

NOVITIATION PARADE IN MYANMAR





In Myanmar, everybody will be a novice once in their lives. The period can last from a few days to several months. As a very religious people, the buddhists Burmese place great importance on this, spending a lot of money to make it an unforgettable day for the child. Some families even go into debt. A formal novitiation ceremony starts with a parade around the pagodas. All the kids dress up as Burmese princes and princesses.



The parade has to cross the rush hour traffic jams when thousands of tourists, buses, taxis, and bikes scurry across Bagan!



As the bulls begin to get nervous, people struggle to calm these 1000 kg beasts.



The mothers in the families lead the Novitiation ceremony. They carry baskets containing red robes. This ceremony usually happens during the school holidays, or before the water festival.



The women in the novices' families all wear colorful clothes and flowers.



Behind the mothers, the girls carry decorated offertories. They wear their most beautiful dresses for the occasion.



To bring good luck and wealth to the novices, fake bank notes are carried during the parade.



The bulls are usually used to transport people and for fieldwork. Their elaborate adornments are also a kind of reward given to them from the peasants who couldn't live without them in the countryside.



At the tail-end of the parade, a mobile DJ follows, mixing blaring loud music with speeches.



Kids between the ages of 5 and 12 are dressed in princely clothes since the Buddha had been a prince himself. The younger children in the novice's family join the parade wearing the same clothes.



The umbrellas are not only for aesthetic purposes. Under the scorching sun, temperatures rise past 40 degrees. The children are on horseback since the early morning.



Some kids are too small to touch the stirrups.



Burmese people consider their lives to be incomplete if they themselves, or their children, have not been novices.



All the children, even the boys, wear make up and lipstick, making them looking very androgynous.



The families rent the cows, golden chariots, and even the clothes too. All this costs a fortune for some of these poor people. It is a real sacrifice, but a necessity to follow tradition. No one will complain.



Novitiation is every parent's obligation. The ceremony is considered a blessing for every child and their parents. It is said that it keeps them safe from evil. Throughout the parade, the parent will stay close to the child, making sure they don't fall off the horse.



Some kids are so tired that they need to hang on to their fathers or relatives. A key part of the parade is to take adequate time to show off the children's beauty, even if it's hard for them. Children know their friends are jealous and that motivates them to it carry on.



Another member of the family will hold a golden umbrella to protect the novice from the sun.



On the Inle lake, the novices ride a long tail boat instead of a horse. The boat also carries all the offerings to the temple.



Once the parade arrives at the temple, everybody will pray and then rest in the tranquil place. This is a much needed repose after hours passed under the hot Bagan sun, amidst the crowd, the cars, the noise, and the dust.



Once in the monastery the novices will observe the 8 precepts (« I won't cause harm and and take life, I won't steal, no sex, no lies, no drugs nor alcohol, I won't eat at the wrong time, I won't sing, dance, play music...I undertake to abstain from luxurious places for sleeping »). They will wake before dawn and eat only twice a day.



Their time at the monastery is not considered difficult, even though they are leaving their parents at a young age. Novitiation is also a good way to educate the poorest Burmese. They are free to continue this religious path or leave whenever they want.

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