2020

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Recommended Citation

Douglas, Gavin D. (2020) "Metta, Mudita, and Metal: Dhamma Instruments in Burmese Buddhism," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion*: Vol. 6: No. 1, Article 1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17132/2377-231X.1159>

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Cover Page Footnote

Special thanks to U Hla Aung, the Tun family, Ko Doo, Gita Lulin Maung Ko Ko, and other friends in Myanmar. Portions of this paper were presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) Performing Arts of Southeast Asia study group conferences. I am grateful for the generous feedback provided at those meetings and from the anonymous reviewers. All errors are mine.

Metta, Mudita, and Metal

Dhamma Instruments in Burmese Buddhism

Gavin Douglas

Buddhist monasteries and pagodas are sonically rich places. Despite the stereotypes of calm silence and serenity that imbue sacred spaces, the array of sounds found in and around Buddhist practice is immense. At a Burmese pagoda, one witnesses layers of bells, gongs, chants, solo and group prayers, all sculpting the sonic environment in meaningful ways. This paper examines the soundscape of Buddhist social space in Myanmar and argues that these sounds provide a critical aural dimension to Buddhist practice, revealing an indispensable perspective that is usually neglected in discussions of Buddhist practice.

I begin with an examination of several sound-making instruments found throughout Burmese pagodas and monasteries. These gongs and bells are generally referred to as *dhamma* instruments rather than musical instruments, as their social life and meanings are primarily in the sacred domain. Indeed, there is minimal overlap of these instruments with those of the traditions of Myanmar's music. Following these instruments from the forge to the pagoda and the monastery, I explain their purpose in marking the acquisition and the distribution of kammic merit. Finally, through discussions with various monks and blacksmiths, I inspect the intersection of sound production and perception with the cultivation of particular states of mind. Most specifically, these sounds promote an opportunity to attend to what the Buddha referred to as the *brahma viharas*, the divine dwelling places of the mind.

The *brahma viharas* are regarded as the ideal mental attitudes or sublime states by

which one engages with fellow humans, with other living creatures (animals, spirits), and with the universe more broadly. They are regarded as the social attitudes that inform or underlie the most appropriate and beneficial modes of conduct toward other living beings.¹

These four sublime states are *metta* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity). They cultivate favorable relationships between people and are four different ways that a spiritually mature person relates to others. I seek here to explore how the sonic relationships between beings in particular Buddhist spaces, and understood through these ideal mental states, aid in the interpreting, constructing, and understanding of a Buddhist nature of reality.

Buddhism encompasses a vast array of traditions, styles, and philosophical approaches to sound. There is no one Buddhism and no consistent approach or philosophy regarding the use of music or sound. Few claims about music hold throughout the Buddhist world. The notion of a "Buddhist music" is essentially meaningless given the variety of Buddhist sound and insofar as some traditions embrace music while others are highly restrictive of its use. Many monasteries found throughout the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions embrace music as a facilitator of meditation and ritual,² in contrast to the Theravada tradition, which is more suspicious of music's power to cultivate attachment. For this reason, Theravada monks and devout

laity are admonished to abstain from participation in musical activity.

Independent of the precepts and protocols for engaging with “music”—however one might define it—sculpted, organized, and intentional vocal and instrumental sounds serve essential roles in all Buddhist societies. Sound (whether called music or not) often defines the architecture of ceremonies and rituals marking particular moments of a liturgy. The symbolism attached to various sounds and sounding objects highlights aspects of the Buddha’s teachings, or dhamma, in many types of Buddhism. While sound is an intrinsic part of lay and monastic Buddhist practice, it is often neglected by religious scholars or treated as peripheral to other aspects of Buddhism. Furthermore, music scholars often pass over sounds that are not framed as music. Scholarly neglect of sound and music analysis is particularly noteworthy in the Theravada Buddhist literature.

By examining sacred space among the Burman communities of Myanmar, I assert that sound production and sound reception play a significant role in lay and monastic Buddhist practice. Awareness of sonic relationships helps to reconcile some seemingly contrary understandings of Buddhism as a philosophy, as a religious practice, and as a source of worldly power.

Sound and Music in Theravada Buddhism

The seventh Buddhist precept implores monks and devout laity to abstain from dancing, singing, and music. Many of the sounds presented in the following discussion are not regarded as music in the narrow sense of the term—that is, music that evokes aesthetic states of enjoyment or pleasure, or social functions such as entertainment. Such traditions of sound making are, some

argue, prone to cultivating attachment. The nonmusical sounds that envelop the pagoda exist to communicate particular aspects of the dhamma, to mark qualities of social interdependence, and to relay specific messages between the mundane and the supermundane worlds.

In what follows, I present some sounds through three different vectors of Buddhist inquiry: the philosophical, the religious, and the political. These three avenues of investigation offer different insights into the practice of Buddhism and bring different understandings to the uses and meanings of sound. As a philosophical tradition, Buddhism offers insights into understanding consciousness and perception. The Buddha never said anything about the origins of the universe, about a supreme being or an independent sentient entity that oversees the cosmos. Nor is the Buddha a judge of behavior and action. His documented thoughts were primarily about understanding our perceptions and examining what they tell us about the nature of reality. As a science of mind or a philosophical tradition, Buddhism addresses our perceptions (or misperceptions) of that reality. Only after understanding the nature of reality can one attend to proper living. Second, as adherents of a religious tradition, Buddhists in Myanmar and elsewhere have developed an enormous variety of rituals, rites, and behaviors that interact with existential problems beyond the quantifiable mundane world. These Buddhist practices reach toward the metaphysical and arguably unverifiable (for example, karma and reincarnation) and engage various types of magic and apotropaic spells that are often realized through sound.³ Third, Buddhist practice is set within the mundane social world where

actors compete for access to resources and power. Religious affiliation and membership in particular communities afford various tools to enhance earthly ends. The study of Buddhism from this vantage point offers insight into claiming and deploying worldly political power through religious means.⁴ This anthropology of Buddhism seeks to reconcile our understanding of Buddhist texts, rituals, and philosophies with human actors and societies. All three lines of inquiry have sonic components that I will address.

Musical compositions and songs with instrumental accompaniment composed by lay Buddhists constitute some of the more conspicuous examples of music within Theravada Buddhist practice. Chanting of sutras and canonical texts dominates the sound world of the monastery—and often of the neighborhood, when such recitations are amplified on loudspeakers—yet such sounds are not properly considered to be music. The shrines, pagodas, and monasteries that constitute the social gathering places for both the public and the monks include a variety of other sounds that I choose to examine here. In this setting, soundscape analysis draws our attention to a wide variety of sound types and sharpens our aural acuity to decipher proximal and distant sources, volume, density, sonic layering, and the interplay of human- and nonhuman-originated sounds. Beyond an account of the variety and fidelity of sound types, I choose also to interact with acoustemological ideas that link sounds to epistemologies, highlighting the ways of knowing that are realized in these arenas. The sounds of Buddhist space at play here are not simply sounds that contribute to feeling the space and embodying religious practice. These sounds, as will be shown, mark off relational, contingent, and reflexive

properties and the social interconnectedness of all agents in the arena.

An aurally attentive visitor to a Buddhist pagoda has the opportunity to rethink the meaning, nature, and significance of social experience, their ethical bond to community, their relationship to power, and to assess how their reality is understood. Attention to pagoda and monastery sound opens doors to understanding Buddhist psychology, metaphysics, and social power. While this study focuses on the auditory terrain of the pagoda, the aural is not the only sense at work. The whole body/mind is relevant to the experience, calling for, as Michael Bull and Les Black articulate, a “democracy of the senses.”⁵ In the Buddhist epistemological context, accounting for all senses includes not only the five bodily senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch but also the sixth sense of mental constructs. Mental perceptions, like other perceptions, contribute to our understanding (and misunderstanding) of the world. The mind and mental constructions interact with sense objects to create impressions, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and other psychological phenomena.⁶

Tens of thousands of pagodas (stupas or zedis) decorate the landscape throughout Myanmar. Pagodas serve as hubs for community events, daily offerings, meditation, and pilgrimage, and many of the larger ones are tourist sites. No village is without one, and most have many pagodas. While serving as a site for social and religious activities, the pagoda’s primary function is as a funerary monument that may contain a relic, image, or other sacred objects. Many pagodas throughout the country lay claim to relics of Gautama Buddha and, in some cases, even previous Buddhas. Relics—a tooth, a hair, or a bone fragment—are

preserved to remind people of the Buddha's corporeality and humanness, and in this way uphold that enlightenment is a possibility for all. Stupas without relics—the vast majority—still serve as reminders of the Buddha's humanness and teachings. While the monks (*sangha*) steward the body of teachings (*dhammakaya*), the laity maintain the material body of the Buddha in the form of tooth, bone, or hair relics (*rupakaya*).⁷ Thus, the pagoda is a shared meeting point between the *dhammakaya* and *rupakaya*, the *sangha* and the laity, the teachings and the artifacts.

The Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, for example, is the most revered pagoda for Burmese Buddhists and is said to contain relics of the four past Buddhas. Standing

100 meters tall on top of a hill, it dominates the skyline of the city and has been a potent site for much of Myanmar's religious and political history. The mythology surrounding the Shwedagon predates the founding of the Pagan Kingdom (eleventh century c.e.) by over 1,500 years: the two brothers Taphussa and Bhallika returned from India in 588 b.c.e. with eight of the Buddha's hairs. With the help of King Okalappa, they enshrined the hairs at the top of Mount Singuttara, the site of the present-day Shwedagon.⁸ Over the years the pagoda has expanded to a massive complex that today houses an uncountable number of spires, bells, and Buddha images ringed by numerous monasteries where thousands of monks take residence (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: The Shwedagon Pagoda

A visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda and countless other pagodas throughout the country is a full, six-sense experience. Visitors approach the raised platform of the Shwedagon through one of four covered staircases that climb high above the noisy, heavily trafficked street. After removing shoes or sandals at the base of the hill near the ten-meter-tall *chinthe* (lionlike) guardians, one climbs the stairs past countless stalls selling a variety of tourist curios and religious paraphernalia: statuary and images, prayer books and beads, incense and electronic audio prayer players. The climb to the Shwedagon is modest compared to many of the religious shrines in the country that demand significant effort (such as Mandalay Hill, Mount Popa, or Kyaiktiyo), but after 100-plus steps one emerges onto the pagoda platform with an elevated heart rate from exertion in the tropical climate. The smooth marble that surrounds the spire offers a tactile sensation to bare feet that is unique to the pagoda space. During the monsoon season, the tile is likely to be wet and slippery, while during the hot times of the year it burns the feet. As one rests at the top of the stairs to take a breath, deep inhalation of incense burned in one of several thousand receptacles confronts the olfactory sense. Gold leaf and gold and white paint decorate countless spires and Buddha images, presenting a visual overdose of bright, shiny gold and white. And then the sounds

Countless bells, ranging from one inch to five yards in diameter, sound a steadily tinkling and chiming aural glitter that accompanies the other senses on overload. Above, through, and under the unremitting acoustic sparkle, individuals chant prayers and suttas, or perhaps a group of devotees collectively reads verses from the

Dhammapada. Off to the side, a monk may be reciting scripture or providing discourse on the dhamma for other listeners. On festival days or full moons, mass gatherings of monks or laity may recite together. At difficult times in the country's political history, the Shwedagon platform has provided a setting for voices of both dissent and authority. Over the years the site has been host to anticolonial demonstrations, prodemocracy rallies, government proclamations, and state rituals, all backed by the unquestioned authority of this sacred space. As a nexus of earthbound and spiritual power, where religious authority meets mundane politics, the Shwedagon Pagoda is the location of choice for countless political activities. It is a charismatic place that supports both worldly and spiritual ends. As Kees Terlouw, drawing from Weber, writes, "charismatic places with a link to the charismatic past are frequently used to legitimize traditional regimes; similarly, bureaucratic regimes tend to use charismatic places presenting the future to legitimize their rule."⁹ Many spaces have unique sounds that embody and reinforce such charisma. What relationship, then, exists between the sonic environment and the charismatic power of this place?

Recitation of scripture, prayers, *kyi zi* (percussion plaques), and *kaung laung* (bells) create sonic and spatial layers of sounds that are ever-present at the pagoda and monastery. As the sound of bells is constant but not overpowering, the degree to which one is even aware of these sounds is variable. Unlike the wealth of religious spaces singled out for their acoustics throughout the Western world, the Buddhist pagoda is predominantly outside. No acoustically designed parabolic ceiling reverberates the sound of instruments or voices. Bells,

gongs, and percussion plaques in this space are designed to ring out and then disperse. Not formally considered music and not noticed by scholars, the pagoda soundscape is absent in the literature.¹⁰

Three Perspectives

To engage the many insights that these sounds offer, I engage three groups of people who provide different perspectives on them. First, I introduce the standpoint of the builders—the gong and bell smiths who forge the metal and distribute it to users; second, that of the consumers who construct, patronize, and decorate the pagodas; And finally, that of the devout laity, monks, and others who are mindful of these objects, their sounds, and the relations that their soundings connect. The organization of this discussion into three social categories reflects the social economy of these objects and highlights the life of gongs as objects that move through the hands of different people. However, this organization is also a heuristic tool that highlights particular actions, engages specific ideas, and germinates certain concepts along the way. Indeed, many individual people are in all three groups. Alternatively, as Eliot Bates articulates in arguing for the study of the social life of musical instruments, much of “the power, mystique, and allure of musical instruments . . . is inextricable from the myriad situations where instruments are entangled in webs of complex relationships—between humans and objects, between humans and humans and between objects and other objects.”¹¹ Within this Buddhist context, Bates’s webs require expansion to include all sentient beings as well—even spirits and animals, as will be noted below.

The Builders: Forging the Dhamma Instruments

Tanpawaddy is a township of southern Mandalay in central Myanmar, not far from the Irrawaddy River. Just south of the famous Mahamuni Pagoda (along with the Shwedagon, one of the most revered shrines in the nation) is an area maybe six blocks in radius where approximately 150 people make all the gongs and bells for Myanmar and much of Thailand. It is here that the commercial networks that serve all gong and bell consumers begin. Family businesses design and forge *maung* (gongs), *kong laung* (bells), *kyi si* and *toe si* (percussion plaques) of various sizes in a manner virtually identical to those of many previous generations. Of the products created, only a small fraction will end up being used by musicians. Almost all of the bell and gong market is destined for religious use. Unlike the builders of traditional Burmese musical instruments, such as the *saung* (arched harp)¹² and *patt waing* (drum circle) makers, these gong makers have little interaction with trained musicians. This contrasts notably with gamelan traditions in Malaysia and Indonesia, where performers and instrument builders work in close association. As these instruments are not associated with musicians, they are not mentioned in any of the musicological literature.

The instruments forged in Tanpawaddy township are standardized in form, with minor variations in shape, external design, and ingredients found among different family recipes. The *kong laung* are heavy brass bells cast in a mold and can range in diameter from four inches to eighteen or twenty feet. *Kyi si* are suspended percussion plaques which, when struck on the edge, spin to create an accelerating and decelerating pulsing tone. *Toe si* are similar to *kyi zi*

but are round in shape. Maung are bossed gongs ranging in diameter from five inches to three feet and have the most widespread usage. Multiple sizes of maung are tuned and set in a rack for use in the *hsaing waing* ensemble, or they can be used individually for any number of attention-getting needs (for example, by street vendors or for calling waiters in restaurants), as well as at the pagoda or in domestic shrines (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Kong laung, kyi si, and maung for sale at the Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon

Tanpawaddy township is recognized primarily as the center of the Buddha image workshops for the country. Notably, gong and bell manufacturing is set within a large industry of religious statuary and monuments. Traveling south along Mandalay's Eighty-fourth Street past the Mahamuni Pagoda, one will find dozens of shops that hand-carve Buddha images

from marble or cast monuments and figures in brilliant brass. Indeed, the casting technologies, the generationally transmitted expertise, and the personnel who design and create bells and gongs are embedded into the business of faith artifacts.

Metalworkers begin work at two o'clock in the morning, the coolest time of the day in the typically hot Burmese climate. The interlocking rhythms of small work crews synchronizing hammers on molten metal echo throughout the otherwise quiet neighborhood in the middle of the night. The darkness allows the blacksmiths to easily see cracks in the mold of a softened piece of metal, though they can suffer eye damage as a result of long periods of staring directly at the bright molten lead. Cognizant of their associations with a long tradition of alchemy,¹³ these metal workers are highly protective of their knowledge and the ingredients of their family recipes. In conversation, the blacksmiths make frequent allusion to Zawgyi, the alchemist/sorcerer character found in many *yokthe* (marionette plays) and to the *weikza* supernatural figures in Burma associated with esoteric and occult practices, including alchemy.¹⁴ Through the night, most teams operate in small groups of five or six people centered around a family business. In the process of making gongs, one worker operates the bellows of the forge while the lead blacksmith manipulates and shapes the iron. Two or three men with large wooden hammers pound out the red-hot form in tight synchrony. A night's work might generate two large gongs (eighteen to twenty inches) or ten to twelve small ones (five to seven inches) and yield about 10,000 kyats for the average worker. This amount (roughly seven dollars) is considered a good wage in this largely premodern economy, despite the harsh working conditions.¹⁵

The primary market for the tuned gongs (maung) is in Thailand, where they are recognized as the premium style of gong. In Myanmar, only a small percentage of maung find their way to a life in the music industry as members of hsaing waing ensembles. *Kyi naung* (single gongs) for a *kyi waing* (brass-gong circle) and a tuned maung saing set as found in the hsaing waing ensemble have to be preordered; they are not in regular production. As they are purchased only by musicians (of a tradition that is losing ground), there is no significant demand for them. The fact that they last a long time also means that they are not in regular need of replacement.

The social lives of the *kyi si* and *kong laung* instruments are primarily found in the religious sphere and, as such, have not been acknowledged in musical scholarship. the commercial interests of the *kyi si* and *kong laung* makers are principally directed toward the pagoda, the devotional market, and the monastic setting. For this context, the quality and purity of the sound are essential, though discrete pitch (necessary for matching with other instruments) is irrelevant. The pure, clean tones of these instruments result from molten brass poured into molds made of clay and wax. After the molds are cooled, carvings and engraved designs are meticulously added. Often quotes from Buddhist scripture or incantations of magic (*weikza*) are found on the bells. Truckloads of Buddha images in the favored *bhumisparsha mudra*,¹⁶ along with *kaung laung*, *kyi si*, and other religious artifacts, leave Tanpawaddy township to be sold in shops throughout the country.

U Hla Aung, now in his seventies, has spent a lifetime in the industry forging Buddha images and bells in Tanpawaddy. In addition to his experience making *kaung*

laung, *kyi zi*, and Buddhist statuary, he is a renowned maker of the *pa zi*, the bronze frog drum most strongly associated with the Karen ethnic minority.¹⁷ His large compound, with numerous assistants and apprentices, suggests a successful career in a lucrative industry. In discussing the preferred sound aesthetic of the instruments that he makes, U Hla Aung directs conversations quickly to health, both physical and psychological: “The sound of the *kyi si*, in particular, is pure and clean. It imparts feelings of calmness, lowers the temperature of the body, and helps one meditate. It also reaches beyond the world of human ears and is welcomed by spirits.”

U Hla Aung and others report that the sounds of quality bells are cooling. An overheated body and mind lead to physical and mental ailments. These sounds have a cooling effect, and the resonances penetrate the body and the mind like a peaceful salve. Mental and physical illness results from an excess of heat within the body/mind, and cooling practices are thus beneficial. Traditional medicine, alchemic practices,¹⁸ and mindfulness practice (*samathi*)—all health activities found in the region—discuss such cooling efforts, but nothing (to my knowledge) in the medical literature references the cooling (and heating) properties of different sounds. The brahma vihara quality of equanimity (*upekkha*) is present here in the capacity of influencing the body and mind to establish balance and calmness. *Upekkha* is the fire in the heart that is steady and constant. The “cooling” aspect of the sounds of well-made bells, with their steady and sustained tone, sympathetically resonates with a desired home base for a well-cultivated mind.

The radiant tone and long tone duration that comes from a well-made bell will be

heard from long distances. The incredible sustain of these instruments sonically paints the area of the pagoda and contributes to making it a health-conducive space. The stamp impressed upon all of the *kyi si* of the Tun family shop (a few hundred yards down the street from U Hla Aung's compound) proclaims *a than ah ma kan*, "the sound that lasts forever." As with the "illimitable" (*apamañña*) qualities of the brahma viharas, which in their perfection and their true nature should not be narrowed by any limitation as to the range of beings toward whom they are extended, so too a long-sustaining bell limitlessly rings and extends to beings.

After much care and deliberation, bells and gongs are sold to devotees, who use them in a variety of ways to enhance their economic and spiritual lives. While some uses are found in secular arenas, U Hla Aung takes great pride in the role he plays in supporting the religious activities of his community. "As a maker of religious objects," he continues, "I get satisfaction from the contribution I make to other people's merit." Moving outside of the forging compound, the social lives of these instruments stretch in multiple directions.

The Consumers: Social Economy of Sound and Sound-Making Devices

Outside of the pagoda and explicitly musical contexts, these bells, plaques, and gongs show up in a wide variety of daily settings, where they visually and audibly decorate social, religious, and commercial space. Single *maung* are the favored noise-making devices that one finds used by mobile vendors on food carts. A steady pulsing on a small gong often accompanies a call for boiled peanuts, fried vegetables, or sweet sugar cane drinks. *Kyi si*, in particular,

can be found where a good-luck talisman might enlist the aid of otherworldly powers. Lottery ticket carts and jewelry stores often ring *kyi si* after a sale (particularly a big one) in the hope of attracting more of the same. While bells and gongs appear in a multitude of nonreligious contexts, their associations with spirits and Buddhism point to a sonic authority that blurs the boundaries between religious and nonreligious activity; sacred and nonsacred space, the mundane (*loka*) and the supermundane (*lokuttara*).

In the Burmese Buddhist context, *dāna* (ritual offering or generosity) is arguably more critical than good behavior in the economy of merit. Offerings to Buddhism—to the pagoda, to the monks, and to the monastery—are central to accruing kammic merit. Indeed, good deeds earn one merit, but donating to the perpetuation of Buddhism is an exceptionally meritorious act, what Melford Spiro has referred to as "the merit-path to salvation."¹⁹ By giving to monks (*sangha*) and monasteries (a daily cultural practice in Myanmar), the laity earn kammic merit. This practice of *dāna*, a ritual exchange of giving, makes merit, cultivates generosity, and ultimately (in theory) destroys the impulse that leads to attachment and further suffering. The donor (of food, robes, shelter, or furnishings for the monastery or pagoda) earns not only kammic merit but also an increase in social and political status and legitimacy. Buddhism in this anthropological reading is fundamentally political, based upon an economy of merit. One of the primary social roles of the *sangha* is to be a "field of merit"—a conduit through which the laity may make merit. The monastery and the pagoda are the beneficiaries of such donations and are also the primary locations for engaging offerings. Especially meritorious offerings

might include sending your child to be initiated as a monk, building a pagoda, or supplying the materials for a pagoda.

Not only are kaung laung bells (and others) given as donations themselves—and the blacksmiths in Tanpawaddy district delight in their contribution to this religious economy—they are also used as signals at countless locations to mark that a donation has been offered. Kaung laung and kyi si, as seen and heard on the pagoda platform, are both donations and the sound of donations. Even off the platform, where meditation clubs, community service groups, and lay dhamma associations walk the streets accepting donations, the kyi si (carried along with the donation basket) acknowledge the offering. Heard beyond the grave, they are also associated with death and the passing of someone to a future life. Kyi si are struck at funerals and in memory of the dead, and the leader of a funeral procession carries and strikes the kyi si (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Kyi si at donation booth, Shwedagon Pagoda

Beyond the public religious spaces, kyi si and maung are found in home shrines. Virtually all Burmese Buddhist homes contain a small shrine with a Buddha image that is attended to daily with incense, flowers, fresh fruit, and water. A national

Myanmar Buddhist identity is found in almost all of these domestic shrines, as they are often densely adorned with pictures of the country's major religious sites (ubiquitous are images of the Shwedagon, Mahamuni, and Kyaitiyo Pagodas), as well as photos of famous monks (historical and contemporary: Ledi Sayadaw, Mingun Sayadaw U Vicittasarabivamsa, and U Thuzana, for example). Daily prayers and meditation before the shrine (for some more regular than others) are followed by a stroke of a gong or the kyi si to acknowledge the offering, send merit out to the world, and complete the ritual. Daily recitation of suttas that emphasize compassion (karuna), one of the brahma viharas, directs well-wishes for all beings (including or especially for the dead) to be free from suffering. As one of my friends noted, "My mother rings that thing every day for all the people that have passed away." Karuna (compassion) is a cultivated and limitless state of mind that extends toward all other creatures, here found in daily practice and ritualized (by an individual) and expressed sonically (for the community) through the bell.

History and Mythology of Bells in Myanmar

Such sounds also have an earthly power. As explicated by Julianne Schober,²⁰ the acquisition of kammic merit through the act of dāna has a worldly component, since sizable offerings (and the ritual presentation of those offerings) potentially increase one's political stature. To be recognized as a significant donor and a patron of Buddhism has been essential for every Burmese politician and king for hundreds of years. The exchange of merit for world power defines the parameters of politics in this context. Kammic merit is earned through donations but also accrues to political

power. While Schober has clearly articulated the connection between *dāna* and political power, I add here a sonic dimension to this power actualization that is largely absent from the discussion. Such earthly power is sounded and must be heard.

The forging, inscribing, and donating of bells is a long-held tradition in Burma. All *kong laung* and *maung* found on pagodas are the results of generous benefactions. Those places that generate the most donations are also the places that have the most significant and numerous bells. Some of the world's biggest bells are found in Myanmar and were cast for gifts at religious shrines. King Bodawpaya (r. 1782–1819), for example, the longest-reigning monarch of the Konbaung Dynasty, had the ninety-ton Mingun Bell forged in 1810 as a large donation, but also as a demonstrative example of his power. The bell sits beside the Mingun Pagoda, the base of what could have been the largest pagoda in the world, if its construction had not been abandoned after Bodawpaya's death. The building of the Mingun Pagoda itself was a huge donation and a significant display of Bodawpaya's power. The Mingun Bell, forged with gold, silver, bronze, iron, and lead, is one of the most massive working bells in the world and is a noted symbol of the country that links Buddhism to the king and the king to the country.

Further back in history, King Dhammazedi (r. 1471–92), a former monk and a significant figure in the patronage of Theravada Buddhism, cast the largest bell ever made, in 1484. The Great Bell of Dhammazedi hung at the Shwedagon for centuries until Portuguese merchant mercenary Filipe de Brito e Nicote sacked the capital and captured the bell in 1608. After removing the bell from the pagoda,

De Brito tried to transport it across the Bago River to be melted down for cannons. The raft holding the bell broke apart as it crossed the confluence of the Bago and Yangon Rivers, and the bell sank into the deep silt of the river along with De Brito's ship. De Brito's forces were eventually overpowered at Syriam, and he suffered a brutal execution. Even today De Brito is near-universally despised in the country and is a symbol of pillage and plunder, not least for his "seizing objects of worship of the Buddha" and "committing sacrilege to the point of forcibly demolishing Buddha images and sacred shrines and pagodas."²¹

Though forgotten by many in the interim, 400 years later the Dhammazedi Bell continues to bridge the mundane and the supermundane worlds. The significance of this particular bell is evidenced by continuing rumors and active mythology. Over the years numerous search-and-salvage operations have pursued the bell unsuccessfully. In August 2014, the Myanmar press reported that it had been found (again!) and that salvage efforts and plans to restore it to its station at the Shwedagon were underway.²² Contrary to various news accounts, the discovery of the bell has not been confirmed. Some doubt that it ever will be found, given the shifting sands of the delta; others question whether the bell ever existed, while still others assert that the search is cursed. One search team claimed to have spotted the Great Bell, but it was under the protection of dragons. Team leader San Lin said the team had spotted the sunken bell, "but we have to compete with spirits to salvage the bell. They won't give it to us eagerly." As documented by BBC reporter Jonah Fisher, San Lin believes "that Buddhist 'nats' or spirits are preventing the bell from being found and that only the

spiritual approach that he advocates can placate it. GPS and maps are secondary tools behind monastic and *weikza* power insight. ‘We must use our traditional ways so that the dragon spirit does not keep hold of the bell.’”²³

Figure 4: Inscribing a *kong laung* bell at the Mahamuni Pagoda, Mandalay

The power of bells as donations and markers of connections between spiritual authority and worldly power continues today, as bell makers find regular customers. Bells usually have inscriptions along the side (see Fig. 4) giving the names of donors and the dates of and reasons for the donations. Khin Maung Nyunt describes the significance of inscribed bells as primary historical evidence of monastic and civilian relationships.²⁴

The Singu Min Bell currently stands in the northwest corner of the Shwedagon Pagoda. This twenty-five-ton bell measures seven feet tall and six and a half feet wide at the mouth, and is named after King Singu (r. 1776–82). Twelve lines of calligraphy are inscribed around the bell, along with floral designs that “are not mere decorations but are in the nature of magic diagrams and mantras.” Line 10 reflects the intersection of worldly status, merit-making offering, and the idea of sound and voice.

In order that pilgrims and devotees may happily strike this big bell to hear a sweet sound and pray that they obtain *magga-phala*, the path and fruition of sanctification, a gift of sound is offered [sic] to the Pagoda. A bronze bell of 15,555 viss, 7 cubits and two spans in height, 15 cubits circumference, 5 cubits in diameter at the mouth, and two spans in thickness was cast and donated to the Shwedagon Pagoda on the first day waxing of Tabodwe in the year 2322 of the Buddhist Era, 1140 of the Myanmar Era. For this meritorious gift of sound, replete with the virtue of beneficence, may he [King Singu] be conducted to nirvana and obtain the blessings of men, devas and brahmas. May he in his future existences obtain only the reigning state among men and devas. May he have a pleasant voice like the voice of the Bird-King Karaweik, a voice heard at whatsoever place desired.²⁵

The material gift of the physical bell is well documented as a merit-making (*dāna*) activity, but the sounding of it also accrues worldly power. Worldly power is heard. Pictures of politicians and notable elites donating to the monasteries are commonplace on Myanmar television and in state propaganda. Included with countless state-produced photos and videos of donations and prostrations before monks are snippets of leaders striking gongs and bells as a sonic declaration of their merit making.

The Sound of Bells

The physical act of striking the bell and producing an audible, long-sustained, and far-reaching tone is also a component of meritorious activity. Bells and gongs sonically contribute to cultivating a spiritual, sacred space and provide an aural element to a sense of place: a sense of mindfulness in place. The sonic dimensions of mindfulness

are linked to the merit-making activities associated with gongs and bells. Dāna has heretofore been discussed in a physical and economic sense. Donations to monasteries and pagodas in the form of gifts, food, furnishings, robes, icons, and money are ubiquitous. Though not a universal sentiment, many monks, patrons, and blacksmiths regard the sounds themselves as welcome offerings. The sound of the *kyi si* and *kaung laung* as described by U Hla Aung is pleasing to the spirits who are receptive to the offering. “A well-made *kaung laung*,” he continues, presents a “pleasurable sound offered to the Buddha.” The sound itself brings merit.

While the beauty of a sound is potentially a dangerous attachment, Abbot U Nayaka, the cofounder of the Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School in northeast Mandalay, which provides free education to over 7,000 underprivileged children of Mandalay, highlights the desire for offerings to be functional as well as beautiful. What role does the sound of these bells have? When I asked monks about the importance of sound at the pagoda, they recurrently spoke of fostering awareness and cultivating particular states of mind. How, then, do the sounds of bells facilitate the development of a specific state of mind?

Meditation practice, at home, in monasteries, and at pagodas, is central to much of Buddhist practice in Myanmar. Meditation, as described to me by Ashin Doctor Asabha, head abbot of the Shwe War Win Meditation Center in Dagon, is “a cooling practice. In cooling the body, we mitigate jealousy, anger, greed, and ignorance.” Bell makers similarly point to the cooling aspect of the sounds created by well-made bells. For both humans and spirits (who are equally caught up in the

cycles of rebirth), these bells help the mind to cool.

Both monks and blacksmiths related the creation and reception of these sounds to the *brahma viharas*, the four sublime mental states, or four immeasurables. Scholars of chant have noted the import of the voice in embodying the dhamma. Paul Greene, Céline Coderey, and Hammalawa Saddhatissa move well beyond text analysis to evoke the connections between melody, timbre, style, and Buddhist ethical and metaphysical principles.²⁶ What has not been addressed by scholars are the nonvocal sonic attitudes that actualize or realize the dhamma through acts of sounding and listening. Our understanding of the dhamma is here deepened through an analysis of the interconnected relationships that are reified through sound.

Cultivation of *metta* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity) realizes the four different ways that a spiritually mature person relates to others. They are “the great healers of social tension and conflict, the builders of harmony and cooperation; they serve as potent antidotes to the poisons of hatred, cruelty, envy, and partiality so widespread in modern life.”²⁷ In many sermons, the Buddha spoke about the four states of mind as the four *brahma viharas*.²⁸ They are godlike or brahmalike: an ideal perfected mental state. They are called *vihara* (abode or home) because they should be the mind’s permanent dwelling place. They are not a place to visit occasionally but, ideally, a permanent place, lived in and lived through. Many meditation practices in the Theravada world are designed to cultivate these sublime mental states.

Each of these four mental states relates to aspects of social relationships. *Metta* aims to

promote the welfare of others and is one of the most theorized and discussed concepts of Theravada Buddhism and meditation practice. It is the opposite of ill-will. Karuna is the hope and desire for all sentient beings to be free from suffering and contrasts with cruelty. Mudita is found in the celebration of the successes and virtues of others; it counters jealousy and schadenfreude. Finally, upekkha recognizes all sentient beings as equals irrespective of current relationships, accepting the impermanence of temporal relations. Meditation practice cultivates these sublime states that are considered immeasurable and infinite in their reach.

What, then, is the relationship between these states of mind and sound? On the pagoda platform, metta and mudita, in particular, are associated with the act of sounding and hearing the bells. After making an offering or prayer of any sort, in a public space or at a domestic shrine, one strikes the bells (usually kaung laung or kyi si) to acknowledge the offering and, as an act of loving-kindness (metta), to invite others who hear the sound to share in the merit that has been made. To make an offering clearly meritorious, other sentient beings (humans or spirits) are invited to participate in the kammic deed as well. While dāna (offering) has a mundane political/social component and serves specific worldly-power ends, it also, as emphasized in the Buddhist canon, cultivates generosity and nonattachment. Metta is the desired state for dealing with fear, and enemies in particular. Thus, the *metta sutta* was the chosen text to recite during the 2007 political and economic uprising (the so-called Saffron Revolution), as monks confronted their fears and enemies with loving-kindness. Sending loving-kindness to others by inviting them

to partake of your kamma is signaled in this context by sound, sending long-sustained tones out in radiating circles from the source of merit. *The sound of the bell is metta: loving-kindness.*

The mental state of metta results in an action that is identifiable and measurable, and is a condition that inspires outwardly visible future behavior. Mudita, in contrast, is a wholly internal state that contemplates the past events of others and cultivates empathy with them. It is difficult to quantify and measure and cannot be identified by others, only by the self. It is known and felt only by the mind. Perhaps for this reason, the secondary literature on mudita is quite small compared to metta.²⁹ Mudita is considered to be the most difficult of the brahma viharas to obtain, as it directly confronts base selfishness and jealousy. Sympathetic joy for someone else's success is perhaps natural in the case of a parent delighting in the accomplishments of a child. To take delight in the achievements and successes of friends, colleagues, coworkers, strangers, or enemies is more difficult.

As I hear a bell, I recognize that someone has made an offering or a prayer; I realize that person is earning merit and, as an act of loving-kindness (metta), is asking me to share in their merit. This gift improves my kammic legacy. As a receiver of the sound, I am not merely invited to share in the merit but, as several monks highlighted to me, have an opportunity to be aware of and to mark someone else's success. I now celebrate that person's accomplishments and meritorious deeds. Hearing the sound of the bell is, in effect, a reminder for me to cultivate mudita: to find joy in the achievements and advancements of someone else. Benefiting from someone else's merits may appear contradictory, but

while kamma may be evaluated individually, there is an interconnected and social quality to its acquisition.

As expressed by U Hla Aung, “I walk with my own agenda across the pagoda, focusing on my own problems; on my self. I suddenly hear the *kyi si* or a *maung*, and I recognize someone else—someone I do not know but someone who is earning merit and has invited me to join with them.” An opportunity to take joy and celebrate is at hand through an invitation to partake of the action of someone else. *The sound of the bell is mudita: sympathetic joy.*

To strike a gong or hear a bell does not, of course, say anything about the actual mental state of the participants. However, these spaces are designed to cultivate awareness of self and others, and many activities, such as circumambulation of the stupa, recitation of prayers or suttas, and meditation, promote such attentiveness. A full-body experience in such spaces aims not only to cultivate awareness of our relationships with other sentient beings but also to raise awareness of our sense perceptions that feed particular mental states. The mental faculties of the receiver (of sound, touch, sight) play a primary role in making one’s reality.

The musicology of Theravada Buddhism is growing, but, as I have shown, it is still quite limited and primarily concerned with chant (not considered music) and inattentive to nonvocal sounds.³⁰ In *The Musical Gift*, Jim Sykes proposes that a “division between Buddhism as a cultural institution and ethical system has long made ‘Theravada Buddhist music’ appear equivalent to Buddhist chant . . . while drumming in rituals . . . propitiating gods and demons struck observers as not authentically Buddhist.” The division between doctrinal Buddhism and the “spirit religion,” Sykes continues, “was long ago

bridged by scholars of Sinhala Buddhism, who argued it should be treated as having two complementary systems: one an ethical system (doctrinal Buddhism) centered on Karma, meditation, and ultimately achieving *nibbana*, the other . . . aimed at helping devotees in *this* life through offering to deities.”³¹ Similar scholarship on Myanmar Buddhism³² casts doctrinal Buddhism at a musical (sonic) distance from other more mundane (worldly) practices such as spirit (nat) propitiation. Sykes challenges such a division through a close reading of the Bervā drumming tradition, asserting that it should be acknowledged as “Buddhist.”

The kaung laung, *kyi zi*, and other dhamma instruments are not engaged in a performative sense (akin to Bervā drumming or the Burmese *hsaing waing* and *nat pwe* ceremony), but they are nonetheless ubiquitous to the spaces where Buddhism is practiced. The instruments and sounds that I have discussed highlight the ethical, doctrinal contexts (or frames), as well as the more mundane and worldly contexts, of practical Buddhism. They similarly bridge, or rather challenge, the conceptions of Buddhism as doctrine and philosophy built on mindful meditation, on the one hand, and those of the worldly and magical associations with deities and kammic intervention, on the other.

In the process of doing this research, my own perceptions of Buddhist social space have changed significantly. I have visited the Shwedagon and many other pagodas dozens of times over the years and enjoyed the atmosphere created by the bells, but the aural wallpaper of sound was peripheral to my visual experience and not, so it seemed, something that should warrant my attention. Shifting my perception to the kaung laung, the *kyi si*, and the small, shimmering bells

that cover the *hti* (umbrella) of the pagoda spire, and then attending to what they reveal about my relationships with other beings in the vicinity, recalibrates my understanding of the community. I now move through the pagoda grounds differently. My awareness has changed, and so have my perceptions of my relationship with others. In a very real sense, those relationships have changed. Bells don't just ring: sounding them and listening to them is an ethical imperative.

The *Kyi Si*

Finally, specific attention to the *kyi si* offers more specific connections to Buddhist thought. The *kyi si* is a suspended, roughly triangular slab of metal. The shape reminds some people of the mythical Mount Meru, an image found in Buddhist cosmology representing the center of the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual universe. Mount Meru is depicted in the artwork of countless Buddhist traditions. Visually, the flat disc blurs as it rotates in three-dimensional space to create an impression of the mountain.

The sound created by a *kyi si* when struck on the edge is unique. A loud, sharp, metallic clang is followed by a rapid vibrato of the tone caused by the spinning plate. The sound widens as the momentum of the plaque slows, stops, spins in the opposite direction, and accelerates again. Through the long sustain, a pulsing sound ebbs and flows as sound waves are compressed and stretched from the spinning. The long sustain of the *kyi si* slowly fades as the pulsations alternate between *accelerando* and *decelerando*. That accelerating and decelerating beat patterns can be found throughout many Buddhist musical traditions worldwide (log drums in zen temples, barrel drums and cymbals in Tibet, the *myu* in China) is a subject worthy of further study.

In a conversation with U Hla Aung about the shape of the *kyi si*, he sketches out with chalk the typical form of the instrument that provides the purest tone and the appropriate pulsations when spun. As he shares his thoughts on a long life of making dhamma instruments and thinking about their meanings, he continues to doodle on the table, emphasizing particular lines of the *kyi si* and further shaping the image. He goes on to highlight the spirits that witness the bell, the feelings of calmness that it produces, and the role it plays in actualizing an ideal state of mind. "The bell is the Buddha," he says emphatically, and, with a flick of the chalk, the *kyi si* no longer looks like a triangle but like an image of the Buddha in the *bhumisparsa mudra*, the most familiar mudra found among Burmese Buddha images. Sitting in lotus position with his right-hand fingertips touching the ground, this mudra points to the moment of enlightenment when the earth was called to witness that the (now) Buddha had overcome the temptations of Mara.

The phenomenological knowing of a place is a multisensory experience. On the platform of the pagoda, a charismatic space imbued with deep historical and spiritual authority, all six senses are engaged in an experience that is set apart from the mundane and understood through the senses as sacred (bare feet, incense, white and gold visuals, bells chiming, and so on).

Despite the prohibition against music, a variety of sculpted sounds are used to facilitate numerous goals found in Burmese Buddhism. Examined through different vectors of inquiry, we here identify sounds and sound-making objects (and the production and reception of the same) in the political life of Buddhism, where they are deployed to mark and herald worldly

status. We hear in the sounds of religious practice the acquisition and the sharing of kammic merit. Moreover, we attend epistemologically to sound as it draws attention to the cultivation of particular mental states and dispositions. The three interwoven groups of people here presented (dhamma instrument makers, consumers, devout laity and monks), who imagine, produce, distribute, create, receive, and think about sounds, reveal that Buddhism is a tradition that is practiced through the creation and perceptions of sound.

The cultivation of metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha, the mental states of the divine, is linked to the experience of producing and receiving sound and offers an insight into the sonic community of Buddhism. In their construction, production, distribution, and sounding, kyi zi, kaung laung, and other dhamma instruments show an important aural dimension to the practice of Buddhism.

NOTES

1 Nyanaponika Thera, *The Four Sublime States* (Penang, Malaysia: Buddha Dharma Education Association, Inc., 1999).

2 For examples of diverse music in northern Buddhism, see Pi-yen Chen, *Chinese Buddhist Monastic Chants* (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2010); Jeffery W. Cupchik, "Buddhism as Performing Art: Visualizing Music in the Tibetan Sacred Ritual Music Liturgies," *Yale Journal of Music & Religion* 1/1 (2015): 31–62; Gavin Douglas, "Buddhist Music," *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com>; and Beth Szczepanski, *The Instrumental Music of Wutaishan's Buddhist Monasteries: Social and Ritual Contexts* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

3 For Burmese contexts, see Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982 [1970]); Paul D. Greene, "The Dhamma as Sonic Praxis: Paritta Chant in Burmese Theravāda Buddhism," *Asian Music* 35/2 (2004): 43–78; and Céline Coderey, "Healing Sounds in Rakhine (Myanmar): Auspicious and Apotropaic Recitations in a Theravada Buddhist Context," in *Hearing Southeast Asia: Sounds of Hierarchy and Power in Context*, ed. Nathan Porath (Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2019), 307–40.

4 See Julianne Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); and Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*.

5 Michael Bull and Les Black, eds., *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003), 4.

6 See Bhikku Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 1123.

7 Julianne Schober, "A Tooth Relic and the Legitimation of Power," in Frank E. Reynolds and Jason Carbine, eds., *The Life of Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 47.

8 John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 78–79.

9 Kees Terlouw, "Charisma and Space," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10/3 (2010): 336.

10 With the notable exception of Yi Yuan, "When Soundscape Studies Encounter Buddhism: Methodology Development of Soundscape Studies Conducted at Chinese Buddhist Temples," *Monititeteinen musiikintutkimus Suomen Musiikintutkijoiden* (Sixteenth Annual Symposium for Music Scholars in Finland), 2012.

11 Eliot Bates, "The Social Life of Musical Instruments," *Ethnomusicology* 56/3 (2012): 363.

12 While not explicitly tied to Buddhist practice, the Burmese harp has significant Buddhist

associations through its repertoire, history, and construction. See Linda Simonson, "A Burmese Arched Harp (Saung-gauk) and Its Pervasive Buddhist Symbolism," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 13 (1987): 39–64.

13 Maung Htin Aung, "Alchemy and Alchemists in Burma," *Folklore* 44/4 (1933): 346–54.

14 Alicia Turner, Guillaume Rozenberg, and Benedicte Brac de La Perrière, eds., *Champions of Buddhism: Weikza Cults in Contemporary Burma* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).

15 For an account of Burmese metallurgy, see Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Burmese Crafts: Past and Present* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994).

16 The *bhumisparsha mudra* is the favored body posture for Buddha statues in Myanmar. With the Buddha's right hand extending to touch the ground, the gesture represents the moment of the Buddha's awakening and the earth's bearing witness to his enlightenment.

17 Increasingly rare in the country, the Karen bronze drum requires a particular specialized knowledge to forge accurately. U Hla Aung was the only maker of these bronze drums in Mandalay. Shortly before my visit to him in the summer of 2013, he had received an order to make ten such drums to be placed in monasteries in Kayin (Karen) State: a large order that would take years to complete. That this rare drum has such associations with both political power and ethnicity is significant. See Richard M. Cooler, *The Karen Bronze Drums of Burma: Types, Iconography, Manufacture, and Use* (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1995).

18 See, for example, Céline Coderey, "Immortal Medicine: Understanding the Resilience of Burmese Alchemic Practice," *Medical Anthropology* 38/4 (2019): 412–24, DOI: 10.1080/01459740.2018.1550756.

19 Spiro, *Burmese Buddhism*, 103

20 Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar*, 10.

21 Damrong Rajanubhab, *Our Wars with the Burmese* (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd., 2001), 188–89.

22 See Aung Zaw, "Chiming with History," *The Irrawaddy*, Feb. 23, 2018; and "Dragons Add Mythical Twist to Search for Dhammazedi Bell," *The Irrawaddy*, Aug. 26, 2014.

23 Jonah Fisher, "The Search for Myanmar's Mysterious Dhammazedi Bell," *BBC News*, Aug. 18, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28832296>.

24 Khin Maung Nyunt, *The Historic Bells of Yangon* (Yangon, Myanmar: Department of Historical Research and National Library, 2016).

25 Ibid., 27.

26 Paul Greene, "Dhamma as Sonic Praxis," Céline Coderey, "Healing Sounds," and Hammalawa Saddhatissa, "The Significance of *paritta* and Its Application in the Theravada Tradition," in David J. Kalupahana, ed., *Buddhist Thought and Ritual* (Delhi: Motilala Banarsidass, 2001), 125–38.

27 Thera, *The Four Sublime States*, 1.

28 See the Anguttara Nikaya Sutta 3.65 and *The Path of Purification*, written in the fifth century c.e. by the scholar and commentator Buddhaghosa. *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification: The Classic Manual of Buddhist Doctrine and Meditation*, translated from the Pali by Bhikku Ñānamoli (Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2011).

29 See Nyanaponika Thera, Natasha Jackson, C. F. Knight, and L. R. Oates, *Mudita: The Buddha's Teaching on Unselfish Joy: Four Essays, Access to Insight* (Legacy Edition), Nov. 30, 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/various/wheel170.html>.

30 Consider, for example, that *Grove Music Online* doesn't mention Theravada Buddhism at all. There is only a brief mention of chanting in Thailand: see Francesca Tarocco, "Buddhist Music," <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000004254> (accessed Nov. 27, 2019).

31 Jim Sykes, *The Musical Gift: Sonic Generosity in Post-War Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 27.

32 Melford Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).