

Day 7b Kalaw to Inle Lake



As we continued our drive back toward Heho, and then past Helo toward Inle Lake, we passed many villages. We passed kids going to school. We saw children in their traditional dress walking next to children in Western clothes. The old and the new. They think that it is the new. I think it is a loss of their beautiful culture. We passed a school which looked like a new building with a row of outhouses behind it. No running water. The old and the new.



We drove behind a typical jitney pickup truck. These are the most common mode of transportation. Instead of sitting on a bus, the people sit in back of the truck, on benches, hanging on the outside, or facing backwards so that they are looking right at us in the next car. There was an old woman and a young girl. I started taking their pictures and realized that they were watching me. Not wanting to make them uncomfortable, I waved. And the old woman gave me the biggest smile, waved back and then made the peace sign for me as I took another picture. Just like at the market, we communicated with each other just with a wave and a smile. Why can't it be that easy with everyone?



We made a stop in Kalaw to both use the restroom and to see where they sold the local wine. The road around the town was full of people and full of cars, monks on motorcycles and taxis. Many of the women were carrying their goods on their heads. But there were also a variety of taxis. There were the typical pickup truck. There were motorcycles pulling a cab bed (similar to the Tuk Tuk in Thailand, just down the road). And there was one I had never seen before. A bicycle with a side car. We saw women with kids in their laps. Women carrying their fruit and vegetables back from the market. Men catching a ride. A Burmese Uber! Then there was the farmer riding the ox and the monk on the motorcycle. Quite the variety of options.





And for all those motor bikes, you need lots of gas, so there was one “gas station” after another. I guess everyone has their favorite place to fill up.

This part of the road was also a toll road, but here there were more Western type toll booths.

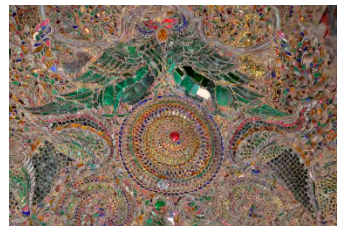
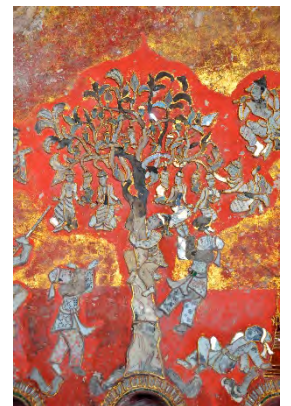


And as we left Kalaw the countryside became more rural again. Cows crossing the road. The land turned into farmland. There were very straight rows of trees, standing like soldiers. The fields were green and orange and brown, not the patchwork colors we saw in Heho.



We could tell we were getting closer to Inle Lake as we the road now had water running along the side, with houses alongside the water. There was a bridge over the water every so often so the people could get from one side to the other. But along the water, as in other places in Myanmar, women were doing their laundry or bathing.

We did stop at one temple which has no name. I searched the internet everywhere. It really has no name. It was the place that the Shan and the British met during independence negotiations. The outside was a pure white with a gold stupa, reminding me of the houses in Greece. The walls inside were almost all painted red. The floor was glass tiles in different earth tone shades. There were niches in the wall each filled with a Buddha image, and while most Buddhas were gold, one section had each Buddha in a different color. And under each Buddha, in white on a sky blue background, was the name of the donor. Merits... And each niche had once been surrounded by beautiful old glass from the 18th century, in blue, red, green. In fact, most of the walls were covered in glass mosaic, telling the story of Buddha. Glass figures of nats. Glass figures of birds. Some intact. Many missing pieces. It was one of the most beautiful temples I've seen. We could see the raw red clay underneath the missing glass, but there was still plenty there for us to appreciate the beauty. [On a side note, we saw some pieces of the glass for sale in some of the markets. This of course is illegal as the pieces were stolen from the temple. And buying would only encourage more stealing.] And we could only imagine how spectacular it once was. I had an image of the British in their uniforms and the Shan in theirs, meeting here to negotiate. It must have been quite a sight.



Next door was an old monastery built in the 19th century, Shwe Yan Pyay Monastery, built out of red painted teak, with some beautiful Buddhas. It was up on stilts with large, oval windows that made great frames around us. The Buddhas were in gold, with filigree umbrellas and a lot of intricate decorations. And one resting monk. There was also red and green glass here, which makes me think there was some connection between the monastery and the temple next door.

