

สถาปัตยกรรมพระไตรปิฎกและคติจักรวรรดิราชพุทธศาสนา  
ในรัชสมัยพระเจ้ามินดง  
Tripitaka Architecture and Buddhist Kingship in the Reign of  
King Mindon

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บทคัดย่อ

สถาปัตยกรรมพระไตรปิฎกในพม่ามีความสำคัญสืบต่อมายาวนานหลายศตวรรษ เมื่อพระเจ้ามินดงทรงสร้างเมืองมัณฑเลย์ในปี ค.ศ. 1875 พระองค์โปรดให้มีการก่อสร้างสถาปัตยกรรมสำหรับประดิษฐานพระไตรปิฎกมากถึงสามแห่ง และเป็นส่วนสำคัญในองค์ประกอบตามประเพณีการสร้างเมืองของพม่าที่มีองค์ประกอบ 7 อย่างด้วยกัน บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบนัยยะสำคัญของความหมายของสถาปัตยกรรมพระไตรปิฎกในรัชสมัยของพระเจ้ามินดง โดยมีกรอบแนวคิดที่ใช้อธิบายอยู่บนพื้นฐานของคติจักรวรรดิราชพุทธศาสนาในพุทธศาสนาเถรวาท ผนวกกับการตีความหมายทางสถาปัตยกรรมตามคติการวางผังสัญลักษณ์จักรวรรดิ สถาปัตยกรรมของพระเจ้ามินดงที่เป็นกรณีศึกษาประกอบด้วย พระเจดีย์ Kuthotaw หอพระไตรปิฎก (Tripitaka Taik) และวัด Atumashi ผลการศึกษาพบว่าสถาปัตยกรรมนี้เป็นการนำเสนอคติสัญลักษณ์ที่เป็นศูนย์กลางจักรวรรดิ พระเจดีย์ Kuthotaw ซึ่งมีแนววงแหวน 7 วงของอาคารสถาปัตยกรรมขนาดเล็กที่ประดิษฐานแผ่นหินจารึกพระไตรปิฎกจำนวน 729 องค์ และการออกแบบวางผังที่ใช้ระบบตารางมณฑล เป็นการแสดงให้เห็นถึงคติศูนย์กลางจักรวรรดิ คือเขาพระสุเมรุ ในขณะที่หอพระไตรปิฎก (Tripitaka Taik) และวัด Atumashi ก็มีการวางผังที่ซ้อนกลมกลืนกันเป็นปรางค์เพื่อเน้นแกนศูนย์กลางอย่างชัดเจน นอกจากนี้จะมีการสร้างวัดจำนวนมากแล้ว พระเจ้ามินดงยังได้ทรงอุปถัมภ์การทำสังคายนาพระไตรปิฎกครั้งที่ 5 ขึ้น ทรงให้มีการคัดลอกพระไตรปิฎกไว้เป็นจำนวนมากรวมทั้งทำการจารึกพระไตรปิฎกทั้งหมดลงบนแผ่นหินไว้ในบริเวณของเจดีย์ Kuthotaw ด้วย พระราชกรณียกิจของพระเจ้ามินดงจึงเป็นการแสดงให้เห็นว่าพระองค์ทรงเป็น “ธรรมราชา” สถาปัตยกรรมพระไตรปิฎกเหล่านี้ยังเป็นสัญลักษณ์ที่สำคัญที่สุดตามคติจักรวรรดิราชพุทธศาสนาในรัชสมัยของพระองค์ สถาปัตยกรรมนี้เชื่อมโยงจักรวรรดิกับจักรวรรดิด้วยคติและพิธีกรรมมณฑลที่เชื่อมโลกกับสวรรค์ อันเป็นมหาจักรวรรดิและจุลจักรวรรดิที่แสดงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างจักรวรรดิกับพระเจ้ามินดง ในฐานะองค์พระจักรพรรดิราชที่ปกครองด้วยบุญบารมี นอกจากนี้การที่เจดีย์ Kuthotaw มีแผ่นหินพระไตรปิฎกอันถูกนับรวมเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของสถานที่พิเศษของโลกตามจารีตของพม่าที่จะคงอยู่ตลอดอายุของจักรวรรดิ ก็เพื่อยืนยันว่าเมืองมัณฑเลย์และพระราชอาณาจักรของพระองค์จะดำรงอยู่จนถึงกาลสิ้นกับปี

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## ABSTRACT

*Tripitaka* architecture in Myanmar has been owned a special status for many centuries. When the city of Mandalay was established in 1857, King Mindon built three important Buddhist architecture related to *Tripitaka*. These were parts of all seven edifices traditionally required when the new city was found. This article aims to investigate the significance meaning of the *Tripitaka* architecture in the reign of King Mindon. The theoretical framework approaching to this study are the concept of Buddhist kingship of Theravada Buddhist state, together with the interpretation of Buddhist architecture according to cosmological planning. The three targeted Buddhist architecture of King Mindon are studies : Kuthotaw or MahaLawkamarazein Pagoda (the Royal Merit Pagoda), the *Tripitaka*Taik and Atumashi (Incomparable) Monastery. It is found that the architectural symbolism of these Buddhist architecture represent the Buddhist cosmic symbol, a center of the universe. The Kuthotaw which has seven concentric rings of 729 small stupas house the *Tripitaka* stone inscriptions, encircle the main stupa, and its *mandala* planning system, certainly represents the center of the universe, Mount Meru. As for the *Tripitaka*Taik and the Atumashi Monastery were also planned as a large stepped pyramid to emphasize the central axis. Apart from building a lot of Buddhist monasteries, King Mindon, as a patronage, arranged the Fifth Great Buddhist Synod. Various copies of *Tripitaka* were made together with the whole texts of *Tripitaka* were inscribed on 728 stones, placed in the precinct of the Kuthotaw Pagoda. These were actually an act of a righteous king, a Dhammaraja. *Tripitaka* architecture became the most important symbol of Buddhist kingship during the time of King Mindon. These architecture link Buddhist cosmology and kingship by rising from the ground in there *mandala* forms as an embodiment of heaven and earth, the Macrocosm and Microcosm. They represent the image of the universe and figured King Mindon to be a Cakkavatti, a universal ruler who governed by virtue of his merit. Furthermore, the Kuthotaw Pagoda with stone scriptures was added to the list as a fifth peculiar place of the world in Burmese tradition, in order to ensure that the city of Mandalay and the whole kingdom will last until the end of cosmic period.

**คำสำคัญ:** สถาปัตยกรรมพระไตรปิฎก จักรวาลราช ธรรมราชา จักรพรรดิราช มณฑล

**Keywords:** *Tripitaka* Architecture, Buddhist Kingship, Dhammaraja, Cakkavatti, Mandala

## Introduction

*Tripitaka* Architecture in Myanmar history has been owned a special status in many centuries. It is widely acknowledged that *Tripitaka* is a doctrine and typically preserved in the scriptures. The Pali *Tripitaka* contains everything necessary to show forth the path to the ultimate goal of *Nibbana*, the cessation of all suffering. It is the words of the Buddha, which is originally called the *Dhamma* (San, 2006: 262).

*Tripitaka* is *Dhamma* relics of the Buddha in Buddhist tradition. When the Buddha, on his deathbed, was asked by his disciple Ananda, who should replace the Buddha after attaining *Nibbana*, his answer was his teachings, the *Dhamma*. There was a sense, the *Dhamma* could act as a substitute for the departed master (Strong, 1948: 8-9). According to Gokhale, the *Dhamma*, Buddhist moral law was declared supreme, it was the ruler of the rulers. The king's function was to bring about moral transformation in the nature of his subjects. Thus, he was to achieve through his own exemplary conduct and by the establishment of law and order, justice, and prosperity so as to create equal opportunities for spiritual development (Cohen, 1967: 197-198; Gokhale, 1966: 15-21).

In Myanmar, the *Tripitaka* was introduced to Thaton Ciy (Mon state) after the third Buddhist council by King *Asoka*'s missionaries, TheraUttra and TheraSona, who were sent to Subannabhumi<sup>1</sup> to spread the teaching of the Buddha (San, 2006: 288-289). During the reign of the King Manuha, Thaton was invaded by King Anawratha of Pagan. Since then *Theravada* Buddhism was introduced to central Myanmar in 1057 (Tun, 1959: 47).

Through the reign of Konboun kings, great emphasis was put on knowledge of the *Tripitaka* text. Performance of the merit of providing for the correct transmission of religious text was considered as an integral part of a Buddhist kings paid enormous attention to the possession of reliable texts, as well as to their correct transmission. *Tripitaka* text were also kept systematically in the *Tripitakataik* (a library for Buddhist scriptures) (Han, 2006: 116). When Mandalay City was founded in 1857 by King Mindon, traditionally it required that foundations of seven edifices be laid simultaneously. This city is the historic capital of last Myanmar kingdom which abounds with historical sites, religious monuments and Buddhist edifices. As being the city giving a sense of past and cultural identity, much research on Mandalay city has been done by local and foreign scholars for decades.

However, the focus of recent researches have been documented that the conservation and development control guidelines for places of cultural significance in the vicinity of Mandalay city area.<sup>2</sup> Some researchers have been widely investigated the development of open space and patterns of Mandalay old city's blocks.<sup>3</sup> Some pioneer scholars such as KanHla and LwinAung had been systematically studied about historic Myanmar Cities from town planning point of view.<sup>4</sup> The foreign author, V.C. Scott O' Connor wrote the book entitle "*Mandalay and other cities of the past in Burma*" which describing of twelve cities included Mandalay (O'Connor, 1907). Donald M.

<sup>1</sup> Suvannabhumi was one of the nine missionaries of King *Asoka* after the Third Council. Suvannabhumi or golden land is Bago (Pegu) and Mawlamyaing district in Mon State, Myanmar (San, 2006: 288-289).

<sup>2</sup> See Myat Soe Phyu (2008) entitle *Heritage Conservation of Religious Complex in Mandalay City*, and Zin Zin Moe (2008), *Development Control Guidelines for Vicinity of Mandalay Royal City*.

<sup>3</sup> Nan Ei Ei Khaing (2008) *Development Patterns of Mandalay Old City's Blocks* and Soe Min Htwe (2009) *Development of Urban Open Space in Mandalay*.

<sup>4</sup> Kan Hla (2014), Lwin Aung (1971) and Lwin Aung (2009).

Stadtner explained belief, myth and site of Myanmar in the book “*Sacred Site of Burma*” (Stadtner, 2011). However, study on the buildings concerned with *Tripitaka* from the architectural point of view is still lacking. Moreover, among the seven edifices of Mandalay city, three edifices are related to *Tripitaka*. There are questions that why King Mindon built *Tripitaka* buildings as symbolic prominent features in his Royal City and how the significant meaning of these architecture related to the Myanmar Buddhist Kingship.

### History of *Tripitaka Taik*

Thaton *Sasana* (religion) was developed from *Tripitaka* translated by Ashin Buddhaghosa, from the *Sasana* of TheraUttra and TheraSona. According to Thaton Chronicle, during the reign of King Dhammaparla, *Tripitaka* has taken by TheraBuddhaghosa installing in the building of the ShweSar Yan Pagoda compound for monks and laities to observe and study (Fig.1, 2) (Htut, 1996: 2-5).

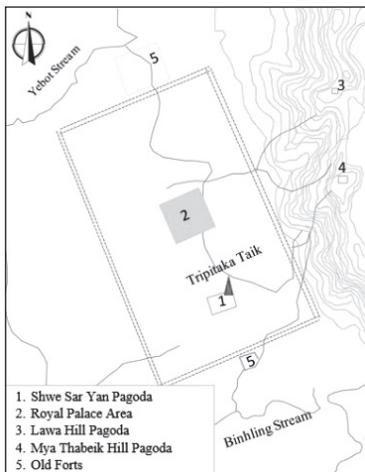


Fig. 1 Map of Thaton City

Source: Reproduced after Hla, 1979

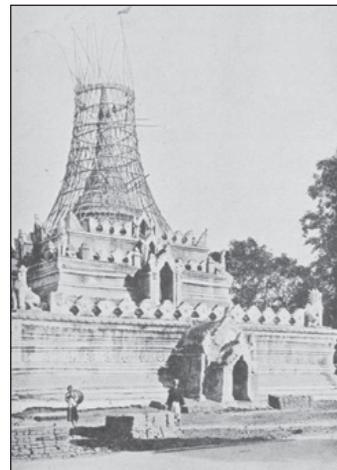


Fig. 2 *Tripitaka Taik* in ShweSar Yan Pagoda

Source: O’connor, 1907

Through Shin Arahan, Anawratha had found the religion he had been yearning for and he decided to set out and procure the scriptures and holy relics of this religion. Anawratha then acquired a replica tooth relic from Ceylon, which again magically replicated itself four times in Pagan (Bischoff, 1995: 14). The five tooth relics in Pagan were enshrined at the Shwezigon, on Tantkyi Hill, western side of river, at the Lokananda on the southern end of the Pagan monument zone, on Tuyin Hill, east of the city and further to the east along the Tuyin range on Mount Pyek. They demarcated and encircled the Pagan city (Hudson, 2004: 26-27). However, Mount Pyek has been forgotten but other four tooth relic stupas are still important pilgrimage sites (Fig. 3).

Apart from the establishing the tooth relics stupas, the *Tripitaka* Taik of King Anawratha was built in a square plan measuring 51 feet on each side. It is arranged much like a temple with a central plinth surrounded by corridor. It housed thirty sets of *Tripitaka* located 150 feet from the Eastern city wall near Tharapar gate, (Fig. 3, 4).

King Kyansittar of Pagan (1084-1113) built his *Tripitaka* Taik at the foot of Tuyin Hill. It located eight miles Southeastern of Pagan. King Htilominlo (1211-1231) and King Kyaswa (1235-1251) also donated *Tripitaka* Taik during their reigns. There were a lot of *Tripitaka* Taik donated by kings, queens, princes, princesses and citizens in the Pagan era and later on became a significant tradition (Htut, 1996: 8-26).

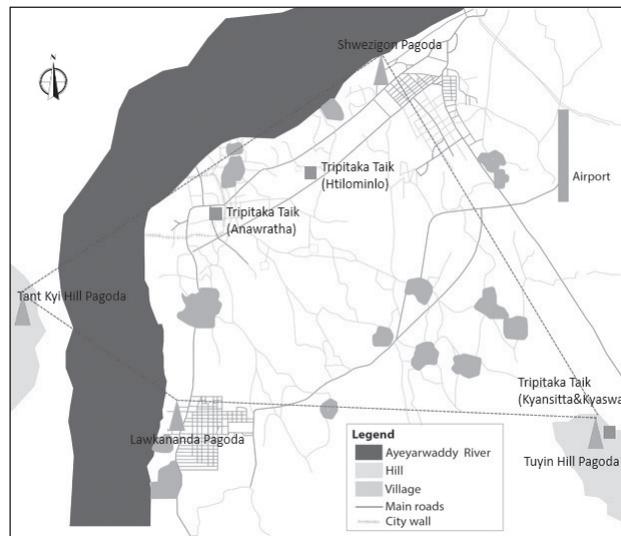
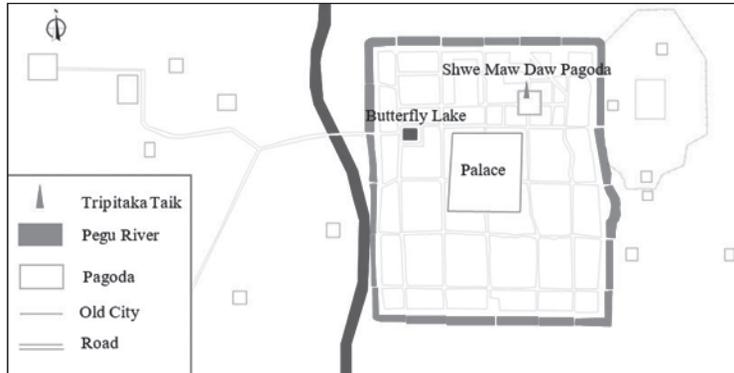


Fig. 3 Map of Four Relic stupas, *Tripitaka* Taiks and Old Bagan City Area  
Source: Reproduced after dpsmap.com



Fig. 4 *Tripitaka* Taik of King Anawratha

During the Taungoo period, King Bayintnaung built the city of Hantharwaddy with three important edifices, including *Tripitaka Taik* (Hlaing, 2011: 94) (Fig.5).



**Fig. 5** Plan of Hantharwaddy City

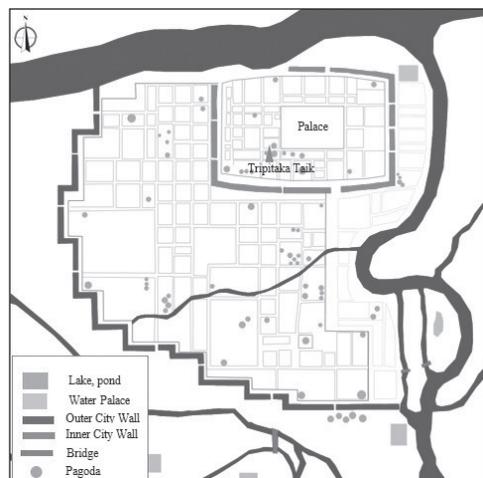
Source: Archeological Department, Mandalay

Although there was a tradition of which simultaneously built seven edifices whenever the kings built a new royal city during the reign of Konboug era, *Tripitaka Taik* became one of the seven edifices from the reign of King Bodawphaya (1782-1811), who was the founder of Amarapura which is located at the Southwest corner of the Mandalay City (Htut, 1996: 23-26) (Fig.6). With the death of Bodawphaya in AD 1819 and the succession of King Bagyidaw who shifted the Royal Capital from Amarapura to Innwa again as the fourth Innwa with a little modified in AD 1822. (Mya, 2003: 22) (Fig.7).



**Fig. 6** Plan of Amarapura City and environment

Source: Archeological Department, Mandalay



**Fig. 7** Plan of Innwa City and environment

Source: Archeological Department, Mandalay

## Tripitaka Architecture in the Reign of King Mindon

Amarapura literally means the city of Immortality. It had been the seat of government for nearly three quarter of a century. The glory of the royal city faded away after King Bagan's dethronement in 1853. King Mindon felt that Amarapura's life span had come to an end because of the defeat in war and the palace was dismantled. He no longer wished to stay at Amarapura so Mandalay became the seat of power according to the fore telling of the Lord Buddha in the legend. For Myanmar Kings, the Buddha's prophecy was of the utmost importance so Mindon worked in respect to the anticipation of the Lord Buddha. Within the context of Buddhist faith and culture, the prophetic utterance of the Buddha was the most important form of legitimation. The legend of Mandalay City says that Gautama Buddha had once predicted that 2,400 years after his attain *Nivana*, a city devoted to the revival and study of Buddhism would be built at the foot of the Mandalay Hill.

King Mindon acted on the political and private reasons on the question of shifting the seat of power. Ostensibly to fulfill a prophecy on the founding of a metropolis of Buddhism, Mandalay in former named Yadanabon was founded by King Mindon during the middle of the 19th century (Han, 2006: 105-111). The city was laid with simultaneously the foundations of seven edifices (Fig. 8). These are (1) the Royal City with the Battlemented Wall, (2) the Moat, (3) the Public Rest House named *Su DhammaZayat*, (4) the Higher Ordination Hall named the Pahtan-Haw ShweThein,(5) the Royal Merit Pagoda named MahaLawkamarazein or Kuthotaw Pagoda, and (6) the Incomparable Monastery named AtumashiKyauung and (7) the Library for Buddhist Scriptures named *TripitakaTaik* (Tun Shein, 2001: 57). Among these, three edifices are related to the *Tripitaka*.

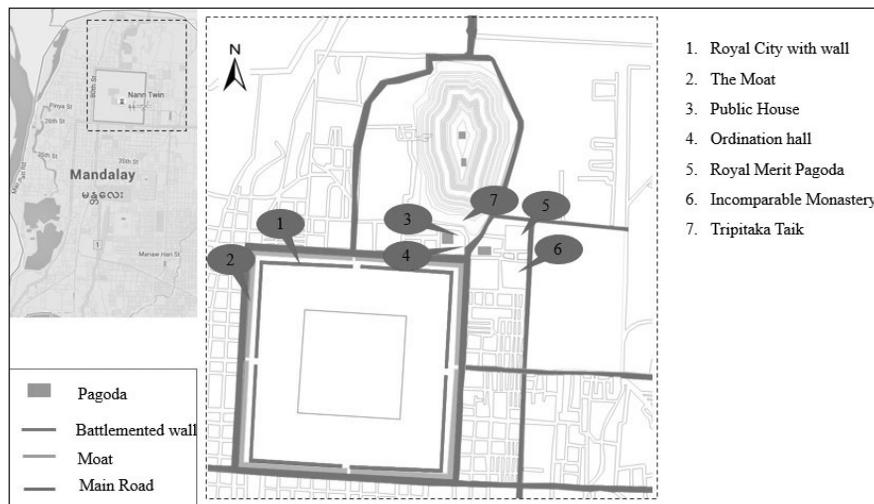


Fig. 8 Location of seven edifices in Mandalay City

Source: Reproduced after <http://www.google.co.th/maps/place/Mandalay>

## Kuthotaw or MahaLawkamarazein (the Royal Merit) Pagoda

As one of the seven sacred edifices necessary for the consecration of the new city, the Royal Merit Pagoda founded by King Mindon in 1857 at the Northeast of the Royal City. It was modeling on Shwezigon Stupa at Nyaung-U. The stupa saw two separate enshrinements before its completion on 19 July 1862. The first occurred on 17 October 1862 that some unspecified relics, Buddha images, stone stupa incised with passages from the Pali canon, and figures of royal personages and enlightened monks were installed in the stupa. Six months later, the second interment took place. Fourteen gem-encrusted golden stupas, six golden stupas, one stupa of gold and copper alloy, four silver stupas, six pearl colored relics, the color of medlar stone and one silver box containing Bodhi Tree leaves were added. The principal interments were tooth-relics from Sri Lanka placed in a mother of pearl casket (Stadtner, 2011: 296-297).

King Mindon conceived the idea of engraving the *Tripitaka* on stone as a meritorious deed which has been never done by any king. He wanted the text engraved on stone and to be entirely free of mistakes. Before this project was started, he ordered a new copy of the *Tripitaka* written on palm leaves. As new copies were made from old copies, it was not unlikely that mistakes abound. King Mindon wanted three copies (one written in gold letters on lacquered palm leaves, one written by stylus on ordinary palm leaves and one written in ink on palm leaves)<sup>5</sup> of the *Tripitaka* which thoroughly edited. Even before the copying of *Tripitaka* on palm leaves was completed the King ordered another on stone with supervision of senior monks. After the work of engraving had completed, these were arranged on the ground of Royal Merit Pagoda. The central stupa was surrounded by 729 upright stone slab on which are engraved the entire Buddhist Scriptures as edited and approved by the 5<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Synod. It is popularly called the Kuthotaw and the biggest book is placed in its enclosures. A little cave like structure were constructed to shelter each stone and the rocks were ordered in neat rows within the three enclosures of this pagoda. The beginning or the inner enclosure has 42 of them, the second or the middle enclosure has 168 and the third or outer enclosure has 519, all adding up to 729. These *Tripitaka* shelters were arranged in 7 square rings surrounded the main stupa. There were (35) numbers of brick rest houses at the south, north and west. There were also two water reservoirs to the south of the site (Ahmar, 1974: 6-18).

According to Robert Heine-Geldern's macrocosmos and microcosmos theory, the ancient builders believed that nothing could prosper unless it was in concordance with the universal powers. Harmony between the emperor and the universe is achieved by organizing the former as an image of the latter as a universe on a smaller scale (Heine-Geldern, 1942: 15). According to Buddhist cosmology, Mount *Meru* forms the center of the universe. It is surrounded by seven

<sup>5</sup> The writing down of the Buddha's teachings on leaves of gold, silver, copper and palm-leaves or on stone in Myanmar dated back to the time when Buddhism reached Srikettra. Gold leaf manuscripts of extracts from Buddhist texts were unearthed near Pyi city in 1897 (Ahmar, 1974: 29).

ranges of concentric mountains separated from each other by seven annular seas. Beyond the last of the mountain chains extends the ocean and in it lie four continents, each locates to the cardinal directions (Fig. 9).

The continent south of Mount *Meru* is *Jambudvipa*, the abode of men. The universe is surrounded by an enormous wall of rocks, the *Chakravala* range. On the slope of Mount *Meru* lies the lowest of the paradises, that of the four great kings or guardians of the world. On the top of Mount *Meru*, the city of *Sudarsana* is the second paradise where the *Indra* reigns as king. Above Mount *Meru* tower one above the other the rest of the heavily abodes (Heine-Geldern, 1942: 17). In order to represent the structure of the universe, *mandala* is one explanation in Hinduism and Buddhism. Alternatively mandala is a fitting metaphor as a tableau of the unity of macrocosm and microcosm. In most cases, the basic form of the *mandala* remains a symmetrical diagram, concentrated about a single center, divided into four quadrants usually of equal size and built of concentric squares that possess the same center (Fig.9).

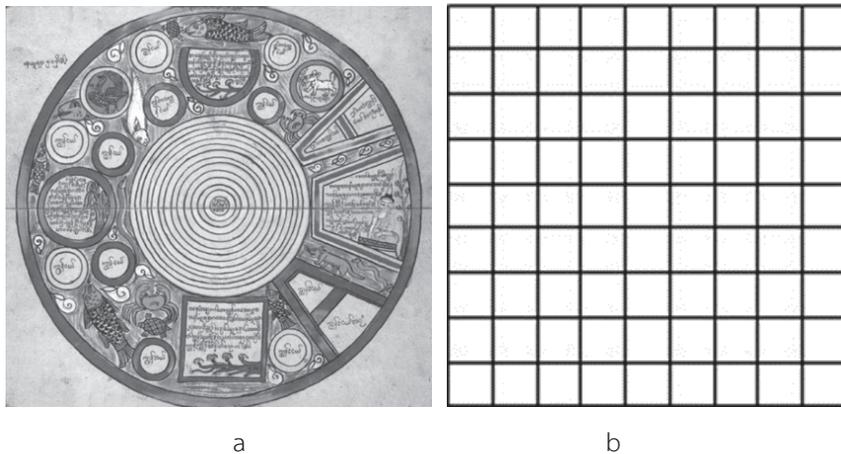


Fig. 9 Burmese Buddhist World interpreted in 19<sup>th</sup> century Burmese manuscript

The symbolism of the mandala grid work

Source: (a) <http://www.loc.gov>, (b) Redrawn after Snodgrass, 1985

It is strictly orientated in accordance with the direction of space. The square of the mandala is subdivided into smaller squares by a gridwork of lines, and within these squares Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Gods are installed, arranged according to the structuring principles of a paradigmatic model that expresses the cosmic pattern of the universe in the image of a network of theophanies. This grid pattern of theophanic nodal points is rich in associations and symbolic correlations, all directly relevant to the significance of the stupa plan (Snodgrass, 1985: 104). In *Vastu-purusha-mandala*, the square was delineated in the ritual of orientation is divided into

smaller squares, their number depending on symbolic correspondences with the location and intended use of the temple, the identity of the divinity enshrined. There are 32 types, starting with a mandala of one square to mandalas with as many as 1024 squares. The squares of the mandala are assigned to various divinities, who are invited in rituals to descend into the mandala and there take up their position. The central squares are those of the *Brahamasthana*, the creator. Surrounding Brahma are 44 devatas whose number and relative positions remain constant in mandala of whatever number of subdivisions (Snodgrass, 1985: 108) (Fig.10).

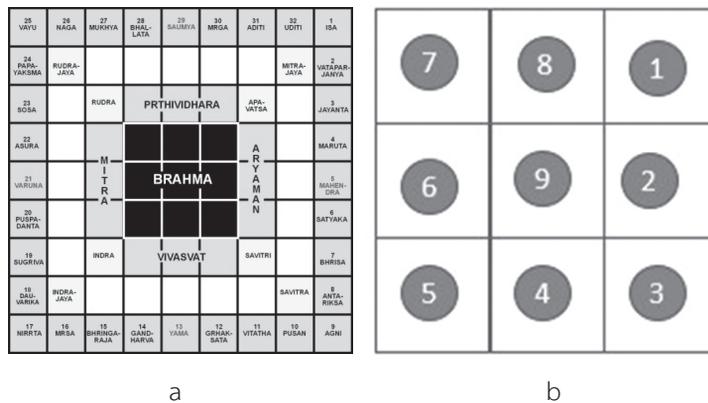


Fig. 10 Plan of VastuPurusha mandala

Plan of nine planets in Burmese Astrology

Source: (a) <http://www.vastuplus.com>, (b) Redrawn after MaungHtinAung, 1959

Similarly, in Myanmar too that the square plan was connected in interpreting various religious and philosophical ideas. Many ancient Burmese beliefs are interrelated with a magical square which symbolized graphically the popular cult of the planets. Burmese astrology recognizes nine planets, namely, Sun, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Saturn and two fictitious planets, Rahu and Kate. They are closely connected with the cardinal direction, with the days of the week, with sacred animals and with the Buddha's disciples. Each of nine planets, with its corresponding objects, has a definite position in the magic square (Fig. 10).<sup>6</sup> As a result there are two types of organization are found in the configuration of Burmese mandala. Firstly, the squares of the mandala are laid with the planets of the week and another is the organization that the central portion is the place for the Buddha and the rest are the positions of his eight disciples. This mandala duplicates Mount Meru in its structure and create the place to be sacred.

<sup>6</sup> Each number has analogous meaning: 1) Sun, Northeast, Sunday, the mythical bird Garuda, Rahula, 2) Moon, East, Monday, Tiger, Kodanna 3) Mars, Southeast, Tuesday, Lion, Revata, 4) Mercury, South, Wednesday (until sunset), Elephant, Sariputta, 5) Saturn, Southwest, Saturday, Naga, Upali, 6) Jupiter, West, Thursday, Rat, Ananda, 7) Rahu (mythical planet causing Sun and Moon eclipses), Wednesday (from the sunset until midnight), the tuskless elephant, Gavampati, 8) Venus, North, Friday, Guinea-pig, Moggallana, 9) Kate (a mythical planet, the principal among all planets), Pyinsayupa (an animal with five beauties), the Buddha (Aung, 1959:7-19 cited in Hla 1978: 92-93).



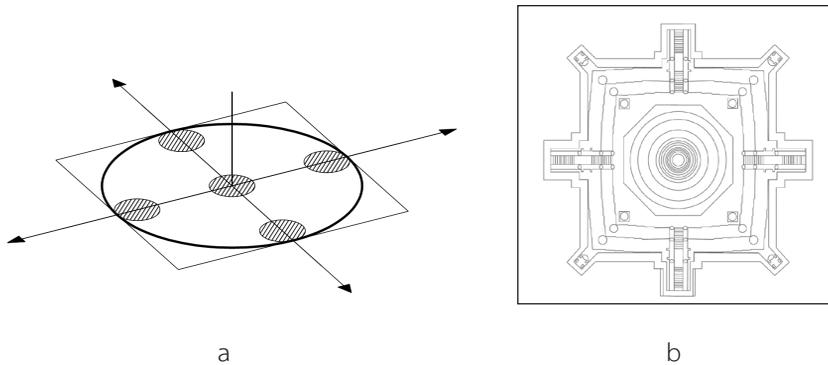
**Fig. 11** Kuthotaw or MahaLawkamarazein or the Royal Merit Pagoda

Source: Klier and Adolphe, 1895

The overall plan of Royal Merit Pagoda is the replica of the mandala with the grids of the square 7 into 7. This square grid was modified by extending half a module in the eastern side outward. It might be because of the emphasizing the auspicious direction of the east. In the context of the legend of the Enlightenment, East is the location of hub of the world wheel. The east locates one aspect of the world axis, namely the pillar of the dawn, the column of light that sunders the darkness and props the sky from earth (Snodgrass, 1985: 41). East was the direction of the Sun, which Myanmar kings identified themselves in claiming of descent in the concept of solar line (Adiccavamasa, means solar dynasty or Sun Kings). The eastern side was considered as important and the pagoda faced east, the auspicious (mangala) direction. The son of the solar king called Manu who was elected by the people of the beginning world era by the title of Mahathamata<sup>7</sup> (Tin, 1965: 181).

At the center of the plan of the Royal Merit Pagoda, a main stupa was erected. It serve as a vertical axis from the center beats the plane of earth whereas the axial pivot that centers the state of existence, joining the realms to each other (Fig.13). It is the mountain that stands at the center of the universe. The central stupa consists of a domical stupa supported by three terraces rising one above another. They form a stepped pyramid with stairways on each of the four cardinal directions. In Maha-parinibbana-sutta, the four directions of space derived from the instruction of Buddha to Ananda on the appropriate way to honor his remains after his parinirvana. A famous passage in the Saddharma-pundarika-sutra explained the symbolism of the four directions refer to the Four Noble Truth of Buddhist Doctrine (Snodgrass, 1985: 37-38).

<sup>7</sup> Mahasammata was the first king and he was elected in order to establish law and order, justice and harmony when society had fallen. He charmed other by the norm, Dhamma he was a Khattiya or Lord of the Fields. This aspect of him links up with other canonical formulations of the ideal Buddhist king as being a righteous king, Dhammaraja, an upholder of morality (Weerataweemat, 1999: 33).



**Fig. 12** The stupa plan as mandala  
And the Plan of central stupa

Source: (a) Redrawn after Snodgrass, 1985, (b) Mandalay Archeological Department

The type of this stupa is said to be terrace-stupa. The stepped pyramid likewise a mountain. The form of the terrace-stupa is that of the prasada, which specifically a mountain is. The Burmese terrace-stupa are described as mountain and the Angkorian temples, which are closely related to the terrace-stupa are specifically built to represent the mountain of the world. Snodgrass said that, “Practically every temple in Southeast Asia, whether Hindu or Buddhist, considered as the image of mountain of Mount Meru” (Snodgrass, 1985: 226).



**Fig. 13** Central stupa of Royal Merit Pagoda

Source: James Kerr, 1880

In planning of Royal Merit Pagoda, a large stupa is at the center and a small stupa in each of four corners of the uppermost terrace. Just as the universe is organized around Mount *Meru*, the small cave like structures with *Tripitaka* were constituted around the central stupa. It is surrounded by ambulatory passage ways for circumambulation of people, enclosure walls and small cave like structures as nesting squares. The most significant cosmological component of the

Royal Merit pagoda is the seven squares of small cave like structures with *Tripitaka* surrounding the central stupa. This might represents the seven mountain ranges or seven annular seas surrounding Mount *Meru*. This plan followed the *mandala* model in directing the layout plan and architectural design (Fig.14).

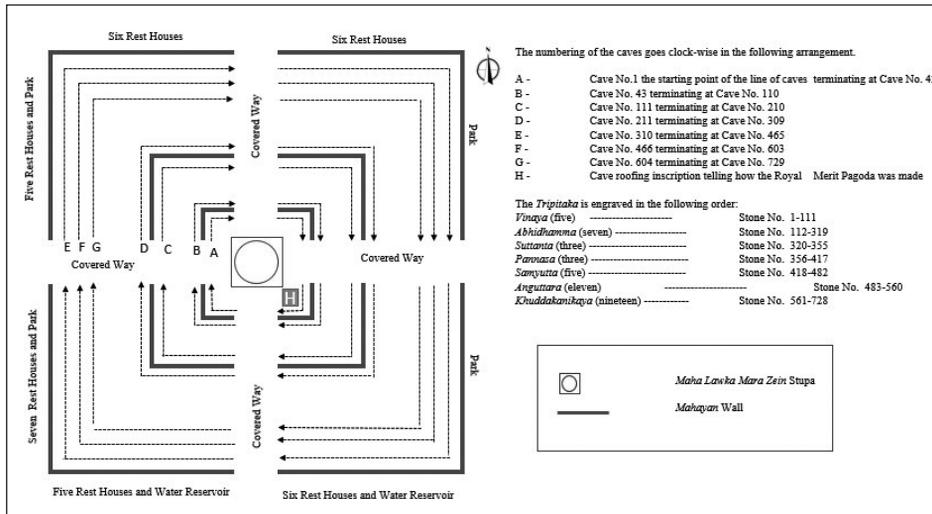


Fig. 14 Plan of *Tripitaka* in Royal Merit Pagoda  
 Source: Reproduced after Ahmar, 1974

In particular, King Mindon built Buddhist edifice, especially a central stupa enclosed with *Tripitaka* not merely a microcosmic symbol of the macrocosm, but also this embodied the very law of *Dhamma* governing the cosmos. By such mimetic repetition, peace and prosperity would be undertaken in the realm and enable the king to govern as a universal monarch, a *Cakkavaratti*. Myanmar kings were most influenced by the model of *Cakkavaratti* who attains his position through the virtues of his past meritorious lives and who rules justly and compassionately in accordance with the *Dhamma*.

### The *Tripitaka*Taik (Library for Buddhist Scriptures)

The Library for the Buddhist Scriptures called *Tripitaka*Taik was also located near the foot of the Mandalay Hill (Fig.15). It was one of the seven monumental buildings which were all constructed simultaneously when the king established the city. In January 1864, copies of *Tripitaka* left by the previous Kings at Amarapura Library Building were moved to this building. The three sets of *Tripitaka* were finished on 11th March 1865 and were also deposited at this library. The building itself was left in ruin for a long time and was later reconstructed (Ahmar, 1974: 16-17).



Fig. 15 Tripitaka Taik

Source: Archeological Department, Mandalay, 1904



Fig. 16 Archway of Tripitaka Taik

Source: Archeological Survey of India, 1904

The *Tripitaka Taik* was a masonry building with teak joists. The archway was crowned with a pediment featuring stucco decoration of *makaras* (mythical sea serpents), lions and a celestial being from Burmese pantheon of spirits (Fig.16). The wall and parapets on the building were ornamented with diamond or leaf shaped elements called *Seintaung*. They were used to demarcate the area around a sacred building. They were embellished with ogres and foliage design carved or molded in white stucco (Report on Archeological Work in Burma for the year 1903-04) (Fig.17).



Fig. 17 Walls and parapets of Tripitaka Taik

Source: Archeological Survey of India, 1904

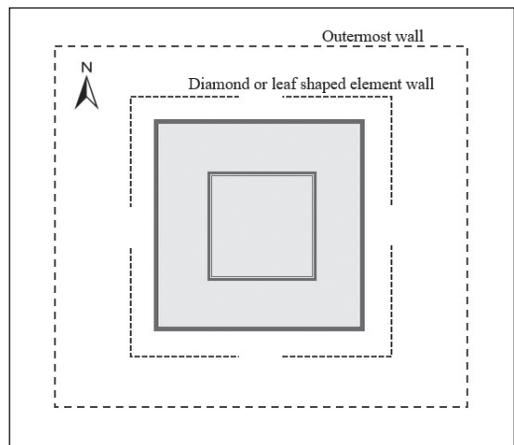


Fig. 18 Plan of the Tripitaka Taik

The plan of *Tripitaka* Taik was also a centralized plan. The significant symbol of mandala, concentric squares were laid by setting building of double layers brick wall encircled with diamond or leave shaped wall. Then encircled again by outermost wall (Fig.18). It orientated to four cardinal directions. The *Tripitaka* was deposited at the center to be paid homage as *Dhammacetiya*<sup>8</sup> The building was also decorated with sculptures and reliefs with depicting deities and mythical creatures as would be found on cosmic Meru mountain.

### The Atumashi (Incomparable) Monastery

The Incomparable Monastery was erected by King Mindon in 1857 as one of the sacred edifices of Mandalay. It stood next to the Royal Merit Pagoda (Fig.19). In this building enshrined a huge image of Gautama Buddha which was made of the silken clothes of the king covered with lacquer. The forehead of the image was adorned with a diamond weighing 32 rattes, which was presented to King Bodawphaya, about a century ago by Mahanawrata, the Governor of Arakan. In the building were deposited, in large teak boxes, four sets of *Tripitaka*, and the monastery was entrusted to the charge of the late Pakan Senior monk. During the troubles following the British annexation of Upper Burma, the whole building, together with its contents was burnt in 1890 (Ko, 1917: 11).

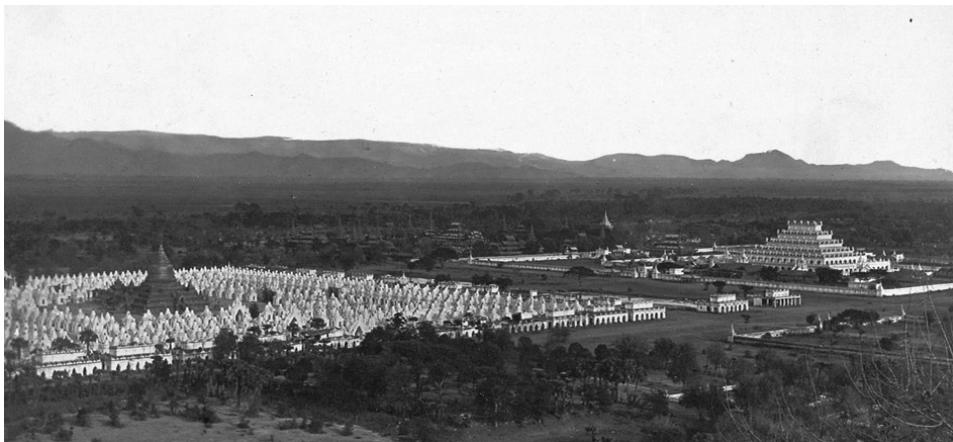


Fig. 19 Royal Merit Pagoda and Incomparable Monastery

Source: Hooper, Willoughby Wallace, 1886

<sup>8</sup> The Vinaya Sub-commentary (sarattadipani) lists three kinds of shrines: (1) Relic shrine (*dhatu cetiya*), (2) Shrine by use (*paribhogika cetiya*) and (3) *Dhamma* shrine (*dhammacetiya*). *Dhamma* shrine is meant a shrine containing writings of Buddhist doctrines (San, 2013: 11).

The handrails of the flight at entrance decorated with of *makaras* (mythical sea serpents) moldings and used round arches, attributed to the European influenced architecture of 19<sup>th</sup> century Burma (Fig.19). The building was of wood covered with stucco on the outside, and its peculiar feature was its being surmounted by five rectangular terraces creating a large stepped pyramid. This monastery has been reconstructed to a new design (Report on Archeological Work in Burma for the year 1903-04). The plan of Incomparable building was rectangular in shape and it differed from the former two edifices because of the function of monastery building (Fig. 20). The five stepped pyramidal roof and decorative elements of monastery might represent the cosmic mountain, Mount *Meru*.

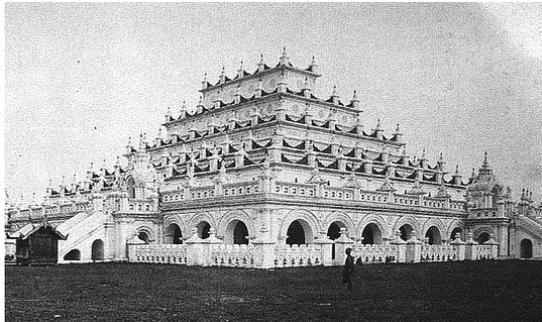


Fig. 20 Incomparable Monastery

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/birdcotton>

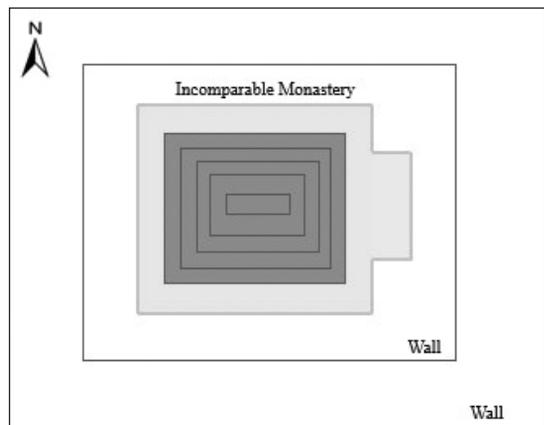


Fig. 21 Plan of Incomparable Monastery

Source: Reproduced after Archeological Department, Mandalay

## Discussion

### *Tripitaka as a means of Dhammaraja*

In the political sense, *Dhammaraja* means administering the state efficiently according *Dhamma*. The tradition of *Mahathamata*, Asoka as *Dhammaraja*, the concept of righteous conquest was applied by King Mindon. He considered the beginning sign of peril for his capital in the advent of British impact to Myanmar government after the loss of Pegu (Lower Myanmar). In this state of affairs, confronted with the necessity to make a sovereign authority by giving a sacred law, the *Dhamma* as the *Mahasammata* in order to bring the stable political situation. The reason why the capital transferred from Amarapura to Mandalay by King Mindon was to establish a new Buddhist Kingdom after the loss of Lower Myanmar to the British. Therefore, the *Dhamma* needed to be framed as the foundation of Konboug society.

During the period from the time of Buddha Gotama to the minimum life span, the Buddha's Dispensation (Buddha-sasana) will disappear. When the Buddha agreed to create the BhikkuniSangha, he told Ven. Ananda that the Sasana would last only half as long because of this. The commentary on the *Abhidhamma* text, the *Dhammasangani*, says that when the First Buddhist Council convened by Ven. Maha-Kassapa rehearsed the Pali Canon, this made it possible for the Sasana to endure for five thousand years. In the *Anagatavamsa* commentary, the Buddha is said to preface the account of the future Buddha AriyaMetteyya by saying his own dispensation will disappear in five stages: (1) the disappearance of the analytical insight (*patisambhida*), (2) the disappearance of the Paths and Fruition States, (3) the disappearance of the practice (*patipatti*), (4) the disappearance of the texts (*pariyatti*), and the disappearance of the Sangha (C. Tin, 1992: 17). That's the one concept of the life span of Buddha Sasana depend on the Pali Canon called *Tripitaka* and Sangha. To protect the disappearance of the Sangha, King Mindon emphasized on allocating the monasteries in his new capital and Atumashi monastery was built as one of seven edifices. To conserve the rest disappearances, the King built Kuthotaw pagoda by placing *Tripitaka* in its enclosures with systematic arrangement of Vinaya, Abhidhamma and Suttana. VinayaPitaka deals with the rules and regulations of the order of monks and nuns came firstly. It might mean that *VinayaPitaka* theoretically control piety and purity of the Sangha might be the most critical component of the Sasana. *AbhidhammaPitaka* consists of the Four Ultimate Things in second place because of the deepest way to attain Nibbana. This is the fact related to the disappearance of the practice. The *SuttaPitaka* contained the discourses delivered by the Buddha was in the third place of arrangement. King Mindon tried to defense those five disappearances and made assured the life span of the Sasana.

Moreover each world cycle (Kappa) is subdivided into four yugas or world ages. *KritaYuga*, the first of the ages, is the perfect one and average human life span was 100,000 years. During this yuga, men and women are born virtuous, and they devote their lives to the fulfilment of the duties and tasks divinely ordained by *Dhamma*. However, order begins to lose ground, and *Dhamma* vanishes quarter by quarter. *Treta Yuga*, the three quarters of its total virtue is sustained by human society and one quarter is sin with average human life span of 10,000 years. In the age of *Dvapara Yuga*, there are half virtue and half sin in the manifest world with average human life span of 1,000 years. *Kali Yuga*, the Dark Age, miserably subsists on only a quarter of the full strength of *Dhamma*. The rest three quarters are sin with average human life span of 100 years (Zimmer, 1963: 13-15 cited in Weerataweemat, 1999: 35). This means that the immorality will continue to increase and human life span will continue to decrease. *Tripitaka* Taik at the foot of Mandalay hill was built for laity to celebrate and study as *Dhamma* to come out as a righteous enterprise to spread the religion in public. Single of the most duties of the *Dhammaraja* was uphold the *Dhamma* to all inhabitants

of the kingdom to void sins and conceive in terms of *Dhamma*. The king tried to set up *Tripitaka* as a symbol of the *Dhamma* by building unconventionally a library for Buddhist scripture named *Tripitaka* Taik, Incomparable monastery named AtumashiKyaung and the Royal Merit Pagoda. King Mindon built the edifices concerned with *Tripitaka* in order to revive the *Dhamma* to the state of perfection and a perfect age to his people return to live with *Dhamma*.

The same concept was utilized by King Rama I (1782-1809) of Bangkok. He restored the *Dhamma* by donating a large sum towards the cost of copying the *Tripitaka* text on palm leaf manuscripts and distributing them to the royal monasteries for the sangha. The restoration of *Dhamma* indicated himself to be legitimized and righteous king (*Dhammaraja*) (Weerataweemat, 1999: 73). In the Royal Chapel of King Rama I, it was very unusual that the *Ho Trai* (*Tripitaka* library) and pond occupied almost half of the compound. The function of *Ho Trai* is to house the *Tripitaka* scriptures and other Buddhist texts. The domination of the *Ho Trai* in the plan of Royal Chapel reflected Rama I's emphasis of the importance of the *Dhamma*, represented by *Tripitaka*. The prasada-like cabinet containing the *Tripitaka* in the *Ho Trai* is the key to signify that *Dhamma* is the center of the universe (Weerataweemat, 1999: 73-126).

When Burmese attacked Siam, the Ayutthaya capital was captured. (Wannarat, 1978: 403-421 cited in Weerataweemat, 1999: 135). Wannarat (1978: 403-421 cited in Weerataweemat, 1999: 135) compared the calamity of Ayutthaya to the Kali Yuga (Dark Age) . The reign of Rama I, therefore was the beginning of the new age when humans lived in the most peaceful society. By setting the *Dhamma* (*Tripitaka*) at the center of the world, Rama I might have imagined that the *Dhamma* was to be constituted firmly in the new kingdom. The extraordinary emphasized on *Tripitaka* by King Rama I may be compared to King *Asoka*, who commissioned the erection of wheel pillar, an analogy for the eternal law (*Dhamma*) which the Buddha turned when he began teaching his first sermon at *Saranath* (Irwin, 1976). Irwin has also pointed out the symbolic significance of *Asoka's* pillar as follows: “*In terms of his personal faith as a Buddhist, Asoka may well have imagined the Pillar-of-Law as a symbol of light and order, darkness and chaos*” (Irwin, 1976: 752 cited in Weerataweemat, 1999: 135). King *Asoka* who was the primordial figure of Buddhist kingship provided a fully developed model of the ideal Buddhist king. In this connection the central portion which was given to an account describing his simultaneous construction of 84000 stupas through his kingdom (an action symbolizing the establishment of the *Dhamma*). Finally in the *Theravada* versions the tradition also includes an account of *Asoka's* convening of a Buddhist Council and then he is presented as a *Dhammaraja* or *Cakkavatti* monarch who devotion to the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the Sangha was complete and effective (Reynolds, 1972: 29).

Thus, to be a righteous king or *Dhammaraja* like *Asoka*, King Mindon spent enormous sums of resources to convene the Fifth Great Buddhist Synod with 2400 monks in Sasana year 2400 as a

great patron of Buddhist religion in Mandalay, his new royal city. At that time monks and lay scholars gather to recite all the teachings of Buddha. They examined the *Tripitaka* in minute detail for errors alternations and omissions of sacred scriptures which over the centuries had found their way into the texts through the process of copying, as *Asoka* had done by purifying and uniting the religion. As the matter of fact, this Great Synod secured King Mindon as a legitimate ruler. At the end of the Fifth Buddhist Synod, the entire *Tripitaka* was inscribed on 729 marble slabs on a memorial in honor of *Dhamma* as meritorious deeds to represent his image as to be a righteous king, *Dhammaraja* by preserving *Tripitaka* in the promotion of Buddhism. King Mindon created eighty-four thousand units of *Dhamma* referred to 84,000 self-born Buddha as the same action with *Asoka* built 84,000 stupas. In *Theravada* Buddhism, it had been prophesied that the religion would last only 5,000 years. Therefore, the King imagined that his stone inscriptions would last until the end of the kalpa (the cosmic period). There are four places in the world where a peculiar quality in each place would last for eternity in the Burmese tradition. They are: (1) A spot in a forest where no forest fire will burn (see the *VattakaJataka* no. 5), (2) The site of *Ghatika* the Potter's house where no rain drop will ever fall (see *GhatikaraSutta*, no. 81 of the *MajjhamaNikaya*), (3) A lake where all natural cane-grass growing around it turn hollow just like drinking-straws (see *Na la ka pa naJata-ka* no. 20) and (4) The face of the moon where the figure of a hare was drawn (see *SasaJataka* no. 316). King Mindon's ambition was to add a fifth one to these four eternities as the world exists (Ahmar, 1974: 37-38).

King Jayavarman VII of Angkor also built the *NeakPean* as a symbol of *Anotatta* Lake. This lake is the source of all sacred rivers of India and important place in Buddhist cosmology. The replica of *Anotatta* Lake in *Himavanta* Forest was created on Angkorian land of his kingdom because this lake will last to the end of the kalpa. (Boisselier, 1990: 9-10). The same concept of erecting Royal Merit Pagoda was applied by King Mindon in order to create the last sacred place which will stand till the end of kalpa.

#### ***Tripitaka* Symbol as a means of *Cakkavatti***

King Mindon used *mandala* in planning of these religious buildings in order to reproduce the cosmological order, macrocosm and microcosm. By planning the buildings associated with the central cosmic mountain, Mount Meru, King Mindon became automatically Cosmo creator who conquered the continents located at each of four cardinal direction. This concept was distinctly applied in order to achieve harmony with a replica of the structure of the universe. The Royal Merit Pagoda (*Kuthotaw*) links Buddhist cosmology and kingship by rising from the background in its *mandala* form as an incarnation of the macrocosmos and microcosmos. Weerataweemat (1999: 302) discussed the next important concept of *Cakkavatti* kingship of the Legend of King *Jambupati*. The story tells the Buddha created a city from *Veluvana*, a monastery in *Rajagaha*, as

a city of Buddha *Rajadhiraja*. The text identified the city of Buddha *Rajadhiraja* as being made up of 100,000 *Vimanas*. The 729 spires of the small stupas encircle the central stupa of the *Royal Merit Pagoda*, might represents simultaneously the image of the city of Buddha *Rajadhiraja*, a supreme *Cakkavatti*. It cannot be denied that his kingdom possessed absolute sovereignty. His power extended the whole continent through his *Dhamma*.

## Conclusion

When King Anawratha had proceeded to revitalize *Theravada* Buddhism in Upper Burma after he conquered Thaton, *Tripitaka* became the very important symbol of Myanmar Buddhist kingship to denote the king as *Dhammaraja* and *Cakkavatti*. The *Tripitaka* Taik became one of seven edifices in the sovereignty of King Badon when Amarapura royal city was established. The *Tripitaka* was more emphasized in the planning of Yadanarbon (The city of Gem) or Mandalay with three edifices by King Mindon. *Tripitaka* is the mysterious one who caused the *Tripitaka*, would not suffer death by accident or by a poisonous weapon or by enemy kings and would reborn with the most excellent beauty either in a noble famous family (Sangaha, 1941: 95-99). The outstanding works of King Mindon which convened the Fifth Buddhist Synod and constructed *Tripitaka* stone inscriptions showed the achievement of the King equal to King *Asoka* as a *Dhammaraja* or *Cakkavatti* whose devotion to the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the Sangha. The Royal Merit (Kuthotaw) Pagoda links Buddhist cosmology and kingship by rising from the ground in its *mandala* form as an embodiment of heaven and earth, the macrocosm and microcosm. With this harmony, the kingdom of Konboun is said to be impervious to attack. Furthermore, it represented simultaneously the image of the universe and figured King Mindon to be *Cakkavatti*, universal ruler who governed by virtue of his merit. It also came to refer to the unbounded radius of monarchical power and virtue. King Mindon built Royal Merit Pagoda with stone scriptures as a fifth peculiar place on the world in Burmese Buddhist tradition in order to ensure that the city of the Konboun kingdom, Mandalay, will exist until the end of cosmic period.

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