

「パオ仏教」の創出？  
——ミャンマー連邦シャン州の民族と仏教の境界——

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The Birth of “Pa-O Buddhism”?  
Buddhism and Identity of the Pa-O in the Shan State of Myanmar

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Abstract

In this paper, I consider the Buddhist practices of the Pa-O in the Shan State after the independence of Myanmar (the Union of Burma). The Pa-O, a group of Karen speakers, is an ethnic minority living in Myanmar. Most of them are Theravada Buddhists and could be considered as a Buddhist minority in Myanmar. Generally speaking, the Buddhism of ethnic minorities in mainland Southeast Asian countries is regarded as resulting from the diffusion of Buddhist traditions from powerful majorities. It is deemed to have an assimilation effect on minorities into the Buddhist majority of each country. As for the Pa-O, it is said that their Buddhist practices have been influenced by neighboring Buddhist majorities: Mon, Burmese, and Shan. From this diffusionist point of view, the Pa-O have been described as passive actors who received a foreign religion under the cultural and political influence of majorities.

However, this paper will argue that we should not view the Pa-O as merely an ethnic minority but also as “Buddhists.” We demonstrate the endeavors of Pa-O Buddhists to construct their own Buddhist tradition by creating sacred place through the renovation of ancient pagodas, organizing monks and monasteries, and advancing Buddhist education for lay people.

**Keywords:** Pa-O, Shan State, Buddhism, Sangha organization, pagoda

キーワード：パオ、シャン州、仏教、サンガ組織、仏塔

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