

Reinstatement of Sarsigyo and expressions of motifs

Professor Dr Ye Myint

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Chapter 1 Introduction, text languages and manufacture places

Sarsigyo is a flat cotton binding tape on which text prayer letters (Myanmar manuscripts) and motif icons are weaved. PE books (Pe leaves or Toddy leaves books) are wrapped with bamboo mesh (KamPaLway), covered with cloth and bind around with Sarsigyo. Inside the binding space, the index card is attached for cataloging and the pile of PE books are placed in alphabetical vowel operated order.

The texts on the Sarsigyo are about the donation of Pe books (mostly Buddhist doctrines) to venerable monks for lecturing the other monks. In KonBaung dynasty, the amount of Sarsigyo exceeds fifty thousand; at present five thousand can be estimated amount in this land. Every Sarsigyo told the event of that time reveals the information of the donation (Who, when----etc); if not dated, a scholar can estimate by the type of yarn, dyes and spelling on the text.

Culture, literature, economics, religion and administration, many can be deduced from Sarsigyo.

The text languages are in Pali, Rakine , Mon, Myanmar and Hindi;(Khmer letter woven tape also exist (Shan people wove letter on bags).The most ancient Myanmar Sarsigyorecorded is dated 1134ME or 1762 AD(256 years ago).

In KonBaung dynasty, in the reign of King Mindon, Sarsigyo,theart spreaded the whole country.

By the end of the nineteenth century, by 1850, hand spun yarn and natural dyes were replaced with machine yarn and chemical dyes. The threads became thinner, stronger and Sarsigyo became more colorful and resolution improved and the weaving art developed countrywide. The texts poems become more informative and the icons more artistic. Those texts were composed by the scholars of that region, showing that all location, village or town or city, the weavers and authors establishedthat national heritage.

That culture flows from race to races and place to places ;it is the human achievements or evolution. It is not proper to decide who invent it or who start this art.

Chapter 2 “How the texts should be regarded” by the wise

Myanmar Professor U Wun, (MinThuWun) by 1960, wrote an article about Sarsigyo and that the art of Sarsigyo should be transferred to the youths as national heritage. He commissioned weaver U Nyo from MonYwa , to weave his favorite poem (ThaPyayNyo).

In the reign of King Mindon of Mandalay, most celebrated monk SayadawSeePanNee,wrote in his famous book, “ KaWiManDaNa-MayDeeNee”

(The course to be a scholar) expressed ,“the Sarsigyotexts must be studied by Myanmar scholars”.

Sarsigyo letters are Myanmar manuscripts wove on cotton tapes by tablet weaving (a handicraft). This type of writing is one of the writing materials that should be studied like inscription on stones, clay tablets, bronze bell etc.

Otherwise coming generation have no interest in the art, only they belong. Every museum and library should have Sarsigyo and sarsigyo book for all, especially for our people.

(3) Expressions of the motifs on the Sarsigyo

As aforesaid, Sarsigyo is attached accessories to the donation of PE books. The prayers texts generally carry the information about the donor, donation and merit transferring clauses; by words to human. The merit must be also transferred to other creatures visible or invisibles those of the other planes and the biological creatures like plants and trees. For them, the motif icons take the role, they appear as symbols for transfer of merit deeds. Nine gem symbol, Ea-Ni or BudocasBedfordi, lion, gecko, fish, Kyay (parrot like), snake, frog, totem pole, Wathondary Earth God, flat gong, bell etc expressing the transfer of merit to those beings. Their expressions are as important as word for the donation because they represent "which creature the donation merit tolls".

Nine gem symbol is for all beings have wealth and health.

Lion is for Forest animals as the lion is the king of forest. (There is no lion in Myanmar; but lion is mighty traditionally.)

Fish is for creatures of water.

Frog is for animals living on ground and water.

Snake is for underground animals.

Kyay (parrot like) is swiftest flying animal and represents air borne creatures.

Gecko for trees as trees have spirit NAT.

Totem Pole(TaGonTine) is the symbol of donation.

Wathondary Earth God is to witness the donation.

Flat gong and bell are for spirits, fairies, creatures of the other planes that can sense the donation through sound vibration.

(The representative creatures occurred in accordance of tradition and JaTaKa tales. To know the SarSiGyo art, the important thing is to go back to purest traditions of Myanmar culture; relearn it, preserve it, present it to the world in the way the world can understand it.)

In the KonBaungdynasty, Mandalay as central city, new icons are weaved.

Wheeled Vehicle for the reigning king.

Throne is also the symbol transferring merit to the King.

Lighted candle holders----- for the court people.

(4) Typical texts that spreads

The text started with “ Aung-Yat-Shwe-Pyi (Nibbana) was everywhere ; Rakhine Sarsigyo in the photo.



The text started with “MinGaLaNyunt Shay (Auspicious) was also common in SarSiGyos all over Myanmar land.

Almost all the sarsigyos have the “Jayetu” as the starting wish.

(5) Text telling history

In general Sarsigyo texts are prayers and reveals about the donation. Some donors show their title , especially in the Mandalay kingdom; some posts like “ Phaung-Gaung-Gyi” (equivalent to commodore) had historical importance about the navy of that era.

In one Sarigyo, the name of the village is (Ka -Tin) showing that the village is for the decorations of elephant and horse troops, and the village can be relocated as it is lost or name altered.

When British colony invaded Myanmar, the feelings of Myanmar people appears in the Sarsigyo of Pyun-Gaut village (in Mait-Hti-La district) . U Taik wrote in the Sarsigyo that British government is devil and foul natured administrator. In their rule, religion became diminish and monks regret.

Many Sarsigyos recorded the descend of King Thi-Baw.

(6) Double line Sarsigyo

Sarsigyo weaving is double face with two colors , using upper seventy two threads and another lower seventy two threads controlling with thirty six tablets. For double line Sarsigyo, upper and lower one forty four threads are weaving simultaneously controlling seventy two tablets. Myanmar words contains two layers (Part-Sint) and it is obvious how the weaver is skillful to weave double line Sarsigyo. In this world , that double line Sarsigyo is unique heritage of Myanmar.

(In national museum it is displayed)

Double line Sarsigyo was studied with the help of Museum director; the text carry a lot of information .



That Sarsigyo was from Al-La-Kap-Pa village(in MyinMu township Sagaing Division) wove in 1239 ME(1877AD).The text is related to the event between ThinGaZaSayadaw and King Mindon taking analog to Greece King Milinda and

Monk NaGaThayNa. The sarsigyo is decorated with with Tagon-Tine, bell ,and WathunDary.

(7) World's longest Sarsigyo

To wrap an ordinary PE book of twenty sectors(i.e. six hundred pages), two meter length is acceptable. For more of the text of 129 verses, the Sarsigyo length can be as long as six meter.

From Insein town, the the longest Sarsigyo of this world has the length twelve meter containing 156 verses; now in of BuddaUniversity museum in KaBaAye, Yangon.



(8) Retrieve Sarsigyo weavers and training in Saunder's weaving school

By 1993, ShweBoDaw Mi MiGyi won the national literature prize, with her son U Ye Myint (i.e the author) had to extend the research on (1) Double line Sarsigyo (2) in search of the old Sarsigyo weavers and (3) to repossess the Sarsigyo art.

In search of the Sarsigyo weavers, we found a KamawaSigyo, wove in 1987. It was donated to PhaYaNgaSuKyaung MonasteryMogok town, to Sayadaw AshinNanDaKarBiWunTha. The text on it was composed by Kamawa writer

U Sein and letters weaved by his daughter DawKhin Thein. That is the evidence that the art exists up to that date.

The Saunder's weaving school , Principle Daw Tint Tint told us that there was a Sarsigyo weaving training in the school on first November 1994 ; under the Ministry of commerce, domestic home economics section training teacher Daw Thein Htay conducted a Sarsigyo training and the paper was presented . In that training fourteen candidates attended and one demonstration woven sarsigyo finished which was in the museum of the school. One trainer was Teacher Daw Roi-Nai-Zain .

By 2006, we got the information that in ShweYinMarvillage ,MyinMu township, there was a weaver , by the name of Ma MarLar. Sarsigyo book author ShweboDaw Mi MiGyi commissioned one Sarsigyo with the text of oldest poem "PoPer -Nat -Taung, A-Khaung,Myint,Phyar----- (In the high region of Popar Mountain---)" . Ma MaLarwove in square alphabets.

In 29June2009, Ma MarLarwas invited to Yangon and made a demonstration weaving and video recording was made. Our patron U Thaw Kaung , Chin lady Mai Ni Ni Aung from Zone-Tu weaving project , Singapore people and I witnessed the event.

To achieve the original art is important. Teacher U Kyaw Aung and Teacher Daw Roi-Nai-Zain made the setting and Daw Roi-Nai-Zain wove an original style Sarsigyo, text started with "Zay-Ya-Tu" , circular alphabets including Wathunday God icon. The date was 9 August 2011 .Saunder's weaving school was ready to performed a Sarsigyo course (including weaving also making natural dyes).

To maintain the art is most essential and we have to recruit new weavers.

Chin lady Mai Ni Ni Aung from Zone-Tu weaving project (MinByatowship, RakhineDevision)organize a team of eight girls and took the Sarsigyo training in Saunders weaving school(in the year2013). They all finished on sarsigyo each, trailing the art of KonBaung dynasty. Now the art is well preserve and any text of any language can be weave, outspread to wrist band,bracelet-- etc.

Author U Ye Myint (ilbcye@gmail.com)

