

**Buddhist Art and Architecture during Bagan
Dynasty (1044-1368)**

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

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JANITA

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PROF. S. VICTOR BABU**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SCHOOL FOR AMBEDKAR STUDIES
BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
LUCKNOW-226025
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SUMMARY

The research paper is studied about art and architectural aspects of Bagan monuments that were built during the reign of Bagan Kings. The stupas are classified according to their development of form such as Stupas with bulbous shape, Stupas with octagonal basement, Stupas with rectangular basement, Stupas with circular basement, Stupas with pentagonal basement and Sinhalese type Stupas. Most of the stupas with circular basement, bulbous shape, rectangular basement, pentagonal basement and octagonal basement in the Bagan period were apparently evolved from the hemispherical stupa like Sanchi and Amaravali of India.

The ancient kingdom of Bagan in Myanmar is the symbol of Burmese religion, history and culture as well as facts about important architectural works of its ancient capital. Towering above the plains of the central Myanmar, the treasures of the ancient kingdom of Bagan have survived for centuries. Bagan is home to over two thousand Buddhist temples standing as symbols of Burmese history and culture.

The ancient capital city of Bagan can be found in the Mandalay region of Myanmar. The kingdom of Bagan began its ascendancy under King Anawrahta in the 11th century, though there was construction at the site in previous centuries. Two factors led to Bagan's rapid growth. First, the Burmese defeated the rival Mon kingdom in battle under King Anawrahta, allowing him to consolidate his power as their ruler. Second, King Anawrahta converted to Buddhism and had a sudden need for temples, and lots of them.

The century that followed is remembered as the Golden Age of Burmese Temple Building and also earned Bagan the nickname "Land of a Thousand Pagodas." The people of Bagan took refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and they also hoped that the religion would

last until the end of 5000 years after the parinibbanna of Lord Buddha. They took part many meritorious deeds in supporting the propagation of the religion. They built solid pagodas, hollow pagodas, Ordination halls (sima), monasteries (Vihara), Pitakas stores, Dhamma halls, rest houses, alms-houses, warehouses, reservoirs, wells and bridges. By the end of the 13th century, more than 4,000 religious structures were built in and around the kingdom's capital city. Though many temples have been damaged and destroyed by natural and manmade forces since then, over 2,000 temples and other structures survive until modern day.

Bagan temples are unique among Southeast Asian architectural styles. They are characterized by central, square structures built around shrines, with interior passages supported by vaulted arches radiating outward, creating the shape of a cross. Kiln-fired brick and stucco make up the interior of the temples. Archaeologists know that the bricks were made outside of Bagan and shipped in via the Ayeyarwaddy River because each brick carries a stamp of the village in which it was made.

The outer structure of the temples' soaring, pointed towers are meant to reflect the shape of Mt. Meru, the mythical home of the Hindu gods, which is also held sacred by Buddhists as the center of the world.

There were altogether the stupas that built in Bagan and the Dhammarajaka Stupa is the zenith of Myanmar Religious Architecture. Myanmar had impressed on special features and their own style from the Indian style. They showed entirely the different appearance of the whole structures from the Indian monuments. They may be traced to the Indian origin by signifying the philosophy of the fine arts. This research paper is studied that the artistic decorations and the architectural typology of Bagan monuments adopted to conform Myanmar style.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study is aimed to contribute the following objectives.

-To study on creation of architectural aspects of stupas those were built during the first Empire of Myanmar.

-To express in attempting of the development of arts and architectural aspect during Bagan dynasty.

-To support the works of conservation and maintenance of these historical monuments in Bagan area.

-To appreciate cultural heritage buildings and conserve thr essence of atchitctural objects of these heritage buildings.

-To perceive the essence of the cultural heritage buildings in Bagan without losing their values.

HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

On viewing the study on Buddhist arts and architectures of Bagan dynasty, five main factors can be viewed as fallows;

- (i) The reflections of the historical background in Bagan dynasty.
- (ii) The special features and ideas of creative abality during the reign of study.
- (iii) The development and changes in arts and architectural typology of temples and stupas in Bagan.
- (iv) The arts and architectural technological achievements of Myanmar religious architecture reached its peak during Bagan dynasty.

- (v) Not only regional people but also national people need to conserve and protect the landscape of Bagan not to lose the essence of Bagan due to man-made and climate.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Historical method using archival and literature sources has been used in this study. An attempt has made to recapture the nuances, personalities, and ideas and events. It has been the process of learning and understanding the background and growth of the study field to offer insight into a reliable result.

Chapterisation of Study

This study has been divided into six chapters for narration of contribution of Buddhist art and architecture during Bagan dynasty.

Chapter one has dealt with the introduction. It introduces the historical background of Bagan such as geographical condition, climatical condition, social-economic condition and religious beliefs as a brief history of ancient Bagan. The principal forms of Buddhist art involve the construction of monuments, either stupas or temples, which embody the main artistic media: architecture, painting, and sculpture, in addition to the decorative arts. Along the southern Burma coastline the Mon civilization enjoyed good maritime contacts with India and acted as a conduit for the ingress of Buddhism into the Irrawaddy valley. The Mon possessed their own script, and their knowledge of Pali texts was significant to the development of art at Pagan.

Buddhism develops art and architectures as visual aids for propagation of the religious ideas. Buddhist stylistic arts have given the great impacts on the religious and secular life of the

people and thus Buddhism had created a great current of art. Under this artistic trend, many valuable art-works created. The images and monuments of Buddha comprise the arts of Bagan.

Chapter two has dealt with the contribution of Bagan dynasty to Buddhist architecture. This chapter attempts to document the chronological list of Bagan Kings and how Bagan dynasty contributes to Buddhist architectures.

The origin of first Bagan occupied nineteen villages at Yonhluhkyun, later the successive kings moved to Sripaccaya and Tampawadi. Under the reign of King Pyinbya, the old Bagan was founded in 849 A D. Tradition carried by the local chronicles, has it that a long line of fifty-five kings ruled over this kingdom during the twelve centuries.

Chapter three has dealt with the art tradition. This chapter traces the essence of Myanmar traditional art culture. By so doing attempt has been made to present various kinds of art, especially popular “the ten flowers art” which are extremely concerned with ancient artistic decorations of Bagan. Art is a cornerstone of Myanmar culture. The traditional Myanmar art forms are cherished and have named ‘The Ten Flowers’. The 10 flower arts are as follows:

1. Panbe (the art of the blacksmith)
2. Pantain (the art of the gold and silver smith)
3. Pantin (the art of bronze casting)
4. Pantaut (the art of making floral designs using masonry)
5. Pantamault (the art of carving stone)
6. Panyan (the art of bricklaying and masonry)
7. Panbu (the art of wood and ivory carving)

8. Panpoot (the art of turning designs on a lathe)

9. Panchi (the art of painting)

10. Panyun (the art of making lacquer ware).

Myanmar art reflects the central Buddhist elements including the mudra (hand position), Jataka tales, Bodhisattva idea, the stupa, the image and any kind of religious monument.

Chapter four has dealt with the monasteries and temples. This chapter mainly explores the process of evolution of the various kinds of vihara for Buddhist monks in Bagan period. The thousands of temples that are spread across the plains of Bagan are the most impressive testament to the religious devotion of Myanmar's people and rulers over the centuries. Monastery is identical with Pali term Vihara. But the term 'temple' sometimes means to a monastery, sometimes a pagoda. Pagoda or stupa or cetiya is mainly for worshipping and the monastery is intended to be dwelled by Buddhist monks. Bagan has mixed style of temple, traditionally distinguished them whether solid or cave structure. There were many monasteries or monastery complexes built by kings and nobility, at times within a large walled compound with pagodas, water tanks, wells, rest houses for travelling pilgrims, alms halls for donation ceremonies and store rooms. Slaves were donated to work in these monasteries as well as farmland or orchards of toddy palm to bring in food and income for the upkeep of the monastic complex. There were also libraries for storing Buddhist texts and the sima the ordination halls.

The monasteries extant at Bagan form another distinct class of monumental dedication. These were constructed mainly of brick masonry, but wooden porches were often attached to them. Monasteries entirely built of timber and wooden halls attached to brick structures have not

survived the long passage of time. The most common type is the double storeyed square building found mostly within the precincts of prominent pagodas or temples.

Bagan monasteries and those of Myanmar in general, were generally made of wood. Many of the wooden monasteries with rich architectural significance have disappeared over the centuries for a variety of reasons. Wooden monasteries were usually built of Teak. Threats of fire, insects, rain and humidity and the intensity of the sun's rays may fell the old monasteries into decay and disrepair while the far older brick, stone and stucco stupas and temples have survived in Bagan.

Chapter five has dealt with the stupas. This chapter mainly explores the process of evolution of the various types of stupas on the plain of Bagan during the reign of Bagan Kings. The word 'stupa' means the pagoda, which is a solid spire or cylindrical shape with a domed or pointed top. Pagoda or stupa is Buddhist commemorative monument usually housing sacred relics associated with the Buddha or His sainted fellows. The stupa is one of the most important structures as a ritual building. People worship the stupa going round keeping to the right (Circumambulate). They worship the stupa offering flowers and incense. Therefore, stupa becomes most ritual buildings because it has religious significance.

Myanmar is the land of pagodas as wherever can find pagodas. Some golden and towering, others small and not painted, on hilltops or flat lands, thus in all sizes, shape and conditions. Pagodas are icons of virtual worship and ritual and also beautiful in architecture. Pagoda is the demand to express people's devotion to and adoration of Lord Buddha and his teaching that manifests itself in the act of building pagodas and in making ceremonial offerings before the shrines. Pagodas are also the centres of social activities. They are places for communal alms-donation at proper seasons, people contributing in cash or in kind.

Chapter six has dealt with the Buddhist images and its iconographical features. This chapter attempts to document (Bagan style) iconographical features of statues of Buddha. The main objective of this chapter is to explore how Buddhist decorative items adopt and interpret from Theravada Pitaka as well as from other religions. Flexibility, adoption of cultural element, and blend of religious symbols were significant features of Bagan spirituality.

Although the Southeast Asia Buddhist art as visual aids for propagation of the religious ideas reflects Hindu art influences, it was changed in the Southeast Asian context. The iconography of Southeast Asian Art strongly reflects Indian influences but Buddhist artists tried to change the idea with the identifying attributes and gestures of some Hindu deities as Buddhist icons.

The diversification and complicated nature of the Late Bagan architectural and artistic achievement can be observed in the Minanthu and Phwar Saw villages. The iconographic remains of Bagan Period can provide the Buddhist dissemination from the origins of India to the East and Southeast Asian regions throughout the land route of Bagan regions because so many visual remains can be found in Bagan as the adapted; influenced; flourished; and compromised features with the neighboring boundary.

An attempt has been made to express the different features such as the standing Buddha images, the seated Buddha images, the reclining Buddha images, the crowned Buddha images, 28 Buddhas, the mudra (hand positions), Relief plaques, Stucco work and wall paintings. The Influence of Hindu Iconography and Tantric Iconography are also found. It shows Bagan did not distinguish between what is Theravada and what is non-Theravada. This leads to the intersectorian blend of iconography and symbolism found in Bagan monuments since the early period up to the end of Bagan era.

Finally an attempt has been made to represent the three-storeyed museum which displays ancient arts and architectural items. During Bagan period, the artistic and architectural achievements of Myanmar Religious Architecture reached its golden age. Nowadays, the new public buildings appear on the landscape of Bagan. Some are built among ancient Bagan monuments. This zone may be developed with tourist facilities such as new public buildings e.g. hotels, motels, guest houses, inns, museum etc. without any attention not only on the value of cultural heritage buildings but also on the essence of the landscape of Bagan in future. All developments within this zone should be strictly prohibited. And the proper way of maintenance and renovation should be performed carefully not to lose their own architectural and archaeological values.