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3rd Place Contest Entry: Sulamani Temple at the Bagan Archaeological Site: Works of Art and Circumambulation in an Active Buddhist Site

Lauren Ogie

Chapman University, ogie100@mail.chapman.edu

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Recommended Citation

Ogie, Lauren, "3rd Place Contest Entry: Sulamani Temple at the Bagan Archaeological Site: Works of Art and Circumambulation in an Active Buddhist Site" (2018). *Kevin and Tam Ross Undergraduate Research Prize*. 22.

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Essay:

The resources I used for my research paper are: books, journal articles, databases and websites. I used a variety of books coming from multiple departments of the library including fine arts, humanities, and political science. Use of the "Search Discover" function on the library website has been helpful finding both articles and books. The main database that was of use for my thesis is JSTOR and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

My process of researching the Buddhist temples at Bagan started in Fall 2016. The project has developed from a broad descriptive paper on the Bagan Archaeological Site in Myanmar to my Junior Seminar research paper and now to my capstone art history Thesis, which reconstructs the interior paintings within the Sulamani temple at Bagan to understand the trends of Buddhist paintings within this particular temple. Since very little is written on my topic in English, I research everything I can find relative to the location and topic. I used a variety of keywords to find relevant sources, e.g. Buddhist, Buddhism, Myanmar, Burma, temple, stupa, pagoda, Sulamani. It is important to input different word phrasings to ensure best results for the searches.

When considering the relevance of a source I see if there is information that is pertinent to my topic or new information not contained elsewhere. I have two documents of notes: one that is for information pertaining to my thesis and another that is information about the topic but probably will not be used in my paper. The attached bibliography records both kinds of resources to demonstrate the scope of my research. In regard to TRAAP, timeliness is not always relevant to my research. This is not only because there is little scholarship on the topic, but also because I need to know the whole history of that scholarship. Sometimes an older source is the most recent information and in other cases there will be more recent sources; I look to see if the article has any new information on my topic or if the article can give insight into questions I am asking. I look at where the information was published and the credentials of the author. It is important to see if there are others who have written on the subject that can either validate or oppose an idea or fact. It is important to me when researching to know how ideas have developed over time because it shows how approaches can be shaped by ideas and politics of the period; in this case, the British occupation of Burma and the current? military regime. Also, looking to see if the source has been cited many times is helpful. The purpose of many of the sources is to document, inform or teach.

I received help from Essraa Nawar regarding a book I had found via the library website, which was still in processing. She explained I could fill out the form online for rush processing. I have used the rush processing feature now multiple times. Inter-library loan has also been a huge help getting books for my topic. I usually find these books through a google scholar or google books search and then check to see if the library has them. Again, because my topic sources are slim it is great to be able to get such specialized books through inter-library loan and to not have to purchase them online for a hefty price.

I have learned that I have been quite closed-minded about using the library for my research. I assumed that everything I needed would be online, which is very much not the case. Many older books do not have an online version, just the hard copy. I have also learned that, while the articles on the databases are great, the physical books have provided me with substantial information for my research. And of course inter-library loan has allowed me to use books I couldn't otherwise have had access to. I learned that by just searching the shelves for one book you can find many more books that open new ideas about your topic. I am currently using all of these resources for other research papers in other classes too, and will continue to do so in the future.

My research on the temples of Bagan is revealing a new way of looking at Buddhist imagery that has never been written about before. I feel that I am filling an important gap within the research of my topic. Currently my Junior Seminar Poster is on Chapman's Digital Commons site and I hope to add my interactive temple map, accompanied by my research paper, as an innovative way to show research in a visual format.

3. Summary and Bibliography Instructions

Myanmar, more popularly known as Burma by westerners, looks like a place out of an *Indiana Jones* movie.¹ It is home to the largest assemblage of Buddhist monuments in the world, the Bagan Archaeological Site, totaling at 3,822 monuments. One of the major temples at the site is Sulamani Temple, also known as the Museum of Paintings.² Existing research and documentation have emphasized the archaeology of the site and preservation of the monuments as structures, but surprisingly little information is available on the religious role of the art within the temples. Often a description or image is found, but it is rare to find both complimenting each other. Attempting to make a reconstruction of the Sulamani Temple using available images on the internet, I quickly found that this could not be done without going to the site and fully documenting the temple. In January 2018 with the support of an OURCA travel grant I traveled to Myanmar for 15 days, After photographing all the images within the temple and observing interactions inside and outside the temple, I created the digital interactive site SulamaniTempleInteractive.com. Supported both by library research and field work, this site examines how Buddhist stories are depicted within Sulamani Temple, traces common iconographic features in the paintings and their grouping within the temple's interior space, and how they are interacted with through circumambulation.

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² This is an unofficial nickname, but it has been referenced to by the Burmese and Scholars.

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