

A Study on the Art and Architecture of Taung Thaman Kyauk Taw Gyi

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Abstract

The kings of Amarapura period built pagodas intending to perpetuate the *Sāsānā*. The basic architectural style of the pagodas resembled each other. The resemblance was due to the strict control of the monarch. It illustrated the dominance of the Bagan architectural style. So, Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi was constructed on the model of Ananda Temple in Bagan. When compared with the paintings of Taungthaman, Bagan wall-paintings were more influenced by Indian culture. Mural paintings may also be observed in some of the temples. The rural paintings reflected the political, social and economic conditions of the period.

Key words: Art, Architecture, Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi (Amarapura)

Introduction

The present town Amarapura stands at the south of the old city Amarapura. In the north, there are Mandalay and Patheingyi townships. The present town is on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railways, about five miles in the south.¹ And it also is on the Mandalay-Sagaing-Shwebo highway. The name "Amarapura" means "The immortal city."²

It has been said that Buddhism flourished best during Amarapura period. The first thing a Myanmar King did as soon as he came to the throne was to make himself the Caretaker of Buddha *Sāsānā* (Teaching's of Buddha), i.e. " *Sāsānā dayaka* Min Myat" in Myanmar. In Myanmar history, there were seven Kings who did their best for Buddha *Sāsānā*, and Badon Min (1782-1819) was one of them. The others were King Anawrahta (1044-1077), Kya Swa Min (1234-1250), Dhama Ceti Min (1471-1492), Hanthawaddy Hsinbyu Myashin (1550-1581), Rakhine Min Yar Zar Gyi (1592-1612), and King Mindon (1852- 1878).³

Badon Min, with the guidance and help of *Sayadaw* (Preceptor), formed a group of caretakers of Buddha *Sāsānā*. He tried to purify the *Sāsānā* (Buddha's teaching) and made it flourish. The King let it be known to his people the Dhama Vinaya Royal Order. According to this Royal Order, some monks who were against the Vinaya (Code of Conduct), were to leave the monkhood. And he also made the *Sayadaws* and Ministers to edit the *tripitaka* to be flawless, and rewrite them on corypha palm-leaves. He built pagodas and repaired the old ones, too. Badon Min sent a mission to Buddha Gaya to bring over the Sanskrit texts and Brahmin scholars.⁴

It was King Sagaing (1819- 1837) popularly called Bagyidaw who ordered a great stone image sculptures in Ava. It was named Mahasakya Ramsi and was housed in the Thein Daw.⁵ On 2 November 1846, Prince Bagan was became king. The new king decided to have a better building for the colossal Buddha Image of Mahasakya Ramsi. In Amarapura, a site on the west of the palace where the British Envoy put up in 1795 was selected. The model of this

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¹ Myanmar Swe-zon-kyann (Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.XIV, Yangon, Sarpay Beikman Press, 1975, p.194-95

² Amara = away form death, pura = city

³ U Tin, *Myanmar-min Oke-choke-pon Sartan-hnit Bodawphaya ei Yanzathat-khaw-thaw Ameint-taw-tan-gyi* (Treatise on Administration of Myanmar King and Bodawphaya's Great Royal Order called Criminal Law, Vol.III, Yangon, Central Press, 1965, p.90 (Henceforth: Tin, 1965)

⁴ Tin, 1965, 132

⁵ U Maung Maung Tin, *Konbaung-set Maha-yazawin-taw-gyi* (Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty), Vol.II, Yangon, Ledi-mandai Press, 1967, p.470 (Henceforth: Maung Maung Tin, 1967)

new temple was the Ananda of Bagan. The construction began on 26 April 1849. Maha Minhla Thihathu (Kyauk Maw *Myoza*, *Wungyi*) and Thadoe *Mingyi* Maha Minhla Kyaw Thu (*Babè Wun*, *Atwin Wun*) were given 3,000 men on 4 June 1849 to move the image to the new site, from Ava to Amarapura.⁶

The temple is constructed on a square platform with each side measuring 133 feet 6 inches. The relic chamber of the temple was closed on 28 September 1850.⁷ The architect was U Hmo (Thado *Mingyi* Minhla Kyawthu, *Badain Myo*, *Mabè Myoza*, *Babè Atwin Wun*). The construction took well over a year and the temple was finished early in October 1850. The finial was ceremonially raised and fixed on 29 October 1850.⁸

Henry Yule wrote that Taung Thaman Kyauk Taw Gyi was constructed on the model of Ananda Temple in Bagan. In the stone inscription of Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi, it is stated in reverse line 23. But the difference between the construction period of the former and the latter was 760 years apart, and so there were certain differences between the two. It is found similar that in the centre of both temples, the core, a large square brick pillar, supports the Sikharan or Kuanduang and a miniature pagoda. The difference, however, is in the Bagan Ananda temple, on each of the four faces of the centre core or brick pillar, four Buddha images in standing position;⁹ and in a cave in the middle of the core Kyauk Taw Gyi, a colossal Buddha image of marble stone can be found in sitting position.

On the outer walls of the Gandagudi-Shrine of Ananda temple, there are niches with images. But there is a niche on each side of the entrance to the Gandagudi of Kyauk Taw Gyi temple. As soon as one goes out from the central Gandagudi, one will find the inner corridor, then one will reach outer corridor.¹⁰ Both corridors are raised a little higher than floor. They are connected by oriels. Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi, however, there are only the brick abutment in line. There is no brick walling between are abutment and the other. To the west of the Kyauk Taw Gyi inner corridor, there are 88 images of Arahats - Saint on a dais.

In Bagan Ananda temple, the central core is connected with half- domes.¹¹ In Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi temple, the abutments one connected by a brick - roof. On the left and right of the gateway to-Ananda, there are caves in which the "Dwara Pala" or "Guardian gods of the gate."¹² It is the same at Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi temple. As soon as one reaches the gate of the Ananda temple, one will step on the platform. On the contrary, at Kyauk Taw Gyi, one has to descend nine brick stair before he reaches the platform. At each corner of Kalagyaung of the Ananda temple, there is a brick lion¹³ "but at Taungthaman Kyauktawgyi there is a sphink (Lion) each.

⁶ Ko Pyinnya (Amarapura), *Taungthaman-winn-kyinn Tha-maimn-win-nay-yan-myarr* (Palace of Historical Interest Around the Taungthaman Lake), Yangon, Sarpay Loka Press, 1996, p.125

⁷ Mahasakyanamsi Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple Stone inscription, Backline, 47-8

⁸ Mahasakyanamsi Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple Stone inscription, Backline, 29-37

⁹ U Myint Aung, *Amarapura-myot Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi Gue-pha-yarr Shi Bi-thu-kar Hnint Saye-yaye-myarr Layt-lar-chet* (Study of the Architecture and Mural Paintings of Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi Temple, Amarapura, Takkatho Research Sansaung, Vol.II, part.i, 1980, p.34 (Henceforth: Myint Aung)

¹⁰ Myint Aung, 1980, 35

¹¹ Myint Aung, 1980, 35

¹² Myint Aung, 1980, 35

¹³ Myint Aung, 1980, 36

The Kalagyaung of the Ananda temple is divided into two, upper and lower parts, so the temple looks like a two - storey building. In fact, it was a one - storey building.¹⁴ In the same way the Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi temple is one storey building though the roof goes up spire. But the Kalagyaung of it cannot be obviously seen. There are roof - shrine and amortizements, etc. above the Ananda Gandagudi, and there has the Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi. The difference is timber gamerel and timber lintel are used here. So, there is a combination a timber work and masonry in Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi.

Wall - paintings can be found on both sides of the walls of Gandagudi and its roof. The paintings are found up to the height of 13 feet and the length is 27 feet 8 inches. The jatakas are systematically drawn on the walls. The ceiling of the Gandagudi is depicted in relief and painting the positions of the constellations. It represents the sky at night full of constellations so it will be very valuable for those who study Astrology. Moreover, there are paintings of Nats (Devas), Brahmas, Weizzars and Zawgyi (Alchemist) and angles.

The angles with wings is dressed in white, so it is the copy of western art. So it can be said that western style of painting penetrated with Myanmar style since the reign of King Bagan. The better painting of an angle can be found on east porch and it is life - sized. There are 10 paintings of Saka (King of the God), Brahmin, 72 devas, 29 weizzars and Zawgyi, 1 Garuad, 21 angles, 151 Sanghas, 7 hermit, 332 men, 140 women, 158 children, 62 animals such as elephants, horses, buffaloes and oxen.¹⁵

When compared with the paintings of Taungthaman, Bagan wall -painting were more influenced by Indian culture. Indian culture which had gained influence for about 800 years was revolted against by Amarapura artists. There is little Royal affairs in the paintings, too. King Bagan left the administrative affairs with the ministers and Princes. He whiled away his time by enjoying himself. He was very fond of wrestling, fighting cocks and other animals.¹⁶

Thus, there are wall - paintings of fighting cocks, fighting bullocks and wrestling. The pictures portrayed people buying and selling goods, loaded oxen and ass and sailing boats. These paintings show the economic performances of that period. And we can draw a conclusion that various national tribes used to come to the King' city to buy all sell goods in those days, because there are paintings of various national tribes, such as the Shans, the Kachins and so on. The pictures of Royal family and people paying homage to the lord Buddha, doing good deeds and offering rice, etc. can also be seen. The picture depicting love affairs of younger ones and three peeping boys is also included in the paintings.¹⁷

By studying those painting on the walls of Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi, we can know the cultural and traditional styles of that period, and musical instruments of the period. One paintings depicted an Ahlu procession. There are musicians and a grand procession of devotes taking offerings to the monastery. Though the Novice - to be was under the traditional Myanmar *Shwe-hti* (golden umbrella), others were with western umbrellas. By this, we can see that Myanmar people were using western umbrellas in those days.¹⁸ And the art of painting had developed well in Amarapura period.

The architectural work of Kyauk Taw Gyi is eighty percent masonry work and twenty percent timber work. It takes more traditional than western style. But in wall - paintings, it doesn't follow the traditional and Indian style, but European and modern.

¹⁴ Myint Aung, 1980, 36

¹⁵ Myint Aung, 1980, 61

¹⁶ U Taik Soe, *Minn-tone-minn (King Mindon)*, Yangon, Pagan Press, 1972, 12

¹⁷ Field Study 28.4.2016

¹⁸ Field Study 28.4.2016

Conclusion

The architectural arts and handicrafts in Myanmar started in Bagan period and they were inspired by Indian culture before Amarapura period. Myanmar handicraft found in Taungthaman Kyauk Taw Gyi repelled Indian culture in Amarapura period and Myanmar fine arts and European fine arts were replaced.

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