Kayin Traditional Houses in Myanmar

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Abstract—Housing is the main crucial shelters for humans: it gives them protection from awfully weather and wild animals. It is a place for rest, to do housework and to do livelihood activities. It is an important place for social cultural functions. Even though the basic functions are the same the role of the house ranges from the basic shelter to a luxurious building. The different styles of the houses it depending to the owner’s requirements. As their daily life, and function changes, so does the house style. In traditional houses different economies, living style, their income, believes and using indigenous material tends to be traditional. There are 7 stages and 7 regions in Myanmar. They have their own traditional houses according to their regional characters. It can be called vernacular architecture. Among them, Kayin has own disposition of traditional houses than other races. Kayin state is located in tropical climate. So, impact of their weather condition is the main issues of non-decorative element in Kayin houses. It is the fact that it requires to consider promoting traditional houses. According to the location, weather, their belief and culture, religion, income is different in Kayin traditional houses from other traditional houses in Myanmar. In this paper, some characteristic of Kayin traditional houses are discussed and some finding and suggestions are given.

Keywords—Traditional Houses, Cultural Factor, Religious Factors, Living Styles, Residential Building.

I. INTRODUCTION

Public and residential building of ancient time built by bamboo and timber, they can’t stand for long times because timber and bamboo have no resistance as good as modern materials. Residential building is basic and essential for people. They do their domestic work in their houses. They spend most of their times in their house so its need to comfortable and compatible for the owner’s requirements. Therefore every ethnic group in Myanmar built traditional houses depending on their geographical location and climatic condition. Likewise, Kayin traditional houses built their houses according to their cultural, traditional, geographic location and climatic condition. Nowadays, Kayin traditional houses in Kayin state have become deteriorated due to natural disasters age and wear as well as tears of the yearly weather condition. It is therefore, necessary that these traditional houses be renovated and maintained without affecting with its original styles.

The significant Architectural building should be made more exposed so as to attract tourists, making Kayin state one of the tourist spot of Myanmar. Travel and Tourism has played important roles in global economic sector. Foreign income has been gained yearly through this sector. Maintain tradition, cultural, heritages and by uplifting patriotism as well as by creating tourist attracting place national economic sector will boom and bring about large national incomes. This paper will show ways and means to implement this issue.

II. BACKGROUND HISTORY OF KAYIN

The origin of Kayin people was originated to the Western part of China. The region was mountainous and located in the middle of Asia. Kayin legend refers to ‘a river of running sand ‘to which their ancestors reputedly crossed. The river was called in Kayin ‘Hi She Meh Ywa’. Kayin people were progressively transcended from Mongo Plateau to southward bound for many years. They stayed in Tibet for a long period and then, they outright left the area in BC- 1388. They started to settle at Sichuan in BC-1385. The Chinese king Ghaw Hsín BC(1134-1122) oppressed the citizens cruelly. Therefore, Kayin race were moved out to other regions. Kayin people were arranged in three groups and then shifted from Tibet to Myanmar in three routes. First route was from Thailand to Cambodia and then moved into gulf of Myanmar. Second route was from Yunnan to Yellow River and then moved into Ayeyarwaddy delta. Third route was from Thanlwin River to Mawlamyine then moved to Hpa-an. So, Kayin arrived in Myanmar since BC(1125).

A. Kayin Habitant and Lifestyles

Kayin people are a group of Indochinese tribes living principally in Eastern and Southern parts of Myanmar. The whole group of kayin tribes can be divided into three main sets, according to their dialects difference. These are the Sagaw, Pow and Bwe tribes. The Sagaw group is the largest and most widely scattered. They are found all through the Ayeyarwaddy delta, from the vicinity of Pyay Southward and from the Arrakan coast Eastward and along the Thanlwin river. The second largest group is Pow tribes. They are found along the seacoast from Arrakan and are also found in the inland of Myanmar.
Bwe is the third largest group and they are found in the vicinity of Eastern Taungoo, and also they moved to the Eastern region, closer to the border of Kayah region.
B. Kayin State

Kayin state is an elongated area lying to the South-East and running from the North-West of Myanmar. It lies between 10 and 21 degrees of North Latitude nd between the 94 and 100 degrees of East longitude. It shares the border with Shan and Kayah States on the North, Bago Region and Mon State on the West, Thininthayi Region on the South and Thailand on East. It has the total area of 11,731 square miles. It has a population of over 1.4 millions.

C. Religious Life

The Kayin people believed in Animism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Kayin people originally worshipped Animism. Buddhism started in 17 century. Christianity was introduced to Kayin during the early 18 century.

D. Domestic Life

Kayin people are earning on Agricultural and Irrigation, Animal Farming, Plantation (e.g. Rubber & coffee, Hill rice, etc). Hunting and Fishing as well as Spinning, Dyeing, Weaving of Bamboo mat & basket.

E. Social Life

Kayin people has friendly minded, simple and want to live peacefully and easy to connected.

1) Marriages: They have two type of wedding ceremony. Wedding ceremony for one day and two days. They would not marry up with their cousin. The pandle is put up in the bride ‘s house for the ceremony. Then the couple will move to Bridegroom’s house together with gift of bride parents. After that the bridegroom parents will build a house for the new ware couple.

2) Child Birth: The tradition of Kayin people child birth is such as– before childbirth a room (60sq-ft) is provided on the ground floor of the house and it is covered as a lean to roof. That little room is close to kitchen area. A single bed is provided inside the room for child birth. After, the child is born that small room will be dismantled.

3) Funeral: For the funeral ceremony of Kayin people, a pandle constructed in front of their houses. A dead body will be placed in living from 3to 7 days. There will be a procession when the body is taken to the ceremony together with the traditional music band.

III. SIGNIFICANT FACTORS ON KAYIN HOUSES

A. Cultural Factors

General cultural factors influencing the kayin traditional houses are- livind area is used for the guests entertaining during daytime and for sleeping at night times. The level of main house and veranda is changed to divide the private space and public space. There is specified space for daughter kayin house. There is no specified space for son in Kayin traditional house. Main stair does not place in the West orientation.
B. Religious Factors

In Kayin traditional house, they place shrine in West orientation. All Kayin houses placed shrine attached with living room. Kayin people who are Buddhist made high shelf in the house pole shrine and pay obeisance. And for the Christians they will use shrine room as an alter area and for worshipping. For the Kayin people who believe in Animism, they make shelf for opulent in shrine room. Some opulent ceremonies will be performed in the open area most likely at foothill of mountains.

IV. Kayin Traditional Houses

The main characters of Kayin traditional houses are with bamboo and timber structure is raised on slit pasts, with easily removable ladder and with pitch roofing. The most significance feature of Kayin’s house is the roof made of bamboo tiles concave plates interlocking to convex plates. The bamboo selected for the posts are twenty or more feet long and usually from four to six inches in diameter. They are set in the ground at intervals of four or five cubits (six to seven and a half feet). Holes are chopped through these large upright at a height of from six to eight feet above the ground and pins are thrust through on which bamboo girders of the same size are fastened by means of withes. The floor is made of large bamboos, split, flattened out and secured to the joists by means of withes of the same material. It is six or eight feet above the ground, springy, and seamed with cracks, through which rubbish and wash water may be disposed of. These traditional houses were constructed by the old Kayin carpenters.

A. Architectural Study on Kayin Traditional Houses

On studying three main tribes of Kayin traditional houses, these can be divided into two periods. The first period was houses which were built in BC.1125-1911AD. These houses can be called ancient Kayin traditional houses. The next period is houses which was construction in AD.1911-20th century. These houses are different according to owner economic income. In these houses, Type-(i) is high income houses the occupant who earning on rubber and coffee plantation, etc. Type-(ii) is middle income houses the occupant who earning on cultivation, farming and hunting. Type-(iii) is low income houses the occupant who earning on weaving, Spinning ,Dyeing and Mating bamboo basket as well as mat, plantation of hill rices.

![Fig. 7 Existing area of Kayin state](image)

B. Study on Sagaw Kayin House

![Fig. 8 Plan of ancient Sagaw Kayin house](image)
Fig. 9 Front view of ancient Sagaw Kayin house

Fig. 10 Side view of ancient Sagaw Kayin house

Fig. 11 Plan of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (i)

Fig. 12 North East view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (i)

Fig. 13 West view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (i)

Fig. 14 Plan of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (ii)
B. Study on Pow Kayin House

Fig. 15 North East view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (ii)

Fig. 16 East view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (ii)

Fig. 17 Plan of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (iii)

Fig. 18 North West view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (iii)

Fig. 19 North view of Sagaw Kayin house-Type (iii)

Fig. 20 Plan of ancient Pow Kayin house

Fig. 21 Front View of ancient Pow Kayin house

Fig. 22 Side View of ancient Pow Kayin house
C. Study on Bwe Kayin Houses

Fig. 32 Plan of ancient Bwe Kayin house

Fig. 33 North East View of ancient Bwe Kayin house

Fig. 34 North view of ancient Bwe Kayin house

Fig. 35 Plan of Bwe Kayin house Type (i)

Fig. 36 South East view of Bwe Kayin house Type (i)

Fig. 37 South view of Bwe Kayin house Type (i)

Fig. 38 Plan of Bwe Kayin house Type (ii)
Fig. 39 North West view of Bwe Kayin house Type (ii)

Fig. 40 North view of Bwe Kayin house Type (ii)

Fig. 41 East view of Bwe Kayin house Type (ii)

Fig. 42 Plan of Bwe Kayin house Type (iii)

Fig. 30 View of Bwe Kayin house Type (iii)

Fig. 43 South West view of Bwe Kayin house Type (iii)
V. Significant Features of Karin Traditional Houses

All type of Saga Karin houses plan are composed with mix of rectangular and square form. The most significance fact of Saga houses is – they place their ladder at East and West orientation only. Their houses always include veranda (or) Foyer area. Shelf for placing utensil consists in Kitchen, it placing half portion on outside, like cantilever.

All type of Paw Karin houses plan are composed with unsymmetrical form. The most significance fact of Paw houses is – they always place decking area in their house.

All type of Be Karin houses plan are composed with informal balance form. The most significance fact of Be houses is – they always places main ladder in centre of their houses.

On analysing of three main tribes of Kayin, their houses are less in windows. They mainly use bamboo and timber in their construction. As well as they decorative with bamboo tiles / thatch in roofing. Roofing is all base on pitch from.

There are no decorative elements such as sculpture or arabesques at their houses. Common decorative elements were found in door leaves, veranda handrail and window leaves. Their houses haven’t got colour painting. The exterior walling of their houses is used rough texture. They provided smoothly surface texture in the interior of their houses. The above reasons are the same in all three main tribes of Kayin traditional houses.

VI. Finding

There are no adequate windows and door ways. So adequate windows and doors should be provided in these houses for natural lighting and ventilation. As well as no sun protection materials. So, sun shades and ceiling should be support to protect sunlight. Handrail should be provided to all stair and veranda because children as well as old people can easily slip and fall down.

VII. Conclusions

Kayin national are ancient natives living in Myanmar and they have their own culture. Their traditional house had been built from pre-colonial period until now. Nowadays there are a few traditional houses in Karen village are left because of the fact that Kayin national develop their living standard with current situation. However, traditional houses are built with bamboo and timber so that can easily be destroyed by nature. Kayin traditional houses should be conserved without running in the future years. Thus Kayin traditional house which are noble things for Kayin national so it study in record in this paper. By studying Kayin traditional houses, their culture, their living style and standard are also observed. In studying of Kayin traditional houses in Kayin state, the common factors are identified. It is envisaged that that attempt to carry out a good record of Kayin traditional character up to this present time is the sole object of this research.

REFERENCES


Note. All Photos are taken By Naw Virginia in research area.