

Buddhist arts and architectures of the Htee Thone Sint Pagoda, Meiktila Township

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Abstract

This paper is organized by three parts mainly. Firstly it is comprised with the *Stūpas (Ceti)*, and then presented with the meaning, location, the history, the arts and architectures of the Htee Thone Sint pagoda. Finally it is described with the findings: this historic “Htee Thone Sint” pagoda is one of the pagodas built by King Anawrahta, being a historic ordination hall and other historic documents, decorating with traditional arts and architecture on the pagoda, and lying of other historic religious edifices and monuments in the pagoda campus.

Key words – history, Buddhist arts and architectures, culture

Introduction

In Myanmar tradition, many *Stūpas*, pagodas and temples have been built. Among them, building faithfully the religious edifices and monuments like *Stūpas*, shrines, pagodas, monasteries and lakes is one of Myanmar Buddhists’ belief. They have built various *Stūpas* and shrines decorated with traditional arts and architecture in different types and shapes since ancient periods.

The word *Cetī* derived from the *Sanskrit* term *Caitya* and the Pāli term *Cetiya*. The terms *Caitya* and *Cetiya* come from the root root *ci* or *cita*, it meaning “heaped up”. Therefore *Cetiya* literary means ‘heap or pile’. In Pali-Myanmar Abhidhan of U Hote Sein, *Cetiya* is defined as the sacred object, shrine, and temple of worship used by Buddhists. In the Tipitaka Pāli Myanmar Abhidhan, *Cetiya* is referred to as pagoda, *stūpa*, temple, shrine, sanctuary, prayer hall and so on. In *ParājikaAṭṭhakathā*, *Cetiya* means that;

1. The object to be worshipped or devotional offering.

2. The object to be decorated with bridges and stones.

Therefore, *Ceti* can be defined as the object decorated with bridges and stones in dome shape where people use their religious functions like worshipping or devotional offering. Since the time of Gotama Buddha building of *Stūpa* or Shrine is permitted for worshipping or offering.

Materials and methods

In this research paper, all of the data about the history of *stūpa* and history of the Htee Thone Sint pagoda were collected from libraries and field survey, together with descriptive method was used. The

materials used for the purpose of the research are Pāli, *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭikā* and *Ganthantara* Texts.

Findings

The name and meaning of the Htee Thone Sint Pagoda

The sacred name of the pagoda is Htee Thone Sint. Unlike other pagodas, the ornamented umbrella of the Htee Thone Sint Pagoda has decorated with three tier umbrella. For this reason, the name of the pagoda is given as Htee Thone Sint Pagoda. The three tier umbrella is dedicated to the *Pariyatti*, *Paṭipatti* and *Paṭiveda* for spreading of three kinds of *Sāsanā*.

Location and Area of the Pagoda

The historic pagoda is located in Meiktila Township which is situated in Mandalay Region of Central Myanmar. It is situated between North Latitude (20° 39' 15" - 21° 00' 00") and East Longitude (95° 30' 40" - 96° 00' 55"). Htee Thone Sint pagoda is located near the clock-tower and beside Meiktila-Myingyan road. It shares neighboring to Yay-wai Oute-Kyin quarter in the north, Thiri-mingalar quarter in the east, Meiktila-Mandalay Road in the south, and Yadanar-Thingyit Pagoda in the west respectively. The pagoda stands on a hill-lock of 26' 7" in length and 18' in height. The height of pagoda is about 65' feet.

Types of Pagoda

The Htee Thone Sint pagoda is a kind of cave temple. It has combination with Htee Thone Sint *sīmā*. It has one gateway called *mok*. Many years ago, most of Myanmar Buddhists built many *stūpas*, pagodas,

solid pagodas and temples. In ancient times, *stūpa* and cave were built and paid respect. And then temple had been built with the architecture of combining the *stūpa* and cave. The square apartment with the entrance (*mok*) above it. According to the architectural point of view, the square apartment with well-planned foundation is built in place of the square base terrace of the pagoda. The Htee Thone Sint pagoda is built with the square base apartment, perforated with one archway, on which a small pagoda is tiered with plinth (*phanat-taw*), terraces (*pyit-sayan*), octagonal base (*shit-myaunt*), bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung*), embossed band (*phaung-yeit*), inverted lotus flower (*kyar-hmaunt*), spreading lotus flower (*kyar-hlyan*), banana bud (*hngyut-pyaw-phoo*) and sacred umbrella (*htee-taw*) respectively and systematically. The square base apartment and top pagoda are proportionately and harmoniously built. Such type of pagoda is called cave temple pagoda in Myanmar. Cave temple pagodas were originally built with one cardinal direction of ornamented archway (*Tawagu*), later extend to two cardinal direction of ornamented archways and four cardinal direction of ornamented archways (*lay-myat-hna-ceti*).

The background history of Pagoda

The Htee Thone Sint Pagoda is one cardinal direction of ornamented archway (*Tawagu*) built in AD 1054 (M.E - 416, B.E - 1598) during the region of King Anawrahta. The King visited to *Mathilā* to renovate the Lake in (414 M-E, 1596 - B.E). During the renovation period of Meiktila Lake, the king asked to Shin Araham leading on nine senior Arahats and 700 Arahats to establish nine sacred ordination halls (*sīmā*), nine cave (*gū*), nine hills (*kone*), nine dammed ponds (*inn*) and nine pools (*ain*) around Meiktila Lake. The nine sacred ordination halls included in the royal work of Meiktila Lake renovated by King Anawrahta are as follow;

1. *Paethida Sīmā*
2. *Kattukan Sīmā*
3. *Wetkyut Sīmā*
4. *Shinpingu Sīmā*
5. *Thaphan Sīmā*
6. *Kalainchae Sīmā*
7. *Kuphyu Sīmā*
8. *Kaungtaung Sīmā*
9. Htee Thone Sint *Sīmā*

According to the list of nine sacred ordination halls established and pronounced by Shin Araham as mentioned above, it can be noted that Htee Thone Sint ordination hall (*sīmā*) is one of them. It can also be assumed that the king Anawrahta may have built the Htee Thone Sint Pagoda in the same time of building Htee Thone Sint hall (*sīmā*). Shin Araham had pronounced nine sacred ordination halls around Meiktila those four sacred ordination halls (*sīmā*) in upper area of the lake, four sacred ordination halls (*sīmā*) in lower area of the lake and the remainder of

Htee Thone Sint ordination hall (*sīmā*) is in the middle area of the lake.

Arts and Architectures of the Htee Thone Sint Pagoda

The Htee Thone Sint Pagoda is a temple of one cardinal direction of ornamented archway. It is built with the square base apartment, perforated with ornamented archway, on which a small pagoda is tiered with base plinth (*phanat-taw*), plinth (*pan-tin-khon*), terraces (*pyit-sayan*), small satellite steps (*ayan-ceti*), octagonal base (*shit-myaunt*), lower edge of bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung-nar*), bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung*), horizontal band (*kyee-wun*), ornamented band (*yin-si /yin-phwet*), barge-board (*pann-swae*), embossed band (*phaung-yeit*), inverted lotus petal (*kyar-hmaunt*), spreading lotus petal (*kyar-hlyan*), large lotus petal (*kyar-yint*), ring of spherical bases (*ywe-lone*), three tier umbrellas (*htee -thone-sint*), shaft to hold the umbrellas (*pein-ne-tai*), pennant shaped vane (*hngge-mana*) and diamond bud (*sein-phoo-taw*) respectively. The height of pagoda is approximately 65 feet.

i. The base plinth (*phanat-taw*)

The base plinth (*phanat-taw*) means the area between the foundations that part of a post embedded in the ground and the embossed plinth. Placing the plinth at the pagoda is aimed to the long periods of worlds in thinking of the Buddha to be Enlightened One.

ii. The plinth (*pan-tin-khon*)

The molded place between the base plinth (*phanat-taw*) and the first terraces (*pyit-sayan*) is named as the plinth (*pan-tin-khon*). In other words, the place where people usually put the flowers aimed to offer Buddha is also called as the plinth (*pan-tin-khon*). On every corner of the plinth (*pan-tin-khon*), the small surrounding *stūpas* are usually placed. These small surrounding *stūpas* at four corner of the pagoda are aimed to the wishing of the Buddha to be Enlightened One for four *asāṅkhyeyya*.

iii. The terrace (*pyit-sa-yan*)

In Pāli language, the term terrace (*pyit-sa-yan*) is defined as the sustaining, which is built with the brick platform to support the pagoda to be stronger. The terrace (*pyit-sa-yan*) leading to the octagonal terrace (*kyee-won* or *shit-myunt*) is usually made of three tiers_ first terrace, second terrace and third terrace respectively. On every corners of the terrace (*pyit-sa-yan*), the small satellite *stūpas* (*ayan-ceti*) and the gilded vases (*kalatha-ou:*) are usually fitted harmoniously.

iv. The octagonal terrace (*shit-myaunt*) and the horizontal band (*kyee-wun*)

The octagonal terrace (*shit-myaunt*) and part of the horizontal band (*kyee-wun*) are fitted closely above of the three tiered terraces (*pyit-sa-yan thone-sint*). According to the architectural point of view, the work is done in the platform to be particularly apparent of the edge of the bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung-hnot-khan*).

v. The downturned monk's bowl (*thapake-hmout*)

The middle band of the bell-shaped dome is called ornamented band (*yin-phwet-taw*). The part of it is looked like a shape of downturned monk's bowl and pronounced as *Thapake-hmout* in Myanmar term. The upper edge and the lower edge of the ornamented band (*yin-phwet-taw*) are decorated with Banyan leaves (*nyaung-ywet*). Mostly, the upper part of the ornamented band (*yin-phwet-taw*) is usually ornamented with floral accents (*pann-swe*) and ornamented ogre clutching (*balu-pann-swe*) in the lower part. However, there is no ornamented ogre clutching (*balu-pann-swe*) decorated on this pagoda, Htee-Thone-Sint.

vi. The molding band (*phaung-yit*)

The bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung*) is usually regarded as a holy reliquary chamber (*dattaw-daik*) on which the circular molding bands (*phaung-yit*) are fitted in ascending order and raised up to the spherical bases ring (*ywe-lon*). This is aimed to the seven factors of wisdom (*bojjhaṅga*) for attaining enlightened One (Buddha). There are seven or nine circular molding bands (*phaung-yit*) usually decorated on the pagodas. Among them, this pagoda is fitted with nine circular molding bands (*phaung-yit*).

vii. The spherical bases ring (*ywe-lon*)

Decorating the spherical bases ring (*ywe-lon*) is aimed to attain eighteen kinds of insights of Buddha.

viii. The downturned and upturned lotus petals (*kyar-hmout-kyar-hlyan*)

Lotus is aimed to the attainment of enlightenment by the Buddha.

ix. The small lotus petal (*kyar-nu*)

The small lotus petals are decorated for aiming to the attainment of insights when Buddha to be.

x. The sacred umbrella (*htee*)

In ancient times, the part of banana bud is the summit of the pagoda, and sacred umbrella was rarely

decorated. However, the sacred umbrellas are made and offered with reverence. Therefore, a pagoda can be seen by three parts mainly as the plinth (*phanat-taw*), the bell-shaped dome (*khaung-laung*) and the sacred umbrella (*htee-taw*).

On the interior wall of cave-liked apartment shaped in square, it is decorated with beautiful glass mosaic workmanship embedded in gliding (*hman-zi-shwe-cha*). The marble Buddha statue with earth touching hand gesture (*Bhūmiphassamudrā*) is gracefully placed in the temple-liked apartment. The place is used as an ordination hall named in Htee Thone Sint *Sīmā*. The two gods posting in worshipping to the Buddha is placed in left and right sides of the interior apartment.

Furthermore, the two Buddha statues gesturing in touching earth (*Bhūmiphassa mudrā*) by sitting on the throne with ornamented backdrops are placed on the left and right sides of the main Buddha statue. On the wall of the cave-liked ordination hall, the seven wall paintings sketched about the history of building the Htee Thone Sint *sīmā* and pagoda by King Anawrahta can be seen in order.

Wall painting (1)

It is sketched about Shin Arahan who is touring by levitation through the supernatural power to the palace while Anawrahta, King of Bagan, discussing about religious affairs with heretic (*Arī*).

Wall painting (2)

The picture is created about the King Anawrahta demolishing the gang of deviant heretic members (*Arī*) by the royal order after he has received and believed into the Buddhism (*Theravāda Sāsana*) by the delivering of Shin Arahan.

Wall painting (3)

In this picture, it is covered about the carrying of the Buddha Scriptures form Thahton (*Suvaṇṇabhūmi*) to Bagan by the suggestion of Shin Arahan aiming to sustain the Buddha Teachings.

Wall painting (4)

The painting is represented to the King Anawrahta matching to the *Shishar* Town (now Meiktila in present days) by four combat arms with the aiming to eliminate the heretic members (*Arī*) running out from Bagan.

Wall painting (5)

The picture is recorded about the sacred action of pronouncing the Htee Thone Sint ordination hall by Shin Arahan and *Arahats* on the bank of Meiktila Lake after the King Anawrahta had eliminated the heretic members (*Arī*) and renovated the royal lake.

Wall painting (6)

In the picture, it is sketched about the King Anawrahta and his royal fellows are delightfully paying obeisance to the royal relics and the Buddha statue to be enshrined in the pagoda tiered on the top of ordination hall (*sīmā*).

Wall painting (7)

The picture is represented about the offering of three tiers sacred umbrellas on the top of pagoda. He intended that three kinds of *Sāsana* spread out the world and the consecrating pagoda of ordination hall by Shin Araham and *Arahats*. All the wall-painting found in the Htee Thone Sint pagoda are observed as the modern artwork created by U Myint Han (*Sale*).

Other Religious Edifices and Monuments of the Pagoda

There are many religious edifices and monuments found near the pagoda. They are as follows,

1. Shwe-Myin-Mi Pagoda

There is a historic pagoda situated in the north-east of Htee Thone Sint Pagoda named in Shwe Myin Mi built by the King Narapatisithu, successor of King Anawrahta. Nowadays, the pagoda is 108 feet in height. It is built in (1718 of B.E, 536 of M.E) by King Narapatisithu. The king had enshrined three Buddha icons casted by gold, silver and diamond and the sacred relics of Buddha.

2. Lay Myat Hna Pagoda

This pagoda is situated in the east of Htee Thone Sint Pagoda. The pagoda is built 28 feet and 6 inches in height. The height of pagoda is 37 feet in total.

3. Theik-Paike Pagoda

In front of the Htee Thone Sint *Sīmā*, there can be found a pagoda of 22 feet and 6 inches in height named in Theik Paike Pagoda (the treasure enclosed pagoda). In ancient times, people believed that there is a treasure chamber under the base plinth of Htee Thone Sint pagoda. And they can borrow and return back in specific promised period's jewelry from the guardians of the treasure chamber of the pagoda. But in later, people became braking their loyalty and faith and could not control the greediness to own on borrowed items. In addition, they had tried to dig up the treasure chamber. Therefore, the treasure chamber was enclosed and on which the *stūpa* is built with the aim to protect the destructions from the intense desire persons. For this reason, the name of the *stūpa* becomes Theik Paike Pagoda in later.

4. The Flag-staff (*Dhajathambha*)

A flagstaff is one of the important sign at the Buddhist Pagoda. Buddhist donate flagstaff in every pagoda. The flagstaff can be found in the north-east corner of Htee Thone Sint pagoda. The statues of gods and dragons are made around the flagstaff. The beautiful stucco work is fitted with the one birth story of Buddha (*Jātaka*) on this flagstaff. It is illustrated about the baby judgment (*thar-tayar-siyin-khan*) of *Mahosadha Jātaka* story. These statues serve as a decoration on the flagstaff.

5. The stake of ordination hall (*Sim-Panak-Taing*)

Around four corner of Htee Thone Sint Pagoda, there can be found some stakes assumed for ordination hall. According to the ancient record, the area of the ordination hall (*sīmā*) is 63 feet in length and 38 feet in width. However, the present days' area is not matched as mentioned above.

6. The ornamented bell (*Khaung-laung*)

The bell-stand and the ornamented bell is situated in the north of Htee Thone Sint pagoda. Most of the Buddhists usually strike the bell after they have done merit and share it to the surrounding. There are two ornamented bells on the bell-stand of Htee Thone Sint pagoda. There can also be seen some traditional curlicue sculptures on the decorative headstock of the bell.

7. The prayer hall (*Aryonkan-Tasaung*)

There is a prayer hall (*aryonkan-tasaung*) in the right east cardinal point of Htee Thone Sint pagoda. In addition, there is a stairway (*saung-tan*) in the north-east, and a preaching hall in the east of the pagoda.

8. *Kyauk sa taik*

There are some religious edifices, the repository of Buddhist Sculptures (*Kyauk sa taik*), in the pagoda campus. Buddha taught the *Dhamma* to the living beings for 45 years. At the First Buddhist Council all the teaching of the Buddha were classified into three divisions. They are; *Sutta Piṭaka*, *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The *Sutta Piṭaka* is composed of five collections.

(1) The *Dīgha Nikāya* (Collection of lengthy *Suttas*),

(2) *Majjhima Nikāya* (the Collection of *Suttas* of medium length),

(3) *Samyutta Nikāya* (Collection of connected series of *Suttas*),

(4) *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Collection of *Suttas* in numerically progressive order) and

(5) *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Collection of Small Works).

In Htee Thone Sint pagoda campus, the Kyauk Sa Taik are built in ‘U’ shape all together. In those Kyauk Sa Taik, the marble slab on which the commentaries of *Piṭaka* are casted in order. Each of marble slabs has 4 feet and 5 inches in height and 2 feet and 7 inches respectively.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (1), 114 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Monastic rules) are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (2), 106 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries *Abhidhamma Pitaka* are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (3), 74 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Dīgha Nikāya* (Collection of lengthy *Suttas*) are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (4), 105 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Majjhima Nikāya* (the Collection of *Suttas* of medium length) are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (5), 78 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Samyutta Nikāya* (Collection of connected series of *Suttas*) are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (6), 120 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Collection of *Suttas* in numerically progressive order) are carved.

In Kyauk Sa Taik (7), 597 marble slabs are placed on which the commentaries of *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Collection of Small Works) are carved. All the marble slabs enshrined in the Kyauk Sa Taik are remained historically and they are invaluable heritages for a long time.

Conclusion

Many pagodas have been built since ancient time. It can be proved that Buddhism has growth in Myanmar for long periods by seeing many ancient pagodas and temples of 11th century built in Bagan. King Anawrahta who established the first Myanmar Empire (Bagan) builds many Pagodas in Myanmar and “Htee Thone Sint” pagoda is one of the famous pagoda in Meiktila.”

“Htee Thone Sint” pagoda being a pride of Meiktila is distinctive and wonderful one. In this pagoda, it has three umbrellas because King Anawrahta intended that three kinds of *Sāsanā* spread out the world. Furthermore, Buddhism has been prosperous in Meiktila as the King wished.

Meiktila is a place of attracting both to the local and foreigners because it is the central point of Myanmar, possesses good transports and communications, and has a famous historic lake and various ancient historic pagodas and Buddhist monuments. In addition, the object of the paper also aimed to be understood for the terms and definitions of the specific parts of the pagoda. The main objective of the paper is to explore the history of the pagodas, the wonderful arts and crafts of the pagoda, Myanmar faith and customary and Buddhist tradition for those that scholars, local and foreign travelers, are interested in.

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၈. ဇာဂရ၊ ဦး (ရန်ကုန်)။ စေတီဆင်းတုသမိုင်းနှင့်တိုးကွယ်မှု အကျိုးကျေးဇူး။ ဆယ်သန်းပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။(၁၉၉၅)။ ရန်ကုန်။

၉. ဟုတ်စိန်၊ ဦး။ ပါဠိ-မြန်မာအဘိဓာန်၊ ချမ်းသာရောင်စုံ ပုံနှိပ်တိုက် (၁၉၉၉)။ရန်ကုန်။

၁၀. ဗုဒ္ဓဒေသနာတော်ဝေါဟာရအဘိဓာန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာနပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ (၁၉၉၆)။ ရန်ကုန်။

၁၁. တိပိဋကပါဠိ-မြန်မာအဘိဓာန်၊ အတွဲ(၇)၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်(၂၀၀၅)။ရန်ကုန်။

၁၂. မြန်မာ့အနုသုခုမအဘိဓာန်၊ မေတ္တာမိုးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။ (၂၀၀၁)။ ရန်ကုန်။