

Study on Architectural Composition of Monastic Compounds in Mandalay

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Abstract: *Monasteries are significant buildings not only for history but also for Myanmar architecture. A lot of the monastic compounds were constructed in Mandalay since it was the royal city. The purpose of this paper is to study and record the architectural composition of Mandalay monastic compounds. Firstly, Mandalay's background study is done. And then, the distribution of monastic compounds is surveyed and the layout of the monastic compounds is studied. This paper, emphasis on the layout of monasteries in a monastic compound. Generally, centralized and random composition are found in Mandalay Monastic compounds. The main monastery center and free space center compositions are the systematic building layout planning. It was usually used since the kings' reign and is also a traditional composition system. Most of the random organizations that are transferred from the centralized compositions were destroyed for some reason. Moreover, the new monastic compounds are increasingly found out to be built in the unsystematic building layout. Therefore, this study displays that we need to conserve our traditional composition system of the monastic compound in Mandalay.*

Key Words: *Architectural Composition, Distribution of Monastic compounds, Layout of Monasteries, Mandalay.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The monastery is a sacred religious structure of Myanmar people. Mandalay is the last imperial capital of Myanmar. Buddhism widely flourishes around the city. It was the cultural and Buddhist education center of the whole of Myanmar. Mandalay is the best area for studying Monastic architecture. According to the lists of monasteries in 2016 from the Mandalay Religious Affairs Department, there are 334 nos. monastic compound in Mandalay four townships. Among them, the paper studies 70 nos. of monastic compounds in Mandalay in which over 55 years old monasteries have existed. Mandalay is the cultural and Buddhist teaching center of the entire of Myanmar. Consequently, the spreading and architectural composition of monastic compounds is one of the interesting features of Myanmar's religious architecture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

A. Terms and Definition

1) *Monastery:* A Buddhist monastery is a building or collection of buildings in which monks and novices reside. A Buddhist monastery is a place, where the three phases of Buddhism are followed and practiced. (7)

2) *Monastic Compound:* A monastic compound generally consists of monasteries, Pagoda, ordination halls, libraries, rest houses, well, tanks, toilets, and pleasant park. The monastic compound was usually enclosed brick wall with one or more gateways. (2)

B. Background Study of Mandalay

Mandalay city is situated in the Mandalay region, central Myanmar. It stands on the east bank of Ayeyarwaddy river. Mandalay lies between latitude 21° 51'47" N and 22° 01'27" N and between longitude 96° 03'17"E and 96° 08'47"E. (9)

On 13 February 1857, King Mindon founded a new royal capital at the foot of Mandalay hill. (9) Mandalay is the last royal capital of Myanmar. King Mindon was well noted for his achievements for the prosperity of Buddhism in Myanmar. Mandalay was divided into two sections as Inner city and Outer city. The inner city is the present 'Palace City' surrounded by brick walls which had a pattern of a four-concerned proportionate square. There were altogether 54 wards or quarters which surrounded the palace on the four sides of it. (3)

When King Mindon passed away, his son King Thibaw ascended the throne in 1878. Mandalay was besieged and annexed by the British on 28th November 1885. Mandalay where Buddha Sasana flourished since the reign of Myanmar Kings, continued to see the prospering of the Buddha Saasna due to the promotion of the donors also in colonial rule. Throughout the colonial years, Mandalay was the center of Burmese culture and Buddhist learning. The city was bombed heavily during the Second World War. After the country gained independence from Britain in 1948, Mandalay continued to be the main cultural, educational and economic hub of Upper Myanmar. Although the

administration systems changed in Myanmar and also in Mandalay city, it is the most prosperous Buddhism until now.
 (4)

3. DISTRIBUTION OF MONASTIC COMPOUNDS:

Most of the monastic compounds are clustered organization in Mandalay. The monastic compounds are found around the palace in the four directions and especially around religious monuments such as pagodas and also near to the canals and the river, as shown in Fig. 3.1.

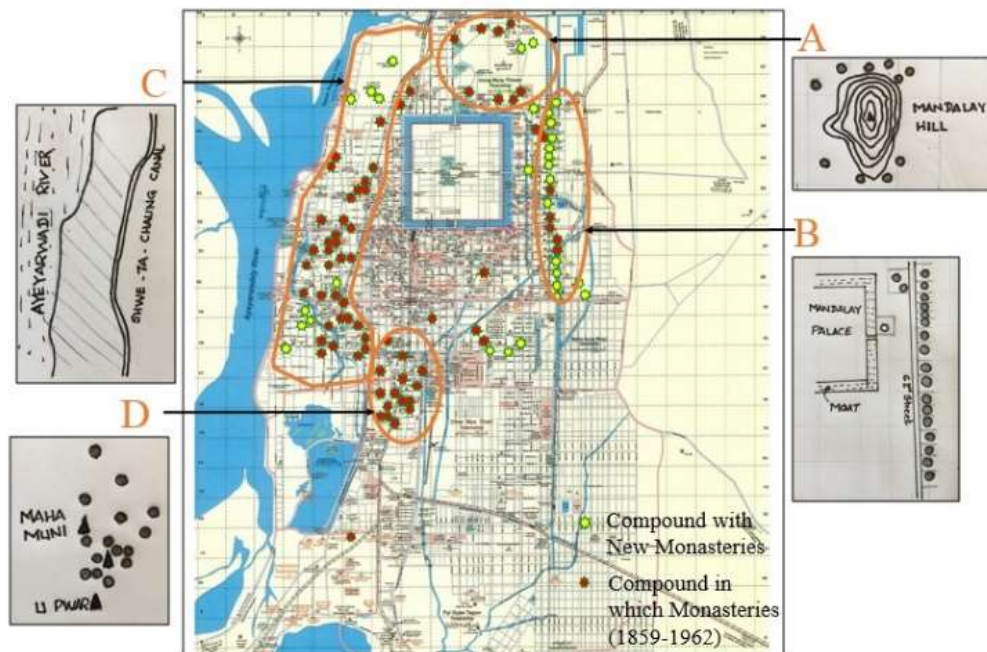


Fig. 3.1 Distribution of monasteries in Mandalay

A. Northern Part of the City

In the northern part of the city, monastic compounds are mostly situated around Mandalay hill. Among them, Shwe Kyin monastic compound offered by King Mindon is significant. We can see this monastery, nowadays.

B. Eastern Part of the City

King Mindon planed the blocks for the monastic compounds at the east of the royal city systematically. It can be seen as a series of monastic compounds along the Yadanar Nadi canal in the eastern part of the city. In these monastic compounds, the monasteries were offered by kings, queens, children, and relatives. A series of fires between 1885 and 1892 destroyed many of the monasteries in the eastern quarter. (5) A lot of monasteries in the Yadanarbon period were destroyed. Famous Shwe Nandaw monastery which was donated by King Thi Baw, fortunately, remains until now. Kyay Myin Monastery, Moe Kaung, and Yamae Thin Monastery which were offered by the Queens can be found nowadays.

C. Western Part of the City

A lot of monastic compounds are found between the Ayeyarwaddy river and the Shwe Ta Chaung canal. In this section, the donors of the monasteries were the royal servants, rich people and other people in the Yadanarbon period. After that period, the merchants donated the monastic compounds in this area. Many merchants from other regions especially the lower Myanmar came to Mandalay for their business and they stay in the monasteries near the Ayeyarwaddy River. Therefore the monasteries' names of this area can find the name of cities in lower Myanmar such as Mawlamyain Kyaung, War Khel Ma Kyaung, Phyar Pon Kaung, etc.

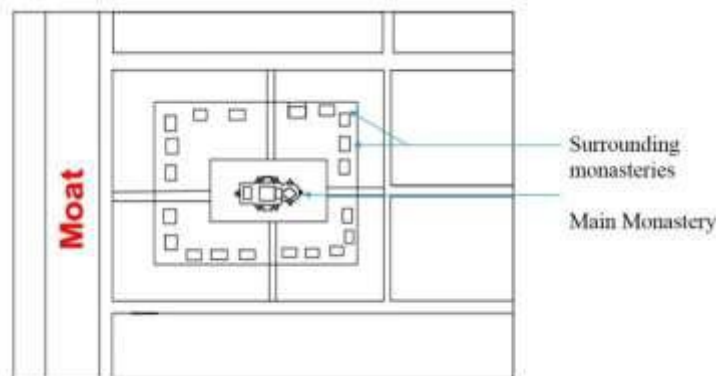
D. Southern Part of the City

Most of the monastic compounds locate near Maha Myat Muni Pagoda and they were founded since the Amarapura period.

At that time, waterway transportation was very important. So, the monasteries may be found very near to the canals and the river. Many merchants from other regions especially the lower Myanmar came to Mandalay for their business and they stay in the monasteries near the ports. The King also constructed the monastic compounds around the royal city as a barrier wall.

4. ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION OF MONASTIC COMPOUNDS:

Mandalay is the Buddhist learning center of Myanmar. Therefore, most of the monastic compounds serve as the school, institution, college or university for the teaching of Buddhist literature religious institutions. Centralization is a commonly used composition system of Myanmar people. The palace is placed at the center in Mandalay city, it shows the ideal of emphasizing center. The royal family built many monastic compounds around the palace. The Mandalay royal monastic compounds are grand. They contain not only a central royal monastery but also another eight to twenty smaller surrounding monasteries. (6) The king Mindom donated the 'Taiktaw' monastic compound for his teacher at the eastern part of the palace city. The main monastery centered composition is used in this compound as shown in Figure (4.1). The chief monk resides in the main monastery in which religious activities are celebrated. Therefore, it is the most significant building of the compound. A centralized organization in the main monastery is mainly used in the composition of monastic compounds in Mandalay.



Fig(4.1) Taiktaw Monastery surrounded by twenty smaller monasteries (source: 6)

Generally, the composition of monastic compounds in Mandalay can be found as the following.

1. Case I - Main monastery centre Composition
2. Case II - Free space centre Composition
3. Case III - Random layout Composition

4.1 Case I - Main monastery center composition

In this composition, the main monastery is located at the center and it is surrounded by the surrounding monasteries and other buildings. The composition shows the significance of the main monastery. This type of composition is an obvious system in the history of architecture. Almost all the monastic compounds in Mandalay are composed in the days of the kings by this system. The layout of the Ma-Soe-Yein monastic compound is systematic because the whole compound is donated by only one donor, the merchant U Thet Shae, and his son. They firstly constructed the main monastery at the center. And then, they built surrounding monasteries one after another. The chief monks of the monastic compound preserved that system until now.

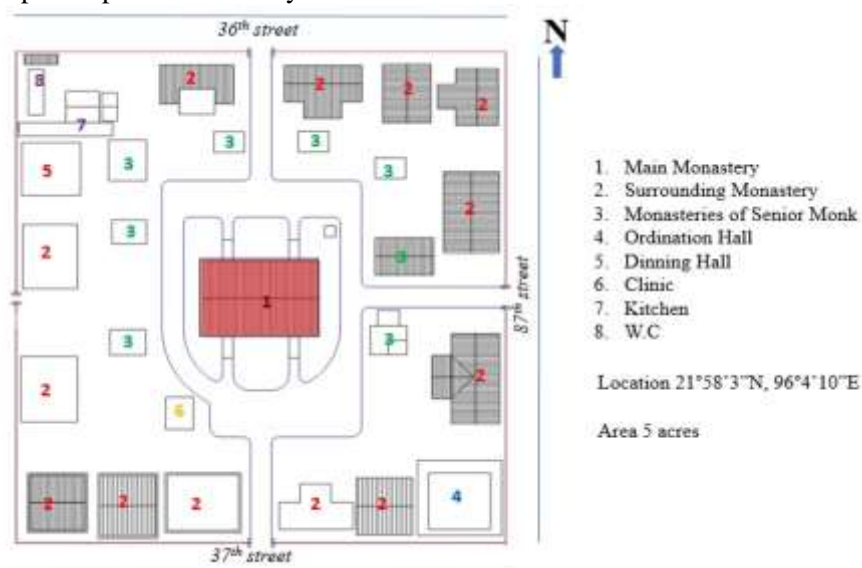


Fig 4.2 Layout Plan of Ma-Soe-Yein Monastic Compound

4.2 Case II - Free space center composition

The monasteries situated around the central free space. The main monastery is center-off. In this composition, the main monastery is not emphasized by its location. The central free space is intended to use in public religious activities such as the initiation of a novice (Shin-Byu), the ordination ceremony, merit feast (Hsun-Kyae) and so on. The temporary pavilion was constructed for reception audiences of the ceremonies in the central vacant space as shown in Figure (4.3). It is also a traditional custom of Mandalay.

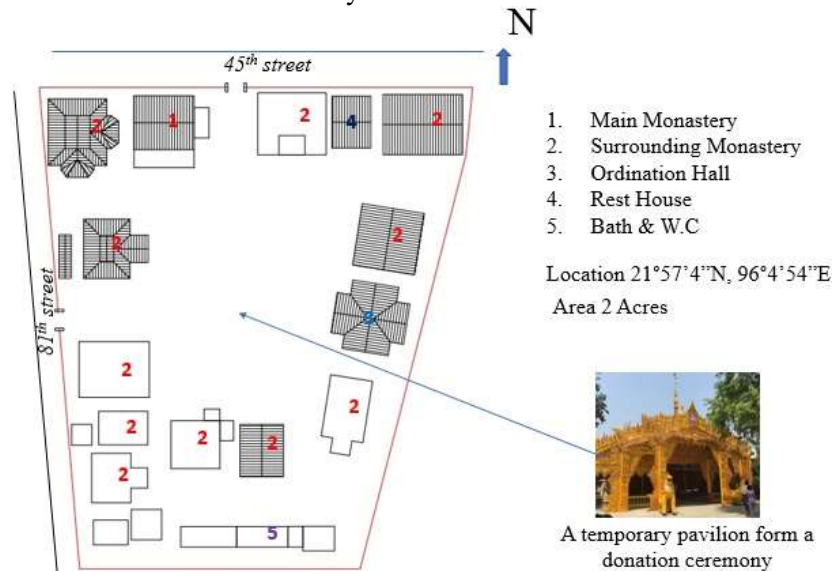


Fig4.3 Layout Plan of Maha-Nandi-Thaynar-Yarma Monastic Compound

4.3 Case III - Random layout Composition

This composition is an unsystematic layout and there are many reasons to occur in this layout. Among them, the followings two factors are the most

- There were no systematic principles in the original planned layout and the monasteries were laid depending on attitudes of abbots or the donors.
- When the central main monastery was destroyed due to a case, the new many monasteries were constructed in this place.

In the following figure (4.4), the Ngar-Sue Monastic Compound was not organized properly plan. The monasteries are built depending on the donors and there are no limitations for planning.

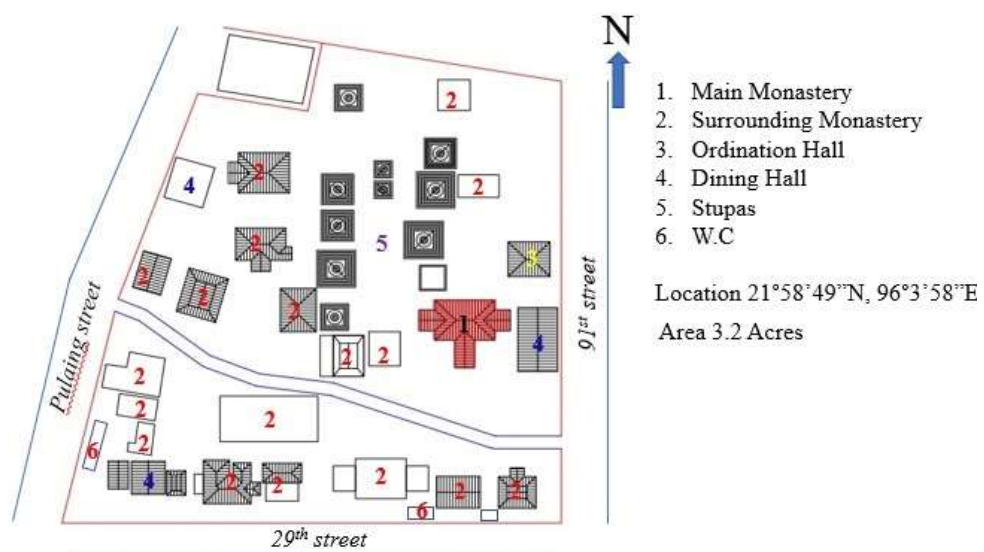


Fig4.4 Layout Plan of Ngar-Sue Monastic Compound

According to the 2016 Field Survey, there are a total of 68 monasteries, including monasteries over the age of 55. In this paper, these monastic compounds are studied. It can be found Case I composition is (29) nos., Case II is (11) nos. and Case III is (28) nos. respectively. The case I and II are systematic layout compositions and they are 59% of all.

Case III, there is unsystematic composition and it is 41%. Although most of the compounds in ancient Mandalay are composed of a centralized systematic layout, some are transformed into unsystematic layout due to some reasons and the new monastic compounds were founded without a definite plan. The total number of random layout is becoming almost the total number of centralized organizations. The case I and II are traditional composition systems. From now on, we should preserve our cultural heritage.

5. CONCLUSION:

Mandalay is figuratively called a Buddhist education center of the whole Myanmar. Therefore, a lot of monastic compounds were constructed since the city was founded. They can be found around the palace in the four directions. The monasteries in the eastern part were constructed by Kings, Queens and their relatives because the east direction is accepted as sacred and auspiciousness in Buddhist cosmology. The royal servants and the people constructed in the western part. After the monarchy period, the new monasteries built by the merchants in the western part. The monasteries in northern and southern parts developed depend on religious monuments such as pagodas and Mandalay hills.

The composition of monastic compounds in Mandalay can generally be found the centralized and random organization. In the days of the Burmese kings, the main monastery was centralized mainly and their composition is found out to be very systematic. Later, random compositions occurred. Although the original monasteries were formed by the centralized system, the main monastery was destroyed due to several reasons such as fires and wars. There, new donors were not able to donate the size of the original monasteries, so only small monasteries were built. As a result, the original composition system was lost. The monasteries in the whole compound were not in the proper layout, but they were built in the locations where the donors and the monks prefer. Now, as land is scarce, new wide compounds are no longer available and new monasteries are being built in the old compounds, thus damaging the original system. Therefore, the composition of the original monastic compounds should be maintained by building new monasteries in systematic compounds. Because they are not only images of Myanmar traditional architecture but also the demo of an era. If we preserve them at present, they will be the best gifts for our future generations.

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