

Why and How the *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* Monastery in Mandalay Captures Tourists' Attraction

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Abstract

Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin monastery is one of them and it can attract most of the tourists who come to Mandalay. The aim is to reveal the treasure of religious buildings from which ancient culture of Myanmar can be learnt. The reason tries to explore why this is an important place and why tourists are interested in this monastery. Not only the monastery shows ancient culture and architecture, but also the monks residing at *Shwekyin* monastery adhere to the *Vinaya* disciplinary rules. These are the main reasons why the monastery becomes a tourist attraction nowadays. In this paper, *Shwekyin* monastery is investigated from the point of view of Tourism and the Buddhist Art and Architecture. Furthermore, it also describes the *Shwekyin* monastery from historical, cultural and religious points of view. This paper will be useful as a part for keeping the *Vinaya* discipline, the ancient heritage in Myanmar. This research intends to safeguard the cultural heritage of our country to learn and to promote the Buddhist Art & Architecture sectors, to help the improvement of tourism industry.

Keywords: Religious Buildings, Tourists Attraction, *Vinaya* disciplinary, Cultural heritage.

Introduction

Mandalay is an economic, politic, religious and cultural center. There are many ancient and historical buildings and edifices around Mandalay. According to the list of the *Kahtina* offering during the reign of King *Thibaw*, there were 154 monastery complexes and 1257 monasteries in the four cardinal directions of the Golden City. In the present time, there is no decrease in the number of monastery complexes but increase in the number of *pariyatti*-teaching monasteries. According to the list of the donation of one hundred and twenty-one years of Mandalay *Malun* Rice Donation Association in M.E. 1379, the Mandalay *Sāsana* is to be satisfied. In Mandalay there are 2497 monasteries where the monks practise *Sudhammā* and 131 monasteries where the monks practise *Shwekyin*, totaling 23074 monks and 17598 novices.

Mandalay is one of the cities where Myanmar culture is still thriving. It is located at the focal point of economy in Upper Myanmar. Mandalay is also the last royal city of the ancient Myanmar kings. Just as it is a city which is at the strategic point of commerce, administration and economy and it is also located at the focal point of land routes to communicate with foreign countries. As there are lots of traditional cultural works of art, ancient buildings and famous pagodas, foreign visitors are visiting Myanmar to study them. This paper will present the *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* monastery this is ancient religious structures that attract the attention of tourists.

(1) *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* Monastery

Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin monastery is one of the ancient monasteries. It is decorated with Buddhist culture and Myanmar culture.

1.1 Location and Area of *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* Monastery

Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin monastery is situated at the foot of Mandalay Hill near the Northern Stairway in Obo Quarter, *Myaukpyin*. It is located on the side of Mandalay-

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Madaya Road, confront of the Denko oil shop and off the Golf Course before reaching the northern exit of Mandalay.

This monastery is two teak storied. Under the monastery have 210-feet and 2-inches in length (from east to west), 87-feet and 10-inches in length (from south to north). In height of the monastery has 9-feet and 7-inches (from ground to floor), 4-feet in height (from floor to railing). *Thayatkin* stair has 27-feet and 11-inches in length (from south to north), 18-feet in length (from east to west).

1.2 History of *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin Monastery*

Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin monastery was donated to *Shwe Kyin Sayadaw* by King *Mindon*, in M. E. 1222, after founding the Mandalay city. King *Mindon* ordered the carpenter *U Kho* to build the monastery at a cost of 222355 coins¹ stamped with the figure of a peacock. The *Sayadaw U Jāgara* who was the first founder of the *Shwe Kyin Gaing* was invited from *Shwebo* and then *Mahā Dhammikā Shwe Kyin Ngataiks* were constructed and donated to the *Sayadaw*.² Moreover, the four satellite *taiks*, namely *Htayankar Taik*³, *Yamethin Taik*, *Minkhin Taik* and *Myataung Taik*⁴ were also built intending for the *Shwe Kyin Sayadaw*. At the time of preparation of this paper, the central *kyaung taik* has been renovated, but the remaining four *kyaung taik* are totally disappeared.

1.3 The Structure of *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin Monastery*

This monastery was built two wooden teak stories. It was built of teak comprising 262 teak-pillars. There are seven brick stairways - three stairways on the south side, three stairways on the north side and one stairway on the east side. The monastery comprises a pavilion with graduated tiered roofs, three Stores of *Sanu-saung* and four Stores of *Verandha*, *Zetawun-saung* and *Bawga-saung*. Around the corridor decorated with lathe. The above and under of the lathe can be found wooden sculptures lion, the sunflowers, withering lotus and blooming lotus and floral designs. Ground the teak pillars covered with concrete pillar and also at the top of the teak pillars covered with *sakyin* stone slabs because of do not destroy insects. The above of the *Shwekyin* monastery consists of four chambers, namely, *Pyathat-saung*, *Sanusaung*, *Zetawun-saung*, and *Bawga-saung* locating in that order from east to west direction. Under the monastery consist of no chamber. *Zetawun-saung*, and *Bawga-saung* was decorated with *mhan-ku-kaiks*. Each of the *mhan-ku-kaiks* has *mhaw-pwint*.

1.4 Reconstruction to the Monastery

As the former *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* monastery was in ruins, it was reconstructed as originally. The centenary memorial ceremony of the demise of the First *Shwekyin Sayadaw* was held in 1994 with a teeming crowd. The statues of the fifteen *Shwekyin Sayadaws* starting from the first *Shwekyin Sayadaw* are displayed in the *Shwekyin Teak Monastery*. The stone inscription of the biography of the first *Shwekyin Sayadaw*, the chronicle of the *Shwekyin Sāsanā*, the record of the centenary ceremony of *Shwekyin Sāsanā* and the brief account of the first *Shwekyin Sayadaw's* admonitions were committed to inscription on a stone slab and an Archive was; also built. To the west of the archive a flag-mast was erected based on a flight of steps.

The figure of *haṃsa* with an umbrella was constructed adhering to the ancient tradition. The *Shwekyin Teak Monastery* was reconstructed to study the *Shwekyin Sāsanā* and the

^၁ ရွှေကျင်နိကာယသာသနာဝံ။ နှာ-၈၆။

^၂ မင်းတုန်းမင်း။ နှာ-၅၅-၅၇။

^၃ Since it was built by Princess Hmainglon, it is also known as Hmainglon dik.

^၄ Myadaungtike of the eastern spread.

biography of the first *Shwekyin Sayadawgyi*. As the *kyaung* was built for the welfare of the *Sāsanā*, the monastery is to be studied as a museum.

Record of construction costs of *Shwekyin Kyaung*: the building with seven tiered roofs; at the head of the monastery, *Sanu-saung* with 42 teak-posts (30 feet high), *Zetawun-saung* with 122 teak-posts, 40 feet high, *Bawga-saung* with 24 teak posts, 30 feet high, was reconstructed.

In the renovation work of *Shwekyin Waiyaun*, the whole structure is reconstructed according to tradition except the side walls and floor posts of *Zetawun-saung* and *Bawga-saung*. The walls of *Zetawun-saung* and *Bawga-saung* are embellished with woodwork patterns.

1.5 The Four Chambers

The four chambers are *Pyathat-saung*, *Sanu-saung*, *Zetawun-saung* and *Bawga-saung*. *Pyathat-saung* is the image chamber which is connected with *Zetawun-saung* by *Sanu-saung* (the connecting hall). *Zetawun-saung* is used as a living room; for the guest and as a sleeping chamber for the resident *Samgha*. *Bawga-saung* is a storeroom.

1.6 *Pyathat-saung*

Dimensions of renovated *Shwekyin* monastery are as follows: *Pyathat-saung*: thirty-nine feet and seven inches in length (from east to west), forty feet and five inches in width (from south to north), and ninety feet in height with seventy-four posts. *Pyathat-saung* has a stairway to get onto and it is of a seven tiered structure decorated with fine floral arabesque. There are four stairs each of the stair has 3-steps. The length of the stair has 4-feet and 2-inches, 3-feet and 6-inches in wide. Moreover, this monastery has four doors and eight *kelars* (window which is hinged at the top). On the doors leaf can be found gods (the attitude of holding the lotus bulb), *turin*, *asaw*, *kinnarī* and *pa-sun-kwe*. Among the four doors, each of the east and west doors are the same sculptures. The total cost has 34-lakh.

Inside of the *Pyathat-saung* can be found the six *cetiya*, diamond throne, fifteen Buddha images (the eight stone images, the four wooden images, one copper image and the two coral images) one of the Venerable *Upagutta* image. The attitude of the hand and feet can be seen *Bhūmiphassa mudrā*, *Bhesajja mudrā*, *Abhayalābhamuni mudrā*, *Jhānāsana* and gesture of lying.

Moreover, the pictures was hanging on the wall inside the *Pyathat-saung*, the picture of *Gotama* Buddha, the three pictures of the monastery, the pictures of *Pyathat-saung*, *Zetawun-saung*, *Sanu-saung*, *Bawga-saung*, the pictures of International *cetiyas*, the picture of *Samgha* meeting pavilion at the memorial of the one hundred years of the *Shwekyin Sayadaw* and the picture of *Takhontine*.

1.7 *Sanu-saung*

Sanu-saung can be found 42-teak pillars. It is 9-feet and 2-inches in height, 44-feet and 10-inches in length (from East to West), 32-feet and 7-inches in width (from North to South), 62-feet and 2-inches in length (from East to West). The total cost has 5.4-lakh. *Sanu-saung* was consisted of drainage, *mhaw-pwint* and floral designs, but it was consisted of no chambers. The shape of hall it was connected with *Pyathat-saung* and *Zetawun-saung*.

1.8 *Zetawun-saung*

Zetawun-saung has 62-feet and 2-inches in length (from East to West), 38-feet and 2-inches in the Buddha chamber, the length of 43-feet and 11-inches include *Samyīn* (from East to West), *Samyīn* has 12-feet and 7-inches in width and feet; with 122 posts. There are 34-

pillars. But the West side of the 2-pillars include inside the exhibition hall. It was repaired 22-lakh cost. It has two stairways each on either sides of the building. It is a three tiered terraced roofing building with intervening structure. At the upper places of the doors of *Zetawun-saung* the figures of deity peafowl are standing in face-off position, which were carved; out in wood with floral design. The figures of deities on the spreading lotus are found on the door folds.

Zetawun-saung has two chambers. It is divided at the center with the reredos. There are East *Zetawun* and West *Zetawun*. East *Zetawun* can be found in the daily life of the *Samgha* photo records, the pictures of the first *Shwekyin Sayartaw* and King *Mindon*. The West *Zetawun* was made exhibition hall. This chamber has seven doors, three doors in West, two doors in East, each of the doors in South and North. The total pillars have forty. It was decorated with on the doors can be found the different postures of gods, *turin*, *kinnarī*, *saingpaung*, *pasonkwine*, *pansaw*, peacock. Between the two doors made *mhan-ku-kuik*. Inside exhibition hall was kept the images of the first to fourteen *Shwekyin Sāsanāpaing*.

1.9 *Bawga-saung*

Bawga-saung is sixteen feet and four inches in width (from East to West), forty-feet and eight inches in length (from South to North), thirty feet in height with twenty-four posts.¹ The corridor was wide eight feet. *Bawga-saung* was included bun and drainage. This chamber repaired 14-lakh cost. Nowadays this chamber made picture exhibition hall. It has total fourteen posts and six doors. Each of the three doors has in East and West. But South and North has not the door. It was decorated with on the doors can be found the different postures of gods, *turin*, *kinnarī*, *saingpaung*, *pasonkwie*, *pansaw*, peacock. Between the two doors made *mhan-ku-koik*. Inside picture exhibition hall was kept the twenty-two pictures.

1.10 Architecture of the Monastery

As of plan of *Shwekyin* monastery, the four chambers of *pyathat-saung*, *sanu-saung*, *zetawun-saung* and *bawga-saung* are lying along the line of east-west axle. The floor of cloisters (corridor) is slightly lower than that of these chambers. Around the verandah, are found the wooden turnery fashioned embellishments. The style and form of *Shwekyin* monastery resembles the picture of the monastery depicted in the mural painting of the interior of the northern arch of *Kyak-taw-gyi* pagoda donated by King *Bagan* in *Amarapura*.²

1.11 Disciplinary Rules of *Shwekyin* Monastery

The monks residing at *Shwekyin* monastery adhere to the *Vinaya* disciplinary rules. At five in the evening when the Ton Gong is sounded, the monks fall in line and take off the foot-wears uniformly and go up the stair steps. At the top of the staircase, they have to stay standing. Then they have to go to the prayer hall according to seniority. At the end of the prayer, the *Samgha* have to retreat with the two palms joined together and raised to the forehead as far they see the Buddha's face. Because it is not to turn a blind eye when one is out of sight of the Buddha. They wear the foot-wears only when they cannot see Buddha's face.

On account of adhering to the *Vinaya* rules of conduct laid down by the Buddha, being an ancient teak monastery which is over a hundred years old, the presence of carved posts, and the presence of grand tiered roofs there are many sight-seeing tourists daily. Being a famous monastery at the foot of Mandalay Hill, the cave where the *Shwekyin Sayadaw* practiced insight meditation is being well kept.³

¹ ယနေ့မန္တလေး။ ၁၁-၁၀၈-၁၁၀။

မြန်မာ့ယဉ်ကျေးမှု မြန်မာ့ရေးဟောင်း၊ ဘုန်းတော်ကြီးကျောင်းကြီးများ။ ၁၁-၁၀၇။

² Field study on (28.5.2016).

³ Field study on (30.5.2016), (30.5.2017), (30.11.2018).

2. Tourist Attractions in Mandalay

Traditional cultural works of art, ancient buildings and famous pagodas, in Mandalay attract foreign visitors. International visitors spent most of their time visiting cultural sites, sought to observe locals' cultural practices, lifestyles and traditional handicraft businesses, including gold embroidery and gold foil workshops. There are many tourist attractions in Mandalay. There are, (a) *Mahamuni* Pagoda, (b) *Kuthodaw* Pagoda, (c) *Shwe Nandaw Kyaung*, (d) *Atumashi Kyaung*, (e) *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwe Kyin* Monastery, (f) *Dutiya Shwe-In-Pin* Monastery and (g) Mandalay Hill.

2.1 Tourist arrivals at ancient religious buildings in Mandalay

Many tourists visit the Pagoda and religious buildings because the religious buildings are the finest examples of Myanmar art and architecture. According to tourists, the purpose of their visit is to view ancient buildings, architecture. Tourists are always amazed at the sight of the ancient architecture. Majority of tourists who visit the *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* monastery are very interested in art and architecture, and the Vinaya disciplinary rules. They also enjoy the natural beauties of twilight. Especially, Tourists visit this monastery during sunset.

Finding and Discussion

The majority of the visitors came from China, followed by France, Germany, Thailand and Britain. Mandalay is famous for its cultural heritage among international travellers¹. From tourism point of view, it can be assumed that majority of tours coming to Myanmar are to visit to the ancient Myanmar cultures or Buddhist cultures. According to the saying of tourist guides, almost 100 percent of foreigners who come to Mandalay, visit to *Mahāmuni* image. Especially, they visit there in the time of washing face, fanning by flowers fan and donating the *cetiya* of flowers. Besides the sculptural and gold plate places are usually visited by many foreigners. They usually visit Royal Palace, Golden Palace Monastery, *Mahāatlaweyan (Atumashi) Kyaung*, *Mahālokamārajin pagoda*, *Mahādhammikā rāma Shwekyin* monastery, *Dutiya Shwe-In-Pin* monastery and Mandalay hill.² The lifelong process and the structures of the ancient statues and religious buildings can also be studied. The culture can also be guessed according to the history of images. As some of architecture designs of the pagodas are very ancient, especially, they attract people from different countries. They study the decoration of the ancient arts and the significant of the things which have been used.

International Tourists Arrival at Ancient Religious Buildings in Mandalay, (2008-2017)										
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tourist	5553	8861	13442	20912	32521	69596	242566	306432	385031	483784

¹ <https://www.google.com.vn/amp/www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/mandalay-registers-high-inflow-tourists-2017/amp/>

² <http://consult-myanmar.com/2016/03/19/tourist-arrival-up-in-mandalay/>



Therefore, the number of Tourists increased every year, with the aim of observing draw many Buddhist cultural arts, Myanmar cultural arts found at the religious buildings. Religious tourism helps foreign currency to the country. It helps increase our country's GDP. Those foreign visitors come to study many Buddhist cultural arts and ancient religious buildings. It is the duty of every citizen to safeguard and protect the ancient buildings as our cultural heritage. We should try these ancient buildings to be recognized as world heritage. In this way, our country will be more and more developed.

These buildings are providing foreign incomes for our country since there are 4.5 million of domestic travellers and world tourists who are studying the ancient buildings and pagodas. Therefore, the aims of this paper are to safeguard the ancient buildings as our country's treasures and regard them as world heritage, world monuments and world memories.

Conclusion

The *Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* monastery is the famous religious buildings in Mandalay was built in *Kong-baung* Era. It is very old and ancient buildings so it is rebuilt because it is ruined. This religious building has high standard. The standards of culture and different periods can also be seen. This paper discusses Myanmar cultural (Buddhist culture) heritages which should be world famous. Domestic travellers and world tourists arrived in Mandalay who wants to study the ancient buildings and pagodas. In addition adhering to the *Vinaya* rules of conduct laid down by the Buddha, being an ancient teak monastery which is over a hundred years old, the presence of carved posts, and the presence of grand tiered roofs there are many sight-seeing tourists daily.

The development of tourism brings the opportunity for job, economy, and exchanging knowledge will be got. Therefore, every citizen needs to protect these heritages of Buddhist culture knowing their value. All of us should be careful not to destroy trees and forests around us, not to cut them, to throw rubbish into the dustbins systematically and to travel in ease without destroying the natural resources and the beauties of nature. Moreover, the Myanmar citizens should be careful about preventing the civil war. The worse climate condition and the civil crisis may cause tourists decrease in the main reason. So, all of us are responsible for safeguarding the historic works of arts in the seven famous religious buildings and the natural beauties of the Mandalay Hill where many tourists around the world are attracted.



Tourists attraction in the monks residing at *Mahā Dhammikārāma Shwekyin* monastery adhere to the *Vinaya* disciplinary rules

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