The Study of the Four Historic Simās that Shin Arahan Consecrated in Mandalay

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Abstract

In this paper, the four Simās that were consecrated by Shin Arahan as Sunrise Simā, Noon Simā, Sunset Simā and Midnight Simā are presented in this paper. The state of the Simās in the present day, Shin Arahan’s historical links, Min Shin Saw’s religious works for the development of Sāsanā are presented for being taken as an exemplary and for emulation. Moreover, kinds of Simā, the accounts of consecration, the benefits that can be acquired by donation of Simā are also presented. This research work will enable to know the benefits that can be acquired by the donor of the Simā.

Key word : the four Simās, development of Sāsanā, donation of Simā

Introduction

The meaning of Simā

Myanmar means Sim (Thein), Pāli means Simā, English means a boundary (or) a limit (or) a chapter house for Buddhist monks. Simā is the place which is designated as a separate territory where all the Saṃgha assemble and perform the greater and lesser rites unitedly. The functions that have to be performed only by the monks such as ordination, assembly of Saṃgha reciting Vinayas in a Simā, asking to reprimand one another at the end of Buddhist Lent, offering of yellow robes, etc. are called greater and lesser rites. In performing one of the greater and lesser rites, the monks have to assemble in a Simā. The monks have to sit in the Simā at a distance of two cubits and a span. Such an assembly of monks is called “kāyasamaggi”. This denotes bodily unity or agreement in satisfaction.

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The Simā, the place where the monks assemble is consecrated with sīhasammutikammavācā according to the Buddha’s order and Vinaya rules. Such a consecrated order of Sīhasammutikammavācā penetrates and extends the mass of lithosphere which is 24 thousand yojanas in thickness to the hydrosphere below the lithosphere. Such a Simā cannot be destroyed by human king, celestial king, Brahma king and opposing enemy however much they may be powerful. Therefore Simā is the place which is indestructible by any person apart from the Saṅgha.

Kinds of Sīmā

There are two kinds of Simā. The Simā that is consecrated by a chapter of four monks or a chapter of monks more than four by reciting ŋattikammavācā in unison and the Simā which becomes a Simā of its own accord without reciting ŋattikammavācā. Of these two kinds of Simā, the first kind is called Baddha Simā (the Simā that is constituted of ŋattikammavācā) and the second kind is called Abaddha Simā (the Simā not constituted of ŋattikammavācā). Of these two kinds of Sīmā, Baddha Sīmā is further divided into three kinds, namely, (1) Khaṇḍa Simā, (2) Samānasamvāsaka Simā and (3)Avippavāsa Simā. Abaddha Simā is also subdivided into three kings, namely, (1) Gāma Simā, (2) Udakukhepa Simā and (3) Sattabbhantara Simā.

Khaṇḍa Simā

The word “khaṇḍa” means division. Khaṇḍasimā has to be consecrated separately within the delimited area of Mahāsimā. Therefore it is a somewhat small Simā. The Simā that can accommodate from twenty monks to one thousand monks is called Khaṇḍasimā. Although the number of monk is more than a thousand, as the number falls within the limit of Mahāsimā, it is designated as Khaṇḍasimā. The Simā that is consecrated encompassing the whole monastery complex or one or two domains of village but not covering more than three yojanas is the Mahāsimā. Not only the Simās in Mandalay but also all the Simās in Myanmar country belong to the category of Khaṇḍasimā.
**Samānasasāṃvāsaka Simā**

The word *Samānasasāṃvāsaka Simā* means the place which is designated for assembling of the monks for performing greater or lesser religious rites with common agreement. This place can be *Baddha Simā* or *Abaddha Simā*.

**Avippavāsa Simā**

The word *Avippavāsa Simā* means that is consecrated for the benefit of staying on *Samānasasāṃvāsaka* which is *Baddha Simā* free from three robes.

**Gāma Simā**

The word “*Gāma Thein*” is derived from *Pāli* word “*Gāma Simā*”. It means village boundary. The village boundary is not only the village within fencing but also the hills and the paddy fields belonging to the village. The place of village including the hills and paddy field is called *Gāma Simā*. The river, saline stream and naturally formed lakes within *Gāma Simā* are not called *Gāma Simā*. Not only the village boundary but also the boundary of large villages and towns are also called *Gāma Simā*. Therefore the boundary of village, the boundary of large village, and boundary of town means *Gāma*, *Gāma Simā* and *Gāma* domain. The above mentioned village boundary, large village boundary and town boundary become *Sīmās* of its own accord without consecration.

**Udakukkhepa Simā**

The word “*Upakukkhepa Simā*” means that is erected in shallow water. *Simās* erected in river, ocean and naturally formed lake become *Simās* automatically without consecration.

**Sattabbhantara Simā**

The word “*Sattabbhantara Simā*” means that becomes *Simā* automatically without consecration with kammavācā in a place without any inhabitants.
Shin Arahāṃ

The original name of Shin Arahāṃ was Dharmadassi. After becoming a monk when he came of age, he became an Arahat who was learned in Piṭaka literature. He became distinguished as “Arahāṃ”. Shin Arahāṃ’s teachers were Venerable Mahākānu and Venerable Sīlavuddhi. Shin Arahāṃ went to Pagan for the purification of Sāsanā. He could preach King Anawratha to become convinced in the admonition of Therāvada Buddhism. After the arrival of Shin Arahāṃ, the Sāsanā of Pagan brightened like sunshine and moonshine. Htisaung Pagoda, at the foot of Taywin Taung that was enshrined with bone relics of Shin Arahāṃ, can be worshipped until today. In Natmauk Htun Shein’s National literary award winning book, Prince Min Shin Saw, the son of King Alaung Sithu, was banished from Pagan. The Prince came to Mandalay with multitude of elephants, horses and troops. Then Prince Min Shin Saw invited Arahats such as Shin Arahāṃ to propagate the Sāsanā. Furthermore in the book “Mandalay before King Mindon built Madalay Palace” it is also described that as Shin Arahāṃ Thera knew that Mandalay Shwe Taung area was going to be a place where the Sāsanā flourished, King Anawratha and fifty Arahats headed by Shin Arahāṃ built Simās and consecrated. As Prince Min Shin Saw knew that the places where Shin Arahāṃ consecrated Simās were auspicious and replete with glory, he built town and palace on a place called Putetkon formerly (Botetkon now) to the west of Shin Arahāṃ Simā.

Therefore Shin Arahāṃ who built the four Simās is considered to beShin Arahāṃ who came to Pagan from Thaton.
The Four Simās

There are four Simās in Mandalay that were consecrated by Shin Araham. They are:

(1) Sunrise Simā,
(2) Noon Simā,
(3) Sunset Simā and
(4) Midnight Simā

It is noted that Shin Araham called these Simās as Sunrise Simā, Noon Simā, Sunset Simā and Midnight Simā with reference to the auspicious times when stakes were driven to mark off ground plan. These Simās were well known as Araham Simās because they were consecrated by Shin Araham himself. Although the original Simās that were built of teak, they were substituted with brick Simās when the teak structures were ruined. The four Simās belong to the category of Khaṇḍa Simā. The four Simās were consecrated by Shin Araham in B.E. 1601.

Sunrise Simā

Sunrise Simā is located at Botetkon village where Prince Min Shin Saw built a palace. It was included in Patheingyi Township. On the sixth waxing day of Wāso in M.E.1295, a person called U Sin from Thanpataw Village rebuilt the Simā with brick. It is 35' in length and 21' in wide. Most of the worldly persons who believe in omens go to the Sunrise Simā to pray for their success, prosperity, promotion, etc. when they are carrying out various worldly affairs.
Noon Simā

Noon Simā is located in the Ywa-U Kyaung in Kankauk Village. Now it is included in the additional quarter in the eastern part of Chanaye Thazan Township. Formerly it was included in Patheingyi Township. Kankauk quarter, relying on Aungpinle Lake, is located in the west of the embankment of Aungpinle Lake. U Chit Maung and Daw Ma Ma rebuilt the Noon Simā with brick M.E.1325. It is 21' in length and 15' in wide. Although Noon Simā was formerly built with three tiers, now it is built seven tiers. People are in the habit of going to this Simā before noon to pray for maintaining one’s rank, and who do not want to be transferred.
Sunset Simā

Sunset Simā is located in the Nyaung Kwe Quarter on the west of the embankment near the Ayeyarwaddy River. Although Nyaung Kwe Quarter is not included in the list of quarters, it was a distinct place in history. On looking at the Mandalay map, it is a place where the Ayeyarwaddy embankment makes a bend to the east. It is adjoining with Obo Shwekyin Quarter on the east and Phyigyi Yanlon Quarter on the south. Thayettapin Village and Kyunpaung Village are located on the west. It is included in Aung Myay Thazung Township. Now the mass are reconstructed with teak pillars. It is 35' in length and 21' in wide. As this Simā has a Buddha Image that fulfills the prayers, it is well known as a pagoda that fulfills prayer for breaking off the habit of drinking and prayer after taking a vow.

Midnight Simā

The Midnight Simā is located on the east of Mandalay-Yangon highway within the compound of Pyay Kyaung Taik in Taguntaing Quarter in Pyigy Tagun Township. Queen Sīrimahāratanādevī rebuilt the Simā on the fifth waxing day of wāso in M.E.1218. Now the Midnight Simā is graceful with stucco flower decoration as it has been reconstructed with
brick. But as the teak doors are still in good condition, they are found to be reused remarkably. The Midnight Simā is 42' in length and 42' in wide. It is known that the persons who want to compound medicine, those who to overpower sorcery and those who want to make solemn vow usually go to this Simā.

Out of many Simās which were consecrated Shin Arahaṃ who was a missionary Thera in the Pagan period, the four Simās, namely, Sunrise Simā, Noon Simā, Sunset Simā and Midnight Simā are particularly distinctive Simās on account of the people’s beliefs because the lay-men go to these Simās to make solemn resolutions.

The Benefits of Donation of Simā

There are four kinds of benefit acquired from donation of Simā. They are:-

(1) Just as the monks receive adhisīla sikkhā (training in higher morality) in the Simās donated by one-self, one will meet with Buddha Sāsanā in every life in the Saṃsāra and will able to practice adhisīla sikkhā.

(2) Just as the monks cleanse the breached morality on the Simā donated by one-self, one is free from breached morality and the danger of sīlavipatti in every life in the Saṃsara.
(3) Just as the monks cleanse themselves of the breached morality and free from the dangers of saggattaraya (the danger of celestial journey) and maggattaraya (the danger of magga, the donors of Simā do not meet with saggattaraya and maggattaraya and also free from apayavatta in every life in the Saṃsāra.

(4) Just as the Simā that one has donated exists penetrating the great earth, one will definitely acquire the indestructible benefit.

Conclusion

Among gems, diamond is the noblest. Among the offerings, the food received in the alms-bowl is the noblest. Among offerings of yellow robes, the offering of yellow robes between the first waning days of Thadingyut to the full-moon day of Tazaungmon is the noblest. Among the offerings of monastery, the offering of Simā is the noblest. Therefore the ancient scholar set a traditional saying: “diamond in pagodas, Simā in monasteries, kathina in robes, alms in the bowl is the noblest. In the Buddha Sāsanā there can be monks only when there are Simās (ordination halls). Only when there are monks, Buddha Sāsanā will be propagated, perpetuated and thrive. From the Buddha’s time to the present day, the prospective monks become monks on the Simās and carry out the religious affairs. Without the existence of various Simās, the prospective monks cannot be admitted into the Order of Samgha. Therefore Simā is a great and noble institution for propagation and perpetuation of Buddha Sāsanā.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to acting Rector and Pro-Rector, for their encouragement to carry out this research work. I am greatly indebted to Dr Htwe Yi, Head of the Department of Oriental Studies, Yadanabon University, sayamagyi Daw Mya Sint, Retired Professor the Department of Oriental Studies, Yadanabon University and Dr Khin Myint Myint, Head of the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Mandalay for their encouragement to write this paper.
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