Late Kong Baung Era Wooden Buddhist Monasteries in Mandalay City

May Zin Phyo¹, U Hlaing², Daw Pwint³

¹M-arch Student, ²Professor, ³Associate Professor, ¹, ², ³Department of Architecture, Yangon Technological University
Yangon Myanmar

Abstract—The historical artifacts are the nation’s historical heritage that are historical palaces, moats, ornaments, statues, religious statues, religious buildings, bridges, pagodas, stupas, temples and monasteries etc. Historical artifacts and heritage buildings are essential of the nation. As Mandalay was the latest palace of Myanmar kingdom in upper Myanmar, there are many historical places and historical heritage buildings. So, Buddhist monasteries from Kong Baung Era are also architectural heritage buildings of Myanmar history. These monasteries should be measured and conserved. In Kong Baung Era, there are three types of monasteries; wooden monasteries, brick monasteries and combination of wooden and brick monasteries. The wooden monasteries are expressing the traditional monastic style. The spatial compositions of wooden monasteries located in Mandalay City are studied. These monasteries are Pyay-Kyaung, Bann-Maw-Kyaung, Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung, Thin-Gar-Kyaung, Moe-Kaung-Kyaung, Ya-Mae-Thin-Kyaung, Kyay-Myin-Kyaung, Min-Htin-Kyaung, Pin-Thar-Kyaung, Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung, Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung and Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung. It is noticed that wooden monasteries are formed three types; type I, type II and type III by analyzing their plan shapes. The wooden monasteries were initially built in the form of type I and then developed to type II and finally to the type III. By studying and comparing the spatial composition of the Kong Baung era Buddhist monasteries, there can support in the case of conserving historic architectural heritage buildings. Once this heritage is gone, an important part of our life, history and heritage will be lost forever.

Keywords — Historical artifacts, Wooden monasteries, Spatial composition, Heritage, Kong Baung Era.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every nation has its own art and architecture. And it is required in-depth study of them. One cannot imagine the outcome of the society without religion.

In Myanmar, Buddhism is the major religion. So, Buddhist monasteries play a significant role in the history of art and architecture of Myanmar. Buddhist monasteries from Kong Baung era should be measured and conserved. Every nation has its own art and architecture. And it is required in-depth study of them. So, Buddhist monasteries play a significant role in the history of art and architecture of Myanmar. Buddhist monasteries from Kong Baung era should be measured and conserved.

Background history of Mandalay

After confiscated the King “Pagan Minn”, the King “Min-tone” wanted to find a royal capital at Mandalay. So, he decided to build his royal capital city of Mandalay in 1221. The establishment was completed at 1223, and it took for one and a half year. The King “Min-tone” propagated the Buddhist religion. He built and donated many pagodas, monasteries and other religious buildings. In 1878, October 1st, the King “Min-tone” was passed away and in that year, October 2nd, his son, the King “The-baw” ascended the throne. The King “The-baw’s” reigned, the administration was improved but the communication with British was not aligned. So, Myanmar throne was confiscated by the British in 1885, November 29th. During World War II, most of wooden monasteries and religious buildings were burnt and destroyed.

Location- The borders of Mandalay City are; “Dote Hta Wary” river on the north and “Mattayar” river on the south “Nat Htae Taung” on the east and “Ayeyarwaddy” river on the west.

(Source: Tin Naing Toe, History of Mandalay, 2009)
II. EVOLUTION OF WOODEN MONASTERIES

The remains of masonry monasteries and its monastic traditions of the Pyu and Pagan periods in Myanmar served as the primary prototypes for the development of wooden monasteries. Wooden monasteries were called Hpon-Kyi-Kyaung and large teak edifices crowned by tiered roofing systems and constructed on wooden platforms, supported by piles, that were prevalent throughout Myanmar during the 18th and 19th centuries. Because of a Buddhist monastery’s varied functions and its special use of sacred space, certain key elements were undoubtedly modified from Indian and other traditions, but in form, basic layout, method of construction and the associated founding and dedicatory in ancient South-East Asian house-building practices and beliefs.

III. EVOLUTION OF WOODEN MONASTERIES

There were four main apartment divisions in a traditional wooden monastery consisting of a principal shrine room (Hpaya-hsaung or Pyat-that-hsaung), an adjoining intermediate area (Sanu-hsaung), which may serve as a room for the abbot or as passageway between the shrine and the cavernous main room (Hsaung-ma-gyi), and a smaller apartment at the western end which usually served as a storeroom (Baw-ga-hsaung). The edifice was usually surrounded by a wide veranda or zin-gyan where monks could take their daily exercise. To emphasize the hollowed nature of the building, each apartment was marked externally a set of distinctive multistoried roofs. Like most wooden buildings in Myanmar monasteries were only one storey high.

A. Pya-that-hsaung - usually located in the east, the most auspicious direction was the principle shrine room of a square shape, which housed the main Buddha image(s) and served as a private chapel for the residents. Indicative of its special nature, the flooring was usually laid at a higher level than that of the rest of the building. It was entered by small flights of steps usually three on one or more sides. According to be crowned by a towering multi-tiered spire Pya-that, it was referred to as a pya-that-hsaung than an hpaya-hsaung.

B. Sanu-hsaung - Next to the shrine room (Hpaya-hsaung/Pyat-that-hsaung) was an intermediate area, a passageway, or a room called Sanu-hsaung which often also served as the living quarters of the presiding monk or abbot (Hsaya-daw). If there was no separate library (Pitaka-taik), this room was sometimes used for storing manuscript chyests (sardaik) filled with palm-leaf books and folding Para-pite books inscribed with the Pali scriptures.

C. Hsaung-ma-gyi - The Sanu-hsaung traditionally opened into a large central room, the reception hall or Hsaung-ma-gyi where the monks slept, novices were taught, and visitors were received. Traditionally this room has two distinct areas sometimes separated by a wall partition Mara-bin the upper part of which was usually of an open lattice-work to allow for greater air ventilation. Most important was the eastern part where members of the public could make their obeisance and meet with the abbot and senior monks when they came to make merit. The western part of the reception hall served as a schoolroom and dormitory for junior monks and novices. Mats, bed rolls, sleeping pallets, and students’ supplies such as slates, dusters, and copy-books were stowed unobtrusively in the corners or under cabinets.
D. Baw-ga-hsaung - Behind the reception hall was the westernmost apartment, the storeroom, where crockery, monk’s bowls (tha-beik), food carriers (hsun-op), small low tables (daung-lan), and other domestic objects and utensils used by monks in their everyday life were kept. In some monasteries where space was at a premium, the area originally designed as a storeroom (baw-ga-hsaung) might be converted into a dormitory for novices and visiting monks. (Source: Zaya Thin Ka Yar, Shwe-Bon-Ne-Dann, 2009)

IV. STUDY ON THE SELECTED MONASTERIES
There are four types of wooden monasteries in Mandalay City based on their plan shapes. They are---
1) Type I
2) Type II
3) Type III and
4) Other type
The characters of type I monasteries are ---
• All rooms are in the rectangular shape of the monastery.
• The plan composed of Shrine room, Hsaya-daw’s room, dormitory and school room.
• Only one or two stairs.
• There are various types of traditional roofs were used.

*Kyay-Myin-Kyaung* monastery (1875)

---

*Pyay-Kyaung* monastery (1839)

---
Fig. 8 Interior view of the Pyay-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 9 Type of roof forms in Pyay-Kyaung monastery

*Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung* monastery (1879)

Fig. 10 Plan of the Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 11 Exterior view of the Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 12 Interior view of the Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 13 Type of roof forms in Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung monastery
Of these three monasteries, Thar-Ka-Won Monastery was different from. It was donated by Kin-Won-Min-Gyi-U-Kaung in 1879 after he had returned from Landon. So, its form and planning was differed from the other monasteries of that time.

The characters of type II monasteries are:
- All rooms are positioned in the east-west axis of the monastery.
- The plan composed of three rooms: Pya-that-hsaung, Sanu-hsaung and Hsaung-ma-gyi.
- Four or more stairs.
- The roof types used in this type of monasteries are seven tiered Pya-tha roof, Sanu-yon-khaung roof and three tiered Zay-ta-won roof.

Ban-Maw-Kyaung monastery (1857)

The characters of type III monasteries are:
- All rooms are positioned in the east-west axis of the monastery.
- The plan composed of four rooms: Pya-that-hsaung, Sanu-hsaung, Hsaung-ma-gyi and Baw-ga-hsaung.
- Four or more stairs.
- The roof types used in this type of monasteries are seven tiered Pya-tha roof, Sanu-yon-khaung roof and three tiered Zay-ta-won roof and single tiered Hta-we-hsaung roof.

Min-Htin-Kyaung monastery (1876)
Fig. 20 Interior view of the Min-Htin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 21 Type of roof forms in Min-Htin-Kyaung monastery

Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung monastery (1895)

Fig. 22 Plan of the Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 23 Exterior view of the Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 24 Interior view of the Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 25 Type of roof forms in Min-Htin-Kyaung monastery

Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung monastery (1860)

Fig. 26 Plan of the Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung monastery
Fig. 27 Exterior view of the Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 28 Interior view of the Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 29 Type of roof forms in Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung monastery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rooms of the monastery</th>
<th>Roof forms</th>
<th>Sample of Roof forms</th>
<th>Photos of the roofs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pya-Thar-Maung</td>
<td>Seven-tiered Pya-Thar roof</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sonu-Maung</td>
<td>Sonu-Maung roof</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maung-Maung</td>
<td>Triple-tiered Maung-Maung roof</td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daw-Si-Maung</td>
<td>A single-tiered Daw-Si-Maung roof</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 30 Plan of the Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 31 Exterior view of the Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 32 Interior view of the Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery

Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery (1861)
Fig. 33 Type of roof forms in Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery

Of these four monasteries, Min-Htin-Kyaung monastery left only one room called Hsaung-Ma-Gyi and Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung monastery included left and right apartments.

The characters of other type monasteries are similar to type I monasteries. But they were built as Nan-hsaung, firstly. When the royal capital was moved to Mandalay, the royal family donated their rooms as Buddhist monasteries to monks.

Moe-Kaung-Kyaung monastery (1871)

Fig. 34 Plan of the Moe-Kaung-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 35 Exterior view of the Moe-Kaung-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 36 Interior view of the Moe-Kaung-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 37 Type of roof forms in Moe-Kaung-Kyaung monastery

Pin-Thar-Kyaung monastery (1878)

Fig. 38 Plan of the Pin-Thar-Kyaung monastery
Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung  monastery (1878)

Fig. 39 Exterior view of the Pin-Thar-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 40 Interior view of the Pin-Thar-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 41 Type of roof forms in Pin-Thar-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 42 Plan of the Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 43 Exterior view of the Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 44 Interior view of the Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung monastery

Fig. 45 Type of roof forms in Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung monastery
Ya-Mae-Thin-Kyaung monastery (1871)

V. FINDINGS

It can be said that the plan shapes are changed period by period. So, the wooden monasteries were initially built in the form of type I and then developed to type II and finally to the type III.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

There are generally classified into three types of wooden monasteries:

- Traditional monastery type
- Nan-Hsaung style type and
- Foreign style type.

In traditional monastery type, there are 6 numbers of wooden monasteries; Pyay-Kyaung, Ban-Maw-Kyaung, Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung, Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung, Min-Htin-Kyaung and Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung. In this type, Ban-Maw-Kyaung, Shwe-Kyin-Kyaung, Thin-Ga-Zar-Kyaung and Shwe-In-Pin-Kyaung have similar plan shapes, spatial composition and roof forms. Pyay-Kyaung has a little different plan shape, spatial composition and roof form. In Nan-Hsaung style type, there are five numbers of wooden monasteries; Moe-Kaung-Kyaung, Ya-Mae-Thin-Kyaung, Kyay-Myin-Kyaung, Pin-Thar-Kyaung and Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung. They were built as Nan-hsaung, firstly. When the royal capital was moved to Mandalay, the royal family donated their rooms as Buddhist monasteries to monks.

In this type, Moe-Kaung-Kyaung, Ya-Mae-Thin-Kyaung and Kyay-Myin Kyaung are similar plan shapes, spatial composition and roof forms. Pin-Thar-Kyaung and Shwe-Nan-Taw-Kyaung are quite different from the others and they do not similar each other. In foreign style type, there are only one number of wooden monastery; Thar-Ka-Won-Kyaung. Thar-Ka-Won is different from other types of wooden monasteries; has different plan shape, spatial composition and roof forms. It is exactly influenced by foreign style.

REFERENCES

[4] Zaya Thin Ka Yar, Shwe-Bon-Ne-Dann, 2009