

MONK IN SET YO VILLAGE – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

30th November 2018



This photo was taken whilst on a journey through Myanmar from Bagan to Mount Popa.

Our photography group was on a mission to locate the remote village of Set Set Yo, which is about an hour off the main road down dusty dirt tracks. The isolated settlement is the last place where it's possible to witness children with the 'yaung pae soo' hairstyle {a topknot with a circular fringe} which is a fading tradition dating back to the Pagan Empire, around AD 850.



On arrival we were invited into the main meeting hall to share refreshments with the children and elders.



The other photographers were focused on capturing images of the children with the unique hairdo.



I thought had spotted a tiny tot paying his respects to a monk elevated on a platform right in the corner of the open space.





I was intrigued that a child so young was acting with such reverence.



I photographed the child but then realised the monk had an extremely beautiful and intriguing face that I had to photograph.



No one else was interested in the monk, as we had seen plenty before within temple and monastery settings.

Whilst in Set Set Yo, I had been taking portraits experimenting with my Nikon 50 mm f1.4 and 105 mm f2.8.



However, as I wanted to get some images of the village scenes, I reverted to my favourite lens - the Nikon 28-300 mm f 3.5-5.6. I then turned, saw the monk in contemplation, adjusted myself to avoid the very cluttered background and took the picture with the monk lit from outside on the left.

I was astonished and pleasantly surprised at the bokeh behind the monk. I didn't know it was possible to achieve that effect with the 28 mm - 300 mm lens. The camera settings used were:

aperture priority
focal length 145 mm
auto ISO {450}
f 5.6
1/160 sec
exposure compensation set to -2

Later I processed the image in Lightroom cropping slightly then correcting the black and white clipping.

Some extra background regarding our visit to Set Set Yo. Before leaving the village, our guide met with the chief and made a generous donation towards a project to get water piped into the village, which would save the constant transporting of water by hand from a nearby lake up to the homes. A backbreaking task, which we witnessed.



We also saw many of the children using sign language. We were informed that sadly a significant number of new-borns are deaf and mute - possibly a hereditary condition.