An Examination on Identity of Yenanchaung

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Abstract

Yenanchaung (c. 906-1885) stands out as providing its regional identity in the descriptions of the Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell Inscription and the Pinn Cakkalaṁpa Stone Inscriptions. The paper attempts to check those Inscriptions that aimed at recording religious contributions and personal accomplishments. The former researchers depended on offices and personal notes. Now, comparing with the contemporary documents, an examination of contents in those Inscriptions is thoroughly made with an intention to gain the historical reliability. This examination leads to discoveries: different names for Yenanchaung; regional background and royal officials of the Town. Moreover, those Inscriptions provide for some accounts of Yenanchaung, and an estimate of wealth of Twin-rooe Twin-za Community who took the leading role in Yenanchaung’s Society. It can be concluded that the paper partially reveals Identity of Yenanchaung.

1. Introduction

Mostly, the stone and bell inscriptions consist of accounts such as background of the donor's lineage and the donor's accomplishments. The Inscriptions in this paper are capable of recounting how Yenanchaung had existed in different names of those times and how Twin-rooe Twin-za Community developed their status in the administration and promoted Buddhism.

Thorough examinations on the Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell Inscription and the Pinn Cakkalaṁpa Stone Inscriptions are made to portray themes in the Inscriptions of Myanmar. In addition, the descriptive and analytical methods are used for writing this paper. In an examination of the former researches, it is seen that a work named Yenanchaung Thin-khe-pa Sardam (A Brief Paper about Yenanchaung) written by U Roe Be in 1913 depended on traditional stories and speeches. It is found that a work, Yenanchaung Myo-nel Phyit-sin Ḥmattan (Record on Historical Events of Yenanchaung) compiled by a Committee in 1969 depended on traditional stories and office-records. It is examined that a thesis titled Twin-rooe Twin-za Thamaing (History of Twin-rooe Twin-za Community) written by Kyaw Soe in 1987 focused on the position of the Community. It is noted that the paper entitled Twin-rooe Twin-za Myar ei Mu-la-a-sa (The Origin of Twin-rooe Twin-za Community) written by Yin Yin Htn in 2002 put an emphasis on the origin of the Twin-rooe Twin-za Community; and that the paper entitled “An Examination of the Repository Complex of Tipitaka Inscriptions in Yenanchaung” by Kyaw Swe Oo in 2003 focused on history of Repository Complex; and that the paper entitled "The Geographic Data Analysis on the Crude Oil and the Natural Gas Production in Yenanchaung Oil Field" by U Pwar and U San Yu in 2004 focused on oil and gas production in Yenanchaung. Those papers ignored the Bell and the Stone Inscriptions.

2. Discussion

2.1. The Bell Inscription

Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell Inscription -- inscribed on an alloy (bronze) bell, found in the precinct of Auk Tawya Monastery in Yenanchaung -- is of some interest for the study of regional identity of Yenanchaung. The Bell - Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā means the finest bell that produces sound more pleasant than other bells; and that is similar to a headdress. Donor was Mahā Minhaminhtinrājā who had been appointed as Lay Myo-wun1 (Yenanchaung, Wetmasut, Kyaukyè and Pakhamgè) and Sīkē2. As a record of donation, they inscribed an inscription on the outer surface of the Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell in 1869. The Inscription written in Pali and Myanmar was consisted of fourteen lines.

Preamble of the Inscription declares that: "Pali and Myanmar version of Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell that is donated and hung in Tawya Kyaung (Monastery)3 at a distance of Koklok4 4 tars 500', south of Yenanchaung Myo (Town), called as Kyaukdaga Myo in the reign of King Alaungsithu (1113-1162)."

According to the preamble, it is learnt that Yenanchaung had been an old name, "Kyaukdaga" in the time of King Alaungsithu of the Bagan period. The preamble gave a description of Auk Tawya Monastery located at a distance of 12,700 feet from south of Yenanchaung. It is learnt that the Auk Tawya Monastery, in accordance with the Buddhist Order, was built at a proper distance from the Myo (Town); and that a bell named Aṭi-ghosa-makuta-ghamḍa-rājā Bell was hung at the Monastery. It can be concluded that the reasons for holding the ceremony of donation might have been two factors. (1) There was a personal connection between the donor and the presiding-monk of Auk Tawya Monastery, and (2) There was an own

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1 Lay Myo-wun means “Governor of Four Towns”.
2 Sīkē means “Chief Deputy of the Governor of Town with responsibility of judicial and criminal matters”.
3 Tawya Kyaung means “Monastery in Forest”.
4 Koklok tar means “1 tar = 4 taungs, 1 taung = 19.05 inches, 1 inch = 0.0833 feet (It is equal to 3860.8 metres.)
5 The Inscription of Yenanchaung Pinn Cakkalaṁpa Pagoda also described the name of Kyaukdaga in the time of King Anawrahta (Bagan period).
choice of the donor to hold the ceremony at the Monastery due to the more purified disciplines of the Theravada Buddhist monks in Tawya Kyaung (monastery in forest).

From the seventh to ninth lines, it is observed that father of the bell-donor was clarified with such rank as Minister of Hlutaw, Commander Minister and Commander of Horse Platoon, with such titles as Thadominyg1 Mahā Minkyawminhaung and Myo-za. It is observed that the bell-donor had been Lay Myo-wun, Sīkē Mahā Minhlaminhinrājā; and that the wife of the bell-donor had possessed the five characters of a good woman8. The tenth and eleventh lines mentioned that the bell-donors had made ceremonies of Kannavijjha Maungalā and Sāmanera Pabhajja Mangalā9 for their son Maung Maung Ba in January 1870. The eleventh and thirteenth lines mentioned that the donors have made some expressions of prayers.

The last line mentioned that the bell-donors shared out their merits to the kings included in the lineage of Yadanaheinga10 Dynasty, to the ancestors and all of relatives, and to all of living beings in the Thone-set-ta-bon11; and that the donors acclaimed "May all of living beings gain these shares of merits!"

According to the historical accounts of the Bell Inscription, it is learnt that the donor who served as King’s servant shared out the merits to the Kings of Konbaung Dynasty. Moreover, the Bell Inscription provided four accounts: (1) the account of conferring title, “Thadominyg Mahā Minkyawminhaung”12 on Myo-za U So; (2) the account of appointing ranks of Hlutaw Minister and Commander Minister on him; (3) the account of favour on U So as father-in-law by marrying to his daughter; and (4) the account of appointing ranks of Lay Myo-wun and Sīkē on his son with title of Mahā Minhlaminhinrājā.

By examining the ranks of father and son, it is learnt that they were in the lineage of Twin-za-roe of Yenanchaung; and that the father had to enjoy the Crown’s share of the revenue of Yenanchaung as Myo-za and the son had to govern four towns including Yenanchaung as Myo-wun. It is found that King Mindon wished to recognize the influence of Twin-za-roe on Yenanchaung; and that he wished to keep U So who has been existing as a good servant since the times of King Tharrawady (1837-1846) and King Bagan (1846-1853); and that he aimed to gain his influence on the oil fields and oil production of Twin-za-roe in Yenanchaung.

In making a comparative study with the other great bells, the Aiti-ghosa-makuta-ghamda-rājā Bell is a bell that was donated by only a Governor of Town; and that was recorded only about the ceremonies of making novice and ear-boring; and that was intended to share out the merits of the donation due to the nature of preserving Sāsanādaw. In addition, the Bell Inscription could provide little data regarding contemporary history of Yenanchaung region.

2.2. The Stone Inscriptions

Taking an examination of the King Anawrahta’s Inscription at Pinn Cakkalampa Pagoda (1045), it is learnt that the Pagoda having four archways was built at the south of Pinn Chaung (creek, stream); and that the Buddha’s relics contained in a golden casket are stored in a larger casket made of seven jewels, and the casket has been enshrined in the Pagoda. The Inscription also revealed that the Pagoda has been built with wall and pagoda terrace, and with lakes; and that the religious lands have been fixed with the definite partition of spot around the Pagoda. Together with the religious lands, the royal revenues relating to the lands have been included in such donation of lands.

Some data in the Inscription definitely mention the figure of the Cakkalampa (Cakkalamba) Pagoda, the weight of the Buddha’s relics contained in the casket, the names of the demarcation of religious lands and the names of donors and witnesses in the function of donation. It is also noticed that the supporters of the donation included not only the royal servants but also the laypersons. Among the royal servants, two ranking-positions of Kalan13 and Thanbyin14 are clearly found in the Inscription. The donor, King Anawrahta aimed them to serve the religious matters of Pagoda. This Inscription erected by King Anawrahta ended with such description, "On Sakkaraj 1148, 3rd day waxing of Waso15, Nga Kauk Ya, Myo-thugyi of Yenanchaung copies and presents the Inscription, and Nga Myaing Pin who knows the Inscription continues to write the letters."16

There was also another inscription erected by King Badon in the Pinn Cakkalampa Pagoda17. Badon made to confirm the setting up of the Pagoda and the total amount of donation. He aimed at lasting the donating materials including the religious lands made by King Anawrahta. From Badon’s Inscription, it is clearly seen that the lands of the Pagoda have been demarcated; and that the lands of the religious service to the Pagoda have been demarcated. Like the King Anawrahta’s Inscription, a sentence brings light on a prayer that "After demarcating the Pagoda’s territory and the religious lands, the Pagoda, the lands, the toddy palms, the royal revenues including Dhathhamabhaya Revenue18, Ah-kauk Ah-za19 and Kumm-boe20 are

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1 Thadominyg refers to a noble person who has might, diligence and wisdom.
2 Being possessed a good skin and a beautiful feature, being possessed a good age, being possessed a smooth skin, being possessed a well-proportioned physique, and being possessed a good hair.
3 Ceremonies of Ear-Boring and Making a Novice
4 It means "Focal Point of Treasures".
5 Thirty-one Planes of Existence
6 Governor on Riverine Affair, Governor of Horse Platoon, Governor of Nine Districts, Commander
7 It is a kind of širit-hoe Inscription.
8 Revenue for one-tenth of individual income
9 A kind of revenue enjoyed by the head of town or village and the land-surveyor
10 Expenses after judgment (the expenditure for Court)
11 Thadominyg)
12 Head of Village
13 Head of Town
14 28 June 1786
15 The last three lines of the twenty-eight lined Inscription
16 It is a kind of širit-hoe Inscription.
17 Mr. Myo U So a Governor of Town, has set up the inscription on the pagoda in 1870.
18 The title of Mahā Minhlaminhtinrājā.
19 It is a kind of širit-hoe Inscription.
20 It is a kind of širit-hoe Inscription.
21 It is a kind of širit-hoe Inscription.
incorporated into an original set of donation. For these good results, May the sacred Sāsanādaw be endurable and lasting! May I be enjoyable in gaining the Buddhahood, the Enlightened One!" Moreover, it is also included that King Badon made the act of pouring water with the golden jar, sharing his merits to all the beings.

Significantly, it can be examined that the Pagoda’s territory in this Inscription was an area of 3,311 pe21 after the demarcation.

This Inscription ended with such description that “On Sakkaraśa 1147, 9th day waning of Thadingya22 Thursday, at 4-beat of morning, 3-hour 1-pad 8-vizana pyan-pyi khara-pyi, Lord of Golden Palace, Lord of Lives23. Hsinphyunna shin24 Boedaw Mintawggi25 called King Badon who founded the Amarapura Capital, made this donation by pouring water with the golden jar. He shared his merits to all the beings and left a record by erecting a new stone inscription”.

In addition to Anawrahta’s Inscription and Badon’s Inscription, there is also a verse composing about the demarcation of territory for Cak-krā-hlan-pra Pagoda. In the Verse, the Pagoda’s territory (domain) extends to eight directions: Sakkalan-chaung, Phaunglin-gone (Salin Township) and Shwe-mawlu Pagoda in the west; Mye-ni-inn and Ngazinraing-gone (Salin Township) in the north; Ngamwè (Salin Township) in the south; Kyamange - cheya, Mèhti - sha hima Pagoda. Shwe-mawlu Pagoda is situated at the area of Yenanchaung, this paper follows two methods: the method of comparing the descriptions in Inscriptions and the Records of Pagoda and the Verse composing about building of Twin Pagoda founded by Anawrahta (1054-1180), Twin Pagoda in 1054, Anawrahta of the Bagan period erected a stone inscription about building of the Pagoda. Later, in 1855, Badon (1782-1819) of the Konbaung period made further donations and contributions to the Pagoda, and erected the second stone inscription. Examination of the two Inscriptions and the Records of Pagoda is capable of contributing to expose positions of Yenanchaung’s territories or a regional setting. In other words, the region can be shaped by positioning the territories (villages) in accordance with descriptions in the two Inscriptions and the Records of Pagoda.

Unfortunately, the two Stone Inscriptions of Pinn Cakkalaṁpa Pagoda are not the original ones and they are rewritten by scribes of later periods. They had been only inscriptions of Sint-htoe. By examining the date of Anawrahta’s Inscription, it is found that the men who lived in 1786 during Badon’s reign wrote the original account. Similarly, due to examination on the date of King Badon’s Inscription, it is found that the men who lived in 1787 wrote the original account, together with some additions.

By accepting locations of territories (villages), creeks, lakes and hillocks included in the Inscriptions, parts of Yenanchaung region can be seen to gain a proper figure. Moreover, by taking an examination of the Records of Pagoda and the Verse composing about the Pagoda’s Territory, the Yenanchaung region has been capable of placing it in accordance with the pointing-sides. It can be concluded that Yenanchaung is an old town in prominence of historical documents; and the Pinn Cakkalaṁpa Pagoda founded by Anawrahta is an ancient pagoda in image of Theravada Buddhism. It is also taken a notion that further documents will be searched for clear revelation to researchers.

21 5860.47 Acres
22 27 October 1785
23 ==Possessor of All the Living Things++
24 ==Lord of White Elephants++
25 ==Boedaw++ means Grandfather of the later kings. ==Mintawggi++ means a King who rules his Kingdom in accordance with the Lord Buddha's Doctrines - Dhamma.
26 A Creek three miles north of Kyaukyè (Chauk)
27 Chaung is Creek. Gone is Hillock. Inn and Kan are Lake. Pin is Tree.

28 All the available documents pointed out that the Region had four names - Seikha Kunhthauk, Yenanththa, Yenanchaung and Kyaukdaga (also Kyauka).
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