

Two Great Sīmās in Myanmar

where the founders of Amarapura Mahānikāya got their higher ordination

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(1) Sin Kyo Shwegu Pagoda and its sīmā

The Sin Kyo Shwegu Pagoda is the largest of the pagodas located in the 4 corners of the royal city, Amarapura. It was situated in the northwestern corner of the royal city, which is on the northern side of today's Amarapura City.

Approximately 10 kilometers to the south of Mandalay, there lies the dried moat of the royal city with the Shwe Yinze Pagoda and the Daw Thi Pagoda situated on both sides of the road across the moat. The Sin Kyo Shwegu Pagoda is located to the west of the two pagodas.

The king allowed Aṃbagahapīṭiyē Ñāṇavimala and other Sri Lankan monks to attend the higher ordination ceremony at Hatthirajjasuvaṇṇaguhā-sīmā of this pagoda.¹⁾

This sīmā is located in the southwestern corner of the pagoda precincts. According to the present Sayadaw (chief monk) of the monastery, it was a beautiful building at the time, but destroyed during World War II; a number of Japanese soldiers stayed there and were air-raided by the Royal Air Force. The present sīmā is a temporary structure donated by a jeweler of Mandalay in 1988. The marked stones of the sīmā are authentic.

After King Mindon moved the capital from Amarapura to Mandalay, this area was deserted, smitten with pestilences, and shadowed by evil spirits.

In around 1930, a venerable monk, U Āzeinda (–1945) built a hut there to edify people and pray for safe and soundness (Kat Kyaw). He was also known as Kat Kyaw Sayadaw and became famous. Subsequently, the Sin Kyo Shwegu Pagoda came to be called the Kat Kyaw Pagoda. The following Sayadaws were U Kuthala (1945–1990) and U Nyanobātha (1990–). A trustee board was organized to proceed with the repairs of the pagodas and the construction of new monasteries in the precincts of approximately 8 acres. Outside the inner fence in the precincts, the vacant lot of a scripture house (Pitaka Taik) is indicated and a small pagoda stands there. Near the entrance to the temple precincts, there is a hall (Thudhamā Zayat, Sudhammasālā). Zayat means a rest house and typically has no wall. It is also used for a religious purpose. In this place, the Sri Lankan monks took examinations for Dhamma and Vinaya before attending the ordination ceremony.²⁾

The photo³⁾ which is available in today's Sri Lanka as showing the sīmā where the founders of the Amarapura Mahānikāya received the ordination, shows the Than Thay Kat Kyaw Pagoda rather

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than the *sīmā*.

At present, the monastery of the Sin Kyo Shwegu Pagoda belongs to the Thudhamā (Sudhamma) sect and has residents consisting of 12 bhikkhus and 18 samaneras.

(2) Kalyāṇi-sīmā

Among the founders of the Amarapura Mahānikāya, Kataluvē Guṇaratana did not go to Amarapura, but received the ordination at the Kalyāṇi-sīmā of Haṃsāvātī (Pegu). It was said that he was urged to do so by the Governor and Head Monk of Rāmañña (lower Burma).⁴⁾ The uppajjhāya was Medhānandadhaja Rājaguru Mahāthera of Head Monk in Rāmañña, who was in charge of the Kalyāṇi-sīmā temple.

The other founders, Kapugama Dhammakhandha and Attuḍāvē Dhammarakkhita also visited Kalyāṇi-sīmā after receiving the ordination in Amarapura. Kapugama met Kataluvē and Attuḍāvē's parties at the Kalyāṇi-sīmā on his trip home. In addition, the later generation founder of the Rāmañña Nikāya, Aṃbagahavattē Saraṇānkara received higher ordination again (daḷhīkamma) from Ñeyyadhamma, the Head of the Saṅgha as the uppajjhāya at Mandalay.⁵⁾ On his way home, however, he visited Haṃsāvātī and underwent the ordination ceremony again at the Kalyāṇi-sīmā. Kataluvē, Aṃbagahavattē, and other Sri Lankan monks regarded the tradition of the Kalyāṇi-sīmā of Haṃsāvātī of Rāmañña in lower Burma as important. In other words, Burmese Buddhism was first introduced from India to the Rāmañña region. That tradition was revived at the Kalyāṇi-sīmā. Although King Alaungpaya (1752–1760) conquered this region, he knew that the tradition of pure Theravāda Buddhism had been continuously handed down. Subsequently, King Bodawpaya repaired the Kalyāṇi-sīmā.

The establishment of the Kalyāṇi-sīmā originates from the fact that King Dhammazeti (1472–1492) of the Haṃsāvātī dynasty sent a Buddhist delegation to Sri Lanka in 1475. This delegation was intended to receive the ordination for the purpose of restoring the Saṅgha. Buvanekabāhu VI, the king at the time in Sri Lanka, welcomed the delegation. In a *sīmā* on the water of the Kālaṇi River, the king allowed the delegation to receive the ordination in 1476 from Vīdāgama Mahāthera as the uppajjhāya.

When the delegation returned home, King Dhammazeti established a *sīmā* in Pegu under the same name as the Sri Lankan *sīmā*. In this *sīmā*, ordination ceremonies were held to qualify a large number of bhikkhus, thereby the prosperity of the Saṅgha was promoted. Subsequently, the *sīmā* was repeatedly restored⁶⁾ to protect Theravāda Buddhism introduced from Sri Lanka.

The Kalyāṇi-sīmā is located in the western suburbs of Pegu City, 80 km north of Yangon. It is at Zaing-ganaing on the western bank of the Pegu River and was also accessible by boat from Yangon. When A. P. Buddhadatta Thera visited the *sīmā* in 1908, it was already dilapidated. The old buildings were destroyed during World War II. When the Thera visited the *sīmā* in 1953, only the foundation and marked stones were left. However, when he visited the *sīmā* in 1955, the buildings were completed there.⁷⁾ When the author visited the *sīmā* in 1996, he found that the *sīmā*, which had been repaired again a few years earlier, was more beautiful and larger than any *sīmās* that

could be seen in Sri Lanka. King Dhammazeti constructed monasteries and pagodas as well as the sīmā. In today's precincts of 15.5 acres, there are many monasteries and small and large pagodas, a lecture hall, a scripture house, rest houses, a dining hall, a storage room, Bodhi trees, and a large wells near the fenced sīmā, as well as the shed which stores the Kalyāṇi inscription and is located in the southeast corner.

The king appointed U Thuwunna, the Head of the Saṅgha in the Rāmañña, as the chief monk of a monastery. Today's Sayadaw, U Tilawka (2000–) is recorded as the 8th generation.⁸⁾ In this monastery, 68 monks (25 bhikkhus and 43 sāmaṇeras) reside and belong to the Shwegyin Nikāya. The monastery is a special prestigious temple in Pegu. Nine nāyakas are chosen from among 4,781 monks of 209 temples and then a chief monk is determined by the religious age. The sīmā is used for events such as ordination ceremonies, Uposatha, and Pavāraṇā. It is available to any other Nikāya.

Notes

- 1) *Sāsanavaṃsa* (PTS), p. 135. Hatthirajju Suvapaṇṇaguḥā-sīmā in the Kōtamalē Saddhammavaṃsa revised edition (Alutgama, 1931, p. 109) in Sri Lanka. The wall painting in Ambarukkharāmaya in Balapitiya shows that the entrance to the sīmā is shaped like an elephant. It is unknown whether the original building had an elephant-shaped entrance or not. The wall painting was created about 70 years ago.
- 2) Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, 1598–1885 A.D., Part Five, A.D. 1788–1806* (The Center for the Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1988), p.125.
- 3) For example, Tangallē Dirilakuru, *Siri Dam Rāki Saṅgaparapura* (1978); Maḍihē Paññāsīha, *Buddhavaṃsaya Sāsanavaṃsaya Amarapuravaṃsaya* (1990); Śrī Laṅkā Amarapura Mahā Saṅgha Sabhāva, *Śrī Laṅkā Amarapura Mahā Saṅgha Sabhāvē Gawrava Nāma Pradānōtsavaya* (1995). This photo was taken by a lay person accompanying the Sri Lankan bhikkhus who attended the 6th Saṅgāyana in Burma (taught by Ven. Vāligama Ñānaratana Nāyaka Mahā Thera).
- 4) Polvattē Buddhadatta, *Samīpāṭīyayehi Bauddhācāryayō* (Colombo, 1964), p. 36.
- 5) King Mindon transferred the capital from Amarapura to Mandalay in 1857. The founder of the Rāmañña Nikāya, Aṃbagahavattē Saraṇakara, received the ordination from Ñeyyadhamma as the upajjhāya in 1862, at Mandalay.
- 6) Taw Sein Ko, 'A Preliminary Study of the Kalyani Inscriptions of Dhammачeti, 1476 A.D.,' *The Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXII, 1893–1894. Kyogo Sasaki, "Kalyāṇi Hibun Ni Tsuite" ("Regarding the Kalyāṇi Inscriptions") "Iwai Hakase Koki Kinenronbunshu" ("Collection of Dissertations in Commemoration of Professor Iwai's 70th Birthday"), 1963, pp. 242–245. Niharranjan Ray, *An Introduction to the Theravada Buddhism in Burma*, 1946, pp. 182–192.

U Thet Tin describes the subsequent history of the sīmā as follows: In October/November 1576, King Bayin-naung restored the sīmā. In 1584/85, Portuguese destroyed the sīmā. In 1613/14, King Anauk Hpet-lun restored the sīmā. In 1645/46, King Thalun repaired it. In 1794/95, King Bodawpaya repaired it again. On April 23, 1873, the sīmā was burnt down. On November 28, 1873, U Thein and his wife, Daw Hmo U restored the sīmā. The Sayadaw was U Āsāya. In 1902/03, Daw Kyay and her 4 daughters restored the sīmā again. The Sayadaw was U Sandima. On May 5, 1930, the sīmā collapsed due to an

earthquake. The whole precincts were destroyed during World War II. U Thu Daw (owner of Shwe-chu Cheroot Company) and his relatives donated 100,000 kyat, and the government 420,000 kyat. On July 23, 1953, Prime Minister, U Nu held a ground-breaking ceremony in the presence of 9 Nāyaka Sayadaws. The sīmā was completed on February 7, 1955. U Thet Tin, *Pegu Myo Zedipaung 55 Su Thamaing Akyinchoke*, Thazin Press, Yangon, 1974, pp. 107–113. Regarding the building completed in 1995, see E. Michael Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma—A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 275.

7) Polvattē Buddhadatta, *Pāli Sāhityaya*, 1962, pp. 394–395.

8) The successive generations of Sayadaws at the Mahā Kalyāṇi Kyaung Taik are as follows: (1) U Thuwunna (1476–), head of the Saṅgha in the Rāmañña; (2) U Medhananda (during the reign of King Bodawpaya), head of the Saṅgha in the Rāmañña; (3) U Wunna (1856/57–), Mahā Nāyaka of the Aranyawathi Nikāya; (4) U Āsāya (1864/65–), Mahā Nāyaka of the Aranyawathi Shwegyin Nikāya; (5) U Sandima (1901/02), Nāyaka of the Aranyawathi Nikāya; (6) U Nyana Wuntha (1944/45–), Nāyaka of the Aranyawathi Shwegyin Nikāya; (7) U Zāneya (1972/73–2000), Nāyaka of the Aranyawathi Shwegyin Nikāya. Ashin Kelatha, *Kalyani Sasanawin*, Yangon, 1981, pp. 1–2; taught by late U Zāneya and U Tilawka.

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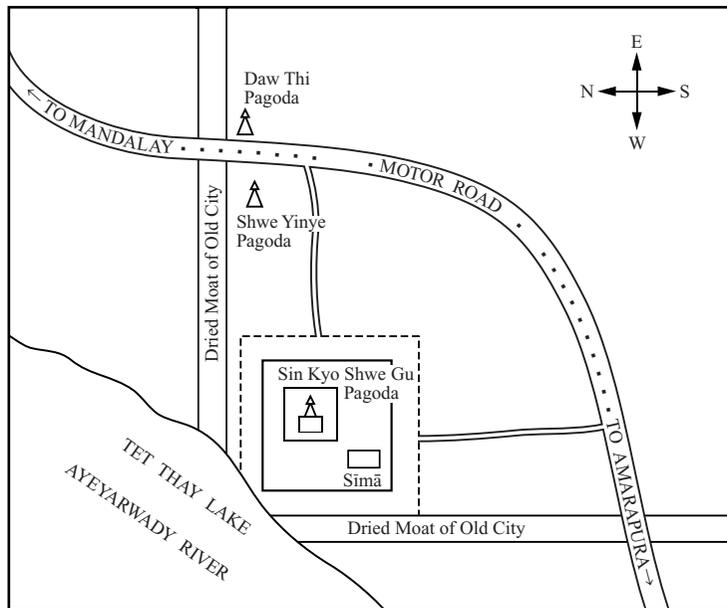
This is a revised paper under the title ‘A Survey of the Founders of the Amarapura Nikāya in Burma(Myanmar)’ published in *Journal of Sugiyama Jogakuen University*, Humanities, No. 33, 2002, pp. 153–172.

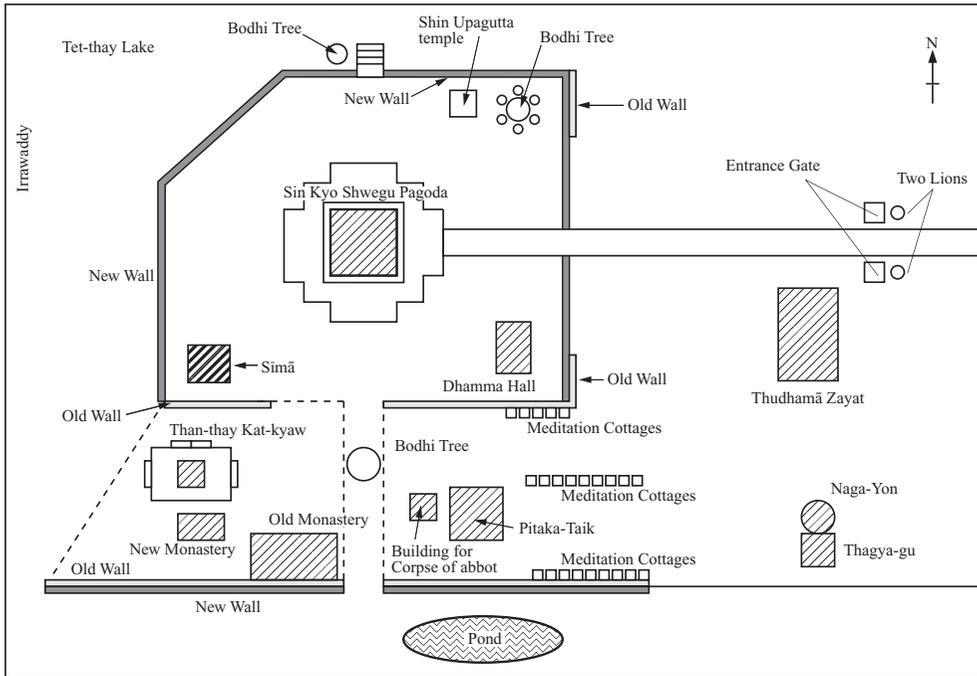
Two Great Sīmās in Myanmar



Sin Kyo Shwe Gu Pagoda (Amarapura)

The 3 founders of the Amarapura Nikāya underwent their ordinations at the sīmā of this Sin Kyo Shwe Gu Pagoda





Simā stone



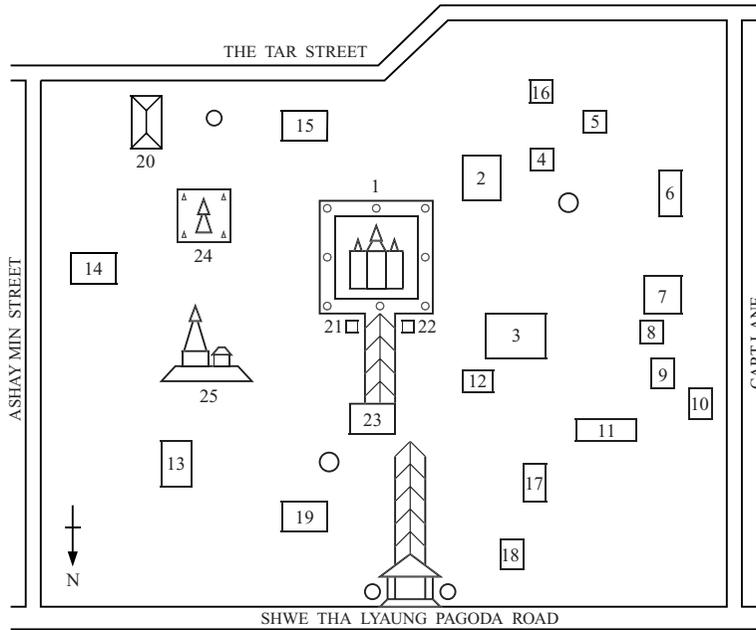
Than Thay Kat Kyaw Pagoda



Present-day Suvannaguhā-sīmā

Two Great Sīmās in Myanmar

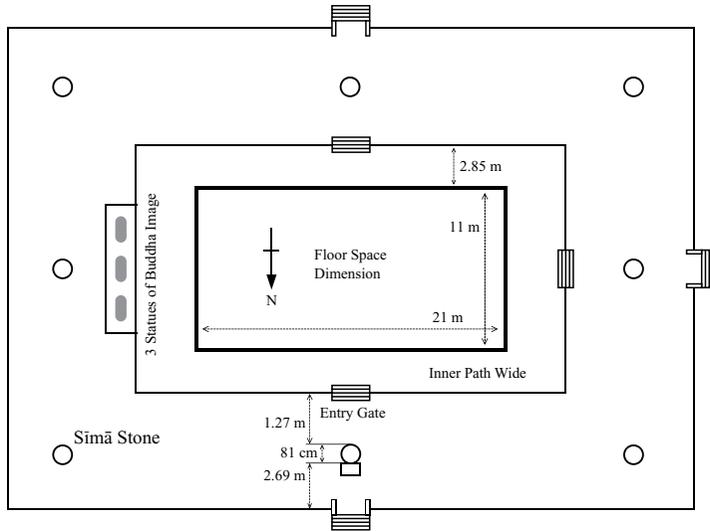
Mahā Kalyāṇi Kyaung Taik



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| (1) Kalyāṇi sīmā | (14) Sanda Wuntha Kyaung |
| (2) Sayadaw Kyaung | (15) Purana Kyaung |
| (3) Dhamma Hall | (16) Daw Punnya Zayat |
| (4) U Thi La Hsaung | (17) Daw Thi La Zayat |
| (5) Set Yon Kyaung | (18) Daw Nyāna Zayat |
| (6) Saṅgha Wātha Kyaung | (19) Zayat for Guest |
| (7) Swun-sa Kyaung (for cooking and dining) | (20) Inscription Shed (old) |
| (8) Store Hsaung | (21) Inscription Shed (New) |
| (9) Pyinnya Theik-pan Kyaung | (22) Bell Shed |
| (10) Dhamma Theik-pan Kyaung | (23) Dhamma Hall with Bronze Image |
| (11) Dhamma Sariya Kyaung | (24) Madawa Pagoda |
| (12) Library | (25) Thilawa Pagoda |
| (13) Thiri Manta Kyaung-thit | |



Mahā Kalyāṇi Kyaung Taik



Mahā Kalyāṇi Sīmā

Two Great Sīmās in Myanmar



Kalyāṇi Inscriptions