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# The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene

*Geok Yian Goh*

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## THE WHEEL-TURNER AND HIS HOUSE

*Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene*

Geok Yian Goh

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**Geok Yian Goh : The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene:

The recorded history of precolonial Burmese empire and the modern state of Myanmar starts with the kingdom of

Bagan in the 11th century. The oldest surviving written records and structures are from the reign of King Anawrahta (1044-1077). Anawrahta converted to Theravada Buddhism and created a vibrant Buddhist state in the Irrawaddy River basin. Anawrahta is a folk hero to this day in Myanmar and is widely credited as a charismatic and pious leader who consolidated various ethnic groups throughout the region into a single nation. *The Wheel-Turner and His House* traces the archaeological and historical record of Anawrahta and his seminal position in forming modern Myanmar, based on the few sources that have been recovered. The Great Chronicle, an important history of the country written by the 18th-century Burmese nobleman U Kala, forms the basis for much of the knowledge we have about Anawrahta today. Geok Yian Goh examines U Kalas work in light of the context of U Kalas own time and points out the bias of his royal court, as well as the scribes personal views from the elaborate narratives he produced. She looks at other sources as well, including unpublished palm-leaf manuscripts, to disentangle earlier knowledge about Anawrahta and 11th-century Bagan. Placing the overall study of Burmese historical tradition within the larger manuscript culture of Asia, Goh presents a critique of theoretical issues in history, especially the relationship between the past and memory. In order to analyze the expansion of Anawrahtas historical image that formed the development of a Buddhist ecumene in the 11th and 12th centuries, Goh utilizes published and unpublished texts in Burmese and classical Chinese, along with northern Thai and Sri Lankan texts, many of which Goh makes available for the first time in English.

A must-read for those interested not only in pre-modern Southeast Asia, but also in understanding how the past is reinvented in our time. *Journal of the Siam Society* Drawing upon a close critical analysis of extant Burmese sources as well as Chinese-language sources, this work is a significant accomplishment that will be of interest not only to Southeast Asia specialists, but also to historians of any field who are interested in the complex connections between history and memory. *American Historical Association* Goh has made contributions to the study of Burmese history and, by extension, Burma Studies more widely. *New Mandala* This book is one of a kind. There are only a very few historians both inside and outside the country of Geok's generation who can do what she has done. *Michael Aung-Thwin*, author of *The Mists of Ramanna: The Legend that Was Lower Burma* In exploring how Anawrahtas reign has been presented or understood over the past several centuries, the author shows the range of historical sources that are available in this kind of endeavor and how they may be read and used in different ways . . . Recommended. CHOICE