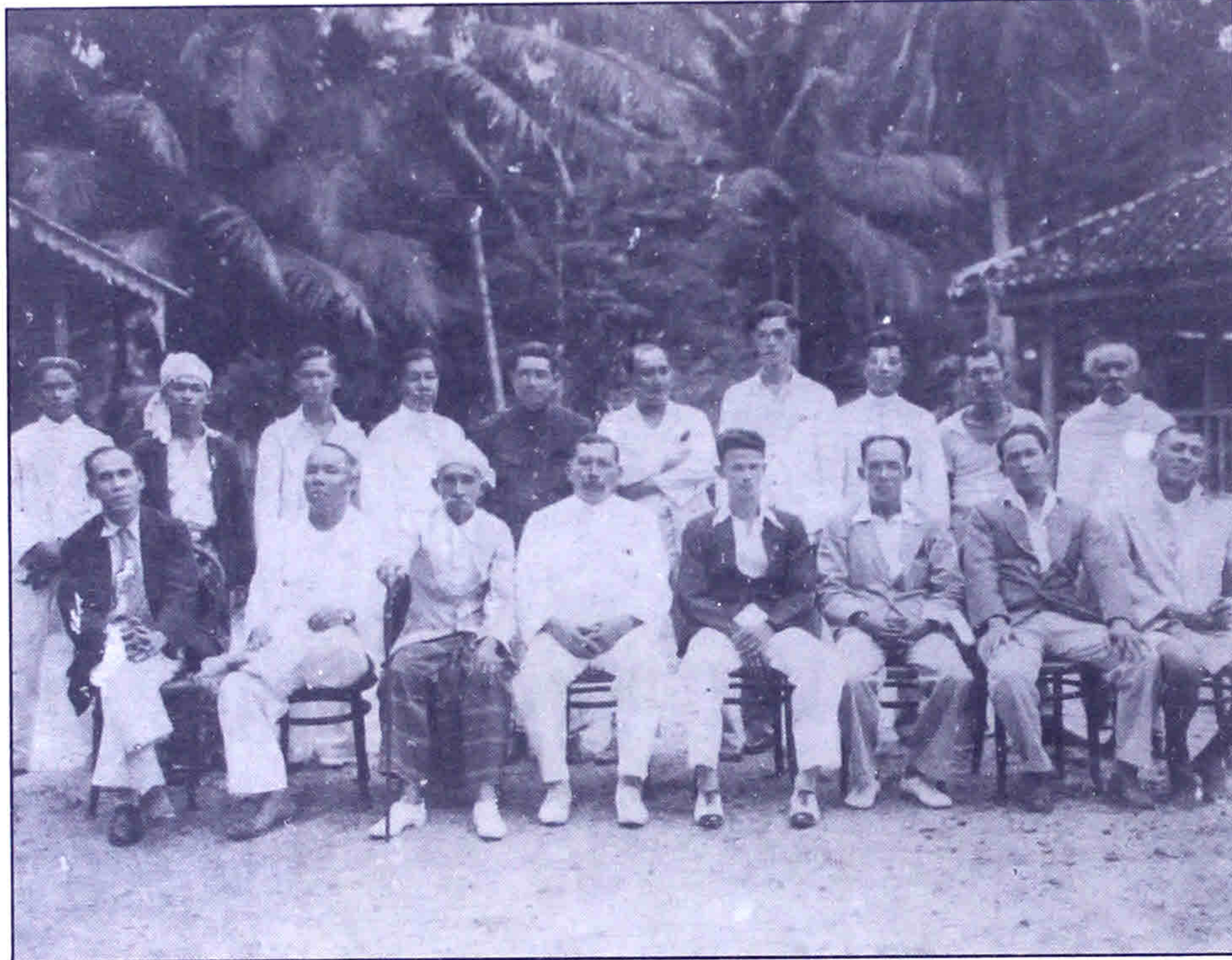


## Former Preceptees' Building





## Group Photographs Of Temple Devotees

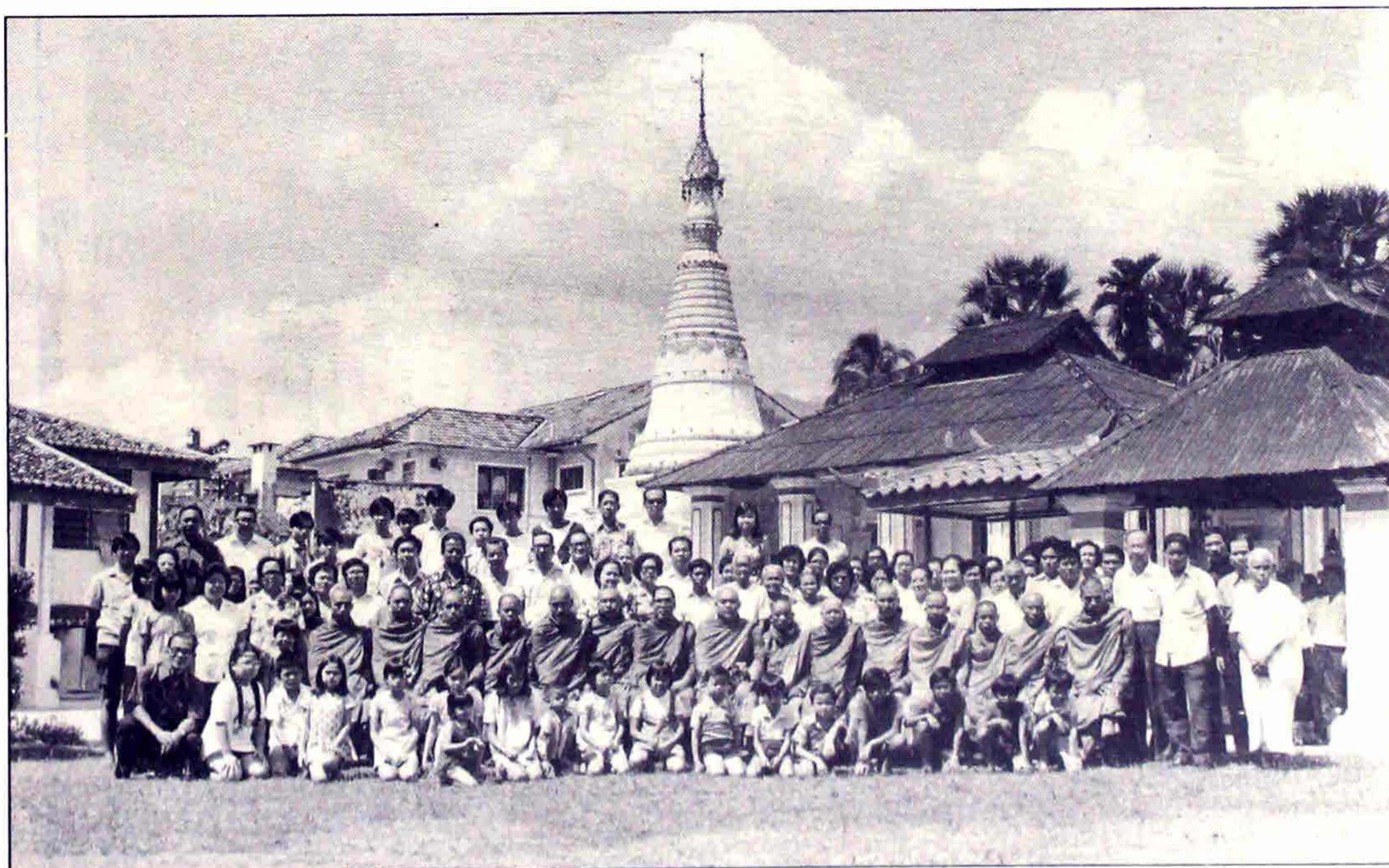


# Burmese Cultural Show And Dance





## Visit Of Burmese Monks And Devotees From Thailand



**Madam Daw Aye Tin**



**Voluntary Burmese Crew Members**



## Blessing Of The Newly Wed



The newly wed paying homage to the Buddha



The newly wed receiving blessing from the Chief Monk

## Food Fair



Security at the collection centre

# Shops And Counters

Tuck shop



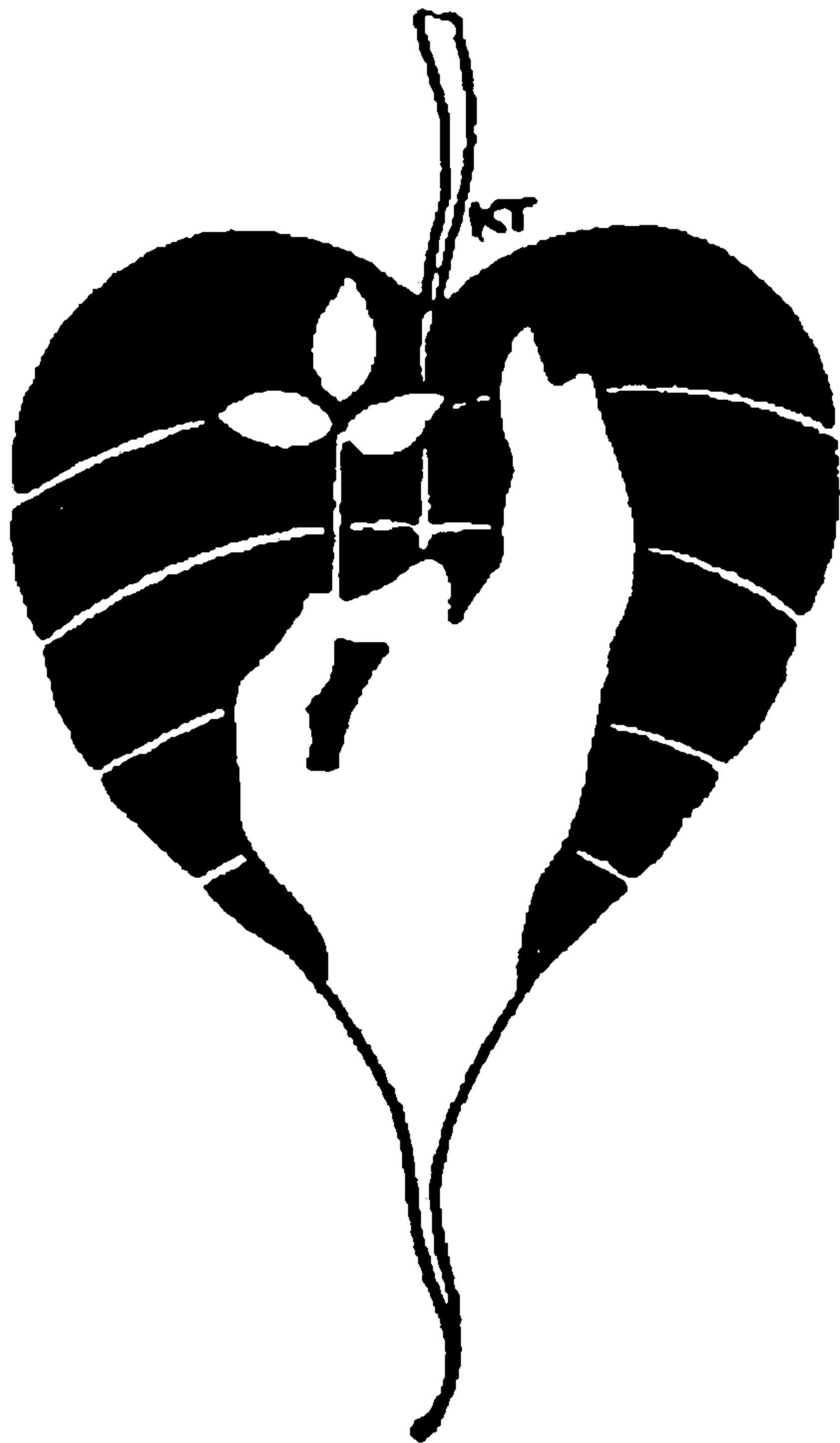
Souvenir shop

Temple sale counter





# RECOLLECTIONS



# **Interview With A Group Of Elderly Devotees**

## **By**

### **Members Of Editorial Board**

It has been a wonderful weekend of recollection and reminiscing of past events of the temple for Mr. Maung Toolseram and several elderly ladies, to mention a few, Ong Ah Bee, Cheah Ah Pow, Lim Chye Tuan and Cheah Ah Leng when some members of the editorial team met them . The discussion revolves around the residing monks, activities that were held and devotees who truly cared and supported the temple. However, the main stay of conversation was on the services rendered by the late Daw Chin Thoay. Everyone could remember vividly this first Burmese lady who not only contributed time, energy but money and kind to the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple.

Before the second World War, the temple was looked after by three Burmese boys, Bah Guan who is currently residing in Rangoon, Burma; brothers Theng Choon and Ewe Theng. All three were studying in Penang then.

Another generous devotee made known to us as Mr. Sin contributed money and kind monthly. Others like the families of Mr. Cheah Seng Cheong and Mr. Maung Shuay Nee would cook and bring lunch in tiffin carriers to offer to the temple monks. Sometimes, an old monk, Reverend Khoo would go on almsround to three or four houses in the vicinity. The families of Mdm Tan Gaik Im, Lim Oh Nya and June Toolseram would eagerly perform almsgiving to the 'Kodor' (monks are referred to as Kodor by the Burmese, while the Junior Monk is acknowledged as 'Uzine'). It was in the mid 1945, a few months before the second World War ended that the late Daw Chin Thoay (aged about 60 years old then) travelled from Ipoh by train to Penang. When she arrived at the temple, she was sick and suffering from asthma. Despite her poor health, she took charge of cooking, cleaning and looking after the welfare of the monks for almost ten years. The temple was then under the guidance of the late Ven. U Vimala. When the Burmese ships docked at the port, Burmese traders would bring foodstuffs like dried prawns and fish, rice, red and white beans to the temple. At other times, there were practically no food supplies at all. During such difficult times, the late Daw Chin Thoay would sell her jewellery to buy food for the temple. Such was the immeasurable generosity and sacrifice on the part of this devout Buddhist. Even in the later part of her life, when she was indisposed, she would still provide for marketing expenses to buy food for the two or three resident monks.

The temple was not well-known then but with her faith and perseverance, she kept on encouraging people and layperson to call at the temple. During that time, a large proportion of devotees were the female workers from a cigar factory. About 300 of these Burmese ladies would throng the temple on the 1st and 15th day of the lunar month to cook for the temple monks, devotees and the voluntary helpers who helped to upkeep the temple. They also donated without fail part of their salaries every month to perform danas.

After Daw Chin Thoay, several other devotees contributed their time and services. These include Nenek who would prepare the morning breakfast, Kim Kee Ee (who looked after the late Daw Chin Thoay when she was sick) and her children who would help to clean and upkeep the temple grounds and Daw Aye Tin who served in the temple for 40 years. Daw Aye Tin fondly addressed as Ah Daw now still visits the temple frequently.

During those days, activities were simple. On Sundays, devotees would gather to cook, chant and observe precepts. Those observing the eight precepts would have to sleep in the open along the

verandahs of the former wooden Arahant shrine, while those who wished to chant would individually lay mats under the rambutan, mangosteen and chikku trees (which were in abundance) to do their chanting.

Festivals celebrated were Soon Dorgyi, Buddhist Lent and Water Festival. Offerings for Soon Dorgyi were in the form of a katopwe basin. Soon Dorgyi would culminate with nights of “ronggeng” and “lambong” dances and shadow play.

During Water Festival, water dyed green, yellow and red (on Burmese tradition) were splashed onto friends and relatives in the temple. The festival would last for one whole week from morning till evening. In the afternoon, armed with pails of water, friends would call on each other and have a water splashing time and would later enjoy themselves with food, music and dance, all in the spirit of fellowship.



# Early Immigrants

By Mr. Tan Cheng Guan

Although the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple was founded in 1803 in Penang, it was a known fact that people from neighbouring countries like Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia visit frequently Peninsular Malaysia especially Penang forming a two-way free flow of visitors without any barrier of customs and immigration which were non-existent in those days. However, it was during the 19th century that there was an influx of immigrants and they form the three main categories.

The first group consisted of traders and merchants who came from their homeland to carry out commercial business in the form of barter trade. However, some chose to remain and set up their own business which soon flourished. These bloom into settlers with their families forming into a large community. Later on these families practised their own religion and culture.

The second group consisted of mere travellers who came from neighbouring countries and who thought that the neighbours are also like their own because at that time there were no immigration or customs like now, to make the sovereign boundaries look so distinct and formally rigid.

The third group consisted of conscripts brought into by the various colonial governments like the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and English to rule the country. The administrative staff like clerks and the military like the Burmese Rifles, Gurkhas are amongst that were brought in. As these groups grew in their cantonment many wanted their own cultures and religious facilities, such as temples, priests and so on.

Among the groups who had very strong influence and settlement implanted were the Burmese and the Thais (Siamese). In the case of the Burmese a big piece of land was bought for the Buddhists particularly to be a place for public worship and the price was paid in Spanish dollars! This is recorded in its Title Deed and can be still seen as such today. The area surrounding this piece of donated land is named after many places in Burma. Just to name a few, you have Burmah Road, Burmah Lane, Irrawady Road, Tavoy Lane and Moulmein Road in the vicinity of the present Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple in Burmah Lane, Penang.

The Burmese community regardless of their creeds came to celebrate their New Year known as the Water Festival which usually falls in the month of April. It is a very enjoyable event in the Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple and is attended even by the tourists as well.



# **Development And Beautification Of Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple - Penang**

**By Mr. Goh Hock Lye**

From observations made over a number of years, our Temple has been going through a rapid development and beautification process which has received much praise and approval from all quarters. By the time the master plan to upgrade and beautify the temple and its environment is completely implemented, every devotee would be proud to be associated with this famous Buddhist temple in Malaysia.

Temple devotees would be delighted if more focus and prominence could be given to our Temple in our state tourist brochures. As it is, the Temple seldom receives much publicity in the state tourist brochures though the Penang Development Corporation has designated it as one of the new historical sites for tourist attraction.

In 1988, the Temple Management Committee under Mr. Ong Ewe Teong now Patron, undertook the tremendous task of beautifying the Main Shrine Hall which was in a poor shape. A magnificent marble floor was constructed together with simultaneous development and beautification of its interior and surroundings. An imposing Burmese Buddha image and attractive panels were added admired by one and all.

Many thought that the development of the temple would have stopped as the front section of the temple from its entrance right up to the Main Shrine Hall has been completed. Imagine the surprise when they see construction workers taking measurements and beginning work on the site for our meditators/preceptees block. The momentum appears to be going on a greater rate as together with this, the old kitchen was demolished and the area has been marked for a new dining hall. Prior to the above, a consecration and foundation ceremony was held to officially launch the construction of the two additional structures in our Temple grounds. The dining hall would definitely serve a useful need as the large area should accommodate the usual big gathering at our temple religious festivities.

The principal driving force behind our temple beautification and development programme is none other than our far-sighted Chief Monk, the Venerable U Pannavamsa whose wide experience and knowledge have helped considerably to guide its development and progress. He is our main inspiration and brains behind all the projects and injects enthusiasm and energy in our Management Committee to implement the many attractive projects to upgrade and add more facilities to our Temple. The Chief Monk Venerable U Pannavamsa has already other more ambitious plans to improve further the religious facilities in our Temple and perhaps make it second to none in our island of Penang as a tourist attraction for both local and foreign tourists to visit and enjoy, and for our own devotees a beautiful environment for them to visit often for their mental inspirational peace of mind. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

# Dhammikarama..... Revisted

By Mr. Tan Cheng Chui

Clad in school uniform I first visited the temple  
That was in the late sixties I could remember  
Children being children, I had often grumbled  
Why did my school teacher make this temple a stopover !

I could not precisely recall what I had actually said  
Definitely not pleasant but rather disappointed instead  
The school teacher carrying his camera could have made a mistake  
For it was obvious there was no picturesque scene to take

That was several years ago my opinion of Dhammikarama  
Being a born-again Buddhist and a learner of the Buddha Dhamma  
I wanted to know more about Buddhism practice in Burma  
Thus my revisitation to the temple called Dhammikarama

Aesthetically the new boundary wall is an attraction  
Physically the new corridor way is a restoration  
Culturally, the Sima Hall and the Pagoda are for preservation  
Spiritually, the Arahant Upagutta Shrine is for aspiration

The entire environment is now so picturesque and refreshing  
Even the compound of the temple has eye-catching landscaping  
Presently, construction works are in progress for a preceptees' building  
Very soon the temple will take pride of a new hall for dining

Nowadays I am able to observe a constant flow of visitors  
Of different walks of life, be they local people or foreigners  
While some seek shelter and enjoy the coolness along the corridor  
Schoolchildren and tourists are busy with their cameras and video recorders

There are some who respectfully pay homage to Lord Buddha at the altar  
Another group would be busy selecting and buying souvenirs at the counter  
While some are blessed by the temple monks with sprinkles of holy water  
Others would be admiring the Buddha rupa as a fascinating piece of sculpture

Bridegrooms in full suits and brides in wedding gown  
Are now a common sight at the temple ground  
The newly-weds would light up candles, and with their heads bow down  
Would probably wish their marriage lives safe and sound

Just as when the visitors walk into the temple with much anxiety  
They can be assured to leave the temple with happiness aplenty  
The Dhammikarama is not only a public place for worship by laity  
Its history with fascinating features is ideal for photography

I must admit that the temple now has its charm and serenity  
To those who have contributed energy, in kind and money  
From the bottom of my heart I salute you all with sincerity  
With this appreciation may I wish you all well and happy.

# GENERAL



# ***Acknowledgement***

The Dhammikarama Burmese Buddhist Temple Literary and Publication Committee would like to extend its profound gratitude to the following :-

The Temple Chief Monk, Venerable U Pannavamsa, the patron cum advisor of the project on the publication of the historical book of the temple;

The Temple Resident Monk, Venerable U Sumanacara, the religious advisor of the project on the publication of the historical book of the temple;

All the loyal supporters of the temple who have unselfishly lent their invaluable collections of this temple, thus facilitating the task of compiling this historical book ;

The Penang State Museum Board and its Curator as well as Datuk Lim Chong Keat, the author of “ Penang Views 1770-1860 ” for their kind permission in allowing the reprinting of old photographs of this temple ;

All the item contributors for their laborious, invaluable effort and their timely submission of item write-up;

The photographers, Mr. Lee Hong Huat and Mr. Chuah Cheng Lee for their valuable time and expertise ;

All the temple devotees, supporters and friends of Buddhism for their kind assistance, co-operation and patience throughout the whole duration of the compilation of this historical book.

Finally but not least, the Committee would also like to thank all the generous donors as well as others who might have been inadvertently left out.

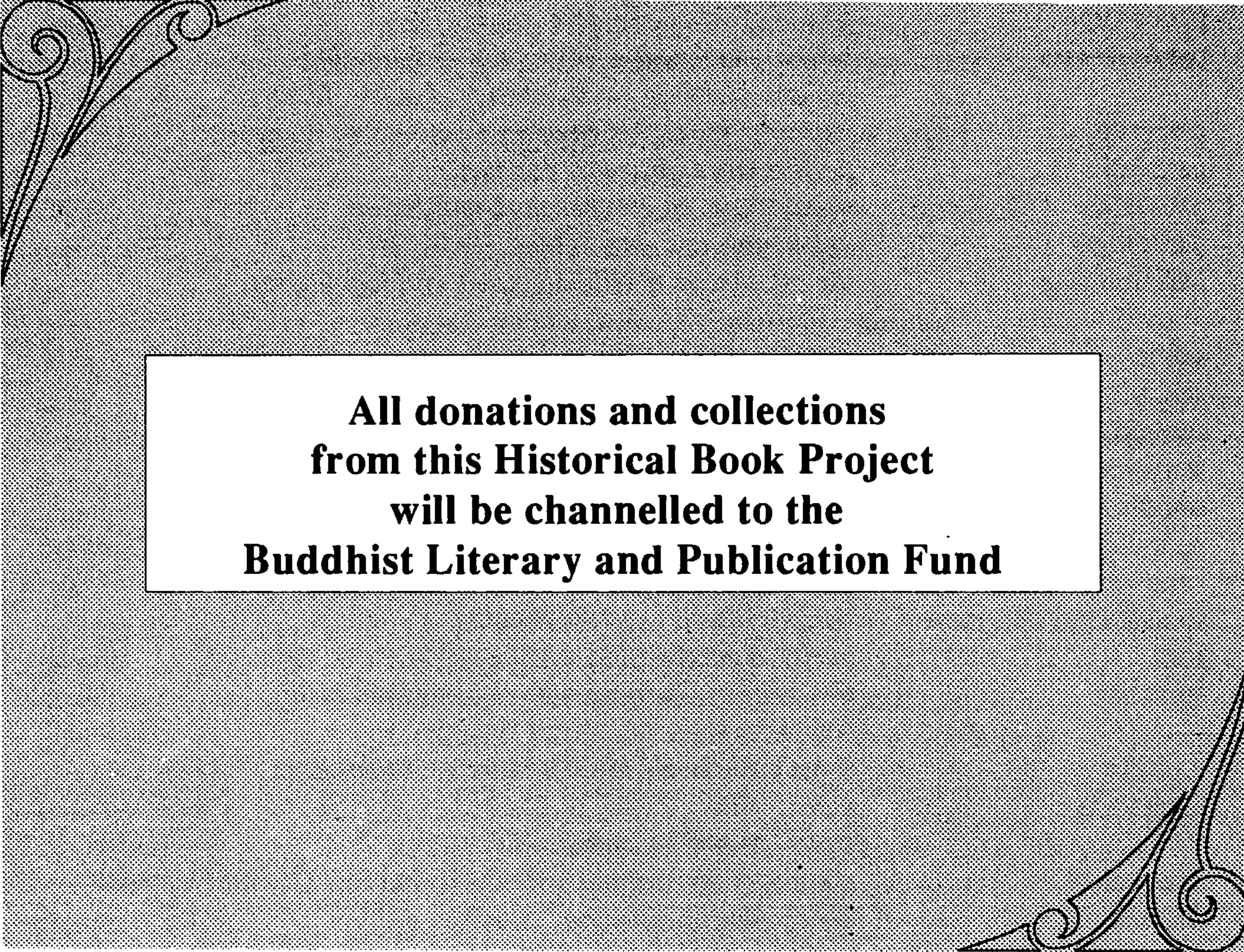




## Glossary

abadda	<i>a usual place, which was occasionally used by the monks as a Sima (chapter house)</i>
ajja	<i>today</i>
arahanta	<i>a worthy one, saint</i>
arahatta	<i>state of being an arahant (worthy one)</i>
arama	<i>garden, park, monastery, temple</i>
ariya	<i>noble one, who has attained an enlightenment</i>
badda-sima	<i>chapter house, consecrated by the monks</i>
bhavana	<i>mental development, culture, meditation, increase</i>
bhikkhu	<i>Buddhist monk, mendicant</i>
brahma	<i>exalted, noble, higher celestial being</i>
bodhi	<i>supreme wisdom, omniscience, the wisdom tree</i>
buddha	<i>an enlightened one, an awakened one.</i>
buddhism	<i>the teaching of the Buddha in the three baskets.</i>
cakka	<i>wheel, circle, disc, army, multitude, region, domain</i>
ceti=cetiya	<i>a sacred object, shrine, temple, tomb</i>
dana	<i>gift, giving of almsfood, generosity, charity.</i>
deva	<i>male deity, celestial being.</i>
devi	<i>female deity, celestial being</i>
dhamma	<i>doctrine, law, phenomenon, virtue, thing, object, nature, quality, justice, religion, scripture.</i>
dhatu	<i>element, relic, humour</i>
eva	<i>only</i>
garuda	<i>roc (king of bird)</i>
ghatikara	<i>the name of maha brahma (higher celestial being)</i>
gotama	<i>Gotama is the family name of the Prince Siddhattha</i>
ika	<i>possession, endowed</i>
isi patana	<i>place, where sages embarked and disembarked by the power</i>
jagara	<i>an energetic one, an active one</i>
jinati	<i>succeed, excel</i>
katopwe (Burmese)	<i>container of offering for thanksgiving</i>
kamma vacca	<i>the word of disciplinary action in the monastic order</i>
kathina	<i>an enduring of wholesome state</i>
kicca	<i>work, duty, service, need.</i>
katabba	<i>carry out an action</i>
maha-yana	<i>great vehicle, which means that everyone has to become a Buddha.</i>
moggallana	

medawgyi (Burmese)	<i>great grand mother, it was the name of Surassati.</i>
nanda-mala	<i>nanda - pleasant, joy. mala - garland, pavillion, row, line</i>
nibbana	<i>free from corruption, void of craving, extinction of greed, hatred and delusion.</i>
natti	<i>announcement, declaration</i>
nana vamsa	<i>nana - knowledge, wisdom vamsa - lineage, descent</i>
obhasa	<i>aura, brightness, light</i>
paritta	<i>protection, defence, small, limited.</i>
panca-rupa	<i>panca - five rupa-form , body.</i>
panna-vamsa	<i>panna - knowledge, wisdom, understanding vamsa - bamboo, race, leneage, dynasty, history.</i>
pariyatta	<i>learning, the text of Buddha's word, three divisions.</i>
patipatti	<i>performance, practice, conduct.</i>
pativedha	<i>penetration, comprehension, realization.</i>
paribhoga	<i>enjoyment, use, possession.</i>
parinibbhana	<i>the attainment of Nibbana (peaceful happiness)</i>
sabba	<i>a whole, entire, all.</i>
sakka	<i>lord of heavenly beings, king of devas, Buddha's race.</i>
sarnath	<i>the name of place where the Buddha first preached.</i>
samatha	<i>calm, tranquility, serenity.</i>
sangha	<i>the order, community.</i>
sariputtra	<i>son of the Brahmin lady named Sari, but his nickname is Upatissa.</i>
sima	<i>boundary, limit, parish, chapter house</i>
soondawgyi (Burmese)	<i>various offerings to the Buddha</i>
sutti	<i>purity, a good saying.</i>
surassati	<i>the name of Goddess, who regards Buddhism.</i>
ti pitaka	<i>three baskets, Buddhist scriptures, Buddhism.</i>
thera vada	<i>thera - elder vada - speech, doctrine, advice.</i>
upagutta	<i>a name of an Arahant, who overcome Evil One and his hosts.</i>
uddissa	<i>concerning, dedication.</i>
vicara	<i>sustained thought.</i>
vimala	<i>pure, spotless.</i>
vipassana	<i>seeing clearly, insight, the vision of what is formed as impermanent, painful and not-self.</i>
vesak vesakha	<i>the name of Buddhist month.</i>
Wagaung (Burmese)	<i>the name of fifth month in Burmese.</i>



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