

A photograph of a traditional Southeast Asian temple complex. In the foreground, a small pond reflects the sky. To the left, a red-roofed pavilion with ornate golden decorations stands on a stone platform. To the right, a stone staircase leads up to a white stupa. The background is filled with lush green trees and more temple structures.

# Sanctuary on the road to Oblivion?

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# Buddhist tradition



# Indian Origins of the story?

- **TURTLE IN EARLY INDIA, BUDDHIST LEGENDS, JATAKA**  
Below text courtesy [www.borobudur.tv/avadana\\_04.htm](http://www.borobudur.tv/avadana_04.htm)  
The story of the [Historical Buddha](#)'s birth as a tortoise (in his past lives, before becoming the Buddha) is featured in Indian reliefs of the first gallery balustrade, where a total of five panels present the culminating scenes from a story called the **Kaccapavadana**. In the Hindu scriptures, the great sage Kasyapa (Sanskrit for tortoise) is the father of Aditya, the Sun. The solar nature of Kasyapa is particularly appropriate representation for a past life of the Sakyamuni, who was sometimes called the "Kinsman of the Sun" (Adityabandu).

# Four Chinese Compass Points



# Genbu

## Guardian of the North



# History- The Chinese Buddhist tradition

- Fengsheng- “Release of Life”.
- Has its roots back in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Setting Turtles and other animals free is considered very auspicious.
- Established in the reign of the Chinese Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty. A Buddhist leader whom built many universities and decreed that animals should not be killed.

# Animist traditions

- The role of the Turtle/Tortoise in many ancient animist cultures, is part of a creationist myth that the earth, or at least the land we live on is the back of a giant Turtle.
- Perhaps reverence to this group of Reptiles should be revisited in part of the education process?

# Tortoise/Turtle Symbolism

- Tortoise and Snake Symbolism  
**Below text courtesy Gabi Greve**  
[www.amie.or.jp/daruma/Tsurukame.html](http://www.amie.or.jp/daruma/Tsurukame.html)
- **Tortoise and Snake 亀と蛇**  
In Chinese culture, especially under the influence of Taoism (道教) the tortoise is the symbol of heaven and earth, its shell compared to the vaulted heaven and the underside to the flat disc of the earth. The tortoise was the hero of many ancient legends. It helped the First Chinese Emperor to tame the Yellow River, so Shang-di rewarded the animal with a life span of Ten Thousand Years. Thus the tortoise became a symbol for Long Life. It also stands for immutability and steadfastness.



# Typical Buddhist Turtle Pond



# Current problem?



# Conservation message to the international Buddhist community:

- Please consider using your Temple facilities/Pond sanctuaries as a conservation resource, for the sustainable propagation of the highly endangered Asian Turtle species?
- With guidance from the international scientific Zoo /institutions, maybe the management of these pond facilities could foster a meaningful conservation message.

# The Orange Headed Temple Turtle



# Common names

- Giant Asian pond turtle, Orange-headed temple, Kura besar.
- Size: Maximum 48 cm, males are larger than females
- Distribution: Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Kampuchea, peninsular Malaysia
- Habitat: Swamps, wetlands, deciduous forest, rice paddies, rivers, mountain streams up to 400 m above sea level
- Accommodation: Hatchlings: aquarium with basking area.
- (Semi) adults: semi-aquatic setup.
- Diet: Omnivorous (fruit and leaf eater, opportunistic scavenger)
- **Pigs of the turtle world!**
- Subspecies: Cites status: [Appendix II](#)

# Adult Male *H. grandis*



# Female *H. grandis*, eating Banana



# They also like Peppers





# But best of all Snails





# Enclosure in Tropical Room



# Indoor pond



# Hatchling *H. grandis*



# Eggs laid in January 2010

- Clutch of four eggs laid. Hatching at between 100, and 120 days
- Interesting delay in the emergence which seemed staggered and occurred, at the onset of Summer rain showers. Intensive rain seems to trigger emergence?
- Young emerge at approx 30 grams and grow quickly on a diet of insects and fruit. By the end of first year average weight is 100 grams.

Regular monthly weigh in.



# H grandis youngster





Fresh ripe fruit a favourite part of diet



At fourteen months, from 30g-109g



# Kadoorie Confiscations

- In July 2010, group of ten adult animals arrive in Europe.
- However, they turn out to be 9 X male, 1X female.
- Active European Stud book maintained by Marnix Hoekstra: [www.heosemys.org](http://www.heosemys.org)
- Breeding recorded at ZSL, Fuengirola Zoo

# Kadoorie Confiscations



# Kadoorie Female



# Burmese Giant Pond Turtle

## *Heosemys depressa*



# Muenster Zoo Breeding group



# Yellow headed Temple Turtle





# Heosemys annandahlia



# Heosemys spinosa

- Other common Names:
  - Cog Wheel Turtle
  - Spiny Hill Turtle.
  - Kura kura
- Probably less common in the Temple ponds of the far east, this shy Forest turtle for much of the year is terrestrial, foraging on the floor of Tropical and sub tropical forests.

# Juvenile Cog Wheel Turtle



# Adult at DWT





# Adult in natural habitat



# Typical forest habitat



# Market madness!





# Buddhist quotation:

- **“Turtles remind us that the way to heaven is through the earth. In Mother Earth is all that we need. She will care for us, protect us, and nurture us, as long as we do the same for her. For that to happen, we must slow down and heighten our sensibilities. We must see the connection to all things. Just as the turtle cannot separate itself from its shell, neither can we separate ourselves from what we do to the earth”.**