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Twenty-Leaf Water Color Folio – Mandalay Palace Stories Burma (19th century)¹

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Abstract

The Mandalay Palace stories show and royal performance to display their culture. The following are the objectives of holding the royal *parabaik*: reviving and further pursuing royal traditional culture. Directing all efforts are national duty, at maturing union spirit, and preserving national cultural heritage. Energizing Mandalay and highlights its beauty in Royal Palace area. Focus on cultural heritage preservation of royal *Parabaik*. The main focus was on the organization of past cultural behavior and their transformations through time to time. Urban theory and critical social theory are used. To engage with topics such as the development of religious, social norms and politics; the role of the environment; social and cultural transformations in society and everyday life; print culture and the role of the city and its institutions in the production and circulation of knowledge of the arts. Analytical skill the future changes in society and the built environment.

Key Word: tangible and intangible culture sustainable

Introduction

King Mindon relocated from Amarapura to Mandalay in 1856. Mindon ruled until his death in 1878 when King Thibaw ascended the throne. Thibaw's relationship with the British rapidly deteriorated when he had some eighty of his relatives executed in 1879, and in 1885, he was exiled by the British to India, thus ending the dynasty. Assuming this folio is contemporaneous with the presence of a king in the Mandalay Palace then this would date it to between 1856 and 1885. (Falconer, 1998) Color paintings in *parabaiks* that belonged to monarchical days are rare. A complete set of "Twenty-Leaf Water color Folio–Mandalay Palace Stories Burma 19th century" *parabaik* is found in UK art market

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331644734_Twenty-Leaf_Water_Color_Folio-Mandalay_Palace_Stories_Burma_19th_century

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contributed by Michael Backman Ltd. (www.michaelbackmn.com/1236.html) The emphasis is made only on the Kon-baung art works with special reference to paint *parabaiks*. The artist's contribution to art history or social history, all captions beneath the panels of pictures are rendered in English version. The author attempts to reconstruct the Kon-baung society by reading or rather interpreting the social characteristics seen in totally 26 pictures in *parabaik*. Among them the same pages are (*parabaik* No. b, i2, n, p, u). The pages are held between pink covers that have been illustrates with an elephant and its keeper (www.michaelbackmn.com/1236.html). There is no text in the folio; there are images only. The non-*parabaik* form of this unusual. There are classified into seven portions are as follows:

Table-1 Seven Portions of *Parabaik* Index

Kinds	<i>Parabaik</i> No.	Remark (Same Pages)
Elephant Trainer	a	Pink Cotton
Royal Performance	b, c, d	b2
Alarm (Old Man, Cow, Crab, European Soldiers)	e, f, g, p, q	p
Myanmar Traditional Sport (<i>kim:mi:gau'htaun, dou: pji', gjin, dan:si, kja htou pyit', naban tha'</i>)	h, j, i, k, l	i2
Donation	m, n	n
Garden	o	
Urban Theory and Critical Social Theory	r, s, t, u	u

Source: www.michaelbackmn.com/1236.html

This splendid 20-pages water color portfolio (*width when folded out double: 34cm, height: 22cm (each single page is 17cmx22cm)*) shows a series of scenes, most probably part of a narrative, which relate to stories about King Mindon's (1856-1878) Mandalay Palace. The later Kon-baung Period saw the progress of *parabaik* art in paint. Sometimes, kings assigned special duties to a minister or a deputy Minister to supervise and charge over the royal artists to draw in white *parabaiks* regalia's and all other things of royal use. During the reign of King Min-don, such duty was assigned to one of his Chief Ministers, Min Gyi Maha Siha Sura who was a fief-holder of Taing-dar. And when king Thi-baw ascended the throne in 1878, it was handed over to a Deputy Minister, Min Gyi Maha Sithu who was a fief-holder of West-ma-sut. (Min Naing, 1980)

Color paintings in *Parabaiks* that belonged to monarchical days are rare. Finely rendered pages show musicians, acrobats, the king with courtiers, wrestlers, monks receiving arms, and several scenes of larges in the moat that surrounded the palace. Trees are beautifully rendered as are the clothes of the figures and the details of the palace walls and barges. The king and his court lived within the palace walls with a large community of monks. The king presided over festivals and rituals and otherwise was entertained by dancers, musicians, and other performers. It is not public entertainment. (Appendix- PBK, No-1, <http://antiqueburma.blogspot.com/2009/06/manuscriptparabaik.html>)

Royal Performance



PBK-c

PBK-d

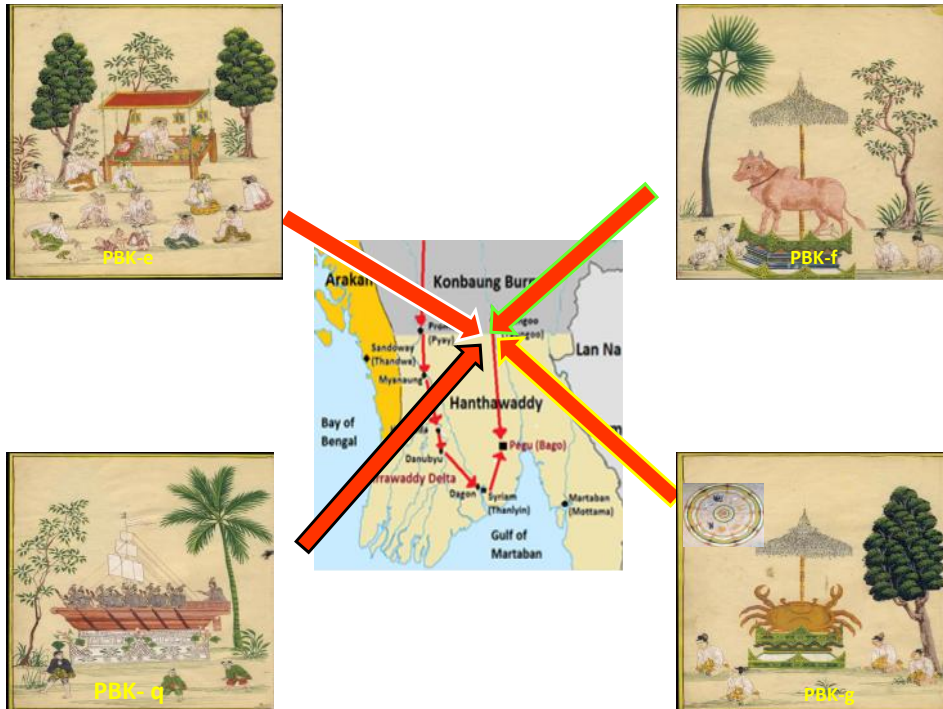
PBK-b

According to the *Parabaik* No.c, d and b showed that the whole palace groups had become friends with the members of the troupe. The drummers were invited to this garden. It is a group dance style with *byaw* drum music. He dances to the rhythmic sounds of the accompanying *Mingala Sitaw Gyi* (big drum), *dobat* or double-faced short drum and cymbals. Its musical accompaniment is the purest and oldest form of Myanmar traditional music and instruments. It not used to be usually performed by a solo drummer.

The earliest physical evidence of Myanmar traditional performance showed in the *Parabaik*. They are well dressed and bedecked with ornaments, and their postures are animated indicating they were engaged in performance. The most prominent and popular form of Myanmar's performing arts are strictly traditional in their form and content. Myanmar traditional performances are supple, graceful, elaborate, well-refined and floral. (Marshall Cavendish

Publishing, 2007). But in performing the work, they used to put their ideas, feelings, experiences, etc in their artwork to meet the adoration of the people.

Alarm



He may be love or respect person (<http://www.myanmar-family.htm>) because the followers are not strict sitting style. But twelve persons are ignored for respect person except one. We can't accurately say their posture. It is probably that their behavior to engage with scene such as the social norm, politics and cultural transformations in society and everyday life; print culture and the role of the country affairs and circulation of knowledge of the arts.

Going to the *Parabaik* No.f drew that parasol designated and bestowed by the cow on courtiers. The cow is a symbol of wealth, strength, abundance, selfless giving and a full Earthly life. Since Burmese farmers depended on them as beasts of burden to maintain their livelihoods. In those days beef consuming was also prohibited. These who consumed beef meant that they slaughtered cattle directly or indirectly. (A promulgation of law , *Parabaik MS*. Nos.1, 3, 6, 8,

9, 14, 22, 52, 75, U Soe Naing Hand Writing, Yoke Sone Monastery Collection). During the Konbaung dynasty, habitual consumption of beef was punishable by public flogging. (Spiro Melford, 1982; Ohn Kyi, 1968). Another reason why King Min-don promulgated these laws (Yandameik Kyaw Htin, 1965) were because the cattle population was falling in Upper Myanmar since the British who were very fond of beef bought them offering good prices. So there took place cattle smuggling in Upper Myanmar. (Royal Order of King Thi-baw, *Parabaik MS*, no. 1, Kyauk Sa Yone Collection; Paddy Tax, *Parabaik MS*, no.1082, YNLC; Paddy Tax, *Parabaik MS*, no. 4, KYC; Thatha-Meida Taxation in 1878, *Parabaik MS*, no. 221, Meikhtila University Library Collection) The beef taboo is fairly widespread in Myanmar, particularly within the Buddhist community. (Charney, 2007) Among many scenes depicted in the *parabaik*, one that is Ledi Sayadaw's *Nwa-myitta-sa* striking (Hardiman,1900) us was that of the ritual animal figures. It is still in use in our modern agriculture.

Let me inform the *Parabaik* No. **g** painted that parasol designated and bestowed by the crab on courtiers. The astrological sign Cancer (Appendix- PBK, No-2) are named after the crab. (http://www.niu.edu/burma/publications/jbs/vol14/Lammerts_illustrations/fig11.shtml) It is a symbol of sea, wealth; cold (Elizabeth Benson,1972) and giving a full prevention of war often depicted crabs in their art. (Katherine Berrin & Larco Museum, 1997). Kon-baung period, peace situation decline is important role perhaps one reason for the decline was that area of the country of Myanmar was limited and after the second Anglo-Myanmar wars, less and less prevention of the war. We do not know the expression of the artist works. When the country was faced with external threat that impinged on Myanmar in 1824, and after 1852, the king and people seemed to devote themselves in religious performances ever than before. It is probably that the *parabaik* paintings and animal symbolism provide a testimony of Myanmar's believable, social and political history reflected in the illustrations for Kon-baung society.

Parabaik No. **p** and **q** showed that the symbolism of foreign boatmen. The portraits of British soldiers, strange and unfamiliar are illustrated. In many of their drawings we often come across the painted figures of Europeans. These are the reflections of the age. The people seemed to perceive that the Europeans were harbingers of atrocious demons. Moreover, we can see in them the ethnic nationalities or foreigners, wearing striped trousers and hats. Generally speaking, some Europeans were portrayed in Myanmar paintings as devils of their society.(Dr.Than Tun, 23 July 1972).

By studying the above *Parabaik* manuscript figures e, f, g, p and q, we can get a good knowledge and understanding the reflection of the through ages and current affairs.**Myanmar Traditional Sports**

According to the *Parabaik* Nos. h, l, j, k and l showed that Myanmar Traditional Sport document was discovered in *Parabaik* painting during the late 1800s in Myanmar. It is on display at the rare.



We can analyze the comparative study of the Myanmar sports are as follows:

Pbk Nos.	Sport Name	Player Nos.	Style	Remark
PBK-h (above)	<i>kim:mi:gau'htaun</i> (do a handstand or headstand)	4	for vicinity defense	practice for military attack
PBK-h (under)	<i>dou: pji'</i> (throwing with sea bean seed game)	6	for vicinity defense	concentration for their mind
PBK-i	<i>dan:si:</i> (swing)	5	they don't fear the high place	practice for military attack
PBK-j	<i>gjin-</i> top (toy game)	4	Myanmar traditional hamlet style	concentration for their mind
PBK-k	<i>kja htau pyit'</i> (playing with cloth bag toss away)	10	strength for leg and proximity defense	practice for military attack
PBK-l	<i>naban tha'</i> (Wrestling Sport)	9	indisputable artifacts	practice for military attack

Source: *Parabaik* MSS Nos: h, l, j, k, l www.michaelbackmn.com/1236.html

The "greatest" part of that is a matter of taste. But when it comes to "oldest," the sports are showcasing some ancient documentation to make its

case." Not only is the oldest sports but it has indisputable artifacts."([http://:www. Wrestling.html](http://www.Wrestling.html)) It was a sort of games for young princes to identify every one of these maids-of-honour correctly. It is treated as is reflected in the illustrations for military tactic.

Garden



PBK-o

Parabaik No.o showed that the royal family and common people visit to the royal garden. They go to the monastery offering of food for monks. To served that as a recreation center for the public. To carry out educational activities related to conservation of trees so that people will become interested and appreciate the values of trees and flowers. The resident forest birds, reptiles, small mammal species and insects are not found in picture. The other one is a *parabaik* in which portraits unfamiliar trees are illustrated. The botanists and researchers can study the trees and flowers. They were to garden was colorfully and magnificently depicted. We can study the past cultural behavior and their transformations through time to time.

Donation Ceremony

Parabaik No.m and n showed that invitation one or more monks to a meal at a ordination hall and offer provisions and various articles to monks collectively by the Royal Family.



PBK-m

PBK-n

The donation ceremony at Mandalay Palace procured food and accessories. We can approximate the donor's desire. Donation is instead most commonly defined as an intangible forms, embodies therefore all the aspects of a community's past and present that are considered meaningful for defining its identity, and valuable to pass on to future generations. We can be proud of our cultural heritage handed down to us by our forefathers. Another factor showed that the ordination hall were flat and wooden structures. It can be said that they were ideographic art. However, we see religious structure.

Urban Theory and Critical Social Theory



PBK-r

PBK-s

PBK-t

PBK-u

So that historical facts can we glean from *Parabaik* no. r, s, t and u paintings? In the paintings of the royal behavior in *parabaik* under study, there

are fort cities, place, gates, multi-roofed spires, brick structures, rowing boat and so forth. These pictures could tell of the court life, ecclesiastical life, and common life of the people in the Kon-baung period. More importantly we can discern the social life especially the life of the Upper echelon or royalty and elite class through these pictures. Boat not only plays a major role in the daily life but also holds the pride of place in Myanmar culture.

As we see, the forts of Inwa, Amarapura, and Mandalay were made of brick with four main gateways—one, at each cardinal point. But, except Mandalay, there was no multi-roofed spire over the gateways of Inwa and Amarapura. (Appendix- PBK, No-3)(<http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1890-89924>) Instead, we find only a wooden structure erected over the gateway, with a three-tiered roof in Chinese style.

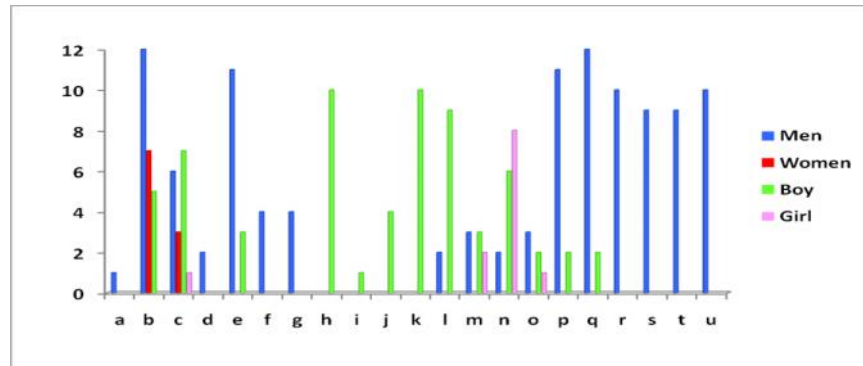
And on the fort walls, there were banquettes, battlements, crenels, ramparts etc. These were the things that can still be seen on Myanmar old fort cities. (Lay out Plans of the Fort and the Palace, *Parabaik* no. 25017)Of course the artist copied the model of Amarapura. But the artists—including those who belonged to the reigns of King Mindon and Thibaw, forgot to illustrate moat scenes in their pictures of old historical cities. The Myanmar kings thought that their city and palace were built on the model of the gods, city and Palace in heaven on top of the Mt.Meru. Another factor showed that the seven-roofed spire was also located at the centre of the universe. If the artist knew this concept, he should have painted seven-roofed spires in his court scenes, because the palace has seven-roofed spires. Urban theory and critical social theory are used.

Instead, the meritorious deeds of his and his predecessors, scenes of ceremonies, scenic beauties around the capital were recorded in pictures on the moat so that the visitors could learn the achievements of their kings. The western techniques that the Myanmar artists used and some western traditions that the Myanmar artists copied are also easily visible in this scenes. For example, the idea of perspective drawing, light and shade, and the winged angels or the figures of Eros are of the western ideas and traditions. (Thein Hlaing, 1980)

Gender Role

According to the *Parabaik* No. b to u indicated that the total population of (196) persons, of these (110) persons were male, (10) persons were female, (64) persons were boys and (12) persons were girls. They are not proportion for men and women.

Table-3 Gender Role



Source: *Parabaik* MSS, Nos. a-u www.michaelbackmn.com/1236.html

So we can approximate the gender role account and artist create the society portray in *parabaik* painting. One can find the men role influence upon women role in *Parabaik* image.

Costume Designs for Various Status



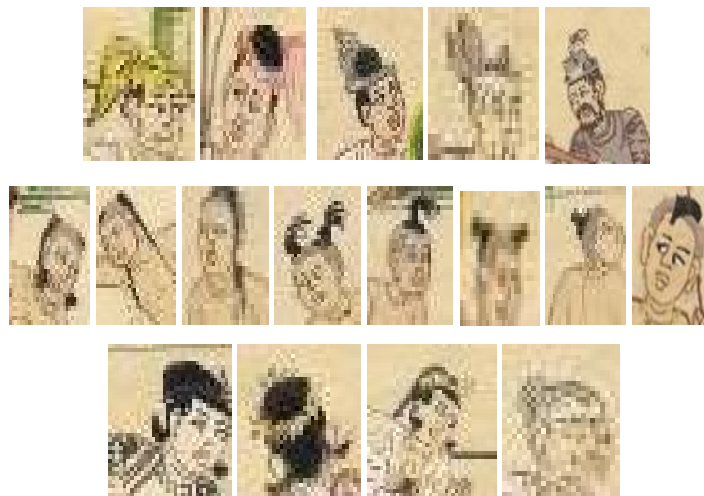
The paintings reveal variety of dresses and clothing's for various status. In the monarchical days people were to dress themselves in conformity with

their rank and insignia or social status. By seeing one's dress, we can judge one's social status. In some pictures, we see royal attires, diadems, white parasols etc. Which were of the royal regalia? Only kings and gods were dressed in this style. Ministers, military officials, and retainers are seen painted in different dresses according to their position. The popular and expensive cloth might be the *acheik* loin cloth worn by royalty of both sexes in this period. (PBK-no.11, 24).

For crown servicemen of low ranks they wore imported square-patterned cotton clothes. Moreover, high ranking officials wore fillets and gowns with color stripes downwards along the hems. Wearing gold ear-plugs by both sexes of high social stratum including the royalty are thought to be the Kon-baung fashion or style. The unique feature of the paintings is that foot-wearing is totally neglected. We cannot find out any foot-wear. I tried my best to discuss on the costumes adorned and worn by royal members and commoners in the days of monarchy in Kon-baung period. However one can notice, at least, the living style of the royalty, the officialdom and common people.

Various Hair Style for Men and Women

We can approximate the various hair styles for men and women in later Kon-baung period.



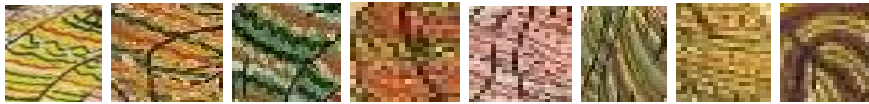
***Pasos* Designs for Men**

The waist-line was folded to make *Kha-thein Eingyi* (Shirt) type. Thus costumes of various types were worn to distinguish the various ranks. There is a Myanmar expression, "men in the royal service wearing the twenty-cubit-long *paso*", referring to the lower garment worn by king, princes and men in royal service in the older days.



These garment having floral designs. Valuable *pasos* of high quality were to be worn by the king and the people of the upper class. The officers of high and low ranks engaged in the service of constructing a new palace, wore white *pasos*-the white color implying the meaning of auspiciousness. (Than Tun, 1997) It can be assumed, that the king and the people of the upper class mostly wore the gold-embroidered, white cotton fabric. There is no exact date for *paso*.

***Htamein* Designs for Women**



Htamein is according to Myanmar culture and Myanmar women's unique style. White and dark-colored lower garments were mostly worn. Those white *Htameins* had been woven in gold embroidery. The ladies of the upper class wore not only the designs of spot, double-layered triangle, color spot between two horizontal lines, circular spots, various designs inside the circles, and big wavy pattern called *kyogyi-cheik* and wavy pattern, but also modern wavy designs. The term "*cheik*" was used to refer to the costume of the Konbaung period, but the wavy pattern had already existed in that period. There was a change of the culture of Myanmar costumes in the Konbaung period.

Tattoo Designs

People believe having tattoos on the body brings luck and special powers. From the waist to the knee some people were tattooed with artistic bluish-black effigies of powerful agile creatures with various marks.



There were marks that bespoke the original regiment and status group of the person that he was attached to for life. They had tattooed marks on their body that spoke of their mother units or regiments to which they belonged. (Appendix- PBK, No-4; San San May, Dec 2011)

These marks were in the form of figures of beast, birds, demons and other symbols that also signified the crown service groups or regiments differentiating them with others or with their locality and ethnicity. There were different tattoo marks on different parts of their bodies in *parabaik*. These are tabulated below with each men concerned.

Parabaik No	Tattoo Mark Location
g	Left and Right side leg
h	Left and Right side leg
i	Left and Right side leg
j	Left and Right side leg
k	Left and Right side leg
n	Left and Right side leg
m	Left and Right side leg
q	Left and Right side leg

The traditional art of tattooing is deeply rooted in Myanmar's history: from kings to Commoners, tattoos were exemplars and devices of state bondsmen, masculine strength, cultural identity and aesthetic appeal, while endowed as well as with spiritual powers serving as protection from evil forces.

Various Trees Design



The other one is a *parabaik* in which strange and interesting events, portraits of various trees from royal palace environ; bonsai method, strange and unfamiliar trees are illustrated.

Preservation of *Parabaik* Erosion

The political, social, administrative, and religious conditions of the *Parabaik* can be studied in Kon-baung Period. They are shed light on the life of previous generations. In ancient time, monasteries and libraries have no environmental controls and preservation programs to preserve the intellectual heritage of a rich and old culture. The conditions of the *parabaik* in the London are better than ours due to more careful and scientific preservation. Now, the National Commission for the Preservation of Traditional Manuscripts (NCPTM) was organized in Myanmar in September 1994. So the National Commission for the preservation of Traditional Manuscripts was organized for the cultural heritage and manuscript erosion.

Materials and Methods

Descriptive and analytical methods have been used in this paper. Statistic methods are manipulating for new contribution.

Results/ Findings and Discussion

I would like to solve some problem in this work. To be frank, the evidence is sketchy; we can, however, guess their historical conditions by trickling such questionnaires. Which way to study the Mandalay Royal *Parabaik*? How to analyze the urban theory and social theory? Why is predominant symbolism in Myanmar Art? Why is past cultural behavior important? How to

preserve the national cultural heritage? The author tries to deal with the social life of the people of the Mandalay royal palace during the later Kon-baung period.

Conclusion

Myanmar was very fond of paintings since the prehistoric times up to present. Mural paintings prevailed throughout the dynastic periods. The art of painting reached its zenith in the Kon-baung period. But in the later Kon-baung period both mural and *parabaik* paintings were in vogue together with other forms of arts all of which are known as the traditional arts. The Kon-baung society as reflected in the art *Parabaik* works left by our ancestors could certainly speak of the society to which they belonged. Myanmar is very rich with arts and craft since the dawn of Christian era. It is to be admitted that all paintings were no practice of perspective drawing. Symbolism is predominant in Myanmar art. So in studying the Myanmar art one needs to correctly interpret the symbolized figures in terms of Myanmar traditional thought. Myanmar artist attempted to introduce secularized paintings in the *parabaik*, depicting the daily life of royal family often seen in their environs, like, for example, the royal performance scene, animal symbolism scene, Sport scene, etc. But in later Kon-baung period secular art became more and more predominant ever than before, parallel to religious art. When closely studied, one can notice that the artists used yellow pale color in outline drawing, but in painting, they used yellow more than other colors. (*Shei-yoe Myanmar Bagyi* (Myanmar Traditional Art), Yangon Archaeology Department, n.d.) Nevertheless, a study of such an illustrated *parabaik* from historical perspective has never been made before. This is a pioneer work for scholars to come. This work does not matter whether it is good or not. But it could certainly interest some people in revisiting the author's source material to reconsider some points, some interpretations and conclusions. The *parabaik* paintings throw light on the reliable for kon-baung society. Art, social historians and environmental scholars could glean historical facts from these paintings in order that they could either acquire their painting techniques and their ideographic views or reconstruct the then social life. As Mandalay was the capital of the last unified Myanmar Kingdom, the *parabaik* paintings and antiques provide a unique and irreplaceable testimony of Myanmar's intellectual, social and political history. The ancient *parabaiks* are required to be preserved in virtue of their historical, cultural, artistic or anthropological importance which identified objects and competent authorities for cultural heritage protection. The techniques used the principles of preservation applied and the relative plans for heritage management. Analytical skill the future changes in society and the built environment.

Appendix



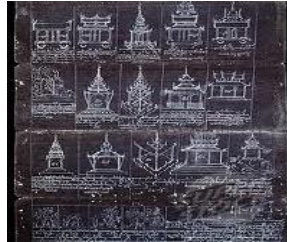
PBK, No -1, Public Entertainment

<http://antiqueburma.blogspot.com/2009/06/manuscriptparabaik.html>



PBK , No-2, Cosmological Map

http://www.niu.edu/burma/publications/jbs/vol14/Lammerts_illustrations/fig11.shtml



PBK, No -3, Architecture Design

<http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1890-89924>



PBK, No -4, Tattoo Art in Early & Later Konbaung Design

San San May (Curator for Burmese, British Library, London),(December 2011) Tattoo Art in Burmese Culture, South East Asia Library Group Newsletter, ISSN 0308-4035, No.43, 9, MSS, Burmese 199, f-51

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