

# THE MON ORDINATION TRADITION AND ITS PRACTICES

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## Abstract

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The intention of this study is to describe the three types of ordination ceremonies in Mon State and their practices: (1) A splendid Mon ordination ceremony; (2) a simple Mon ordination ceremony; (3) an emergency Mon ordination ceremony; and (4) the practices of these Mon ordination traditions. A splendid ordination ceremony is a ceremony that is mixed with entertainment, many decorations, and an abundance of donations. A simple Mon ordination ceremony is held with few cultural celebrations and those that celebrate adhere only to the requirements of the Vinaya as given by the Buddha. An emergency Mon ordination ceremony occurs in the event of a serious illness of a beloved one or, alternatively, during a funeral ceremony. The practices of a Mon ordination ceremony is most commonly practiced in the form of a splendid ordination ceremony that the Mon people perform in an attempt to represent the occasion of the Bodhisatta Siddhattha Gotama's renunciation and associated legendary events. It is a beautiful tradition and embodies meritorious deeds which will be illustrated with the Mon traditional ways of life, stories and the stories from the Buddha's time.

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In summary, this article will show the attitude of the Mon people towards the celebration of an ordination tradition which some could accuse of involving extraneous work and unnecessary additions. However, the Mon takes it as a moral and religious expression of their Buddhist way of life and feels there are many good reasons behind those celebrations.

**Key Words:** Mon ordination; tradition; and practice.

## Introduction

According to the Buddhist Vinaya rules, the establishment of a *sima* boundary, the presence of 10 monks (*dasavagga*) in the central region of India (*Majjhamadesa*) or 5 monks (*pañcavagga*) in the regions outside that area<sup>1</sup> (such as Thailand) allows for the full ordination (*upasampadā*) of any man over the age of 20 by reciting the *saṅgha kammavācā*. Any boy under 20 by reciting the Triple Gems is also allowed for lower ordination (novice) (*Bhattanta Nai Kalayāna*, 1976). Actually, a boy can go to the monastery and make a request to the head monk to allow him to ordain. The head monk can instruct him to prepare the necessary things for ordination (*Ramannya Nimala Bikhu*, 2009). It's very simple, isn't it? However, the Mon people, a civilization of Southeast Asia since ancient times received Buddhism from India (*Emmanuel Guillon*, 1999) and traditionally celebrate the Buddhist ordination ceremony with many different facts from the original Buddhist ordination. A beautiful celebration of Mon Buddhist ordination can commonly be seen during the summer months in Mon State. Why do they celebrate this ceremony as a very special occasion? Why do they happily celebrate this as often as they can? Why do they view it as a once in a lifetime experience for them? What do the things that they do in the celebration represent? Do they represent how *Siddhattha Gotama* renounced his princely life and became a Buddha? As a very religious people, do they regard the Buddhist ordination ceremony as a unique event? Do they believe that it is a good opportunity for them to make great merit? Do they aspire to earn greater merit by making the ceremony happier, more elaborate, and more beautiful?

When a country or area is developing, people of different nationalities, religions, and languages live within the same realm. The social and cultural lifestyles of the people begin to adapt to a modern lifestyle. The valuable traditional culture begins to lack knowledgeable people to follow. Only a few people socially accept the old correct cultural norms and most admire the modern lifestyle which is easier and more popular to follow. The beautiful, polite, and gentle social traditions are unpopular among the youth. This could happen in Mon State, Myanmar in the future. Therefore, the target of my article is the future citizens of Mon State, Myanmar. Motivated by a fear of losing the Mon ordination tradition and an aim towards their preservation, I will seek to factually inform people about it. This will be included within four parts in this article:

A splendid Mon ordination ceremony.

- A simple Mon ordination ceremony.
- An emergency Mon ordination ceremony.
- The practices of the Mon ordination tradition.

### **A splendid Mon ordination ceremony**

A splendid Mon ordination ceremony is a big celebration for the Mon people. It is performed not only to celebrate the lifestyle of the Mon people in Mon State today but also to reflect the events of the Buddha's time. The ceremony they perform is related to the stories of the Buddha such as those we can read in the Nidānakathā of Jātaka and Buddhavamsa Commentary. Most traditional activities they do in this ceremony, they refer to the story of the Buddha and the history of Mon people. In such a ceremony, they make the most generous donations possible to all the attending monks and laypeople.

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### **A simple Mon ordination ceremony**

A simple Mon ordination ceremony includes few celebrations and those included are only those requirements of the Mahāvagga Vinaya as given by the Buddha. This ceremony also includes donations but only to those monks and people necessary for the ceremony. Monks included in this ceremony are those who perform novice ordination's procedure such as giving the three triple germs to the candidate etc and monk ordination's procedure such as reciting Saṃgha Kammavācā for the candidate in the Sīmā. Laypeople involved in this ceremony are only those who are related to the ordination candidates and perhaps some local elders. Hence, one need not spend a lot of money to hold this ceremony. It is similar to the manner by which ordination candidates were ordained during the Buddha's time because the most important things to have for an ordination candidate in this ceremony are the attha parikkharā (the eight requisites) and the required (5) number of monks (*saṅgha*).

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### **An emergency ordination ceremony**

An emergency ordination ceremony is performed because a member of a family is seriously ill or dying. For this reason only family and relatives participate in this ceremony. This ceremony can be either involves a novice ordination or a monk ordination. An emergency ordination ceremony performed just after someone's death is to hold concurrently with

a funeral ceremony. Relatives, villagers, and those people who are related to the deceased come to the ceremony. Any young boy who is related to the deceased may seek a novice ordination. This is called *dak wall* in the Mon language (Nai Ba Maung, 2014). *Dak* means “to ride” and *wall* means “something that has four corners and is carried by people” (in this case a coffin has four corners to be carried by people). So, *dak wall* means, “to ride upon that which has four corners that is carried by people” (a coffin). This kind of ceremony can be compared with the story from the Buddha’s time of two small orphans who were allowed to be ordained as a novice even though they were under 15 years of age since they were able to scare away the crows approaching a nearby a rice bowl (Thānissaro Bhikkhu, 2013). Among these three categories of ordination ceremonies the most important and common in the Mon tradition is the first one. However, the vital point is for the ordination candidate to become a valid monk. Therefore, the most important thing to arrange for the ordination ceremony is the eight requisites (*attha parikkhārā*) and the proper quorum of (5) monks (*saṅgha*). Without these eight requisites and the quorum of (5) monks (*saṅgha*), one cannot receive a valid higher ordination. In arranging any ordination ceremony anything other than the required requisites and monks are superfluous and unimportant.

However, the most popular ceremony that the Mon people perform in an attempt to represent the events of the Bodhisatta Siddhatta Gotama’s renunciation and legendary events are a splendid ordination ceremony. It is a beautiful tradition and represents meritorious deeds which include the following practices.

### **The practices of Mon ordination tradition**

**(1) Avoid going out to sea, avoid climbing trees, and avoid travelling afar:** This advice is for the Mon boys to follow if they have not yet received novice ordination. This concept comes from the story of Maung Shin, who was captured by spirits because it was assumed that he had not yet received novice ordination but was still planning to get ordained upon his return from the sea. But, he failed to arrive back to his village to receive his ordination because of his capture by spirits (Dha Nute Koko Zaw, 2013). The Mon people believe that someone who hasn’t yet ordained could easily be caught by spirits as he is mentally and spiritually soft due to having not ordained. For this reason, Maung Shin’s mother invited monks to the island where her son was captured by spirits and re-

requested the monks to give his late son the Triple Gem (tisāraṇa - which is a novice ordination formula) (The Triple Gem are Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha). This concept also comes from the legend of Māra attacking the Buddha which also contributes to the Mon peoples' belief that an ordination candidate could be attacked by an evil spirit.

**(2) Worshipping the spirits** (Sprit is called Kalok in Mon(Nat in Myanmar). Kaloks are spirits worshipped in Mon in conjunction with Buddhism. They are divided between the 37 Great Ka Loks and all the rest (i.e., spirits of trees, water, etc.): Prior to celebrating an ordination ceremony, Mon ordination candidates worship the spirit at home (An offertory coconut is often hung on the main southeast post in the house, wearing a headdress) and surrounded by perfume, as an offering to the Min Mahagiri (Lord of the Great Mountain), also known as the *kalok hei* or *peo ĕu hei* (house guardian). and the spirit in the village (Every Mon village has *hei kalok* or *hei peo ĕu* (*spirit's house*) which essentially serves as a shrine to the village guardian kalok called the *kalok kwan*). This means that they inform the spirit that they are going to become novices or monks soon. Their intention is that the house's spirit at home is the one who guards the family within the house and the spirit in the village is the one who guards all the people in the village. The family in the candidate's house has to inform the house's spirit within the home. In the same way, the people in the village perform have to inform the spirit in the village. This is tradition because the Mon people consider the spirits (kaloks) like one of their respected ancestors. Another reason they have to inform the spirits is that after someone becomes a novice or monk, they no longer need to worship or pay respect to those spirits any more. It may be that a novice or monk who keep the precepts and maintains good behavior may be more accomplished than the spirits with respect to *sīla* (virtue), *samādhī* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom). So, they are free from the duties of having to worship spirits (kaloks) during their novice or monk lives. It is like being free from having to carry on a duty for government service. For example, a layman has to inform the spirit (Kalok) in the house, or in the village, if he wants to go to another country. But, a monk is free from having to do so. Maybe we can say that this is one of the benefits of becoming a monk in the Mon tradition. On the contrary, in some Mon villages, such as in Ye Township, they don't worship spirits (kaloks) even though they are laymen. As one monk told me, they believe that spirits (kaloks) are lower than human beings and, therefore, not worthy of respect.

**(3) Paying respect to parents, grandparents, and the elderly before getting ordained:** This is a very polite tradition of the Mon ordination. The intention is that they want to worship their parents, grandparents, and the elderly before getting ordination because after a candidate becomes a novice or monk, the candidate can no longer worship and pay respect to them anymore. Novices and monks are considered more venerable than parents, grandparents, or the elderly. The grandparents or elders give them a small amount of money or other things which may be useful for the ceremony. The belief is that if they offer something to the candidate, they also can become the sponsor of an ordination ceremony and have a chance to become monk by themselves in their next life. Nai Maung Toe (1989) said that some old people don't let the candidate pay respect to them. It is because they keep in mind that the candidate is approaching a higher status by becoming a novice or monk soon. Instead, they let the candidate pay respect to the Buddha's shrine in their house. Another reason for paying respect to parents is that according to the Vinaya rules, one must have permission from parents to get ordained. So, it is a form of asking permission from the parents.

**(4) Taking ordination before getting married:** This is a good tradition of the Mon people. It is a moral and pure idea. Logically, if someone is addicted to drugs, he struggles to live without drugs. In the same way, if someone falls in love with his wife and family and has attachment, it is very difficult for him to renounce or stay away from his loved ones. So, as a result, he cannot remain a monk for a longer period and will be obstructed from attaining his spiritual goal. That's why the tradition of not getting married before ordination is, ideally, very good for each person who is sincere regarding their spiritual development and who wishes to become a monk for life.

**(5) The age of an ordination candidate:** According to Mon tradition, although a 12 to 14 year old boy is suitable to be ordained, a qualified novice candidate is considered according to his ability to take care of his personal needs and his daily routine (Nai Maung Toe, 1989). For monk ordination candidates, there is no need to mention that Mon people must follow the Vinaya rules which state that one must be at least 20 years of age to receive monk ordination. In the Vinaya, or monastic discipline, a man under the age of twenty cannot ordain as a bhikkhu (receiving the upasampadā) but can ordain as a sāmaṇera keeping the Ten Precepts and the seventy-five rules of training (sekhiyas) as their code of behavior while

devoting themselves to the religious life either temporarily or for life. The procedure for novices is a short and simple one with the candidate reciting a formula for requesting the refuges and the Ten Precepts. The novice should be at least fifteen years old, or if younger, he should be able to “scare crows away.” He should have a bowl and two robes (that is, without the outer robe or saṅghāṭi, only monk should have outer robe).

**(6) Sponsoring ordination:** Ordination sponsorship can accrue uncountable benefits and it is believed that someone could be released from the hell realms as a result of sponsoring ordination. This Dhamma is popular among the members of Mon society and is deeply impressed in the heart and minds of the Mon people. The story of the Isālī Lady whose consciousness already experienced hell (like a nightmare) but as a result of sponsoring ordination, she was released from the suffering of hell and returned to the human world (Bhaddanta Uttamālaṅkāra, 2013). Another story told that of Mangalikā sponsored other son to become a novice. As a result, when her consciousness already went to the hell, she recalled her foster son novice and her consciousness too could have released from the suffering hell and got back in the human world. The Mon people also believe that the best way to support the Buddha Sasana (dispensation of the Buddhadhamma) is to help someone, someone’s son, or one’s own son to receive ordination as a monk (Bhaddanta Uttamālaṅkāra, 2013). According to the teaching of the Buddha, there are five difficulties described in the Buddhist suttas: (1) it is very difficult for a Buddha to appear in this world; (2) it is very difficult to be born as a human being; (3) it is very difficult to be a human being with generosity; (4) it is very difficult to live life as a monk; (5) it is very difficult to hear the Buddha’s teachings. (Appamādena Bikkhave Sampādetha, Buddhuppādo Dullabho Lokassmī, Manussattabhāvo Dullabho, Dullabho Saddhāsampatti, Pabba-jitabhāvo Dullabho, Saddhammasavanam Atidullabham”) (Samyutta Nikāya, Sutta Pitaka, Chattha Sangayana Tipitaka CD 4.0). So, it is very beneficial for someone who has the opportunity to get ordained because becoming a monk is one of these five difficulties. These are the reasons why Mon people want to sponsor an ordination ceremony, but rather so that they can have a chance to donate the atthaparikkārā (the eight requisites) and accrue benefits for uncountable existences which prevents rebirth in the hell realms. And, they believe that in the next life they can understand the truth of the teaching, get ordained easily, and achieve the goal of Nibbāna.

**(7) The Mon ordination candidates go around the village:**

Mon ordination candidates go around the village in procession with their families, relatives, and friends. Parents or elders carry bowls, or robes, and the younger people carry pillows, mats, water pots, flowers, etc (Mon Literature and Culture, Yangon, 1977). This is a beautiful scene because everything in the ceremony is decorated. The Mon people have this beautiful tradition and embrace it as essential because it refers to the prince Siddhattha riding to the forest upon his horse. Some says they go around the village because they want to inform people and the devas (diving beings) that this candidate is going to become a monk soon. The candidates wear royal clothing. Wearing royal clothing also refers to the Buddha, who was a prince when he left the palace and went to the forest with his horse, Khandaka, and his servant, Channa. Another reason is that if a person goes first and foremost in front among many people in a ceremony, he or she should be either senior in age or greater in virtue (sīla). That's why the Mon people let the candidates go first, the parents; second, the relatives; and then friends accordingly in order to socially respect their age and virtue (sīla). During this time, to express the joy of having new ordination candidates, the young people often play music on loud speakers, drink alcohol, and dance.

**(8) Walking three times around the temple:** Similar to going around the village, parents, relatives and friends follow the ordination candidates in procession while carrying the candidates sleeping mat, pillow, and requisites (monks' necessities). They circumambulate the temple three times. They walk on the right hand side (The Mon literature and Buddhist culture, All Mon state association, 2006) so as to emulate Bodhisatta Siddhattha Gotama. The reason they walk around the monastery is that they intend to inform the divine beings (spirits or devas) that their boys will soon become a novice or monk and live in the monastery compound. Another reason is that they want the candidates to be familiarized with the monastery compound. Nai Calk (2014) said "Some people still carry the candidate on their shoulders and some people let the candidate walk around the monastery but they shouldn't let a horse or elephant walk around the monastery as it may be small area to walk around for a horse or elephant." Nai Maung Toe (1989) mentions in his book that the person who carries the candidate on his shoulders sometimes doesn't climb up the monastery's stairs but rather he takes the candidate away upon his shoulders and runs. In this way, the ordination's sponsor must then exchange the candidate with a little amount of ransom money! Doing this is



only a good natured donation between the sponsor and the person who carries the candidate as the candidate is on his way to having a noble higher life. Finally, they climb up the stairs to go into the monastery in order to take the precepts, listen to the monks' chanting, and follow the monk's instructions what to do next.

**(9) Shaving the head of a candidate:** The Mon people catch the shaved hairs with a scarf or white cloth to prevent them from falling down onto the ground. The comparison of this tradition with the Buddhist concept is that it was the hairs of the Bodhisatta which the Sakka Deva (a king of divine beings) prevented from falling down onto the ground, took to heaven, and built a cetiya called Cūlāmanicetiya to enshrine them (J.i.65). An article, "Hair of the Buddha", stated that hair is often used as a metaphor for human delusion or ignorance and called the 'weeds of ignorance'. Thus, shaving the hair implies, symbolically, getting rid of ignorance. The body and the mind should be kept clean in order to reach the final aim of true understanding. Thus, cutting and shaving the hair represents a sort of determination to keep the body and mind clean and then to attain enlightenment and save all beings (Peter Vredeveld, Hair of the Buddha). In the process of getting ordination, the candidate has to repeat after his teacher monk (uppajjhāya), "I am disgusted by *kesa* (hair of the head), *loma* (hair of the body), *nakha* (nails), *danta* (teeth), *taco* (skin), *taco* (skin), *danta* (teeth), *nakha* (nail), *kesa* (hair of the body), *loma* (hair of the head) so now I have cleaned all the disgusting things which are perishable nature of the human body." Therefore, shaving the head or the beard is not only a tradition but also in accordance with the Buddha's *kesamassu orohana* or rules, to getting ordained.

**(10) Bathing with auspicious chanting water:** Mon ordination candidates bathe with auspicious chanting water after shaving is an essential step within the Mon tradition. The auspicious water is water which has just been chanted over by the monks and mixed with acacia concinna (Acacia concinna has been used traditionally for hair care, known in Mon as Sot Kapore, literally «hair-fruit», «fruit for hair»). Mon people also use it for cleaning the body of Mon ordination candidate as they also believe that it can give them magical power. That's why it is also use for cleaning Buddha statue, bead, and other charms) and turmeric powder (Turmeric is called Mit in Mon. It uses for medicine and is also good to apply on the new shaved head. So, Mon people use it for applying on the new shaved

head of ordination candidate). The reasons for bathing the candidate with this water are: (1) the water is believed to have the power of the protective paritta because it has just chanted over by the monks; (2) there is a legendary story of a Mon king who lost the power of his magical eye but regained the power again due to just standing under an acacia concinna tree. This makes the Mon believe that the acacia concinna was able to clear his bad fortune and restored his magical eyes' power; (3) According to scientific discovery, the Mon people use acacia concinna and turmeric powder because acacia concinna is good and healthy for the hair. Turmeric is also good to apply on the newly shaved skin. It makes the skin healthy. In researching these proceeding facts, the reason for bathing ordination candidates with chanted water mixed with acacia concinna and turmeric powder is to clean not only the exterior of the candidate but also the interior of the candidate.

**(11) Offering the hand of the candidate to the teacher monk (uppajjhāya):** This is another tradition of the Mon ordination ceremony. While an ordination ceremony is in progress, a sponsor of the candidate has to stay near the candidate in order to offer the candidate's hands to the teacher monk (literally take the candidate's hands to touch the monk). The intention of doing this is to make sure that the sponsors (usually the parents) are allowing the candidate to receive ordination. This refers to the Vinaya rule that a candidate must have permission from his parents or guardians to receive ordination.

**(12) The first donation to new ordination candidate:** As soon as new monks receive ordination in the ordination hall, it is a Mon tradition to offer something to them. It is believed that they earn very great merit if they are able to make this first donation. This tradition started from the time of King Dhammaceti (AD 1472). (Pālita, 2004). After 249 monks were ordained in the new Kalayāni Ordination Hall, the king, queen, ministers, and people from the countryside worshiped and donated something to the new monks (Parlita, 2010). From that time on, the Mon people have been worshipping and donating something to the new monks as they descend from the ordination hall. It was originally at that time that this tradition started. After having finished performing a higher ordination, senior monks as well as the newly ordained monks, prepare to walk in procession to accept donations from people such as parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives, and friends. These offerings are unique for Mon people because they also compare this donation with the first donation of cake and honey

rice from the two Mon brothers, Tapussa and Bhalluka, offered to the Buddha (UdA.54) following his enlightenment. As new monks, it is believed that they are pure in *silā* (virtue), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). So, it is auspicious to make this very first donation to new monks. The Mon people are very proud of Tapussa and Bhalluka's story as they believe that Tapussa and Bhalluka were Mon traders who came from Ramaññadesa. Having the chance to donate food to the Buddha for the first time was very auspicious. For having had an opportunity to take refuge, worship the Buddha, and becoming the first lay Buddhists who met the Buddha was very fortunate. In the same way, recollecting this first time, Mon people believe that it is a great fortune to donate something to new monks for the first time. It is a great chance to be the first to pay respect to new monks. Therefore, this first time is a reflection of Tapussa and Bhalluka's experience.

**(13) To the Mon, ordination does not mean a lifelong commitment to live as a monk:** In the Mon tradition, after getting ordained, a novice should stay for at least 7 days and a monk should stay for at least 9 days. Even though this tradition is not according to a rule that the Buddha laid down, Mon people practice it as if it were. However, Mon people believe that it depends on the candidate's *pārami* (perfection) (Ashin Nyanna Vamsa, 2001). *Pārami* (perfection) in this case in Mon Buddhism, is the belief that someone has attained a high moral standard. For example: in the past, he donated one of the (8) *parikkharā* (outer robe, upper robe, under robe, belt, bowl, shaving knife, needle, and water filter) to a monk. Or, he did something to cause someone or himself to become a monk in his previous life. Normally, a novice or monk who stays longer can study at the local monastery or at another *pariyatti* (academic) monastery in another village or town. There are many Mon novices and monks who sacrifice their lives for Buddhist *Sāsanā*. Some of them serve Buddhism until the end of their lives. They may study either the *Tipitaka* or meditation. It depends on what they are interested in. But, normally, if one becomes a monk when he is old, he may begin his work with meditation; if one becomes a monk when he is young, he may go to a *pariyati* monastery and do his *Tipitaka* studies.

What I intend to mention here is in regard to those Mon novices or monks disrobing within Mon community. I should say that disrobing is a normal situation and is socially acceptable among the Mon people.

Those who just want to stay only 7 days or 9 days just disrobe on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> day night following their ordination. For those who have remained for one vāssa (rainy season retreat) or longer for his parents merit, his disrobing makes people feel a little bit shocked and unhappy to see him return back to normal life again. This is because those people may have wished to see him remain as a monk for life and hoped that he could have served Buddhism for much longer.

The Mon people understand that it is the nature of ordinary people that the many monastic rules make it difficult for them to stay as a monk. The Mon people called the disrobed novices Kon Hta Po or Kao Hta Po, and for a disrobed monk, they called him as Kon Nai or Kao Kyait or Amu Kyait, or Anai Kyait or Nai Yañ or Nai (Nai Maung Toe, 1989). The reference of a disrobed monk is different from one village to the next. These references are all polite, great, and respected words. After someone disrobes, he should perform some duty within the monastery, such as cleaning the monastery compound, toilet, floor, etc. He should wash his former robe carefully and give it to the head monk of the monastery. Only after asking permission from the head monk (bowing down three times), should he depart for home.

## Conclusion

When the Mon people try to make an ordination ceremony elaborate and celebratory by organizing various different kinds of pageantry it is an attempt to imitate the story of Prince Siddhatta Gotama's renunciation of his worldly life and embarking on his search for truth. The emphasis here is more on donations (dāna). Donations of food, gifts, and other necessities to the attending laypeople and monks is a traditional part of the ceremony accompanying a Mon ordination. Taking a positive view, Mon people are cultivating generosity. They are like a rain which falls everywhere. This example of rain is mentioned in Itivuttaka 75 which explains that there are three kinds of persons in this world. One is like a rainless cloud, one is like a cloud which rains locally, and one is like a cloud which rains everywhere. The one like a rainless cloud doesn't give anything to anybody. The one like local raincloud gives only to people that he/she wants to give. And, the one like a cloud which rains everywhere gives to everyone and everywhere. Therefore, most of the Mon people want to celebrate an ordination ceremony as splendidly as possible if they have the money to do so. Such a celebration of an ordination ceremony can require many donations to lay-

people, monks, and all those who come to the ceremony. It is such people who donate to all who are like a rain that falls everywhere.

In contrast, the simple ordination ceremony is like a rain that falls locally. Even though they focus on only the necessary things that should be arranged, such as the eight requisites and the monks, they also donate to some people who come to participate in the ceremony. This is like a rain that falls locally. However, one important beneficial aspect of this approach is that they don't celebrate the ceremony with music, dance, and alcohol which encourages sensual desire. This can be compared with ordination events during the Buddha's time as there was no elaborated celebration for ordination at that time. Ordination in the Buddha's time could be received in a very simple way but it was only meant for those with a sincere desire for renunciation. In contrast, it is a Mon tradition that every boy has to get ordained for reasons of cultural conformity rather than the true renunciation of the Buddha's time. There was always a spiritual reason behind one's ordination in the Buddha's time and not just cultural tradition. That's why there was no celebration for ordination. If one wanted to get ordination in the Buddha's time, he/she just asked permission from the Buddha, or a monk, and received ordination in a very simple manner. The necessary things were only the eight requisites (*attha parikkhārā*) and the proper quorum of monks (*saṅgha*) required to perform the ordination for the candidate. This is the very similar to this simple ordination ceremony (ie, the ordination ceremony that includes few celebrations and include only the requirements of the Vinaya as given by the Buddha.)

An emergency ordination in Mon State takes place when someone is seriously ill or dying. The goal of this ordination is to earn merit because the Mon people believe that, according to the Buddha's teaching, sponsoring an ordination can accrue a great deal of merit for an uncountable number of existences. Also, the ordained individuals can receive great benefit in this existence and the next. According to Buddhists' belief, one should perform good deeds as often as possible while one is alive. That's why the Mon people will try to sponsor an ordination both before death and after death. In this regard, after death means there is another kind of emergency ordination related to someone's funeral. Even though the dead person cannot know anything about such an event, the rest of the family and relatives will arrange a novice ordination ceremony on behalf of the dead. The belief is that the deceased could receive merit from such an ordination performed just proximally after their death. This is the same

as the concept of transferring merit. (According to Theravada tradition, in Tipitaka mentioned that one can only transfer merits to beings in the hungry ghost realm, if a relative of someone has passed away and you have reasons to believe he/she is in the ghost realm (manifestations, signs etc.) one can donate food or clothes or something to the Saṅgha transferring the merits to him/her.) Therefore, this kind of emergency ordination is celebrated during the serious sickness or death process of someone. The intention of this ordination, in brief, is to help the sick or dying person to gain merit after death and to transfer the merit of the ordination to the dead person. It should be noted that the ordination held during someone's serious illness is to be allowed for either a novice ordination or a monk ordination, but the ordination that is held after the death of someone only allows for a novice ordination.

In the Mon ordination tradition there are many practices, concepts, superstitions, and attitudes of the Mon people related to their ordination customs. I can present a brief comment that their practices are meant to be reflections of the life of Siddhatta Gotama, particularly in regard to renouncing the world and going into the forest to search for the truth. Some cultural practices in the ceremony are moral and some are immoral. For example, the practice of paying respect to parents, grandparents, and elders are purely moral but the practice of playing music, dancing, and imbibing in alcohol during the ceremony is immoral. From the time of the Buddha until the time of present Mon State, the pure ordination has been changed by the superstition of the people. For example, the belief that an evil spirit could disturb the ordination candidate if the candidate fails to worship the spirits before his ordination. This is merely a superstition. The above cases may lead to unwholesome deeds for both the sponsor and their ordination candidates. This means that one may not get the full benefit of ordination if they play music, dance, and serve alcohol because they are opposed to the precepts and the rules of Vinaya.

In Mon society, there is always something behind each ordination tradition. It is like 'when there is a cause, there is always a result'. When there is an ordination, there could be a moral or immoral cause. Only if they wisely perform an ordination ceremony, they can say that sponsoring an ordination ceremony, or becoming a monk, will result in good benefits for uncountable lives, can save them from rebirth in the hell realms, and lead them to Nibbāna.

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