

Approaching to the Typology of Ancient Wooden Monasteries in Late Konbaung Period

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Abstract

As Myanmar is a country which has been rich in culture since 100 CE (2000 years ago), the Myanmar architecture and arabesque also have been flourished since then. In accordance with the histories and researchers' chronicles, it is learned that the handiworks and arabesque of Pyu period were under the influence of India. And they have been more created own style of Myanmar in the Innwa period (from 14th century to 17th century CE) and the Konbaung period (from 18th century to 19th century CE). This dissertation briefly describes that monasteries can be classified the period according to their structures and handiworks, and the arabesque of decorations type in monasteries are different depending on the standard of donors and monks.

Keywords: architecture, arabesque, period, classification

Introduction

It is learned that the great architectural scholars in Myanmar built religious buildings such as monasteries and stairways taking advice of wise men and monks. Depending on the donors' ability to donate, monasteries are different as follows: (1) foundation, (2) size, (3) basic material and (4) decoration of bespangle. One can see wooden monasteries, bamboo monasteries and thatched monasteries in mural paintings. Although some are historic wooden monasteries, some parts, which can be seen nowadays, might be restored to former styles which were damaged as they were moved from place to place and rebuilt. During the time of the Buddha, there were great and grand monasteries such as Jetavana Monastery donated by Anāthapiṇḍika, a wealthy man and the Pubbārāma monastery donated by Visākhā and there is no doubt at all although they can be found only in the Buddhist literature. Seeing the brick stairs, which are still remaining, one can know that some disappeared wooden monasteries built and donated in the Konbaung period were really splendid. And this is aimed at those who adore the Myanmar architecture and traditional heritage in order to study about these and have records even when they are damaged.

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Monasteries were built of wood or brick. In the Bagan period, a monastery built of brick was called Kula Klon°(the Indian monastery). (Reff; Toe Hla, ပင်းယ-အင်းဝမြေမှ သမိုင်းဝင်စေတီပုထိုးများ, P.194). Among them some monasteries were damaged when the British ruled Myanmar and some were burnt. Religious building can be studied in two period-Bagan period and late Bagan period. The buildings in Bagan period were built as Pyu and Mon architecture and created to be better. When the late Bagan period, monasteries were decorated with wood carving and floral design. People had to ask the king for permission to build a monastery with floral design. According to the abbot's quality, the king gave permission with limited rules after being asked.

If the abbot is well-educated, full of great wisdom (Pariyatti and Patipatti), four stairs can be fixed in that monastery. If the abbot was an archbishop, the donor had a chance to build wall decorated with a role of upright leaves all around the monastery base. The archbishops were allowed to take palanquin, take a golden umbrella, use a white Parabaik (whiting tablet made of paper, cloths or metal in the form of accordion folds). And he also could accept Jīvita dāna (life charity). Provided that the abbot is the monk who has entered monkhood late in life, the donors were not allowed to build a great and grand monastery no matter how generous and rich they are. The donors had to donate only small Zaytawon Hsaung with one stair for such kind of monk. It was ruled like that in order not to vie with another Venerable monk. (Reff; Maung Maung Lat, U(Archaeology) စလေပန်းပုရှုစုံကျောင်း သမိုင်းစာတမ်း, P.3).

Furthermore, there were some rules for donors.

1. Unless one derives feudal lord,
2. Unless one is an officer (i.e. governor, mayor, etc.),
3. Unless one is a rich man recognized by the king, up to the abbot's personality it is not allowed to decorate with ornamentation with carved figurines and floral designs. Sometimes, when the princes became the king, they donate some monks the mansion they lived. Later people built and donated as this style. Such kind of monastery is called Ein-daw-pom Monastery. (i.e. Pinthar-minthar Monastery)The monastery which is rebuilt after demolishing the palace building is called Nan-kyaung or Shwe-nan-daw Kyaung (i.e. Shwe-nan-daw monastery). It can be roughly distinguished as follows.

The Introduction of Kyaung Hsaung (The hostel of a monastery)

Konbaung period monasteries which are complete feature have four kinds of building called Pyatthat Hsaung, Sanu Hsaung, Hsaung-ma-gyi and Bawga Hsaung. They are built in east-west line. Some monasteries with the complete feature have wells, pounds, pagodas, Sīmā (chapter house) and gardens.

Pyatthat Hsaung (Shrine room)

Pyatthat Hsaung is a building with five, seven or nine tiered roof. It has three stairs in the east, south and north. They are used for Venerable Sayādaws and the kings. The altar is placed in it.

Sanu Hsaung (Connecting with Pyatthat Hsaung and Hsaung-ma-gyi)

Sanu Hsaung is a hall which is between Pyatthat Hsaung and Hsaung-ma-gyi. It is the place where the abbot regales guest monks and novices.

Hsaung-ma-gyi (Main room)

Hsaung-ma-gyi is the main building of a monastery. If it is two storeys with a terraced roof, it is called Hta-wel Hsaung. If it is three or four storeys with a tiered roof, it is called Zaytawon Hsaung.

Bawga Hsaung (Store room)

Bawga Hsaung is a back building of a monastery. Mostly it is made of three rooms. The middle room is for novice to live in, one room is to store some dishes and one is to store some foods. (Reff; Myo Myint Sein, U and Others "ကုန်းဘောင်ခေတ်နှောင်းဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်းများ", P.287). Some monasteries have complete feature and some do not have. Nowadays the most complete monastery is Shwe-in-bin Monastery. (See Drawing (1))

Different Kinds of Floral Design

Architecture from the Bagan period to the Yadanabon period was gradually developed. Roof styles such as low or high, bend or straight and terraced roof styles are a little bit different. Rinceau progresses every century. Therefore in early Bagan period (11th century), middle Bagan period (12th century), late Bagan period (13th century), Pinya period (14th century), early Innwa period (15th century), late Innwa period (16th century), Nyaung-yan period (19th century), the styles of rinceau were gradually updated. (See Drawing (2)) (1) Early Bagan Period-The bubs of rinceau are round and coiled.(2) Middle Bagan Period-Having coil and roll in rinceau is less than the early Bagan Period.(3) Late Bagan Period-Floral designs are curlier than before and natural lotus bubs and lotus flower are mixed in rinceau.(4) First Innwa Period-Rinceau in the late Bagan period is developing by mixing with natural lotus bubs and lotus flowers.(5) Second Innwa Period (Early Nyaungyan Period)-Rinceau in the first Innwa period is chained a little by putting coil-prop and it looks in detailing.(6) Second Innwa Period (Late Nyaungyan Period)-Floral design in the late Nyaungyan period is not based on lotus bubs and lotus flowers and it is new style rinceau based on spring of screw-pine plower can be created. (7) Early Konbaung Period-The rinceau of

the early Konbaung period is not so different from the rinceau of the late Nyaungyan period. (8) Middle Konbaung Period (Amarapura)-In 1160 M.E, the style of rinceau was changed and made with limp, bundle and bub.(9) Late Konbaung Period (Yadanarbon)-The architects created rinceau to be natural making the leaf, bark, bub and spring only in the palace which had been moved from Amarapura to Yadanarbon (Mandalay).

Pyatthat Hsaung

There are four kinds of Pyatthat. They are:

1. Wooden Pyatthat,
2. Iron Pyatthat,
3. Brick Pyatthat, and
4. Bronze Pyatthat.

Pyatthats that were built during the period from Bagan to Konbaung are of four types – (1) Bagan Period Pyatthat, (2) First Innwa Period Pyatthat, (3) Hanthawady Period and Second Innwa Period Pyatthat, and (4) Konbaung Period Pyatthat. (See Drawing (3))

Sanu Hsaung

One can be roughly distinguished the period by seeing the ridge pole. Sanu Hsaung is of two kinds- Nay-kyaw and Nay-shauk. The system of Nay-kyaw or Nay-shauk can be easily known by seeing the ridge pole. The ridge pole which stretches from east to west is Nay-shauk and the ridge pole which stretches from north to south is Nay-kyaw. (Reff; Maung Yin Hlaing, *မြန်မာမှုအဆင်တန်ဆာများနှင့် ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးကျောင်းများ*, P.21). Before Yadanabon period, monasteries were built Nay-kyaw system (the ridge pole which stretches from north to south) and the monasteries in Yadanabon and late Konbaung period were usually built Nay-shauk system (the ridge pole which stretches from east to west). For example, one can study Bagaya monastery in Innwa and Shwe-nan-daw built by the Nay-kyaw system, Thingazar and Shwe-in-bin monasteries which were built by the Nay-shauk system. The Nay-kyaw system is used in Yadanabon period and the Nay-shauk system is used in Amarapura period. (U Maung Maung Thiri, **ICOMOS** (International Council on Monuments and Sites) **Myanmar** Lecture)

Handrail

It is learned that the handrail has to be made closing type provided that the donors are the king and queens of renown and the handrail is made of balustrades when the princes, princesses, king's councilors and ordinary people donate. As an example, it can be learned the handrail made closing type in Shwe-nan-daw Monastery donated by the king,(See Fig (1)) the handrail made of balustrade in Bagaya Monastery donated by the king's councilor and the

handrail made of balustrade in Shwe-in-bin Monastery donated by the wealthy man (who owns mill). (See Fig (2)) Balustrades in a monastery have to be made in shape and design up to the donor's right. Therefore one can generally know the position of the donors by seeing handrails and balustrades. Puchan (astragal or tours moulding) is used as hemming, the small and long ribbed- cylindrical. At the well of the throat, some handrails are highly decorated with relief, arabesque. It is supposed to be that donors are queen of renown.(Reff; Maung Maung Thiri(Myanmar Shae-yoe Pan-chi), *ဝိဟာရအမွေ*, P.50).

Gilding

By seeing gilding somethings, one can know the standard of the donor: The donors from the lower position donate thin gold foil and the donors from the higher position donate thick gold foil. (U Maung Maung Thiri, **ICOMOS** (International Council on Monuments and Sites) **Myanmar** Lecture)

Stairs

It is learned that the monasteries in late Konbaung period mostly have wooden stairs and brick stairs. In brick stairs, there are different styles: simple volute stairs, (See Fig (4)) volute stairs with floral design, stairs with mythical creatures such as Magan. (See Fig (5)) Wooden stairs which do not have many designs like brick stairs. Wooden stairs can be mostly seen in the monasteries donated by princes, princesses and inconspicuous queens, i.e Pyay-minthar Monastery, Kyaymyin-miphayar Monastery and Yamethin Monastery. (See Fig (6),(7),(8)). Therefore, it is supposed to fix that wooden stairs to the monastery were donated by the princes, princesses and inconspicuous queens and brick stairs to the monasteries were donated by king and queens of renown. It is found that monasteries face east and north. In fixing stairs, it is different monasteries facing east from facing north. The monastery facing east has to be fixed double stairs because people believe that the stairs giving back to the sun should not be fixed. (U Win Mg (Tanpavati) interview) Such kind of stairs can be seen in Kyaung-thit Monastery in Innwa (See Drawing (4)) and Ahtet-minbu-yokesone Monastery.

Conclusion

By studying monasteries in the late konbaung period, it is known that there are two types: the monastery with the complete feature and the monastery without complete feature. Some were without complete feature originally although some were complete with feature. They are being damaged now by various reasons as follows:

- (1) damaged by the fire
- (2) damaged by the bad weather

(3) damaged by the men or pets

(4) damaged by the demolishing and rebuilding. Therefore it is lack of feature when it is rebuilt.

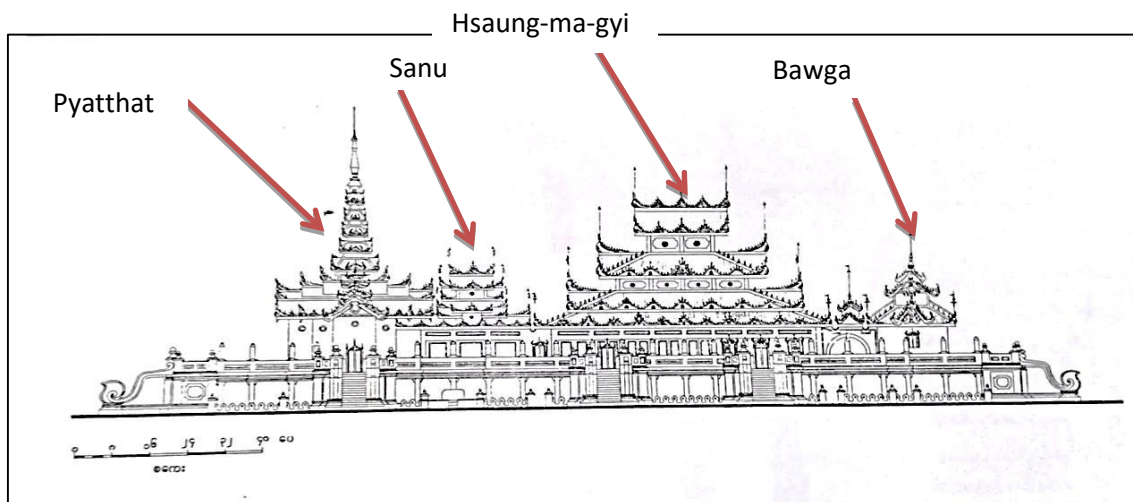
It is likely that the monasteries without complete feature could not be built with the full of feature because of prohibition by the king or lower positions even if the donors are sufficient for money. Monasteries can be different from the number of stairs because of restrictions, abbots' Pariyatti and Paṭipatti levels, different sizes and donors' insufficiency. It is supposed to be that the stairs are fixed not only for up and down but also for sturdiness of the whole building. The forms and shapes of monasteries can be generally learned in mural paintings and Parabaik painting.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express heart-felt thanks to Rector Dr. Tint Moe Thu Zar and Pro-Rectors Dr. U Khin Myoe, Dr. Daw Myint Myint Oo and Dr. Khin Maw Maw Soe, Yadanabon University for their interest and encouragement on the research work. Furthermore, I would like to give my special thanks to Dr. Than Aye, Professor and Head of Archaeology Department, Yadanabon University for her valuable suggestions which enable us to produce our research. Thanks are also given Dr. Khin Thida, Professor of Archaeology Department, Yadanabon University, for giving us precious advice.

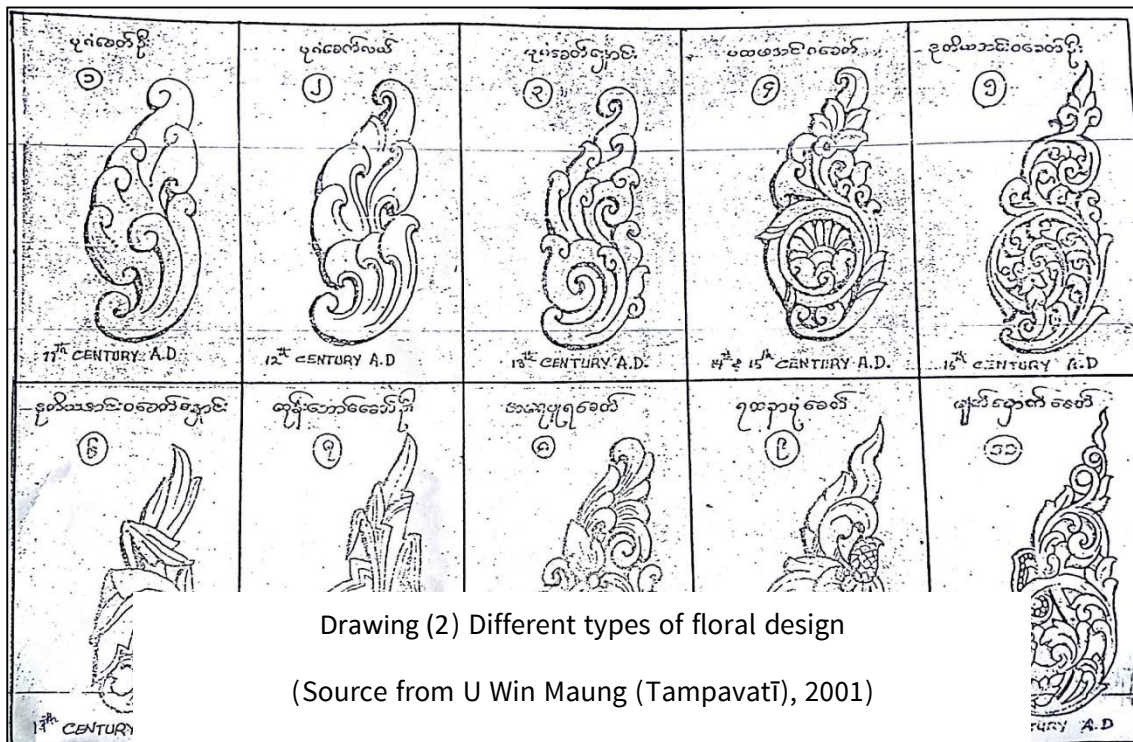
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Drawing (1) Cross section of Shwe-in-bin Monastery in Mandalay

(Adopted from U Myo Myint Sein and Friends, Monasteries during late Konbaung Period)



Drawing (2) Different types of floral design

(Source from U Win Maung (Tampavatī), 2001)



Fig (1) The balustrade of Shwenandaw Kyaung in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher



Fig (2) The balustrade of Shwe-in-bin Monastery in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher

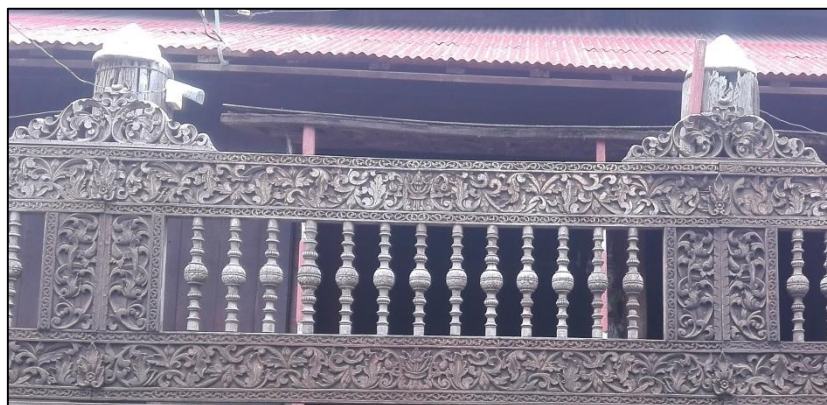


Fig (3) The balustrade of Bamaw Monastery in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher



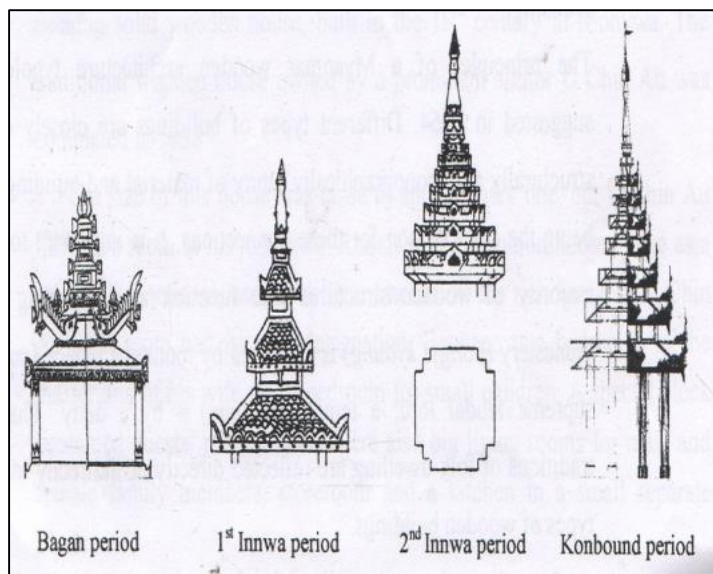
Fig (4) Volute Stair of Shwenandaw Kyaung in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher

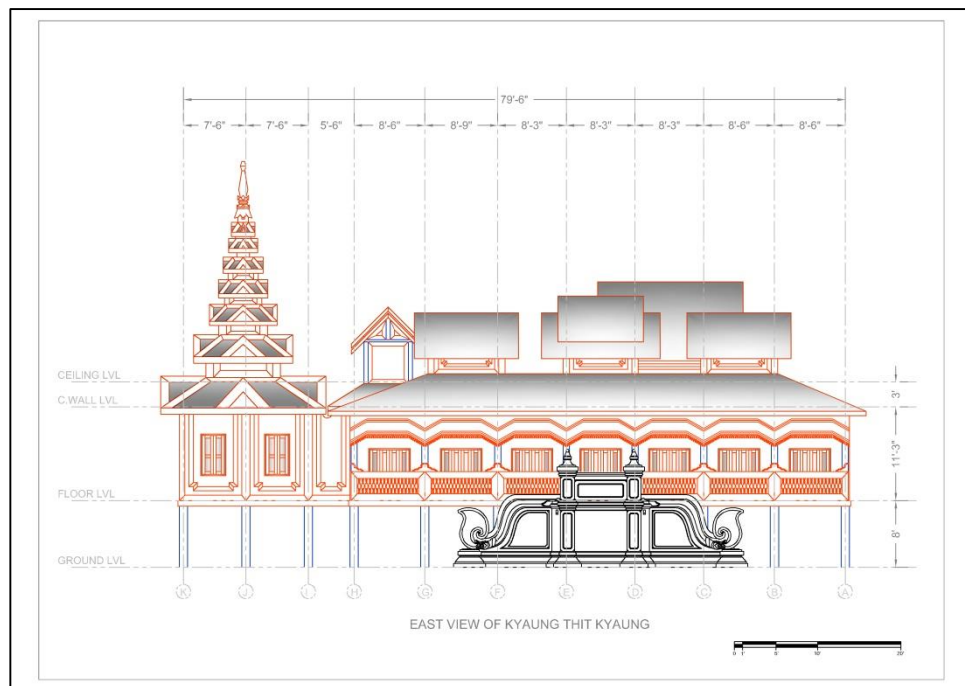


Fig (5) Volute Stair of Ariyawontha Monastery in Sagaing

Photo by Researcher



Drawing (3) Four types of Pyatthat from Bagan to Konbaung period
(Adopted from Min Min, Report on the preservation and Restoration of wooden structure in Myanmar)



Drawing (4) East view of Kyaung Thit Kyaung in Innwa
(Adopted from Ko Min Hein, Documentation Engineer)



Fig (6) Wooden Stair of Kyaymyin-miphayar Monastery in Mandalay
Photo by Researcher



Fig (7) Wooden Stair of Yamethin Monastery in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher



Fig (8) Wooden Stair of Pyay-minthar Monastery in Mandalay

Photo by Researcher