

Bangladesh and Myanmar

**November - December
2005**

Jim Russell

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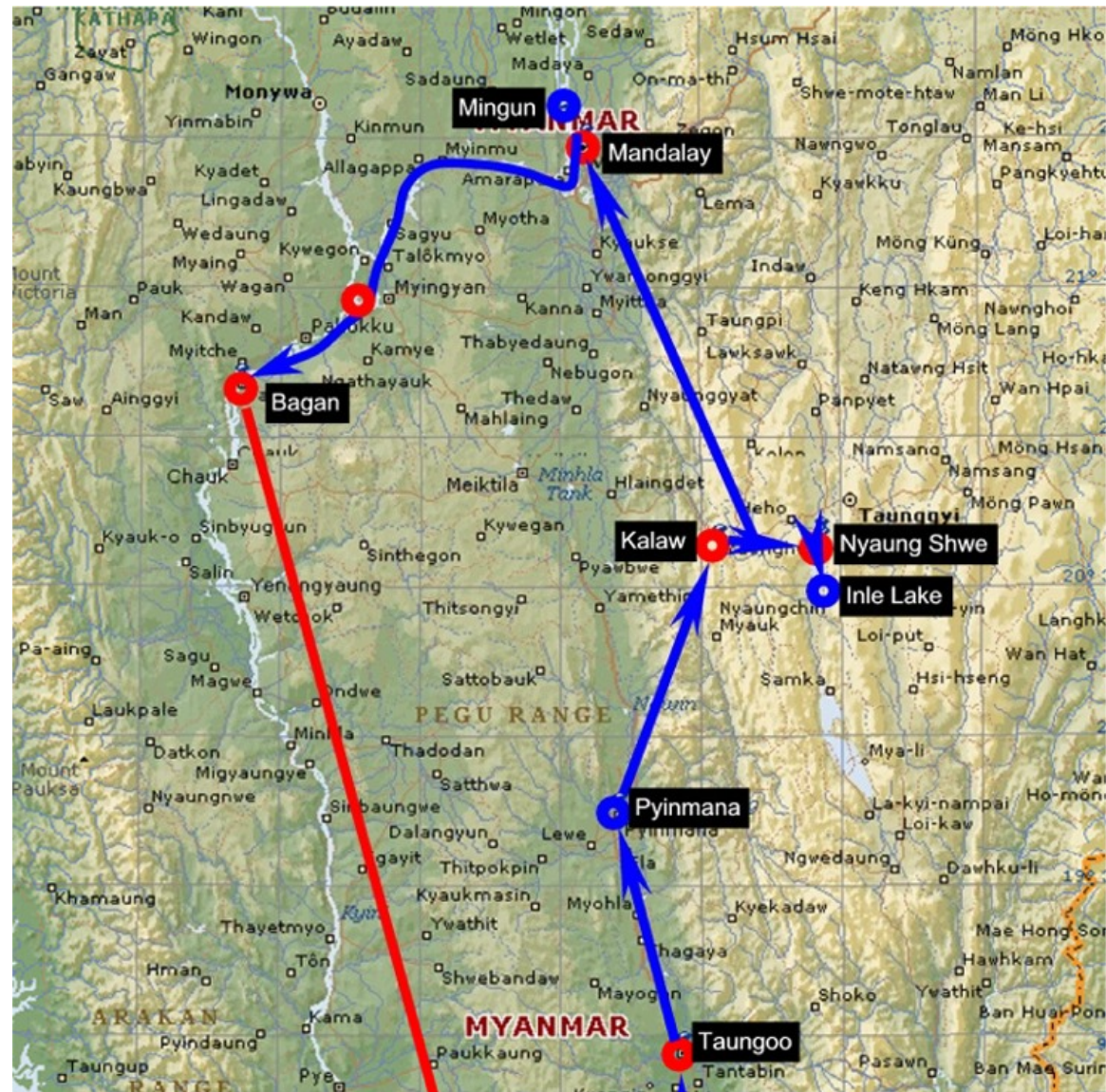
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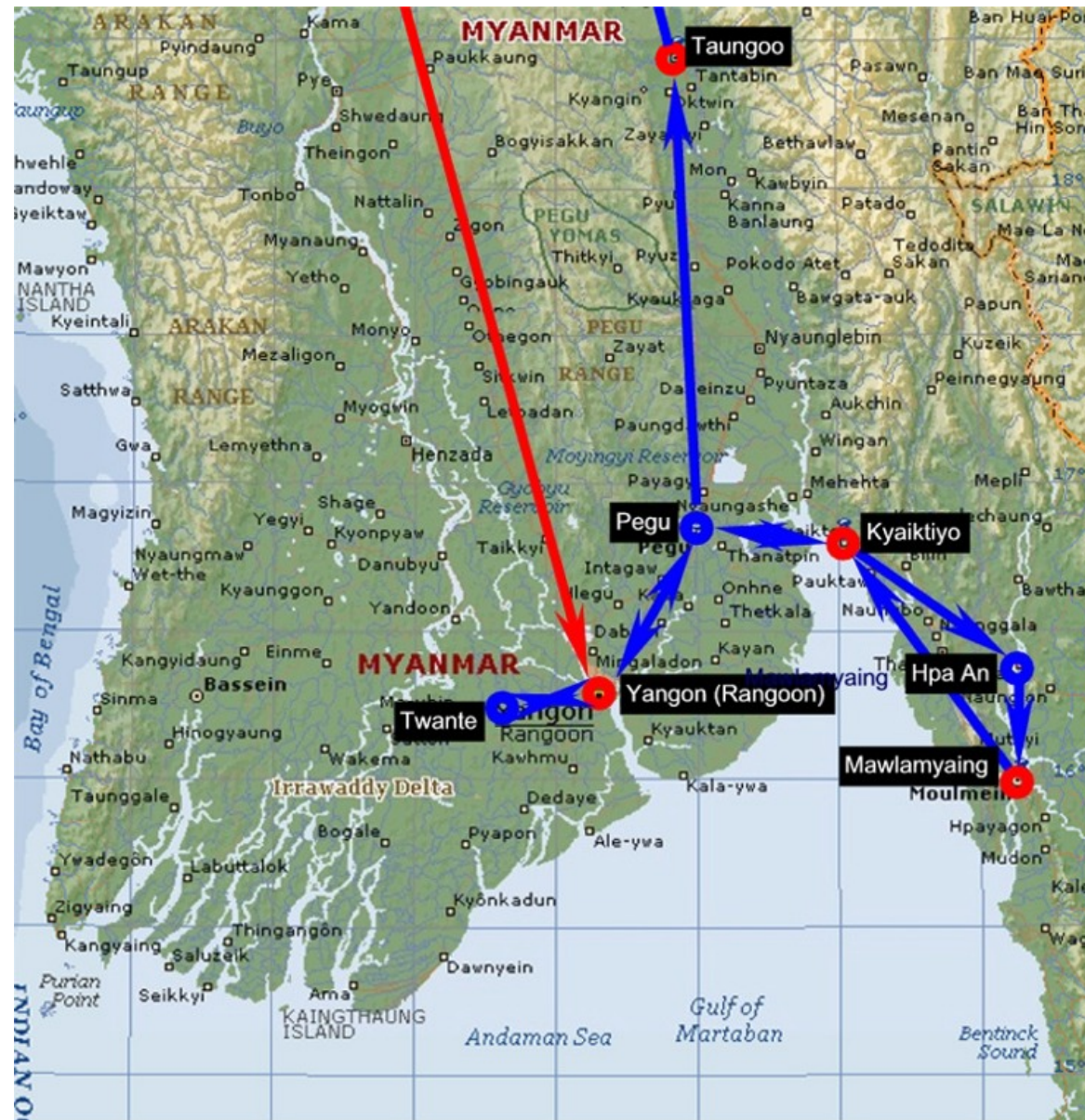
Itinerary – Bangladesh and Myanmar – November – December – 2005

Date	Day	Tour Day	Activity
Thurs 17 Nov	01		Mel to Dhaka MH148 15:40 - MH196 22:00
Fri 18 Nov	02		With Que and Hans.
Sat 19 Nov	03		With Que and Hans.
Sun 20 Nov	04		With Que and Hans.
Mon 21 Nov	05		With Que and Hans.
Tues 22 Nov	06		With Que and Hans.
Wed 23 Nov	07		With Que and Hans.
Thurs 24 Nov	08		With Que and Hans.
Fri 25 Nov	09		Dhaka to Yangon (Rangoon) MH197 01:00 – MH740 – 10:05
Sat 26 Nov	10	Day 1	Yangon - Arrival day (no activities planned)
Sun 27 Nov	11	Day 2	Yangon to Taungoo - Depart early. Stop at Taukkyan War cemetery. Evening spent in central Burma town of Taungoo..
Mon 28 Nov	12	Day 3	Taungoo to Kalaw - A scenic drive climbing up the Shan plateau
Tues 29 Nov	13	Day 4	Kalaw – Day trek/visit to tribal villages.
Wed 30 Nov	14	Day 5	Kalaw to Inle Lake - We take the train winding through the hills and forests of the Shan plateau.
Thurs 1 Dec	15	Day 6	Inle boat day trip - Visit tribal markets, beautiful pagodas and the famous floating gardens.
Fri 2 Dec	16	Day 7	Day of options in Nyaung Shwe
Sat 3 Dec	17	Day 8	Inle to Mandalay - Rugged mountain views as we descend to the cultural capital of Burma.
Sun 4 Dec	18	Day 9	Mandalay

Mon 5 Dec	19	Day 10	Mandalay overnight boat - Morning visit to the ancient capital of Mingun. Then dinner on the boat and night on deck.
Tues 6 Dec	20	Day 11	Arrive Bagan - Settle in to this amazing location amongst 1000 year old pagodas
Wed 7 Dec	21	Day 12	Bagan - Explore one of the most amazing archaeological sites in the world/
Thur 8 Dec	22	Day 13	Bagan - You will need a second full day in this astonishing place to experience its majesty
Fri 9 Dec	23	Day 14	Bagan to Yangon - A morning flight to Yangon (not included). For those leaving us tomorrow we will all have time to visit the spiritual heart of Burma. The astonishing Shwedagon Pagoda.
Sat 10 Dec	24	Day 15	Today our two weekers will depart Yangon. The three week adventurers we head out early morning for an enjoyable country drive through central Burma to Kyaiktiyo. Late afternoon we will arrive at the base camp to the famous 'Golden Rock' pagoda
Sun 11 Dec	25	Day 16	Kyaiktiyo – Full day to trek to the mysterious 'Golden Rock'
Mon 12 Dec	26	Day 17	Kyaiktiyo to Mawlamyaing – Early morning drive to the seaside capital of Mon state.
Tues 13 Dec	27	Day 18	Mawlamyaing – A morning visit to remote Ogre Island. Visit old village settlements and enjoy local Mon cuisine for lunch.
Wed 14 Dec	28	Day 19	Mawlamyaing to Yangon –
Thur 15 Dec	29	Day 20	Yangon – Visit to Twante. A farewell meal together to complete a wonderful journey
Fri 16 Dec	30	Day 21	Yangon - Departure day MH741 12:15 - MH149 21:30 Arrive 08:10 17 th

Maps- Myanmar





MANDALAY

Rudyard Kipling

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat -- jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen,
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheroot,
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:
Bloomin' idol made o'mud --
Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd --
Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!
On the road to Mandalay . . .

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing "~Kulla-lo-lo!~"
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek agin' my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the ~hathis~ pilin' teak.
Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squidgy creek,
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was 'arf afraid to speak!
On the road to Mandalay . . .

But that's all shove be'ind me -- long ago an' fur away,

An' there ain't no 'busses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year soldier tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught else."
 No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
 But them spicy garlic smells,
 An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the tinkly temple-bells;
 On the road to Mandalay . . .

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones,
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they understand?
 Beefy face an' grubby 'and --
 Law! wot do they understand?
 I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land!
 On the road to Mandalay . . .

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst;
For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that I would be --
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea;
 On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the old Flotilla lay,
 With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay!
 On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

Dhaka - Bangladesh

Thursday 17 November - Melbourne to Dhaka

Day 01



Que and Johann

Uneventful flight from Melbourne to Kuala Lumpur arrives in KL a few minutes early at the new KL International Airport. Located some distance to the SW of KL it is connected to KL by a high-speed train service. The flight from KL to Dhaka is delayed a few minutes as the crew try to sort out seating for the mothers with

small babies who want bassinets for them. There aren't enough to go around. Eventually everyone is seated.



Mai at Karate

Many of the passengers are Bangladeshis that have migrated to Australia and the whole family is visiting family in Bangladesh. There are a lot of small children on board.

The flight lands in Dhaka just after midnight and I am among the first off the plane and through the foreign visitors immigration very quickly. Somehow Hans had managed to be at the gate. I didn't see him there and he didn't see me.



American International School Library

Fortunately the baggage took a long time to come off and Hans realised he had missed me and came to the baggage hall.

No delays leaving the airport this time. The roads are clear and we are soon at the apartment in Gulshan 2.

<http://www.bangla2000.com/Bangladesh/default.shtm>
http://www.virtualbangladesh.com/bd_contents.html
<http://www.betelco.com/bd/dhaka/dhaka.html>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhaka>
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/bangladesh/>



**Johann in the American
International School Library**

Dhaka is 5 hours behind Melbourne and apart from some catnaps I have not had any sleep and so I collapse into bed to be awakened by the 05:00 call to prayers from the mosque across the lake.

Que and Hans are determined that I shall not sit around.

<http://www.ais-dhaka.net/>

First a visit to the American International School where Que works and Mai is in the first grade for Mai's Karate lesson. The class is taken by one of the senior boys who does a very good job of teaching and managing the six small children in the class.

It is Friday and there are no classes. Que takes me on a quick tour of the school, particularly the. The school has excellent facilities for the children who are mainly from the expat. community.



Dress Rehearsal for 'The Wizard of Oz'

Mai and Johann are going to a lunchtime birthday party in an entertainment centre in a new shopping complex. We drop them off and Hans and I go on to the War of Independence Museum. Hans has not been before; Sue and I visited it last time we were in Dhaka. It is well worth another visit, but the displays are very tired and the small entry fee cannot possibly raise enough to revamp them.

The highlight of the day is the 'Downunder Glitter Party 2005'. The Glitter Party is sponsored by the Australian High Commission and is a fund raising event for a selected local charity. This year it was the Mother Teresa Orphanage.

Groups are encouraged to prepare acts for a competition, judged by popular vote of the tables not participating in the competition. Hans and Que are participating in a presentation of 'The Wizard of Oz' modified for the occasion. It is a very funny act with satirical references to BBQ's, Shane Warne, and the Wizard of Oz, the Australian High Commissioner.

There were six acts and their act finished second to 'From Dhaka with Love' performed by a group including some of the heavies from some of the diplomatic missions. A parody of James Bond's 'From Russia with Love' it was very funny the first time but when they were asked to repeat it after the prizes were awarded it was a little flat.

A great night.



At the 'Glitter Ball'

Que and Hans have planned trip on the river in the boat they share with about eight others.

As it is the dry season and the river is low the boat is moored in the countryside outside Dhaka. In the 'wet' the boat can be moored nearby.

It is not very far out of town, but we first have to negotiate the city traffic and then make our way through the countryside and villages along very narrow, rough roads crowded with

rickshaws and little taxis. It takes almost an hour and half to reach the place where the boat is waiting for us.



River Traffic - Dhaka



River Traffic - Dhaka

This is no drive yourself operation on the river. The boatman and his mate handle the boat while we lie back and watch the activity on the river.



River Traffic - Dhaka



Que and Hans' Boat

There is plenty of action. Small boats carry people and goods across and up and down the river. Paddling upstream is hard work. Larger motorised boats carry rice and timber and sand barges ply the river with sand for land reclamation.

After about half an hour we pull into the bank for a walk through the fields and the village to our boatman's home. We meet many of his relatives on the way. They are very hospitable and welcome us into their compounds and show us their animals and birds.

Along the way Mai and Johann are able to play with some goat kids that didn't seem to mind being picked up by children.

The boatman's house is new and he is very proud of it.

These houses are set on high ground and in the 'wet' are surrounded by water that covers the surrounding fields and deposits fresh silt. Tomatoes, pumpkins, beans, cabbages, and rice are among the crops.



Johann and Mai



Rice Fields



Fishing

We soon have to head back as another party are taking the boat at 14:00. We are a few minutes late, but there is no sign of them and we come upon the other party coming towards us, obviously delayed by the traffic as we had been.

The traffic is lighter and we take less time to return.

In the evening Hans has a business engagement and Que and I attend the Latino Film festival at the Dutch Club. The film Mar Atendro (The Sea Inside) is the story of quadriplegic Ramon Sanpedro's 30 year fight to die with dignity.

Sunday 20 November - Dhaka

Day 04

A quiet morning in the school library doing some background reading on Myanmar.

A biography of Aung San Suu Kyi, 'Standing Up for Democracy' by Bettina Ling provides a summary of the

role she has played in the movement for democracy in Burma.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aung_San_Suu_Kyi



Mai

'Twilight over Burma, My Life as a Shan Princess' by Inge Sargent chronicles her life as the young wife of a progressive Shan Prince in the years before the military deposed the government in 1962 and the two years after before she left Burma.

http://www.alumnifriends.mines.edu/fun_stuff/twilight_and_tragedy/Default.htm
<http://www.talesofasia.com/myanmar-hsipaw.htm>



Rabbits in the nearby park

'Living Silence – Burma under Military Rule' by Christina Fink is a psychological study of the effects of military rule on the population and particularly upon the 150 people she interviewed.

http://www.davidmetraux.com/docs/family/daniel/burma/articles/metraux_book.doc

Que has tickets to Baroque Music Concert at the Auditorium of the National Museum. The event was organised by the Goethe Institute, an organisation similar to the British Council, which promotes German Culture in many countries.

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/bd/dha/enindex.htm>
<http://www.newagebd.com/2005/nov/22/time.html>

The concert was performed by the Leipziger Barocksolisten (Leipzig Baroque Soloists).

Instruments featured in the performance were; violin, double bass, trumpet, oboe, bassoon, and harpsichord.

A very pleasant, if at times a little condescending to the audience, many of whom, I am sure, were familiar with baroque music and the instruments.



Riana, Mai and Johann

Monday 21 November - Dhaka

Day 05

A quiet day, except for entertaining Johann, who never stops. A long

lunch at the German Club and in the evening a round of the tennis tournament at the Dutch Club. Que and Hans

paired in a mixed doubles match, winning convincingly. The German Club defeated the Dutch Club 3-2.

A quiet morning reading as Johann is at Kindergarten. In the afternoon a visit to the nearby shops.

Que is very keen on her tennis and had a practice session booked for the late afternoon.

Evening dinner at a Korean Restaurant rounded off the day.



National Martyr's Memorial

Another quiet morning. In the afternoon Que and I travel into the nearby countryside to the village of Dhamrai and the nearby National Martyr's Memorial.

<http://www.un-bd.org/unwa/HomePage/Publications/womun-vol28/0403/p14-dhamrai.htm>
<http://www.thedailystar.net/magazine/2004/10/02/tradition.htm>



Que 'ringing' the bronze bowl - Dhamrai

Dhamrai is a predominantly Hindu village and is notable for the brass and bronze castings of Hindu figures and themes. The lost wax process is used and the all the patterns are individually carved in wax. The patterns are coated in clay to form a mold. The wax is melted to create the mold cavity.

Brass and bronze objects are made, mostly of religious images. However the bronze bowls can be 'rung' by running a wooden piece around the edge.



Dhamrai village

The National Martyr's Memorial, near Savar, commemorates the several million people killed during the Liberation War in 1971. In contrast to much of the surrounding area it is a clean, quiet haven.

http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/N_0113.htm



National Martyr's Memorial

The road is crowded with every conceivable vehicle as we make our way back to town.

The German Club played the Japanese at the German Club. Things looked good after the first two matches. Hans and Stephan won the men's doubles and Que and Hans the mixed doubles. In the end they lost 2-3.



Finishing cast objects - Dhamrai



Preparing the wax patterns - Dhamrai

Many small brickworks along the river contribute to the pall of pollution that hangs over Dhaka.



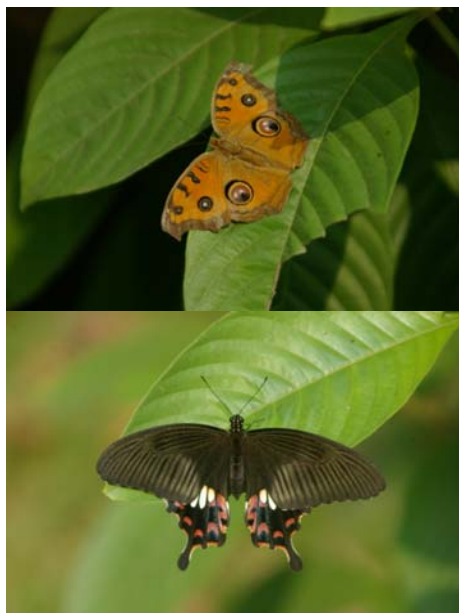
Rickshaws



Brickworks

Thursday 24 November - Dhaka

Day 08



Butterflies

Today is Thanksgiving Day and the American International School is closed so Que has the day off.

Que and I take Johann, Mai and Mai's friend, Riana, the nearby park to see if we can tire them a little. Three laps of the park and there is no sign of them running out of steam.

This evening we are invited to Thanksgiving Dinner at Ned and Jacquie's so the afternoon is spent swapping photos and getting things together as I will be leaving to catch the plane to Yangon at about 22:30.

It was a very pleasant evening with some of Que and Hans's friends, some of whom Sue and I had met when we visited at the beginning of 2003. The party was still going strong when we had to leave.



Riana and Mai

Myanmar

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/asia/myanmar?a=facts>

Full Name	Union of Myanmar
Capital City	Yangon (moving to Pyinmana)
Area	671,000 sq km 259,073 sq miles
Population	52,000,000
Time Zone	GMT/UTC +6.5 ()
Languages	Burmese (official)

	Karen (other)
	Shan (other)
	Kachin (other)
Religion	87% Theravada Buddhist, 5% Christian, 4% Muslim, 3%
animist	
Currency	Kyat (K)

History of Myanmar

<http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar-history/>

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar/History>

The **History of Burma** ([Myanmar](#)) is long and complex. Many peoples have lived in the region, the oldest of which are the [Mon](#). In the [9th century](#) the *Myamma* or [Burmese](#) people migrated from the then [China-Tibet](#) border region into the valley of the [Irrawaddy](#), and now form the governing majority.

The Burmese history comprises complexities not only within the country but also with its neighbouring countries, [China](#), [India](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Laos](#) and [Thailand](#), as seen in the map of ancient Burma.

The Mon

Humans lived in the region that is now Myanmar as early as 11,000 years ago, but the first identifiable civilization is that of the Mon. The Mon probably began migrating into the area in about [3000 BC](#), and their first kingdom [Suwarnabhumi](#), was founded around the port of [Thaton](#) in about [300 BC](#). Spoken tradition suggests that they had contact with [Buddhism](#) via seafaring as early as the [3rd century BC](#), though definitely by the [2nd century BC](#) when they received an envoy of monks from [Ashoka](#). Much of the Mon's written records have been destroyed through wars. The Mons blended Indian and Mon culture together in a hybrid of the two civilizations. By the mid-9th century, they had come to dominate all of southern Myanmar.

The Pyu

The [Pyu](#) arrived in Myanmar in the 1st century BC and established city kingdoms at [Binnaka](#), [Mongamo](#), [Sri Ksetra](#), [Peikthanomyo](#), and [Halingyi](#). During this period, Myanmar was part of an overland trade route from China to India. Chinese sources state that the Pyu controlled 18 kingdoms and describe them as a humane and peaceful people. War was virtually unknown amongst the Pyu, and disputes were often solved through duels by champions or building competitions. They even wore silk cotton instead of actual silk so they would not have to kill silk worms. Crime was punished by whippings and jails were unknown, though serious crimes could result in the death penalty. The Pyu practiced Theravada Buddhism, and all children were educated as novices in the temples from the age of seven until the age of 20.

The Pyu city-states never unified into a Pyu kingdom, but the more powerful cities often dominated and called for tribute from the lesser cities. The most powerful city by far was Sri Ksetra, which archaeological evidence indicates was the largest city that has ever been built in Burma. The exact date of its founding is not known, though Pyu chronicles speak of a dynastic change in A.D. 94, so it was before that date. Sri Ksetra was apparently abandoned around A.D. 656 in favor of a more northerly capital, though the exact city is not known. Some historians believe it was Halingyi. Wherever the new capital was located, it was sacked by the kingdom of [Nanzhao](#) in the mid-[9th century](#), ending the Pyu's period of dominance.

The Pagan Kingdom

To the north another group of people, the [Burmese](#) began infiltrating the area as well. By [849](#), they had founded a powerful kingdom centered on the city of [Pagan](#) and filled the void left by the Pyu. The kingdom grew in relative isolation until the reign of [Anawrahta](#) ([1044](#) - [77](#)) who successfully unified all of Myanmar by defeating the Mon city of Thaton in [1057](#). Consolidation was accomplished under his successors [Kyanzittha](#) ([1084-1112](#)) and [Alaungsithu](#) ([1112-1167](#)), so that by the mid-[12th century](#), most of [Southeast Asia](#) was under the control of either the Pagan Kingdom or the [Khmer](#) empire. The Pagan kingdom went into decline as more land and resources fell into the hands of the powerful [sangha](#) (monkhood) and the [Mongols](#) threatened from the north. The last true ruler of Pagan, [Narathihapate](#) (reigned [1254-87](#)) felt confident in his ability to resist the Mongols and advanced into [Yunnan](#) in [1277](#) to make war upon them. He was thoroughly crushed at the [Battle of Ngasaunggyan](#), and Pagan resistance virtually collapsed. The king was assassinated by his own son in [1287](#), precipitating a Mongol invasion in the [Battle of Pagan](#); the Mongols successfully captured most of the empire, including its capital, and ended the dynasty in [1289](#) when the Mongols installed a puppet ruler in Myanmar.

Ava and Pegu

After the collapse of Pagan authority, Myanmar was divided once again. The Burmans had reestablished themselves at the city of [Inwa](#) by [1364](#), where Pagan culture was revived and a great age of Burmese literature ensued. The kingdom lacked easily defensible borders, however, and was overrun by the [Shan](#) in 1527.

To the south, the Mons reestablished themselves at [Pegu](#), and under their king, [Dhammazedi](#) (reigned [1472-92](#)), entered a golden age as well, becoming a great center of commerce and [Theravada Buddhism](#).

The Toungoo Dynasty

Survivors of the destruction of Ava eventually established a new kingdom centered on [Toungoo](#) in [1531](#) led by [Tabinshwehti](#) (reigned [1531-50](#)), who once again unified most of Myanmar. By this time, the geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia had changed drastically. The Shan gained power in a new kingdom in the North, [Ayutthaya](#) ([Siam](#)), while the [Portuguese](#) had arrived in

the south and conquered [Malacca](#). With the coming of [European](#) traders, Myanmar was once again an important trading center, and Tabinshwehti moved his capital to [Pegu](#) due to its commercial value. Tabinshwehti's brother-in-law, [Bayinnaung](#) (ruled [1551-81](#)) succeeded to the throne and proceeded on a campaign of conquest conquering several states, including [Manipur](#) ([1560](#)) and all of [Ayutthaya](#) ([1569](#)). His wars stretched Myanmar to the limits of its resources, however, and both Manipur and Ayutthaya were soon independent once again. Faced with rebellion by several cities and renewed Portuguese incursions, the Toungoo rulers withdrew from southern Myanmar and founded a second dynasty at Ava. Bayinnaung's grandson, [Anaukpetlun](#), once again reunited Myanmar in [1613](#) and decisively defeated Portuguese attempts to take over Myanmar. His successor [Thalun](#) reestablished the principles of the old Pagan kingdom, but spent too heavily on religious expenditure and paid little attention to the southern part of his kingdom. Encouraged by the [French](#) in [India](#), Pegu finally rebelled against Ava, further weakening the state, which fell in [1752](#).

The Konbaung Dynasty

It did not take long for a new dynasty, the [Konbaung Dynasty](#), to arise and bring Myanmar to its greatest power yet. A popular Burmese leader named [Alaungpaya](#) drove the Pegu forces out of northern Myanmar by 1753, and by 1759 he had once again conquered Pegu, largely exterminating the [Mon](#) people in the process, and southern Myanmar while also regaining control of Manipur. He established his capital at [Rangoon](#). In [1760](#), he briefly conquered [Tenasserim](#) and marched on [Ayutthaya](#), but his invasion failed and he died in the attempt. His son [Hsinbyushin](#) (ruled [1763-76](#)) returned to [Ayutthaya](#), the ancient nation of [Thailand](#) in [1766](#) and had conquered it before the end of the next year. Even [China](#) took notice of Myanmar now, but Hsinbyushin successfully repulsed four Chinese invasions between 1766 and 1769 stretching its limits within Chinese borders. Another of Alaungpaya's sons, [Bodawpaya](#) (ruled [1781-1819](#)), lost Ayutthaya, but added [Arakan](#) ([1784](#)) and Tenasserim ([1793](#)) to the kingdom as well. In January 1824, during the reign of King [Bagyidaw](#) (ruled [1819-37](#)), a general named [Maha Bandula](#) succeeded in conquering [Assam](#), bringing Myanmar face to face with [British](#) interests in India.

War with Britain and the fall of Myanmar

The expansion of Myanmar had consequences along its frontiers. As those frontiers moved ever closer to British India, there were problems both with refugees and military operations spilling over ill-defined borders. In response to

the continued expansion and even direct attacks of Myanmar, the British and the Siamese joined forces against it in [1824](#). The [First Anglo-Burmese War \(1824-26\)](#) ended in a British victory, and by the [Treaty of Yandaboo](#), Myanmar lost territory previously conquered in Assam, Manipur and Arakan. The British also took possession of Tenasserim intending to use it as a bargaining chip in future negotiations with either Myanmar or Siam. As the century wore on, the British in India began to covet the resources and main port of Myanmar during an era of great territorial expansion. In [1852](#), Commodore Lambert was despatched to Burma by [Lord Dalhousie](#) over a number of minor issues related to the previous treaty. The Burmese immediately made concessions including the removal of a governor whom the British disliked. Lambert eventually provoked a naval confrontation in extremely questionable circumstances and thus started the [Second Anglo-Burmese War](#) in [1852](#), which ended in the British annexing Pegu province and renaming it Lower Burma. The war resulted in a revolution in Myanmar, with King [Pagin Min](#) (ruled [1846–52](#)) being replaced by his half brother, [Mindon Min](#) (ruled [1853-78](#)). King Mindon tried to modernise the Burmese state and economy to resist British encroachments, and he established a new capital at [Mandalay](#), which he proceeded to fortify. This was not enough to stop the British, however, who claimed that Mindon's son [Thibaw Min](#) (ruled [1878–85](#)) was a tyrant intending to side with the French, that he had lost the control of the country, thus allowing for disorder at the frontiers, and that he was reneging on a treaty signed by his father; and thus declared war once again in 1885, conquering the remainder of the country in the [Third Anglo-Burmese War](#).

British rule

Britain made all of Burma a province of India in [1886](#) with the capital at Rangoon. Traditional Myanmar society was drastically altered by the ending of the monarchy and the separation of church and state. Though war officially ended after only a couple of weeks, resistance continued in northern Myanmar until [1890](#), with the British finally resorting to a systematic destruction of villages and appointment of new officials to finally halt the guerilla activity. The economic nature of society also changed drastically. After the opening of the [Suez Canal](#), the demand for Burmese rice grew and vast tracts of land were opened up for cultivation. However, in order to prepare the new land for cultivation, farmers were forced to borrow money from Indian moneylenders at high interest rates and were often evicted for failure to pay back the loan. Imported Indian labor ended up with most of the jobs, and whole villages became lawless dens full of the unemployed. While the Burmese economy grew, all the power and wealth was in the hands of several British firms and the

Burmese people did not reap the rewards. (See George Orwell's novel [Burmese Days](#) for a fictional account of the British in Burma.)

A new generation of Burmese leaders arose in the early twentieth century from amongst the educated classes that were permitted to go to [London](#) to study law. They came away from this experience with the belief that the Burmese situation could be improved through negotiations. Progressive constitutional reform in the early 1920s led to a legislature with limited powers, a university and more autonomy for Burma within the administration of India. Efforts were also undertaken to increase the representation of Burmese in the civil service. Some people began to feel that the rate of change was not fast enough and the reforms not expansive enough. This led to strikes and anti-tax protests in the later 1920s. In December [1930](#), a local tax protest by [Saya San](#) quickly grew into first a regional and then a national insurrection against the government. Lasting for two years, the rebellion required thousands of British troops to suppress along with promises of further political reform. The eventual trial of Saya San allowed several future national leaders, including [Ba Maw](#), who participated in his defense to rise to prominence.

In the 1930s, a new generation of dissatisfied students founded a new group called [Thakin](#) (an ironic name as *thakin* means "master" in the Burmese language - rather like the Indian 'sahib' - and this was the term that students were required to use when addressing their British professors, whom they were coming to resent). They staged a student strike in [1936](#), which was notable because it was during this strike that [Thakin Nu](#) and [Aung San](#) joined the movement. The British separated Burma from India in [1937](#) and granted the colony a new constitution calling for a fully elected assembly, but some Burmese felt that this was a ploy to exclude them from any further Indian reforms. Other Burmese saw any action that removed Burma from the control of India to be a positive step. [Ba Maw](#) served as the first prime minister of Burma, but he was forced out by [U Saw](#) in [1939](#), who served as prime minister from [1940](#) until he was arrested on January 19, [1942](#) by the British for communicating with the Japanese.

World War II and Japan

See also: [Burma Campaign](#)

Some Burmese nationalists saw the outbreak of [World War II](#) as an opportunity to extort concessions from the British in exchange for support in the war effort. Other Burmese such as the Thakin movement, opposed Burma's participation in the war under any circumstances. After the Thakin organization called for a national uprising, an arrest warrant was issued for many of the organizations

leaders including [Aung San](#), who escaped to China. Aung San's intention was to make contact with leftist or communist groups in China but he was detected by the Japanese. The [Japanese](#) offered him support, and he briefly returned to Burma to enlist the aid of twenty-nine young men who went to Japan with him to receive military training in [Formosa](#) as the so-called "Thirty Comrades." When the Japanese occupied [Bangkok](#) in [December 1941](#), Aung Sang announced the formation of the [Burma Independence Army](#) (BIA) in anticipation of Japanese invasion of the country. The Japanese duly moved into Burma in 1942. The BIA formed a provisional government in some areas of the country in the spring of 1942, but there were differences within the Japanese leadership over the future of Burma. While the immediate Japanese commander of the Thirty Comrades encouraged them to form a provisional government, the Japanese Military leadership had never formally accepted such a plan. Eventually the Japanese Army turned to Ba Maw to form a government. During the war in 1942, the BIA had grown in an uncontrolled way. In many districts officials and even criminals appointed themselves to the BIA. The Japanese disbanded the BIA and replaced it with the Burma Defense Army still headed by Aung Sang. While the BIA had been an irregular force, the BDA was recruited by selection and trained as a conventional army by Japanese instructors. Ba Maw was afterward declared head of state, and his cabinet included both Aung Sang and Thakin Nu. When the Japanese made Burma, in theory, independent in 1943, the name of Burma Defense Army (BDA) was changed to [Burma National Army](#) (BNA).

It soon became apparent that Japanese promises of independence were merely a sham and that Ba Maw was just a puppet. As the war turned against the Japanese, they declared Burma a fully sovereign state in 1943, but this was just another facade. Disillusioned, Aung San began negotiations with communists and socialist leaders including [Thakin Soe](#), [Thakin Than Tun](#), [Ba Swe](#) and [Kyaw Nyein](#) which led to the formation of the AFO or Anti-Facist Organization in April 1944. The AFO eventually was renamed the [Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League](#)(AFPFL).

There were informal contacts between the AFO and the [Allies](#) in 1944 and 1945 through the British organization [Force 136](#). In [March 1945](#), the Burma National Army rose up in a countrywide rebellion against the Japanese. Afterward, [Aung San](#) and others began negotiations with [Lord Mountbatten](#) in [October 1943](#) and officially joined the [Allies](#) as the Patriotic Burmese Forces or PBF. In the first meeting, the AFO represented itself to the British as the provisional government of Burma with Thakin Soe as Chairman and Aung San as a member of its ruling committee. The Japanese were routed from most of Burma by [May](#) 1945. Negotiations then began with the British over the

disarming of the AFO and the participation of its troops in a postwar Burma Army.

From the Japanese surrender to Aung San's assassination

The surrender of the Japanese brought a military administration to Burma and demands to try Aung San for his involvement in a murder during military operations in 1942. Lord Mountbatten realized that this was an impossibility considering Aung San's popular appeal. After the war ended, the former civilian governor, [Reginald Dornan-Smith](#) returned. The restored government established a political program that focused on physical reconstruction of country and delayed discussion of independence. The AFPFL opposed the government leading to political instability in the country. Sir [Hubert Rance](#) was then sent in as the new governor. Almost immediately after his appointment the Rangoon Police went on strike. The strike, starting in September 1946, progressively spread from the police to government employees and then became close to a general strike. Rance calmed the situation by meeting with Aung San and convincing him to join the Governor's Executive Council along with other members of the AFPFL. The new executive council, which had increased credibility in the country, began negotiations for Burmese independence, which were completed successfully in January 1947. The agreement left parts of the communist and conservative branches of the AFPFL dissatisfied, however, sending the Red Flag communists led by [Thakin Soe](#) underground and the conservatives into opposition. Shortly after, rebellion broke out in Arakan and then began to spread into other districts. The popularity of the AFPFL was eventually confirmed when the party won an overwhelming victory in the April 1947 constituent assembly elections.

[U Saw](#), a conservative pre-war Prime Minister of Burma, engineered the assassination of Aung San and several members of his cabinet in [July](#). Thakin Nu was asked to form a new cabinet, and he presided over Burmese independence on [January 4, 1948](#).

Independent Burma

The first years of Burmese independence were marked by successive insurgencies by the Red Flag Communists, White Flag Communists, the PYA - White Band (Socialists), Arakanese Muslims, army rebels and the [Karens](#). Remote areas of Northern Burma were for many years controlled by an army of Nationalist Chinese forces after the Communist takeover of that country in [1949](#). Burma accepted foreign assistance in rebuilding the country in these early years, but continued American support for the Chinese Nationalist military

presence in Burma finally resulted in the country rejecting most foreign aid. Burma generally strove to be impartial in world affairs and was one of the first countries in the world to recognize [Israel](#) and the [People's Republic of China](#).

By [1958](#), the country was largely beginning to recover economically, but was beginning to fall apart politically due to a split in the AFPFL. The situation became so unstable that U Nu invited army chief of staff [Ne Win](#) to take over the country. Ne Win successfully stabilized the situation and paved the way for new general elections in [1960](#) that returned U Nu with a large majority. The situation did not remain stable for long, however, as Ne Win launched a coup in March [1962](#), arrested U Nu and several other important government officials, and declared a socialist state run by a Revolutionary Council of senior military officers.

U Ne Win (as he was now called) quickly took steps to transform Burma into a true socialist state and to isolated the country from contact with the rest of the world. A one-party system was established with the new [Burma Socialist Programme Party](#) (BSPP) in complete control. Commerce and industry were nationalized, but the economy did not grow at first as the government put too much emphasis on industrial development at the expense of agriculture. In April [1972](#), Win and the rest of the Revolutionary Council retired from the army, but continued to run the country through the BSPP, and a new constitution was promulgated in January [1974](#) that resulted in the creation of a People's Assembly (Pyithu Hluttaw) that held supreme legislative, executive, and judicial authority, and local People's Councils. Win became the president of the new government.

In December 1974, the biggest anti-government demonstrations to date broke out over the funeral of former UN Secretary-General [U Thant](#). U Thant had been U Nu's closet advisor in the 1950s and was seen as a symbol of opposition to the military regime.

In the 1980s, the economy began to grow as the government relaxed restrictions on foreign aid, but by the late 1980s falling commodity prices and rising debt led to an economic crisis. This led to economic reforms in [1987-88](#) that relaxed socialist controls and encouraged foreign investment. This was not enough, however, to stop growing turmoil in the country. Win retired as president in [1981](#), but remained in power as chairman of the BSPP until July [1988](#). By September of that year, the country seemed on the verge of a revolution, and the armed forces, under the command of General [Saw Maung](#), stepped in to restore order, establishing martial law and replacing the constitutional government with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) with Saw Maung as chairman and prime minister.

Military rule

The military government changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar in 1989. It also continued the economic reforms started by the old regime and called for a Constituent Assembly to revise the 1974 constitution. This led to multiparty elections in May [1990](#) in which the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory over the [National Unity Party](#) (NUP, the successor to the BSPP) and about a dozen smaller parties. The military, however, would not let the assembly convene, and continued to hold the two leaders of the NLD, [U Tin U](#) and [Aung San Suu Kyi](#), daughter of Aung Sang, under the house arrest imposed on them the previous year. Burma came under increasing international pressure to convene the elected assembly, particularly after Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in [1991](#), and also faced economic sanctions. Saw Maung stepped down in April [1992](#) to be replaced by General [Than Shwe](#).

Than Shwe released U Nu from prison and relaxed some of the restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi's imprisonment, finally releasing her as well in [1995](#), though she was forbidden to leave Rangoon. Than Shwe also finally allowed the Constituent Assembly to meet in January [1993](#), but insisted that the assembly preserve a large role for the military in any future government and suspended the convention from time to time. The NLD, fed up with the interference, walked out in late 1995, and the assembly was finally dismissed in March 1996 without producing a constitution.

During the 1990s, the military regime has also had to deal with several insurgencies by tribal minorities along its borders. General [Khin Nyunt](#) was able to negotiate cease-fire agreements that ended fighting with the Chinese hill tribes and the Kachin, but the Karen would not negotiate. The military finally captured the main Karen base at [Manerplaw](#) in spring 1995, but there has still been no final peace settlement. Another threat to the government's power was the warlord [Khun Sa](#), a major dealer in opium who controlled much of [Shan](#) state, but he surrendered in December 1995 after U.S. pressure had nearly destroyed his business.

After the failure of the Constituent Assembly to create a new constitution, tensions between the government and the NLD mounted, resulting in two large crackdowns on the party in 1996 and 1997. The SLORC was disbanded in November 1997 and replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), but the leadership of the country remained the same and this was merely a cosmetic change. Continuing reports of human rights violations in

Myanmar led the United States to intensify sanctions in 1997, and the [European Union](#) followed suit in [2000](#). Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest again in September 2000 and remained under arrest until May [2002](#), when her travel restrictions outside of Rangoon were also lifted. Reconciliation talks were held with the government, but these stalemated and Suu Kyi was once again

taken into custody in May [2003](#) after an ambush on her motorcade and remains under house arrest once again. The government also performed another large-scale crackdown on the NLD, arresting many of its leaders and closing most of its offices. The situation in Myanmar remains tense to this day.

Friday 25 November - Dhaka to Yangon (Rangoon)

Day 09



Botataung Pagoda

The flight to Kuala Lumpur is scheduled to depart at 01:00. The departure time passes and we still haven't boarded the plane, perhaps because the plane is packed with young men going abroad to work.

Many regular fare passengers, including myself, are upgraded to business class. We finally depart at about 02:00. This does not effect my connection to the flight to Yangon, but some may miss connections to Singapore. We arrive at 07:20 and my flight doesn't leave until 10:05. There is little to do except to try and catch up on some sleep.



Skyline of satellite dishes - Yangon

Flight to Yangon is also packed. This time, on arrival, I am off the plane quickly and so is my bag and so I am soon out of arrivals to find the driver waiting for me.

Dhaka must now be among the most polluted cities in the world. In the morning the smog blots out the rising sun

and during the day the sky is grey. Late afternoon and sunset the sun is a red ball struggling to be seen through the smog.



Botataung Pagoda

Here the sky is clear and the sun is bright.

It is a National Day holiday so the streets are relatively quiet. Nevertheless first impressions are a great contrast with Dhaka. The road is clean and reasonably maintained, the traffic is orderly and there are not people and rickshaws wandering all over the road. Many buildings appear well maintained and large, although there are also many shanties. Buses seem to be relatively new and well maintained.

After a shower and a short sleep I felt up to a walk to the river and the Botataung Pagoda that houses the Royal Palace Bronze Image of Buddha, taken to London by the British in January 1886 and returned in June 1951.

The streets are not so clean and pavements are broken, but most people return a smile or acknowledge a greeting and it is certainly not the teeming throngs of Dhaka.

Botatung Pagoda

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/botataun.htm>

Tradition says that the name "Botataung" is from 'Bo' a military officer and 'ta taung' one thousand and that it was on a hillock at this site that one thousand military officers of the king were drawn up as a guard of honour to welcome the landing in Burma of the relics of the Buddha brought over from India more than two thousand years ago.

An account from ancient histories of the building of the Pagoda states that the Buddhist king Sihadipa gave one of his ministers a sacred hair from the Buddha's head and two body relics and this minister, renowned for his goodness and faith, consulted a famous religious leader and, on his advice, chose the Botataung Mount on the bank of Rangoon River at a distance one thousand tars (7,000

cubits) in a South-Easterly direction from the Shwedagon Pagoda and there enshrined the sacred relics.

For over two thousand years the histories and traditions told that here, beneath this sacred edifice, was buried the sacred hair, the two body relics and an unspecified amount of treasure.

Burmese histories were always noted for a degree of truth and candour greater than that of some more modern histories in the newer countries, but after more than two thousand years have rolled by in this world, so demonstrably subject to *Anicca* (impermanence) it may be forgiven if memories cloud and men's minds grow doubtful.

There were those who in pre-war Burma were ready to doubt the real existence of the ancient relics and the accounts of the old histories.

It has been said that "Sometimes out of evil cometh forth good" and the old histories were to be vindicated by the trials and misfortunes of war.

The Botataung Pagoda was a famous Land-mark on Rangoon's waterfront. Situated just below the long lines of jetties that serve this busy port whence rice, petroleum, timber and mineral are shipped to the whole world, a most vulnerable spot in war, yet the Japanese air - raids on Rangoon in 1941-42 did no damage though bombs fell nearby and bullets rained death from the sky but on the 8th of November, 1943 the R.A.F. bombed Rangoon's wharves and a whole "stick" of bombs straddled the ancient Botataung Pagoda, leaving where had stood one of Burma's oldest and most venerated fanes, a heartrending heap of twisted and blackened ruins.

As soon as the war ended a Rehabilitation Committee of leading citizens was formed to take steps to rebuild the Pagoda. Preliminary work was commenced and plans drawn up for the rebuilding.

The top-burden of the ruins was cleared away and then on the 4th of January, 1948 marking the day on which Burma regained her freedom and independence, the Rehabilitation Committee put in gold pegs as the first step towards actual re-erection of the Pagoda. A fitting ceremony was performed and the aid of all Forces and Beings was invoked and at 8-45 a.m. on this independence day, a moment judged auspicious, five gold pegs were driven simultaneously into the ground. The centre gold peg was handled by Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin, the gold peg at the North-East Point by U Ba Thaw, Botataung Pagoda Trustee, the gold peg at the South-East point by Sir Mya Bu, Retired Chief Justice, the gold peg at the South-West point by U Po Byaw, Shwedagon Pagoda Trustee, and the gold peg at the North-West point by Thado Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Maung, Chief Justice of the Union. These gold pegs were driven home simultaneously by these five gentlemen at the precise moment.



Discovery of Rare Treasure.

After the driving in of the gold pegs the debris was cleared from the ground demarcated and bronze and silver images, coins and ornaments, some of which had been on display at the Pagoda at the time of the bombing, were recovered. Then a depth of seven feet having been excavated in order to establish the foundations of the new Pagoda, further excavations were carried out for a relic chamber in the very centre of the site. At a depth of three feet an ancient and well-constructed chamber was uncovered, in size 20' x 20' and 6 in height gradually decreasing in size towards the top and appearing like a huge pot placed up-sided down to cover completely what lay inside.

In the very centre of this treasure vault was discovered a wonderful stone casket in the shape of a pagoda with a diameter of 23 ins, and 39 ins, high. Encircling this stone casket were figures of Nats (Minor Deities) carved out of laterite and evidently placed there to act as sentinels. The casket was immersed in mud as water had trickled into the vault during the many centuries it had been there.

With this pagoda-shaped stone casket within the relic chamber were found various kinds of treasures: precious stones, ornaments, jewellery, terra-cotta plaques and images of gold, silver, brass and stone. The total number of these images recovered from within and without the relic chamber was seven hundred. The terra cotta plaques, some of them in a

fair state of preservation, depict Buddhist scenes.

Image of Lord Buddha in Terra Cotta. One of the terra-cotta plaques excavated from the relic chamber bears an image of the Lord Buddha and though affected by age and moisture it is exceptionally important. On the reverse side are inscribed characters which are very close to the ancient Brahmani script which came from Southern India. It is a precious evidence of ancient times and has been deciphered by U Lu Pe Win, Superintendent Archaeologist, Government of the Union of Burma, who points out that the initial word "e" from "*evam vadi*" shows that the script is in the manner of the ancient Mons. This is proof of the belief that the people who erected the Pagoda in ancient times were the Mons. The inscription is reproduced herein and the characters form the verse which summarises tersely the Buddha's Teaching as explained by Assaji (one of the five companions of Gotama - in his strenuous ascetic practices, to whom after His Enlightenment He returned and first preached the Doctrine), to Sariputta who in turn explained it to his friend Moggallana. Those two thereupon perceived the Truth of the Buddha's Teaching, joined the Order and became the chief disciples. The English translation is: "The Tathagata has explained the cause of all things which proceed from a cause and also the cessation thereof. This the Great Samana has taught." (*Sariputta - Mahavagga, pubbujja Khandaka, Moggallana vinaya pitaka*).

The Opening of the Stone Casket

It was at once realised that the stone casket contained relics, but as this could not be opened up unceremoniously the pilgrims who flocked from all over Burma to see these discoveries had at first just to imagine the contents. The Rehabilitation Committee met on several occasions but could not take the responsibility of opening the casket. Then a meeting was called to which were invited 15 of the leading religious leaders (Maha Theras). At this meeting, on the advice of these Bhikkhus, that as an act prompted by good motives and

religious faith it would be quite meritorious to open the casket, it was unanimously decided to do this in the presence of the members of the Committee and the public. Great precautions were taken so as not to cause the slightest damage and actually the cone was removed from the stone salver on which it stood without any very great difficulty. When this cone or stone layer was removed there was found inside another stone layer of similar shape but with a brilliant gold coating and this was more representative of a pagoda in shape while its exquisite workmanship and brilliance inspired feelings of deep religious fervour in the crowd present. Some mud had penetrated even here and the sides of the base were covered with this and when it was washed and sifted precious stones and gold and jewellery were discovered round the base. This second stone casket was then removed and inside was found a small pagoda of pure gold standing on a silver salver or base and beside this golden pagoda was a carved stone image 4 1/2 ins. high of very ancient workmanship.

When the gold Pagoda was lifted up, a tiny gold cylinder of 3/4 ins. length with a diameter of 5/12 ins. was found and in this tiny cylinder were found two small body relics each the size of a mustard seed and a Sacred Hair of the Buddha. This hair was coiled round and fastened with a little acquer on which were traces of gold plaster.

The New Pagoda

The Sacred Body Relics and the Sacred Hair of the Buddha with all the images and other precious objects recovered from the ruins of the Pagoda have been temporarily stored in a shelter near the site of the Pagoda. Meanwhile the building of a new pagoda goes on apace. There had been a good deal of encroachment on the ancient Pagoda lands when Burma was taken by the British and these lands have been restored as glebe lands by the Government of the Union of Burma and the Pagoda site is now restored to 6 1/2 acres. The new pagoda is of original design and in height 131 ft. 8 ins, on a base of 96 ft. x 96 ft. The pagoda is of reinforced

concrete and is to be gilded and observers from abroad opine that this pagoda is a happy blend of the ancient and of the ultra-modern and a really wonderful piece of architecture. The date of completion and crowning is yet to be determined but it will be before that great forthcoming event in Buddhist history, the Sixth Great Buddhist Council which will be held in Burma from 1954.

Unlike many of the older shrines, the Pagoda is not a solid core but has a huge internal cavity and worshippers may enter.

Strength has not been sacrificed in the construction and the internal design is such that the odd nooks and corners, inseparable from an edifice of this shape, are being made the most of for artificial lighting and for guarded show cases in which to display the relics for public veneration. There is a well in the centre of the pagoda where was the ancient treasure chamber and this is to be kept open. An altar is to be erected in this well where the relics will rest so that they may be taken out on special occasions for worship.

The Botataung Pagoda is symbolic of the vitality and energy exhibited in the great Buddhist revival. Here from the ruins of the old culture is being salvaged all that was best of the ancient wisdom and displayed in modern manner to a modern world.



Cross river ferry boats



Street Café - Yangon

History of Yangon

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/history/>

The history of Yangon is intertwined with the history of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Wherever one may be in Yangon, in the busy town center, in the new towns of the east, in the industrial zone of the west, in the paddy fields

of the north, the golden form of the Shwedagon will be seen on the skyline rising above the foliage of the tropical trees, and the top of high rises.

The founding story of Shwedagon reaches back to the days of the Enlightenment of Gaudama Buddha when He discovered the cause of universal suffering and the way to its elimination. It was on the 49th day after the Enlightenment when two brothers, Taphussa and Bhallika, merchants from Ukkalapa in the land of Mon people in Lower Myanmar, came before Buddha. A nat (spirit) who had been the mother of the two brothers in a previous existence had guided them to the Buddha. The brothers offered honey cakes. After Buddha had eaten the cakes, the brothers asked for gift. Buddha passed His hand over His head and, obtaining eight Hairs, gave them to the brothers. Buddha, perceiving that the three previous Buddhas had caused their possessions to be enshrined in a pagoda on Singuttara hill in the country of the two brothers, bade them to do likewise with the

Sacred Hairs.



The brothers returned home and made landfall at Pagoda Point in the south-west coast of Myanmar. They sent word to king Ukkalapa

of their arrival with the sacred Hairs. The King welcomed the Hairs with great ceremony at Asitanzana, north-west of present Yangon.

The king and the brothers next sought for a man who could tell them the location of Singuttara Hill. No human knew the location but Sakka, King of the nats did, and guided them to the Hill. Singuttara Hill is known by seven names of which one is Trikhumba, meaning 'three pots' and signifying three pot-shaped hills. Tikhumba became Tikun and Dagon and later Changed to Lagun in Mon.

When the brothers asked Sakka where the Hairs should be shrined, Sakka could not tell them where the earlier relics were enshrined because they were of such antiquity and he was not that old. However, Sule Nat knew where Kakusandha Buddha's staff was enshrined, Yawhani Nat knew where Konagamana Buddha's water-dipper was enshrined. Hmawbi Nat revealed that he had been assigned to guard the sacred objects. Finally, Gautama Buddha's Hairs were enshrined and stupa consecrated on the full moon day of Tabaung (March 6,c.588 B.C.)

Along time after that, there that, there being no one to worship at the Lagun shrine, it fell into ruin and was covered with jungle.Tradition states that 200 years after Buddha's Parinirvana in 543 BC. Sona and Uttara, two monks from Sri Lanka brought King Asoka to the Pagoda. The King had the jungle cleared and the Pagoda repaired. In the fifth century A.D. King Duttabaung paid homage at the Pagoda. In the 11th century, King Anawratha of Bagan offered gold and silver umbrellas and built a pagoda near the town of Twante across the Yangon River. Dalla, which is now a town on the bank opposite Yangon, was then located on the Twante Ridge and was more important than Dagon. Dagon at that time lay in low lying often water-logged land. Sule Pagoda, now in downtown Yangon, stood on a small island in the swamp, to the west down to he Hlaing River and Yangon /River

to the south .The Shwedagon (then called Kyak Lagun in Mon) was reached across a causeway.

The discovery of a votive of the Bagan period at Tadagale to the north of Yangon

shows that the laterite ridge at the end of which Shwedagon lay was a scene of activity in the Bagan period and the ridge may have provided a road southwards to the Shwedagon Pagoda and Dagon Village beyond.

After the collapse of Bagan in the 13th century and the rise of Mon power in the 14th with the capital at Bago, Dagon became a place of some importance, though not as a commercial port but as a centre of religious life. At onetime Dagon was reported to contain thirty-two ordination halls Binnya U (1348-83), Mon king of Bago created a pagoda of height 18 m. (60'). Dagon was also a place of refuge for princes who did not find Bago safe. Binnya U's son, Binnya Nwe, later King Rajadarit, who had a chronicle to himself, fled to Dagon when he ran away with his half-sister Talamidaw. Dagon at that time was not a walled city but a fort of logs.

Successive Mon King of the 15th century raised the height of Pagoda by encasing earlier pagoda and embellishing the new. King Binnyayan (1426-46)cut down the hill and enlarged the base to five terraces to sustain the height but before he could finish the work he died. The work was continued by his successor, Binnyawaru (1446-50) who was helped by his mother, Queen Shin Saw Bu, the only regnant queen of Myanmar. She was ably assisted by the commander of the army, soldiers,



attendants and the common people. They raised the height of the Pagoda to 90.6 m(302').



Queen Shin Saw Bu was the first to gild the Pagoda. She went on the scales and let them take her weight which was a bout 40 kg.(90 lbs). She donated that weight in gold. She dedicated a vast expanse of glebe lands which virtually covered the whole of modern Yangon. Her successor King Dhammazedi created the stone inscriptions standing on Pagoda Hill. He also donated a huge bell which a Portugese adventurer took away but which fell into the river and has not been recovered.

In 1539, Tabinshwehti, who had conquered Bago, placed a jewelled finial on the Pagoda.

Casper de Cruz, a Dominican priest, who was the country

between 1550-60 said that "the Brames (Burmese) were a great people, very rich of gold and precious stones, chiefly of rubies; a proud nation and valiant.



They have very rich and gallant shippings garnished with gold which they sail in the rivers; they use vessels of gold silver; their houses are of timber and well wrought. The kingdom is very great."

In 1572, Bayinnaung rebuilt the Pagoda to 360' and had it regilded. The shrine had been reduced to rubble during

an earthquake in 1564. Bayinnaung embarked from Bago in a golden barge in the form of the mythical hintha bird, surmounted by a golden spire. The barge was escorted by a large fleet of 300 golden canoes and 1000 war boats which filled the Bago River as far as the eye could see. The grand fleet floated down to Dagon. Bayinnaung repeated the trip in 1581.

In 1583, Gasparo Balbi "came to the faire cities of Dagon, it is finally seated, and fronted towards the south-west, and where they land are twenty long steps, the matter of them is strong and great pieces of timber-- After we were landed we began to go on the right hand is a large street about fifty places broad, in which we saw wooden houses gilded, and adorned with delicate gardens, after their custom, where in Talapoinis, which are their Firers dwell. The left side is furnished with Portals, and Shops, very like the new Procuration at Venice; and by a street that go towards the Varella, for the space of a good mile straightforwards either under paint houses or in the open street, which is free to walk in."

Ralph Fitch wrote about the same time; "It is the fairest place, as I suppose, the that is in the world; it (the Pogoda) standeth very high, and there are four ways to it, which all along are set with trees of fruits, in such wise that a man may goes in the shade above two miles in length. And when their feast day is, man can hardly passe by water or land for the

great presse thither of people; for they come from all places of the Kingdom of Pegu thither at their Feast."



By the end of the 16th century the Shwedagon Fair was attracting people not only from Myanmar but also from distance lands such as Laos and Cambodia. The Dagon Fair was one of the chief markets for overseas trade rivalling Bago and Thanlyin.

The Delta was effecting yet another change. The Bago River too was silting up off Thanlyin,

and sea-going vessels were finding it difficult to navigate the reaches opposite the town. Thus, Dagon was becoming the port of choice.

After the founding of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Alaungpaya's conquest of lower Myanmar is the second most important event in the history of Dagon. May 1775 marks the beginning of the modern town when Alaungpaya, to commemorate his victory, changed its name from Dagon to Yangon, "Enmity Exhausted."

Alaungpaya's Yangon was basically a log fortress, with the river frontage in the south, the site of the present 30th street in the west, a line of about 3300' cutting across the modern Maha Bandola Garden, Pansodan and Bo Aung Gyaw street in the north, and Theinbyu Street in the east. The town lay well to the east of the Sule Pagoda. Its area could not have been more than 1/8 square mile.

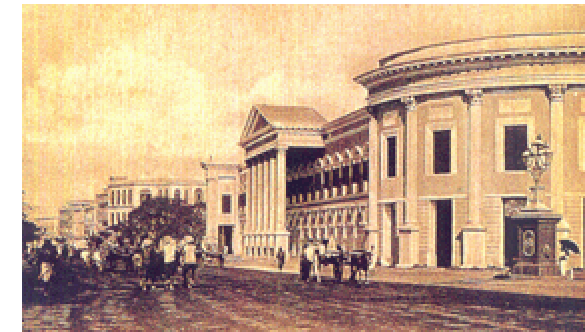
The stockade was built of solid teak piles, rising to a height of twelve feet on average, but to twenty feet in some places. The stockade was protected by a ditch and

it did not stand directly on the bank of the river but twenty or thirty yards away at its nearest point.

The town had three streets running east-west and two running north-south. The east-west streets counting from the river side were Strand Road, also known as Kaladan, the street of the foreigners because most foreigners lived there. then above that was where modern Merchant Street runs, also known as "Pegu Palace" to the English because the Myowun's residence was there. The northernmost street was the Mingala Bazaar. The main south-north road ran along the line of the present Seikkantha Street.

The Sule Pagoda stood on a small laterite pinnacle cut off from the town by a swamp. Yangon itself too stood on a small island surrounded by water at high tide, In 1782, it was reported that the streets were not paved but by 1795 they were well paved, and because wheel traffic was not allowed within the town, the paving remained in tolerable repair.

Outside the town were three wooden wharfs, the principal one



being the King's Wharf which allowed ships to load or unload without the use of

sampans. Higher up the River, beyond the limits of the town, was the China Wharf where Chinese merchants conducted business.

The population of Yangon was now about 30,000 according to Symes. Exports from Yangon included lac,

isingglass, vegetable oil, ivory, cotton, petroleum and famous teak. Teak was especially valued because a vessel built with teak would outlast four ships built of oak. the abundance of teak made ship-construction cheap and the twenty-foot tide in the Yangon River made docks unnecessary for ships could be beached without danger. The Myanmar carpenters were good craftsmen and were hard-working. They were regarded as better shipwrights than men of other nationalities, More than a hundred ships were built in the thirty years after 1775. Most of these ships were sold in foreign ports.

Apart from construction, the shipyards did a busy trade in refitting ships. The industry became so important that it alarmed the British in India who felt that steps should be taken to curb its power, which they did. The East India Company's government sent a combined force of nearly eleven thousand men with forty pieces of artillery. The transports carrying this force were escorted by HMS Liffey, HMS Larne, HMS Sophia, the sloop Slaney, several cruisers, twenty gun brigs, twenty tow-boats each armed with an eighteen-pounder gun and the steamship Diana. On 10 May 1824 the fleet stood into the River and anchored within the bar. The expedition landed on the 12th The invading force was distributed in the town and along to two roads leading to the Pagoda, along the road-side and on the Shwedagon platform.

In November, the great Myanmar general Maha Bandoola arrived in the neighbourhood of Yangon. He made several attempts to evict the invading force stationed on the Pagoda but was frustrated by the guns of the enemy fleet. On the 15th, the Myanmar army was driven from its stronghold at Kokine. The Myanmar army



retreated towards Danubyu where an enemy shell killed Maha Bandoola. That was virtually the end of the war. The Treaty of Yandabo was concluded on 24th

February 1826. Yangon remained in occupation till 8th December. The invading force enshipped on 9 December with a detachment left behind to receive the final instalment of the indemnity. Yangon was returned to the Myowun by General Campbell.

Serious damage was done by the troops who pillaged the pagodas on the Shwedagon platform and around the town. A single company stationed on the Pagoda obtained in one night a large number of gold and silver images which was sold to an officer who resold them for a big profit in Calcutta. Most seriously, General Cambell ordered the piercing of a tunnel into the bowel of the Shwedagon in the hope of finding treasure. He was disappointed. Singu Min's great bell was seized, but when they tried to transport it to India the Bell sank to the bottom of the River. Later, Myanmar people retrieved it by attaching it to a ship at low water, when the tide came in, the ship lifted the bell.

In , King Thayawady decided that King Alaungpaya's town was too vulnerable to attack from the river and that a new town should be built further inland, about a mile and a quarter from the river. A mud wall sixteen feet high and eight broad was to surround the town and a ditch to run alongside it. The Pagoda was worked into the

defences of the town which was about three-quarters of a mile away. Thus the Shwedagon formed the north-east corner of the town. The east border of the town ran along Shwedagon Pagoda Road ridge. The southern boundary was slightly south of the road where the National Health Laboratory now stands. The west road ran roughly along Myoma Kyaung Lan, while the north face cut across Pyay Road and People's Park. Water was supplied by thirty



wells. The town was named Aung Mye Aung Hnin, "Victory Soil, Victorious Ejector". Endawya Pagoda in Myoma Kyaung lan remains from the visit of

Ling Thayawady. Though King Thayawady's town was occupied for residence, the old Yangon continued to be populous. Commerce and industry and all connected with trade and the port were still situated there. A crane was placed at the new King's Wharf at Lanmadaw. So King Alaungpaya's Yangon continued to be the business town. In the end, King Alaungpaya's town existed for only ten years because by the war of 1852, Lower Myanmar was annexed by the British and a new Yangon was planned. A British force of 6000 men with thirty-five pieces of artillery, escorted by fifteen warships appeared at the mouth of Yangon River on the 1st April 1852. Posts and stackade guarding the River were attacked and taken on the 5th. On the 11th the ships crossed the bar and took up position opposite the old town. The next day, Theinbyu, "the White House Stackade" was taken. Meanwhile, a certain Mr. C.M. Crisp, a foreigner residing in Yangon, who had previously sent information about the defence of Yangon, had told Capital Latter that it would be better to direct the attack at the eastern entrance of the Pagoda which was very inadequately defended. A detachment then rushed the east entrance and gained the Pagoda

platform. Myanmar forces were compelled to retire by the southern and western gates of the town. The British lost sixteen killed and one hundred and thirty-three wounded. Two majors also died. The British annexed lower Myanmar by a proclamation dated 20th December 1852. On the 21st the proclamation was read in Yangon.



Dr. William Montgomery who had come along as Superintendent Surgeon with the British troops proposed a town with a checkered pattern of streets based on a road which ran along the Strand. Lt. Fraser of the Bengal Engineers, who had been assigned the design task, largely followed Dr. Montgomery's plan. Fraser's detailed proposal dealt with the problem of flooding at high tide. However, his plan had to be modified to provide for a larger city. Three kinds of roads were incorporated into the design. Roads running west to east were broad roads 160 feet wide. Roads running south consisted of two small 30 feet wide roads, one medium-sized road 50 feet wide, two more 35 feet

wide roads and then one broad 100 feet wide road. This order was repeated from west to east. The smaller roads were numbered, while the medium and broad roads were given names, some for eminent persons of that time.

As laid down, there was the 100 feet wide Lanmadaw Road, followed by 17th and 18th street, which were small roads, then the medium 58 feet road Sint-O-Dan Road, next the smaller 19th and 20th streets, followed by 100 feet wide Latter Road, followed again by the two numbered small roads 21th and 22th streets.

The roads running parallel west to east were the Strand Road, Merchant Road, Dalhousie Road (Maha Bandoola), Fraser Road, (Anawrahta) and Montgomery/Commissioner Road (Bogyoke Aung San) then a medium 50 feet wide road known as Bank Road.

Yangon, which had become the model city in South-east Asia, suffered great damage during the Second World War. Its buildings, roads and drainage systems were destroyed. Multicoloured insurgents added to the problem after Independence in 1948. This led to a massive influx of refugees into the city where enough housing was not available to accommodate them. People simply settled where they pleased. The city was now covered with small shacks of bamboo and thatch causing serious fire hazard. Drainage was blocked with refuse. Traffic on motor roads and sidewalks was impeded by huts and shops. People squatted on public land, gardens and parks. Disease became rampant and the mortality rate increased. Fires often broke out, destroying thousands of homes in the squatter slums.

The population was 46000 in 1856; in 1860 it rose to 60,000 To accommodate the population, the original town



was extended west by the three 100 feet roads, three 50 feet roads and twenty-two 30 feet roads. The extension to the east was by three 50 feet roads and twenty-two 30 feet roads. The extension to the east was by three 30 feet roads. In 1872, the population had risen to nearly 100,000. In 1900, it was over 200,000. The suburbs of Kyimyindaing, Ahlone, Pazundaung, Yegyaw, Myaynigone, Kamayut were incorporated into the town and Voyle Road (U Wisara Road) was added as another northward road to the existing Prome Road (Pyay Lan).

Meanwhile, British officers and soldiers fallen in the war were buried in the north-east corner of the Shwedagon Pagoda platform. They were exhumed and buried in the Cantonment Cemetery after repeated appeals, only in January 1929 the western stairs were opened to the public in March, 1930, after 77 years in British military custody.



In 1869, presiding monk U Pya and elders responsible for the upkeep of the Pagoda found the 100-year old King Hsinbyushin htee crowing the Pagoda had rusted and was beginning to crumble. Since the people of occupied Lower Myanmar could not by themselves put up a new htee, permission was sought and received from the British authorities to appeal to King

Mindon who granted assent.

When the htee was ready for crowning, the British began to have serious doubts over the political implication of a Myanmar King embellishing the Shwedagon because the act could signify the King's supremacy over the area. The British Chief Commissioner of British Burma and not by the Myanmar king. King Mindon agreed. The htee should be placed on the Pagoda by the subjects of British Burma and not by the Myanmar king. King Mindon agreed. The

htee was sent to Yangon and was disembarked on 24 October 1871. The vane surmounting the htee was placed in position on 26 November and the ceremony was completed without the trouble the British feared, though people from all parts of the country had flocked to Yangon. "The town was never more quiet as regards crime than during this great influx of people", reported the Chief Commission. When the Caretaker Government assumed power in 1958, a Municipal commissioner was appointed with the mission to clean up the City. The task was to educate the public, to lay down necessary controls, to dredge and clear blocked drainage, to rid sidewalks of

encroaching shops, to repair old equipment and install new machinery. the mission was undertaken with the slogan; "Wash the City with sweat."

People living as squatters on public land and in trespassing huts, and those living on roadsides were transferred with necessary help to the new towns of Thaketa, South and North Okkalapa. At first, people were reluctant to move, but when they found themselves living in their own houses in clean quarters with water and electricity, good roads and health and educational facilities they realized how well they had come up in life from their previous squalid habitats.

by enactment of the Revolutionary Council, the township Councils of Thingangun, Kanbe, Kamayut, Thamaing, North Okkalapa, South Okkapala and Thaketa were absorbed into the territory of the Yangon municipality.

The population of Yangon in 1973 was 2,015,230. More was to come.

Before the accession of the State Law and Order Restoration Council the population of Yangon had increased to over 2,8 million. Attempts to get rid of squatters on choice lands in the central areas of the City had not succeeded. The City had lost many of the features and characteristics of a capital city. The solution was obvious. People living on trespassed land would have to be relocated, which meant that new towns would have to be made available and the city limits extended. And according to the new policy of opening up the market to private enterprise, private entrepreneurs and construction companies would have to be given the opportunity to employ their initiative.

A new slogan was established: " Raising the people from hut to brick housing ".

Saturday 26 November - Tour Day 01 - Yangon

Day 10

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangon>

Last night I met a member of the group who had also arrived early. Wendy is from Cairns and we arranged to take the local train that circles Yangon. The trip takes 3 hours and travels through the suburbs and into the near countryside returning through more suburbs to the main railway station.



Street Scene - Yangon



By the rail tracks



Monk - Yangon

At the station we pay \$US1.00 for the trip and make our way to the platform. When I enquire which train we are ushered to a carriage where part of the carriage is cordoned off for train staff and foreigners. So we ride in style on the wooden bench seats.

As we slowly travelled from station to station, people with all sorts of goods got on and off as they carried them to market.

There were two young women working with local people training them to teach others how to improve their children's diet so that they did not suffer from malnutrition.

On our return we all went for a light lunch.



By the rail tracks



On board the train

After lunch Wendy and I walked to the Bogoyoke Aung San Market.

<http://www.bogyokemarket.com/>



Old and New



Fellow Passengers



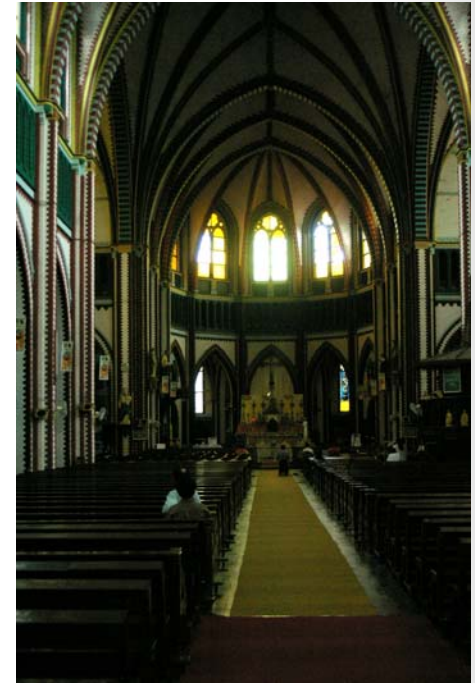
Food Stall on the move - Yangon



Shrine beside the rail tracks



St Mary's Cathedral



St Mary's Cathedral

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-yangon/bogyokeaungsanmarket.htm>

Bogyoke Aung San Market is situated in the heart of Yangon - on Bogyoke Aung San Road. The Bogyoke Aung San Market is the most popular market and a great tourist destination in Yangon. It is one of the precious colonial buildings you can find in Yangon.



The Train



Bogyoke Aung San Market

The market was first built and inaugurated on the present premises in 1926. It was named Scott Market after Mr. C. Scott, the then Municipal

Commissioner. Nowadays, it is called Bogyoke Aung San Market in honor of our national leader General Aung San who was assassinated in 1947.

On our way back to the hotel we called into St Mary's Catholic Cathedral.

Sunday 27 November - Tour Day 02 - Yangon to Taungoo

Day 11

Depart early.

After about 40 minutes driving along a reasonable divided highway we stop at Taukkyan War Cemetery.

http://www.cwgc.org/cwgcinternet/cemetery_details.aspx?cemetery=92002&mode=1

As with all the war graves cemeteries maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission it is immaculate. Here there are the graves of servicemen from all parts of the Commonwealth who served and died in Burma during World War II.

We continue on northward along Highway One that soon deteriorates into a very bumpy, sealed, 2 lane highway carrying buses, heavy trucks, bicycles, motor cycles, bullock carts, rickshaws and pony carts. Very colourful; but slow going.



Taukkyan War Cemetery



Bago



Bago



Cutting Hay - Taungoo



Taukkyan War Cemetery



Fisherman - Bago

We stop for morning tea at the Ngwe Pon Gye Restaurant beside the river at Bago.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bago_Division

We encounter numerous empty army trucks heading south. They are coming from Pyin Mana, the new administrative capital of Myanmar. For some reason the generals have decided to move the administrative capital from Yangon and started moving staff to the newly established centre.



Waiting - Bago

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyinmana>

We make several stops along the way, finally arriving at our overnight stop in the central Burma town of Taungoo; the main staging post between Yangon and Mandalay, shortly before sunset, allowing just enough time to wander into the fields for some photos.



Water Buffalo

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taungoo>

King Mingyinyo founded Taungoo (Kaytumadi) in 1510 AD.

We have travelled about 180 miles.



Three Boys - Taungoo



Plowing - Taungoo

The Myanmar Beauty Guest Houses are run by four doctors, fourdoctor@mptmail.net.mm, and are situated on the outskirts of the town overlooking the rice fields.

Tomorrow is another early start as we continue north to the Shan Plateau and Kalaw.

Monday 28 November - Tour Day 03 - Taungoo to Kalaw

Day 12



Monk with Parasol

We are up early for a breakfast of fruits and Burmese vegetarian dishes on the first floor veranda overlooking the fields and the sunrise. There are soon people working in the fields. Most of the rice crop has been harvested and the fields are being prepared for winter crops. There are no tractors and bullocks draw the ploughs. Harvesting is by hand.



Sunrise at Taungoo

We pass through Pyin Mana and although there is little sign of development near the road; we are not allowed to stop there. There are however, signs of major road construction and new buildings some distance from the road.

As we travel north we continue on through the alluvial plains of the Sittaung River. The dominant crop is rice, but as we travel north there are many sugar plantations and a number of sugar mills.



Breakfast at Taungoo



Ox Carts

At our lunch stop we have the opportunity to sample fried sparrows and sparrow embryos. A local delicacy that we choose not to taste.



Local Bus

The road gets worse. Eventually we leave Highway One and take a shortcut to Highway Two the main east west highway and head east towards the mountains. The mountains rise quickly from the plain and we are soon climbing a rough winding road with heavy trucks, buses and small utility trucks loaded with goods and people. We take nearly four hours to traverse this section of road, arriving in Kalaw at about 17:30.

The 200mile trip has taken nearly 10 hours.



Bamboo Stool Vendor



Compressor Maintenance

Shan Plateau

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/east.asp>

The eastern region of Myanmar consists of highlands known as the Shan plateau, although the "plateau" is

formed by a succession of mountain chains of varied relief and generally of rounded outlines. These are much older than the western mountains and are part of the Indo-Malaysia block of ancient rocks which form the core of the Southeast Asian peninsula.

The average height of the Shan Plateau is 900 m (3000') and rises abruptly from the Central Basin. The ranges are generally aligned north-south and the highest peak in the Loiling range is 2630 m (8770') above sea level. The general elevation is about 900 m' - 1200 m (4000') and is continuous with the Yunnan highland. The Shan massif is continued into Kayah and further southward into the Kayin and Mon states. There are some structural basins formed as a result of folding or faulting forming several lakes which have silted up and become dry land like the Heho plain, the Kyaington plain and Theinni plain. The only lake of importance remaining is the Inle Lake.



Fried Sparrows

The Dream Villa Hotel is very comfortable.

We dine at the Seven Sisters Restaurant. An excellent meal of bamboo shoot soup and Burmese curry and a beer cost \$US3.50



Sunrise - Myoma Kyaung Pagoda - Kalaw

Kalaw

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-inle/kalaw.htm>

Kalaw stands high on the western edge of the Shan Plateau. It is 70 km west of Taungyi, about halfway along the Thazi-Taungyi road. This was a popular hill station in the British days

and it is still a peaceful and quiet place. At an altitude of 1320 m it is also pleasantly cool and a good place for hiking amid gnarled pines, bamboo groves and rugged mountain scenery. A former colonial British hill station, this small-town offers cool temperatures (Kalaw sits at 1,300 meters elevation) and plenty of trekking opportunities. The population is a mix of Shan, Indian Muslims, Bamars and Nepalis (Gurkhas retired from British military service), many of whom are missionary educated.



Dream Villa Hotel

Palaung Village

It takes two hours (short way) or four hours through the hills to the village of the Palaung tribe. At first a steep track leads down into a narrow valley where the Palaung cultivate cheroot, tea, damsons and mangoes on the hillsides. The track crosses the valley floor and then climbs very steeply again to the Palaung village of

Pinnabin, which sits on top of a hill. The village has an interesting long houses for eight families. Observe tribal village life and how the Palaung people drying cheroot in a specially designed oven. The Palaung originate from Mon-Khmer stock. They mainly live in the mountains and are mostly Buddhist



Pina Pin on the mountain top

Today there are optional activities, including a trek to one of the nearby tribal villages. Several choose this option and the others choose to spend the day in and around Kalaw.



Senior Monk - Mia Naw Hla Pagoda



Pa'o Woman

I have chosen to visit the tribal village of Pina Pin (Pinnabin) with five of the group. We set out soon after 08:30

and head of up the mountain to the Mia Naw Hla Pagoda. The monks, who demonstrate the way they arrange their robes and allow us to take photos of them, welcome us.

The senior monk invites us into his house and offers us hospitality. We spend a short time in conversation and then head off over the ridge and down into the valley. Mostly we walk through the bush but occasionally we pass by cultivated areas of mandarins, tea and yams.



Primary School Class - Pina Pin

It pleasant walking, but it is getting hotter. At the bottom of the valley we stop in a mandarin orchard and have tea and mandarins with the farmer before we start the climb to Pina Pin.

Kalaw is at 4315feet above sea level. Pina Pin situated on a higher mountaintop and we have descended into a valley below Kalaw so the climb is long and hot.

We arrive about midday and are immediately offered green tea and shown the woven handicrafts made by the

Pa'o villagers. Of course they are for sale and everyone buys something at the very low prices being asked.



Water Tank construction team at work - Pina Pin



Our Mechanical Buffalo



Myoma Kyaung Pagoda



Monk and Elaine - Mia Naw Hla Pagoda



Mia Naw Hla Pagoda



Pa'o Woman - Pina Pin



Children - Pina Pin



Tea drying in the foreground



Our hostesses at lunch - Pina Pin

Lunch is provided, at a cost of about \$A3.00, including a donation to the monastery, by the female monks; soup followed by chicken, beef, vegetables and rice.

After lunch we visited the primary school and after a short discussion with the principal we witness the fifth grade having an English language lesson. We are not sure how much useful English they learn. We all had difficulty understanding the lesson.

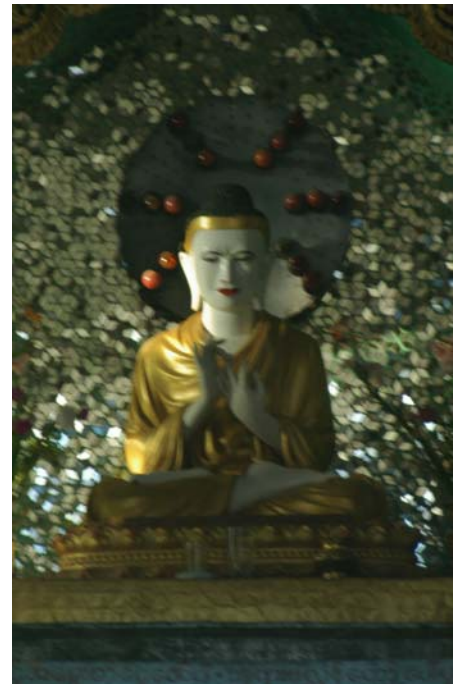
At about 14:00 we start off down the mountain and continue along the road to the main road where our guide hails a mechanical oxen farm vehicle to take us the rest of the way to the hotel.



Women - Pina Pin



Pina Pin



**Buddha - Aung Chang Tha Zedi -
Kalaw**



Aung Chang Tha Zedi - Kalaw



Sweeping the street



Early morning passers by



Leisurely departure this morning. The train to Shwe Nyaung is scheduled to depart at 11:00 so we are able to have breakfast and spend some time in the town as it wakes up and people make their way to work and school.

It is an opportunity for photos of people as they pass by.

After about an hour we return to the hotel to collect our things in readiness

for departure for the train station at 09:30, seems a bit early but it is a leisurely walk through town.

The train may depart at 11:00 and then again it may not. Today the train arrives at about 11:35, however we can't depart until the train going the other way arrives. It arrives at 12:30 and we are off at a pace close to that of Puffing Billy as we wind our way through the hills and forests of the Shan plateau and onto the open grasslands of the plateau.

The train makes stops at several places, including Aung Ban and Hebo.

As we approach our destination, Shwe Nyaung, the train descends into the valley via a steep descent that includes a novel viaduct and bridge where the train crosses a valley on a viaduct and then circles down to pass under the viaduct and across the river.

An interesting trip through farmland and towns we finally arrive at Shwe Nyaung where we load our bags on top of a small utility and hop in and head off to Nyaung Shwe, 7 miles away at the head of Inle Lake.



Sleeping Monk



Morning food stall Kalaw Market

end of the rainy season its greatest depth would be 6.0 m (20').



Waiting for the train



Young Monk on the train



Kalaw Railway Station



The train arrives

Inle Lake

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/east.asp>

The Inle Lake is about 19 km (11 mi) long and 6.4 km (4 mi) broad at an elevation of 875 m (2915'). Its depth in March is nowhere greater than 3.6 m (12') while at the

It is fed mainly by the Nam Lap from the north and the Heho and Nyansin from the west. The lake is surrounded by floating islands formed from the growth and decay of vegetation which form a mass. The vegetation consists primarily of large grasses and sedges which capture

floating plants such as duckweed. At the same time submerged weeds grow up to the surface where their upper parts are killed by the heat of the sun.

A floating island covered with rich soil is thus formed and a variety of plants can now be cultivated, such as tomato

and cucumber and flowering orchids. The water flows out of the lake by the Biluchaung which, after passing the Moby Dam, finally cascades to turn the turbines of Lawpita.

It is too late to do anything but settle in, have a drink and enjoy the Shan banquet prepared by our host at the Pyi Guest House.

After dinner we walk next door to the UNDP office for a performance of traditional Shan dances.

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/do crep/004/ad497e/ad497e04.htm



Weeding the tracks



In the passing train window



Shan Banquet



Farms - Shan Plateau



We passed over - now under



Traditional Dance



Tourist Canoe Boats - Nyaung Shwe



Cargo Canoe Boat - Nyaung Shwe



Stilt Homes - Nyaung Shwe

Inle boat day trip.

Breakfast at 07:30 so that we can get an early start as there is lots to do

A short walk to the canal where our canoe boats are waiting to take us along the canal to the north end of the lake. The canal is very busy as large canoe boats carrying produce from the lake and sightseers heading for the lake dash past.

We are soon loaded into three boats, 4 to 5 to a boat and head south towards the lake, passing dwellings on stilts to raise the houses above the water.



Inle Lake Fisherman - Leg Rowing

Once into open water we can see several of the famous fishermen of Inle Lake in their small canoes rowing with one leg whilst balancing on the other. A rather precarious activity they usually stop rowing to allow the wake of the canoe boat to pass. We stop and take a few pictures and

then we are on our way to the village market at Maing Thauk. Inle Lake is a major tourist attraction and this market has a touristy feel about it with vendors pressuring visitors to buy their wares.

After about an hour at the market we head south to the silk weavers at In Paw Khone. This complex has about 12 large 2-story workshops, each housing about 20 looms, producing silk cloth. The buildings are on stilts in the middle of the lake. The silk yarn is dyed on the premises.

Next stop is the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda, one of the four most important Buddhist Pagodas. The Pagoda houses five images of Buddha onto which men may pin pieces of gold leaf.

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp1996/9-96/pha.htm>



Rolling Cheroots

As a result of over gilding with Gold leaf offerings, the images have turned into solid ball of gold.

We lunch before visiting the Pagoda.

Each year the images are placed on barge pulled by canoes propelled by leg rowers and travel from one village to another. The circuit takes six weeks. Several years ago the barge capsized in a storm. Four of the images were recovered from the lake. The other image reappeared in the Pagoda covered in waterweed. It was concluded that the image did not like

to travel and since then has remained in the Pagoda.



Stilt Homes - Maing Thauk



Maing Thauk Market

After visiting the Pagoda we inspect the barge, which is housed in a large boathouse next. It is quite spectacular and probably top heavy if it is overloaded with monks.



Weaving Silk - In Paw Khone



Yarn drying - Silk Weaving Mills

Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda festival at Inle Lake

<http://www.zarmani.com/festivals.html>

The Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda is located in the middle of Inle Lake. Its festival is celebrated in the first two weeks of the seventh month of Myanmar's lunar calendar (about end of September or beginning of October).



**Gold encrusted Buddha images -
Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda**

Tradition says, the 12th century King Alaung Sithu of Bagan dynasty who was very religious and fond of travelling, visited the Shan plateau and made five Buddha Images and built a shrine near the lake. After centuries, these Buddha Images had disappeared from the public view until the 19th century. When the Governor Prince of Nyaung Shwe Town went for hunting in the forest near the Inle Lake people he rediscovered the Images. They built a shrine on the lake to relocate the Images. Then they

decided to celebrate Pagoda Festival on full moon day of Thidinkyut (generally it falls first or second week of October) just after monsoon. During the festival, Inntha people ('sons of the lake') made a barge in the form of the mythical Karaweik bird to carry the five Images. Two narrow long Inle boats, each boat rowed by one hundred leg rowers who wear the traditional white shirt, fawn colored cotton trouser and turban, pull the barge steadily. Stroll around the floating villages to accept the homage from the villagers. The Shan, Pa O, Palaung, Taung Yo and Inntha, all kinds of tribes who lived around the lake participate in the festival.



Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda

The legacy of Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda continued. During the 1968 festival, an unexpected accident occurred. It was not a windy day, but the barge turned over and sank into the lake. People were so worry and tried to find the sinking Images. They got only four Images back. They lost One. They went back to the Pagoda shrine sadly and quietly with Four Images. It was great silent when they entered into the shrine. Their eyes looked downward. One of them gripped his lip and looked up the shrine. He was amazed at the sight he saw, he shouted excitedly with joy. "Look! There was our lost Buddha!" It was wet and was covered by the green weeds. People were so

happy. Then people were so wonder how the fifth Buddha got back to the shrine itself? Who brought It back? Celestial beings? Super man? Miracle power? Till now no one knows the answer! Then, people presumed that this Image, the smallest One, does not want to voyage. Therefore, after 1968 Pagoda festival, only four Images make the visit around the lake. The fifth One has not been moved from the shrine ever since.



Making Parasols

The traditional food: warm steamed sticky rice, fried fermented bean paste with ginger, crispy tofu, Inle fish curry and hot green tea are offered to any pilgrims in the monastery of the host village where the Images sojourn temporarily. The boat racing of Intha leg rowers takes place near the Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda during the festival. Get drunk by the fragrant of Lotus flowers. Dance with the Shan drum. Gild the gold leaf on the Images. Feed the sea gulls that follow your boat. It is time to visit the Inlay Lake, home of the people who perfectly adapt the nature.



The Swan barge - Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda



Buddha - Jumping Cat Monastery

From the Pagoda we visit a village making paper parasols and witness the manufacture of paper from lotus flower stems and making the parasols. At another village local cheroots are made from local tobacco and cheroot leaves. Girls make about a thousand a day.

The Jumping Cat Monastery has a modest collection of Buddha images in Shan, Tibetan, Bagan and Inwa styles, and for this alone is worth visiting. Monks have trained cats to jump through hoops and the circus act is the main reason for most visitors.

We end the day in a floating garden. There are extensive areas of floating gardens where crops, particular beans and tomatoes are cultivated on the floating weed mats. The produce is taken to Nyaung Shwe on canoe boats and transferred to trucks for transport to Yangon.

Dinner at the Four Sisters Restaurant is first class.

Friday 2 December - Tour Day 07 – Nyaung Shwe

Day 16

Today there are no set activities. A plan to visit the market at Shwe Nyaung was aborted when Ian (our leader) discovered a friend, Cor Visser, was in town. Cor is associated with a children's orphanage at Maing Thauk. He is also chairman of the "Care for Children" fund that raises money for the orphanage.

We are invited to visit the orphanage when the children are on lunch break from school and most of us accept the invitation. Departure is scheduled for 11:00 so most of us hire bicycles and head off around the town.

Nyaung Shwe is a very busy town with all the activity on the canal banks as produce is transferred from the canoes to packing sheds and onto trucks for shipment to Yangon. It is also an important religious centre with several large monasteries and schools.

Situated at the north end of Inle Lake the town is the gateway to the lake for tourists so there are many small guesthouses and hotels and tour operators.

A large market services the town and the surrounding area. All in all, an interesting town to wander around.



Yadana Man Aung Paya - Nyaung Shwe

At 11:00 we head to the canal to get two canoe boats to take us to the orphanage. A quick trip, no stops on the way this time and we arrive in time to make the 15 minute walk to the orphanage, arriving just as the children are coming back for lunch.

<http://myanmar.inlelake.info/>

There are two orphanage projects at Inlelake. The first project is U Tet Tun's boy's orphanage in Minethauk, Inlelake. The second project is the girls orphanage nearby the boy's orphanage in Minethauk, Inlelake.



Loading bags of rice - Nyaung Shwe



Produce Canoe Boats - Canal - Nyaung Shwe

Some tourists started funds (Care for Children In Holland and Child Shelter International in the USA) for a new project, a girls orphanage nearby the boy's orphanage in Minethauk, Inlelake. The provisional orphanage building was officially opened at the 17th of April 2003. A new building was finished in april 2005. The boys and girls are glad to receive guests, also when you are not able to make a donation. You can come there by boat (combine

it with a trip to the lake) or by road. When you are making a trekking from Nyaungshwe to Minethouk, you will pass both orphanages.



Teak Building - Nyaung Shwe



Bridge - Nyaung Shwe



Nyaung Shwe

The orphanage was started by the head of a local monastery who saw the need for residential accommodation for orphans and children from more remote regions so that they could attend school.

No longer associated with the monastery, the orphanage is housed in two modern large buildings, one for girls and one for boys. There are 45 boys and 45 girls between the ages of 7 and 17. The buildings were funded by charitable donations from wealthy Americans and Europeans and funds raised by the "Care for Children" fund.

The fund seeks sponsorship for the children at \$US10/month/child and is seeking further funds to help the brighter children attend university.



Dried Fish - Market - Nyaung Shwe



Busy side canal - Nyaung Shwe

The children are expected to help with chores around the orphanage and also receive extra tuition.

After their lunch they all assemble to meet us and talk to us. They seemed a bright happy and articulate group of children. Some of the older children hoped to be doctors, engineers and writers.



Monastery - Maing Thauk



New Girls Orphanage - Maing Thauk



William - Maing Thauk



Girls from the orphanage - Maing Thauk, and Ian



Potential Engineering Student



Buddha at Kyaukhyugyi Paya - Nyaung Shwe



Boys Orphanage - Maing Thauk



Village houses - near Nyaung Shwe



Sunset - Nyaung Shwe

After returning to the hotel we had a little time to catch up on diaries and then at 16:00 we returned to the canal to embark small canoes for a paddle through the nearby fields and villages. At this time of year the fields are covered in water, but by March they will be dry, ready for planting rice for harvest in August.

Our first stop was at the large derelict Kyaukphyugyi Paya where there is a large Buddha image that was once housed inside a temple but is now exposed to the elements. The image is still maintained and in quite

imposing as it sits in the fields facing east.

We then paddled on through the fields to the impressive teak Tha Lae Oo Monastery where we were welcomed by a very talkative monk who took great pleasure from entertaining visitors and showing them his temple.

We finished our trip by paddling through the village back to the landing, arriving after sunset.



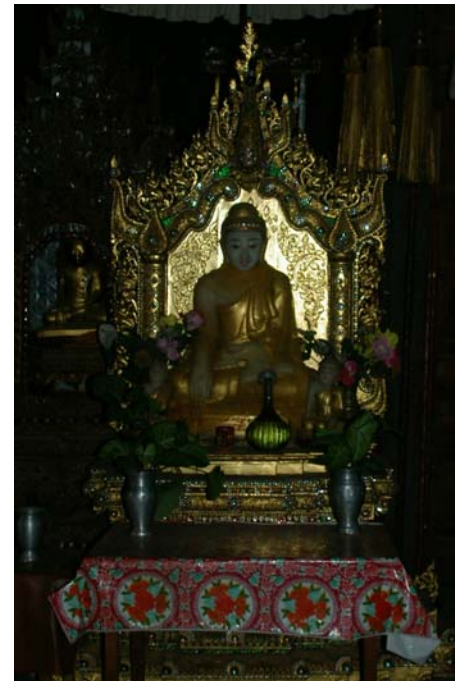
Our Canoes - Nyaung Shwe



Wendy and Anne



Reflected Pagoda - Nyaung Shwe



Buddha - Tha Lae Oo Monastery



Talkative Monk - Tha Lae Oo Monastery

Today we left early to first retrace our route from Kalaw; this time by road.

A brief stop at the Shwe Yaunghwe Kyaung monastery with its oval windows just north of Nyaung Shwe for photos and we are on our way.

At Aungban, about 20 minutes drive from Kalaw we turned off onto a recently opened back road across the Shan Plateau, which at one point reached an altitude of over 5000ft. For much of the morning it was overcast and cool. We travelled through open farmland where the main crop being harvested was cabbage. They were everywhere beside the road being loaded onto trucks.

Around midday we stopped for lunch at a very pleasant roadside stop (Yumagin) where we ate lunch under the shade of a Banyan tree. The peace was regularly disturbed by a very loud speaker calling for donations to support the nearby Pagoda.

Soon after lunch we entered the mountains that surround the Shan Plateau and started the long, winding descent to the junction with the main Yangon to Mandalay road. The views on the road are spectacular. Rugged mountains, many with Pagodas perched on top of them



Shwe Yaunghwe Kyaung monastery - Nyaung Shwe



Roadside stalls - Shan Plateau

We finally reach the main road and turn north towards Mandalay, So far the road has been very rough and narrow, now it is passable and we make good time.

Nevertheless it has taken 10 hours to make the 200mile trip.

Mandalay is located on the eastern bank of the Ayeyawaddy River, in the central part of Myanmar, about 700 kilometres north of the capital Yangon.



Rolling fields - Shan Plateau

Mandalay History

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

Mandalay, as the centre of Myanmar culture, was outstanding in the past, it holds the stage now; and it will continue to be a place of pride in the future.

It is situated about 600 kilometres north of Yangon on the Ayeyarwaddy river, is, with about half a Million inhabitants Myanmar's second largest city.

Mandalay is the historical old capital, a capital of Myanmar culture, Buddhist Sasana and Myanmar traditional arts and crafts, with the life span of one hundred and forty two years, a city which abounds in historical sites, cultural memorials and Buddhist edifices. Accordingly, it is the richest historical landmark next to Bagan.



Local Transport

Despite the wonderful sound of its name, inviting associations to an archaic fairy tale kingdom, Mandalay is neither very old nor particularly beautiful. But Mandalay was the capital of the last, independent Burmese kingdom, which in 1886 was

finally conquered by British colonial forces.

The town had been founded only 29 years earlier in 1857 by King Mindon, making it the capital of an independent kingdom for less than 30 years.

Contrary to other Burmese towns, especially Yangon, Mandalay has not grown from a smaller settlement to town proportions. In 1857 Mandalay was set up in an empty area, because, according to an ancient prophecy, in that exact place a town would come into existence on occasion of the 2,400th jubilee of Buddhism.



Loading Cabbages - Shan Plateau

The city was named after the Mandalay Hill, which is situated at the northeast corner of the present city. The hill has for long been a holy mount and it is believed that Lord Buddha prophesied that a great city, metropolis of Buddhism, would be founded at its foot. It was King Mindon who fulfilled the prophecy.

King Mindon decided to fulfill the prophecy and during his reign in the Kingdom of Amarapura he issued a royal order on 13 January, A.D 1857 to establish a new kingdom. The Ceremony of Ascending the Throne was

celebrated in July, 1858. The royal city and the kingdom was demarcated. The whole royal city was called Lay Kyun Aung Mye ("Victorious Land over the Four Islands") and the royal palace, the Mya Nan San Kyaw ("The Royal Emerald Palace"). The kingdom was called the Kingdom of Yadanabon, along with other name Ratanapura, mean "The Bejeweled Site". Later it was called Mandalay after the Mandalay Hill, 2.5km far to the north east of the royal palace, and today the name still exists. The name "Mandalay" is a derivative of the Pali word "Mandala", which means "a plains land" and also that of the Pali word "Mandare", which means "an auspicious land".



Pagoda at Lunch Stop

At that time a transfer of the capital not only meant leaving an old town and erecting a new town in a different place. As all secular buildings of that time, including the royal palaces, were built from wood, a transfer of the capital meant the complete dismantling of the houses of the old settlement, which then were loaded on carts and the backs of elephants to be reconstructed at the place chosen for the new town.

This way of moving entire capitals is a tradition in Myanmar. The transfer of the capital from Amarapura to Mandalay had not been the first of its kind. The most

important Burmese town of the northern Ayeyarwaddy valley had for a long time been the town of Ava, founded in 1364 about 20 kilometers southwest of Mandalay. In 1636 the at that time powerful royal family from Taungu about 280 kilometers north of Yangon and 320 kilometers south of Mandalay moved to Ava and made it the capital of a Burmese realm roughly equaling the extent of the present Burmese state.

But in 1782 the town was packed up and moved about 8 kilometers to the Northeast, to the aforementioned Amarapura. In 1823 the entire capital was dismantled again and rebuilt 8 kilometers Southwest in Ava. But in 1838 Ava was damaged by an earthquake, and was therefore in 1841 packed up again and once more transferred to Amarapura. But this was not of duration either, as only 16 years later the entire town was moved again this time 12 kilometers to the Northeast to the present Mandalay.

Who, in the face of all this moving of the Burmese capital, might assume that it was more or less only a temporary camp of tents, is very wrong. At least the royal palaces, despite their being made from wood, were immensely large. Many, enormous teakwood tree trunks served as pillars to support the royal palaces, often several stories high.

The rhyming couplet easy to memorize the year of building the royal city is " Okkyit-Kyaw Aye /

Mandalay " or " Aung Kyaw Chan Aye / Mandalay " (i.e., M.E 1221). The city's layout of the construction is the same at that of the earlier Kingdom of Amarapura, and from the bird's eye-view, it has the structure of geographical squares and rectangular shapes, with streets and roads crossing one another at right angles. There are four parts dividing the city, namely, Ashe-pyin (East Part), Anok-pyin (west Part), Taung-pyin (southern part) and Myauk-pyin (Northern Part), with 54 plots.



Lunch Break - Yumagin

With the Ground-breaking ceremony, King Mindon laid the foundation of Mandalay on the 6th waning day of Kason, M.E 1221, (A.D 1857). The King simultaneously laid the foundations of seven edifices: the royal city with the battlemented walls, the moat surrounding it, the Maha Lawka Marazein Stupa, the higher ordination hall named the Pahtan-haw Shwe Thein, the Atumashi (the Incomparable) monastery, the Thudhama Zayats or public houses for preaching the Doctrine, and the library for the Buddhist scriptures.

At the time of building, the royal moat was 68.58m wide and 3.35m deep, and was fed with water from the Yadana Nadi, now called the Ye Ni Canal. In 1995 the moat was dug renewed and the banks were laid neatly and

firmly with rocks. There existed 20 gardens, a huge earthen wall and 57 doors palace. There existed 5 bridges spanning over the moat and 12 bridges. At present, there are four spanning bridges, namely the U-hteik Bridge to the east the Kyaw Moe Bridge to the south, the Kye Mon Bridge to the west and the Lay Thein Bridge to the north.

When King Mindon passed away, his son King Thibaw ascended the throne, and in M.E 1247, Myanmar fell under the British colony. It was the old capital ruled by two successive kings the one where the last of Myanmar's monarchs reigned.

After the British had conquered Mandalay in 1886 they turned the royal palaces of Mandalay into their military headquarters and christened the complex Fort Dufferin.



Descending from the Shan Plateau

During World War II the Japanese installed a military camp in the same place, which then was bombed by the allies, until nothing was left of the ancient palace buildings.

Mandalay today is a striking phenomenon composed of modern and classic images with the ancient cultural beauty of the royal palace and the moat surrounding it,

and the natural impressionistic beauty of the Mandalay Hill, harmoniously added with new architectural

photography of modern houses and brick buildings.

The former palace ground is known by the name of Fort Mandalay. Of the ancient palaces a few concrete replica

have been built and further reconstructions are being conducted.

Sunday 4 December - Tour Day 09 - Mandalay

Day 18



Sunrise - U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

We are all up before dawn to photograph the sunrise over U Bein's Bridge. This 1200m long teak bridge

across a lake was built from teak taken from the former royal palace.



U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay

The Taung Tha Man Lake and The U Bein's Bridge

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

It is situated to the east of Amarapura. It is on the borderline of Amarapura Township, and to the east of the lake is the Pyi Gyi Tagun Township.

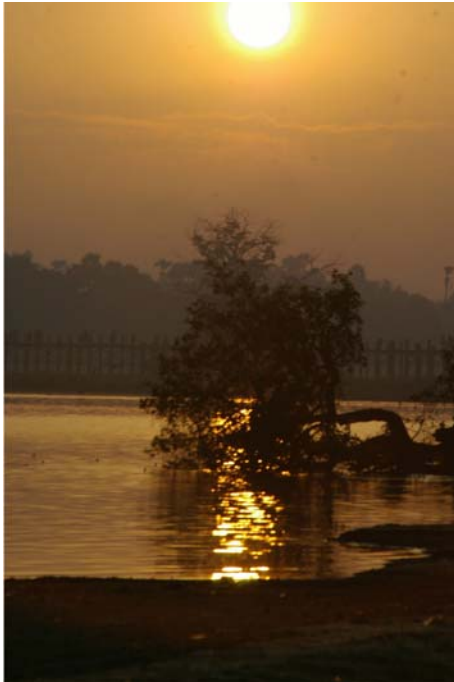
The Lake stretches 2438.4m from the east to the west, and 3048m from the north to south. With the background scene of the Sagaing Hill, the lake is surrounded by scenic sights, famous pagodas around it, historical

religious edifices and crowded villages and quarters. Its water level rises to 2.43m in the rainy season. The famous historical edifices around the lake are the Amarapura Maha Gandayon Monastery, the Pa Hto Taw Gyi Pagoda, the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, the Maha Thekkya Yan This Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda, U Bein's Bridge and the beautiful row of shady Maze (Madhuca longifolia) trees.



Sunrise - U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay

Like the Taung Tha Man Lake, one worldwide famous landmark is U Bein's Bridge, which is the longest wooden bridge in Myanmar. It was called U Bein's Bridge after the supervisor's name, or the Taungthaman Bridge since it spans across the Taungthaman Lake.



Sunrise - U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay

U Bein's Bridge was constructed by the chief clerk U Bein in the reign of Kingin Bagan 1849 (in M.E 12211). The supply of wood for the bridge came from the former old palace of Inwa. It took 2 years to complete the construction. The couplet marking the completion of the construction is " Inga Aw-ngyi-Hsauk-lok-Phyi ". The bridge consists of 1,086 support posts of teak (formerly 984 posts), which were erected 2.13m deep in the ground, 482 spans and 4 rest houses. The bridge stretches 1209.14m long. At 9 points, drawbridges were built to

allow the royal barges like the Pyi Gyi Mon and war boats to pass through.



Monks - U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay



Pagoda - U Bein's Bridge - Mandalay

The Myanmar engineers of those days did not use any scale or lead line. Instead, quite amazingly, the distance between their footsteps was the standard measurement in constructing the bridge. Moreover, the bridge did not line up straight. Instead, it was constructed in the shape

of right angles heading to the south so as to counter the battering waves and the blowing wind.

It is rightly said that any visitor to Mandalay who has not yet been to the Taungthaman Lake and who has not taken a walk along U Bein's Bridge is not really visiting Mandalay. Even the tourists are quite delighted to come and relax themselves along U Bein's Bridge and enjoy sweet recreation beneath the cool shady glade by the Taungthaman Lake, untouched by the simmering heat of Mandalay.

The bridge has stood as a historical ancient heritage for 2 centuries, as well as an enduring architectural building of old Myanmar engineers. It fits in well with the scenic beauty of the Taungthaman Lake. One can row boats for fun. There is also a playground there.

The palace was bombed during WWII by the British during the campaign to defeat the Japanese. The outer walls and moat remain but the Myanmar Army occupies the interior.

After an hour of shooting the magnificent sunrise we headed to the Mahamuni Pagoda, the premier religious site in Mandalay.

The Maha Muni Buddha Image

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

It is the most revered Buddha image in Mandalay. It is also known as the Maha Myat Muni, or Phaya Gyi. It is the most ancient Buddha image in Myanmar. It was cast in the life-span of Lord Buddha in the seated posture of relaxed deportment, namely Bumi Phasa Mudras, symbolic of His Conquest of Mara.



Mahamuni Pagoda - Mandalay

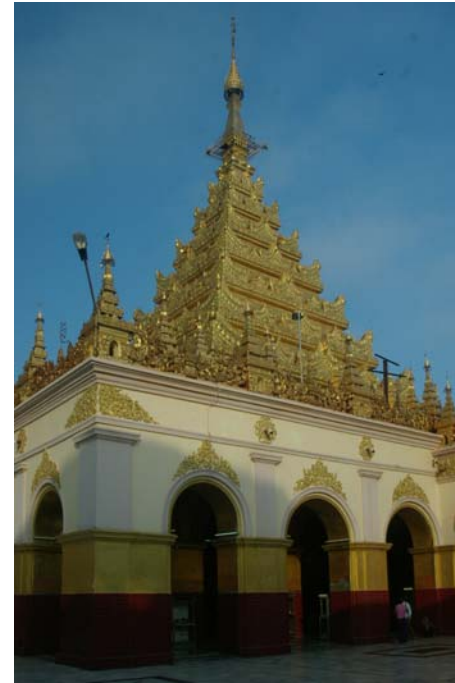
In B.C 123, in the reign of King Sanda Thuriya, Monarch of Rakhine-Dharyawaddy, and carry the Image reverently so as to enshrine it at the present site. It took four months to carry the image reverently across the Rakhine Yoma Ranges, by inland route and by waterway a tough and rough journey indeed. The Height of the Maha Muni Buddha Image is 8 Cubits and 1 Maik (3.83m). The altar is 2.13m high. There, 2 bronze Siamese images, 3 bronze lion images and 1 bronze three headed Ayeyawun elephants are housed and displayed in the precinct on the left side of the northern exit passage.



Mahamuni Buddha - Mandalay

Whoever visits Mandalay from local areas or from abroad unfailingly come and pay homage to the Maha Muni Buddha Image.

In the precinct of the Phayagyi is located the " Maha Buddha-Win Beikman ", the Museum of the Life of Buddha. It is a many-tiered building with Myanmar architectural finials. It houses a scenic map showing in old and current terms the spread of Theravada Buddhism, centered in central India, Buddha's birthplace, famous religious edifices in various lands, the routes of Lord Buddha on itinerary, and the routes of King Asoka's sending Buddhist missions to nine regions of nine countries in A.D 3rd century. Illustrations are displayed, which indicate the Four Noble Sites of Lord Buddha, namely, His birthplace, the site where He attained the Enlightenment, the site where he passed away.



Mahamuni Pagoda - Mandalay



Sandamuni Pagoda - Mandalay

The Buddha Images, representing various countries where Buddhism prospers well, and the Buddha Images revered through successive eras are exhibited in the forms of photographs, paintings and sculptures. Not only Buddhists but also foreigners studying Buddhism pay a visit to this museum. On the left side of the eastern passage, in the precinct of the pagoda, is the Sanctuary Pond of Tortoises and on the right side, the Sanctuary Pond of Fish.

We return to the hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we head off to Ian's favourite shop for local artefacts and gems, Rocky Gems and Jewellery Trading. We are advised not to buy while the whole group is present, but to come back if anything interests us.

Across the road is the Zegyo market; I spend half an hour there and then go back to the shop to bargain for a Buddha carved from smoky quartz. An unusual piece, I get it at the price I am prepared to pay.

At 10:30 we gather at the hotel to arrange little taxis to take groups of us out and about Mandalay. These taxis are built for small people.

Our first stop is a workshop producing gold leaf by very traditional processes. First drawn into a strip about the thickness of paper that is cut into 2cm squares the gold is then placed between sheets of paper and beaten with a heavy hammer for half and hour. This increases the area to about 4 times the original area. These pieces are cut into 6 and are placed between larger pieces of paper and beaten for a further half hour. These much thinner pieces are again placed between bamboo papers and beaten for another 5 hours. These gold leaves are cut into the required size for sale.

Steps for Making Gold Leaf

Courtesy: Gold Rose Gold Leaf, Mandalay

1. Stretch 3 tickles (1.928oz) of gold bullion till it becomes a 0.75 inches ribbon of 20 feet long. Then, cut the ribbon into four equal pieces of 5 feet in length. One such 5 feet ribbon is again cut into 200 equal pieces that then wrapped up in a heap of

bamboo-made paper with every piece of gold separated by a layer of paper. These 200 pieces of wrapped gold make a *unit*.

2. A unit of packed gold is hammered with a 6lb hammer for about half and hour.



Gold Leaf between Bamboo Paper



Hammering Gold Leaf Unit



Packing the Gold Leaf

3. Cut each enlarge gold flake into six equal pieces and wrap them in bamboo-made paper as have been done before. This, we get 1200 small gold flakes that are packed as one unit.

4. The packed unit of 1200 gold flakes is beaten again with a 6lb hammer for about half an hour.

5. After that, every five gold flakes out of 1200 are made into three. Thus, we get a total of 720 flakes that are wrapped again in (5.5x5.5) inches bamboo-made papers as in Stage 1. Then, they are hammered with a 6lb hammer for about 5 hours.

This is the final stage as well as the most important stage. While the beating is going on, the time is counted with a *clepsydra* or water clock, which is made of a halved coconut shell cup with a small hole at its bottom through which water leaks in. The gold leaf beater has to finish 120 strokes before the cup is full. It usually takes an hour to have the cup filled with water 18 times.

It requires three persons to take turns in beating a unit of gold leaf. The first one has to beat it so that the package becomes hot, the second to make the size of the gold

flakes wrapped in the package expand, the third to make the gold flakes not stick onto the paper. Normally, three beaters take about five hours to finish beating an unit of gold leaf. However, the beating time may vary due to the changes in the temperature of the working place.

6. The gold flakes in this stage are called gold leaves that are cut into require sizes (2x2, 1.5x1.5, 1.75x1.75) inches. The, paste onto hay-made paper and packed up with thread. The ready-to-offer gold leaf is thus made.



**Iron Buddha - Sandamuni Pagoda
- Mandalay**



Teak Monastery; Shwe In Bin Kyaung - Mandalay

Making a bamboo paper.

Firstly, we need to take the bamboo without hole. This bamboo must be one year old. After cutting out the bamboo about 10 inches and take off the shell of it and then make a very thin sheet and put in pot with lime and water. This bamboo must be put in to the lime for 3 years.

After 3 years take out the bamboo and boil it for 72 hours nonstop. After boiling, take the bamboo out and beat with a wooden hammer. It takes 2 days. After that we get a soft pulp, and then we mix with water and put in to a cotton frame. This cotton frame is to filter the pulp of the bamboo and to dry it in the sunlight. After drying we get normal bamboo paper. After that we cut 5 inch square size and they put onto the bronze (or copper) flat and beaten with a wooden stick. Then the colour of the bronze goes into paper and we get a very strong and smooth paper, called bamboo paper.

Of course there was the mandatory shop and some items were bought.

<http://www.myanmars.net/travel/main-where-to-visit.htm>



Detail - Teak Carving - Teak Monastery; Shwe In Bin Kyaung - Mandalay



Buddha - Teak Monastery; Shwe In Bin Kyaung - Mandalay

Next the Teak Monastery; Shwe In Bin Kyaung; commissioned in 1895 by a pair of wealthy jade

merchants the monastery features intricate carvings on the balustrades and roof cornices. .



Entrance - Mandalay Hill

It is time for lunch and we go to a recommended Indian vegetarian restaurant. There is of course another shop. Interesting but I don't think any thing was bought.

After lunch our driver takes us to south side of the castle where there is an excellent view of Mandalay Hill and the Temples and Monasteries all the way up the hill.



Stupas - Sandamuni Pagoda - Mandalay

After taking a few pictures we head to the Sandamuni Pagoda; another pagoda where there are over 1700 stone tablets on which the story of Buddha has been carved. We wander around taking pictures and fortuitously make a donation that leads to the ringing of a bell. No idea of the significance.



Inscribed Stele - Sandamuni Pagoda - Mandalay

The Sanda Muni Cast Buddha Image

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

The Sanda Muni Buddha Image is situated to the east of the Kyauktaw Gyi Pagoda. It was cast by King Bodawpaya before the founding of the city Mandalay. During the time of building the Great Mingun Pagoda, during King Bodawpaya's temporary reign in Nan Taw Kyun ("the Royal Palace Island"), the image was cast out of 18563.94kg of iron in M.E 1164, and was carried reverently to the Royal City of Amarapura. In the reign of King Bagyitaw, the Buddha Image was carried reverently to Yadanapura Inwa, and, after being paid obeisance there for some time, was carried reverently back to Amarapura in the reign of King Shwe Bo. In M.E 1229, the Buddha Image was carried reverently to Mandalay, and was enshrined on the Royal Palace Ground of the Nan Mye Bon Tha, King Mindon's temporary royal residence. The Buddha Image, being endowed with the graceful attributes of the Full Moon, is entitled as the Sanda Muni.

In M.E 1229, the temporary palace apartments were destroyed and the bodies of the Grown Prince and his sons Prince Malum, Prince Saku and Prince Pyinsi, who were killed during the Myin Kun Uprising, were buried and entombed. At the distance (.91m) from the tombs, the Sandarmuni Buddha Image was enshrined in a tier-roof brick building. The pagoda was called the Sandarmuni pagoda after the Image.

In M.E 1275, the Hermit U Khanti built with the donations of the people the Dhamma Ceti, 508 shrines housing the inscriptions, 1524 inscriptions recording the Pitakas of the Three Baskets, five Nikayas and commentaries on Buddhist Pali texts (in total, 758 Dhamma Ceti shrines and 1774 inscription slabs).

Across the road is the Kuthadaw temple housing the 'world's largest book', set in the middle of a thirteen acre field of 729 pitaka pagodas or shrines (Dama Cetis).

Each shrine contains a marble slab, inscribed on both sides with the Pali script text of a portion the Tipitaka (Pali spelling, or Tripitaka, in Sanskrit), Theravada Buddhism's sacred texts. Taken together, they contain the entire text of the Tripitaka and thus form "the world's largest book."

We visit the foot of Mandalay Hill and decide not to climb to the top and simply take a few pictures of the entrance.



Reflections - Mandalay

We decide we are 'pagodaed out' and decide to make our last stop at shop

that collects carvings from the various tribes in Myanmar and sells them to visitors. The shop is packed with carved Buddhas and puppets from all over the country. As they are covered in dust it is very hard to appreciate them. However, the owner shows me a bronze Buddha that I like.



Mandalay Hill



Guardians - Mandalay Hill

It is time to return to the Hotel for a short rest before the sun is low enough for photographs of the reflections of the castle walls in the moat.



Reflections - Mandalay



Reflections - Mandalay

The moat is very still and the reflections are perfect for some very good shots.

We finish the day with a Mandalay barbeque dinner and the show at the Mandalay Marionette Theatre.



**Marionette - Mandalay
Marionette Theatre**



Musicians - Mandalay Marionette Theatre

The Mandalay Barbeque is a new and very popular dining experience. Featuring barbequed local foods, diners select what they want to have barbequed from a buffet and it is all freshly cooked. The food was delicious.



Harp Player - Mandalay Marionette Theatre

<http://www.mandalaymarionettes.com/aboutmyanmar2.html>

The Marionette Theatre is trying to rebuild traditional Burmese puppet theatre. A very enjoyable performance to the accompaniment of very loud traditional music.

Monday 5 December - Tour Day 10 - Mandalay overnight boat

Day 19

We leave the hotel at 07:30 for a trishaw ride to the port to join our boat for the overnight trip to Bagan.

Before starting down river we head about 11km up river to the ancient capital of Mingun. The unfinished Mingun Pagoda is now a huge pile of bricks. The King Bodawpaya who intended the pagoda to be the tallest ever built died, in 1819, before it could be completed. An earthquake in 1839

severely damaged the structure and there are large cracks in it.

http://www.mandalaycity.net/travel/historic_mingun.htm

Niel, Wendy and I climb the 172 steps, barefoot, to the top for a wonderful view of the city and the Hsinbyune pagoda.

Built by King Bagyidaw in 1816, three years before he succeeded Bodawpaya as king, the pagoda was constructed in memory of his senior wife the Hsinbyume

princess. It is built as a representation of the Sulamani Pagoda which, according to the Buddhist plan of the cosmos, stands atop Mount Meru. The seven wavy terraces around the pagoda represent the seven mountain ranges around Mount Meru. This pagoda was badly damaged in 1838 by a quake but King Mindon restored it in 1874.



'Our' Mandalay taxi and driver

Mingun Bell

In 1790 Bodawpaya had a gigantic bell cast to go with his gigantic pagoda. Weighing 90 tons it is claimed to be the largest hung, uncracked bell in the world. The bell is about four metres high and over five metres (15 feet) in diameter at the lip.

The girls selling handicrafts are not doing well as the number of tourists has declined. One has shown me some pretty fans and I agree to talk to her on the way back.



Mandalay Clock tower and Mary on her way to the boat



Mingun Pagoda

Mu Mu is waiting and I do a deal for four fans for Karen, Elizabeth, Caroline and Katrina.

After a quite beer with some of the locals I embark with the others for the trip down Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River.

This large river that has its headwaters in northern Myanmar is low at this time of the year, but during the monsoon it was almost to the top of the roof of the small teahouse where I had the beer and would certainly have flooded the lower lying houses in Mingun.



Sailing downstream



Hsinbyune Pagoda - Mingun



Mingun Bell



Hsinbyune Pagoda - Mingun



Mu Mu



Earthquake damaged Mingun Pagoda



Bamboo Raft



Cattle Transport



Sagaing Hill



New Ava Bridge - Sagaing

As we travel down river we pass many pagodas and rice fields on the flood plain. The river is busy with fishing boats, ferries, cargo boats and large barges carrying teak logs from the teak forests. Small fishing settlements dot the riverbanks. In the monsoon season these will be under water.

Sagaing is the site of one of the most important Buddhist centres in Myanmar. The hilltops are dotted with stupas.

It is also the location of a new bridge spanning the Irrawaddy River. The old (Ava) bridge was constructed in 1934 by the British and until 1998 was the only bridge crossing the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River.

http://www.mandalaycity.net/travel/historic_sagaing.htm



Teak Barge



Sunset on the Irrawaddy River

There is a brilliant sunset and soon after we pull into the bank for the night. The boat crew set up a tent for themselves on the bank and set beds, with mosquito nets, for us on board. Chairs and tables are brought ashore and dinner is served under the stars. The crew have prepared an excellent meal for us.

Eventually the fire dies and we head to bed.

Tuesday 6 December - Tour Day 11 – Arrive Bagan

Day 20

<http://tourpagan.itgo.com/archi/index.html>

In the morning we are up with the sun and the crew soon has the tent down and we are soon under way again.

We continue to wind our way through the flood plain.

The deep layers of silt, deposited over eons, are obvious in the banks of the river.

There are hills in the distance, a few pagodas and plenty of river traffic. We pass more small villages and temporary fishing camps on the bank of the river.

Bagan Era History

<http://www.myanmar-travel.com/index.cfm?menuid=6>

In 849 Burmans found the town of Bagan on the banks of the Ayeyarwaddy about 500 kilometers north of its mouth. Bagan was to be the center of the first Burmese realm about which a wealth of historical information exists. Although even before then in the Ayeyarwaddy valley realms with urban centers had existed, there are only scarce historical sources concerning those earlier realms. Before the Burmans the people of the Mon, related to the Cambodians, and before them the Tibeto-Burman people of the Pyu had founded realms in the Ayeyarwaddy valley or delta, but were in the course of time conquered by the Bagan Burmans.



Sunrise on the Irrawaddy River

King Anawratha ascends the throne of the Bagan realm in 1044. In 1056 he is converted to Buddhism by a Mon monk, Shin Arahan.

A little later, in 1057, King Anawratha makes war against the Mon town of Bago (Pegu) to gain possession of holy Buddhist scripts (the Tripitaka), which the Mon King Manuha is unwilling to give up voluntarily. After a few months siege of Bago, Manuha finally surrenders. Bago is destroyed and the Tripitaka is carried off to Bagan on the backs of 32 white elephants.



Moored on the banks of the Irrawaddy.



Deep stratas of silt

The Burmese army brings 30,000 captured Mons to Bagan, among them numerous craftsmen and artisans, who in the following decades not only enrich, but even determine the culture of Bagan. During that time pagodas are almost exclusively built in the Mon style. The Burmese even incorporate the script of the Mon. Mon King Manuha is presented to the main pagoda of Bagan, Shwezigon, as temple slave.



Typical river transport



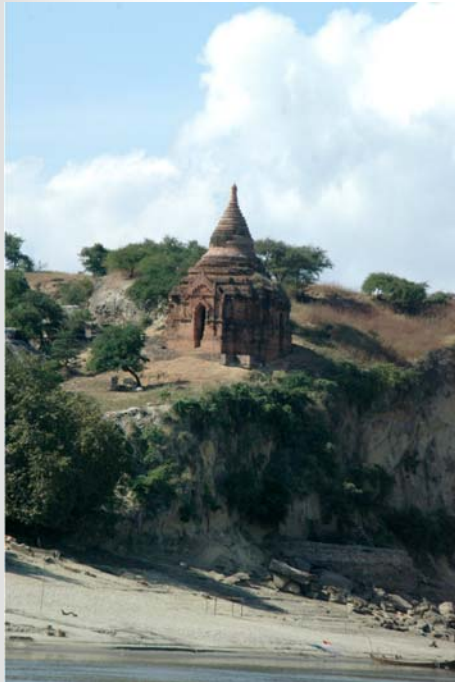
Carrying pots down river

After his campaign against the Mon, King Anawratha makes successful conquests against the Shan realm of that time, which is adjacent to the Burmese realm in the North, and against the Arakan realm to the West of Bagan.

After a reign of 33 years King Anawratha is killed by a wild buffalo in 1077. He is succeeded to the throne by his

son Sawlu, who further extends the borders of the realm. After King Sawlu's death in 1084 King Kyanzittha ascends the throne and further extends the realm to the South.

In 1287 hordes of Mongolian horsemen under Kublai Khan bring the Bagan realm to a graceless and bloody end.



Approaching Bagan

About 12:00 we arrive at our destination, Myinkabar Village, the site of 1000 year old pagodas and quality lacquer ware.



Gubyaukgyi Temple - Myinkabar



Making bamboo base for lacquer ware bowl

Lacquerware of Bagan

<http://www.myanmar.com/ACOCI/CULTURE/1999/10lacquer.htm>

Lacquerware of Bagan has a long tradition. Isolated evidence from ancient lithic inscriptions in and around Bagan, references in old literature and chronicles provide

proof that the art of lacquerware had existed with other arts and crafts at Bagan in its heyday (11th to 13th century AD). Besides there are archaeological finds of ancient lacquerwork dug up at the excavations. A tube lacquerwork dated AD 1274 was found in the Mingala Ceti at Bagan. On display at the Bagan Museum are a number of excavated antique lacquer works such as Buddha images, votive objects and household pieces.



Incising the design in lacquer ware

William, Ian's local assistant, comes from this village and after lunch he takes us on a tour of the more notable pagodas and his family's lacquer ware business. We also visited a workshop making the bamboo forms for lacquered bowls and containers. Very thin strips of bamboo are built up to make the desired shapes and the lacquer coating binds the bamboo together.

Up to 20 layers of lacquer may be required. Each layer requires 5 days to dry in a humid cellar.

After about 15 layers, between which the piece is carefully sanded smooth, the design for the first colour is engraved in the lacquer with a pointed tool. Very skilled artisans, usually girls, perform this painstaking work. The piece is coated with the coloured lacquer, which is

allowed to dry and then it is sanded back and polished to reveal the design. Up to five colours may be applied in this way.

A large piece may take a year to complete.



Foot powered chaff cutter

Paintings of traditional Buddhist scenes on cotton are also a major activity of the locals for tourist souvenirs.

Gubyaukgyi Temple (Great Painted Cave Temple);

has frescoes from the reign of King Anawratha (1044-1077) illustrating the romantic story of Kyansittha and Thambula. Kyansittha later became king. The frescoes are in very good condition.



Pinting traditional scenes on cotton cloth.

Their son Rajakumar built the temple to house a golden Buddha dedicated to the king in memory of the favours bestowed on him and his mother by the king.

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-bagan/gubyaukgyi-myinkabar.htm>

This Gubyaukgyi located in Myinkaba is to be differentiated from another temple of the same name situated near Wetkyi-in village. The Gubyaukgyi, which was built to enshrine the golden image, is a fine temple in the Early Style, square, with a vestibule in the east. The Gubyaukgyi is also noted for the paintings, which cover the walls of the vestibule, the corridor and the sanctum. These paintings are among the earliest now extant in Bagan.

Gubyaukgyi Temple was built during the A.D 1113, by Raza Kumar, the son of King Kyansitthar and Queen Thanbula. After King Kyansitthar ruled over Bagan for 28

years and he became ill. At that time, Prince Raza Kumar made a golden Buddha image and donated for his father. He also built this temple at Myinkaba, in return of his love and care towards his father's kindness.

Beside the nearby Myazedi Pagoda is a stone obelisk, attributed to Rajakumin, with inscriptions in Mon, Myanmar, Pyu and Pali languages. Like the Rosetta Stone this has provided the key to deciphering Pyu.

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp2001/9-2001/raj.htm>

Myazedi and Rosetta Stone Inscriptions

<http://www.myanmar.com/ACOCI/CULTURE/2000/Myazedi.htm>

Although Myazedi stone inscription and Rosetta stone inscription are too far apart in terms of their historic dates, their historic importance is very similar. Myazedi stone inscription is dated A.D.1113 or 474 Myanmar Era whereas Rosetta stone inscription dates far back into B.C.196. But just as the former is an important archaeological evidence for the history of ancient Bagan, so also is the latter in regard to ancient Egyptian history.

Myazedi stone inscription was discovered near Myazedi Pagoda at Myinkaba village to the south of ancient Bagan, so it is known by the name of that pagoda. There are two such inscriptions. The one on display at the Bagan Museum was discovered in 1886-87 by a German Pali scholar and Superintendent of the Epigraphic Office Dr. Forchhammer. The one which is set up on the platform of Myazedi Pagoda was discovered in the Ku Byauk Kyi Temple. It was broken in three pieces. These two inscriptions are identical and they were set up by Prince Rajakumar of the Bagan Period. Therefore they are well known in Myanmar history as "Myazedi stone inscription" or "Ku Byauk Kyi stone inscription" or "Rajakumar stone inscription". The one on display at the Bagan Museum is a square pillar of sand stone, 5 feet 11 inches high, 1 foot

2 inches wide with an inscribed area of 3 feet 6 inches. The one on the platform of Myazedi Pagoda has the two sides wider than the other two sides.



Myazedi Stone Inscription

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burmese_alphabet

The Myazedi inscribed pillar is a quadrangle, each side bearing an inscription in a different language. So there are four languages namely Pali, Myanmar, Mon and Pyu. The Rosetta stone has three languages namely Hieroglyphics, Demotics and Greek. The Myazedi stone inscription is one of the earliest stone inscriptions so far discovered in Myanmar.

Because of the Myazedi stone inscription it is possible to decipher Pyu letters.

The Myazedi stone inscription dated A.D.1113 was the work of Prince Rajakumar the son of King Kyanzittha (A.D.1084-1112).

The Myazedi stone inscription tells us that prince Rajakumar was the son of King Kyanzittha and consort Thanbula. When Kyanzittha ascended the throne, Thanbula and son arrived at the Court. Thanbula was raised as queen Unsaukpann and the son as Prince Zeyaestra and lord of Seven Districts of Danyawadi hill region. Since the king had chosen his grandson (by another queen) Alaungsithu to be his immediate successor to the throne, Prince Rajakumar could not become heir apparent. Though Prince Rajakumar missed the chance of succession he harboured no grudge against his father but proved a good faithful son observing filial duties. When the father grew old and was about to die of ripe age, Prince Rajakumar made a gold Buddha image and enshrined it in Ku Byauk Kyi Pagoda and he also dedicated to that Pagoda three villages of labourers which his father gave him. It was a token of his love for his father and filial gratitude. In the presence of his father and venerable head monks, Prince Rajakumar performed the rite of libation whereby the merit of his religious dedication was shared with his father who became overwhelmed with joy and elation by exclaiming "Well done!" three times.

Manuha Temple is attributed to Manuha, the king of Thaton, who was brought to after Arawrahta's capture of Thaton and the Tipitaka, the Buddhist religious texts considered necessary to enable a centre of study of the religion.

Donors fill an enormous rice bowl with rice with rice each year.

This bringing of these texts to Bagan signalled the start of the Bagan's greatness as a centre of power and the unification of Myanmar.

Myinkaba, Bagan : Its Legends and Historic Pagodas (Extract)

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/myinkaba.htm>



Giant rice bowl - Manuha Temple

In Bagan the kings and queens, the princes and princesses all built pagodas large and small. Manuha the Mon king, detained in Bagan, also wanted to build a temple of his own. He did not have ready money in cash, so he sold his priceless Manaw Maya jewel to a rich merchant of Myinkaba and obtained six cartloads of pure silver. He used this to build the impressive Manuha Temple which you can visit, as it is still a place of worship for the Buddhists. You can easily find the temple as it is on the right side of the main road going south from Bagan, and right in Myinkaba village. King Manuha's inscription says that it was built in AD 1067 about a decade after the Mon king was brought to Bagan.



Buddha - Manuha Temple

The temple is a series of reduplicated squares with the lower storey larger than the upper. There is a large seated Buddha image, 46 feet high, with the right hand touching the earth. Two smaller Buddha images, each 33 feet high, flank this large image on each side. For devotees there is barely room to sit down to pray, the large image and the two smaller ones filling up nearly all the space in the cramped interior. Some say that Manuha purposely put the images in such cramped positions to denote his feelings under detention in Bagan. There is also a huge reclining Buddha image 90 feet long, in an adjoining

chamber at the back, with the head pointing to the north which symbolises the dying Buddha about to enter *Parinibbana*, the Demise. This image too is in a very cramped enclosed place and not in an open shed like the reclining Buddha image in Bago. At one time visitors could climb a tiny, winding stairway built into one of the side walls and view through an open aperture, the head of the huge seated Buddha.



Prayer Pole - Manuha Temple

Connected also with King Manuha is the lovely, little Nan-paya Temple next to the Manuha temple, a short distance to the south. This is

supposed to be either the actual Palace building where King Manuha lived in exile, or a temple built on the site of his Palace. The inner walls are built of bricks surfaced with sandstones on the outer walls. The Nan-paya, meaning the "Palace Temple" is dated stylistically to the 11th century. Professor Luce, an eminent historian of Bagan called it an architectural masterpiece without close parallel in Myanmar or India.

The temple is a small hollow square with a vestibule to the east. You should see the beautiful perforated windows and stone carvings of eight three-headed Brahma figures on the four stone pillars inside which support the whole structure. There are dormer skylights above to give some light and fresh air. See also the carvings and artwork on the frieze and arch pediments, the Kalatha pots with lotus flowers and floral "kanote" designs which are all fine examples of the art of stone masons and carvers of the early Bagan period.

The figures of Hindu gods inside this temple have led some scholars to think that the Nan-paya was originally a Hindu temple. But actually it is an early Mon temple. You can see Mon motifs such as the Kalatha pots, figures of Hamsa, the (Brahmany duck) which became a symbol of the Mons at Hamsavati (Bago/ Pegu). There are also figures of the Makara, the crocodile-like sea creature and of Thiri goddesses.



Myazedi Pagoda at night

The owner of the Phyto Guesthouse, Maung Aung Myin, is also a renowned lacquer ware artist. Pieces from his workshop have been exhibited in Paris and a piece has been acquired by the British Museum. He has signed the best pieces and the quality of the pieces in his back showroom is incomparable with the pieces on sale in the street stalls. A beautifully made, very clever multi-piece item attracts my attention. I will sleep on it and decide on Thursday whether or not I want to buy one.

There are over 2000 pagodas in Bagan. It is the Angkor Wat of Myanmar. The major temples of Bagan were built in the 11th C, Angkor Wat dates from the 12th C.

In the morning we set out together in pony carts to visit:



Stairs to the View - Shwesandaw Pagoda



Thatbyinnyu Phaya - the tallest in Bagan

Shwesandaw Pagoda

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-bagan/shwesandaw.htm>

King Anawrahta built this graceful stupa. The pagoda bell rises from two octagonal bases, which top the five square terraces. The upper terrace of Shwesandaw Pagoda has become a popular sunset-viewing spot.

Following his conquest of Thaton, Anawrahta built this very graceful circular pagoda in 1057. The five terraces once had terra-cotta plaques showing scenes from the Jataka. The pagoda bell rises from two octagonal bases, which top the five square terraces. Close to the Shwesandaw stands the Lawkahteikpan Temple - small but interesting for its excellent frescoes and inscriptions in both Myanmar and Mon.



Shwezigon Pagoda



Monks - Shwezigon Pagoda

The climb to the top terrace is very steep and the steps are high. Going up is OK, but coming down requires care. It must have been difficult and dangerous for tourists before the hand rails were installed.



Souvenir Seller - Shwezigon Pagoda



Shwezigon Pagoda

of the 'purified' Theravada Buddhism, it was also the first pagoda to allow 'nat' images (pre-Buddhist spirits who had the power to do good or evil) within its walls. Its original builder, King Anawrahta (r. 1044-1077), even had images of the 37 traditional nats put on the lower terraces. As a result 'nat' worship joined for the first time with the nascent Theravada Buddhism to form a unique and vibrant Burmese religious experience that also contributed to the general growth of Theravada. Eventually the nats of Shwezigon were removed from the terraces to a small hall within the compound, but the Shwezigon Festival still brings multitudes to honor and worship the nats at Shwezigon.

King Anawrahta's conversion to Theravada Buddhism in the mid-11th century had a profound influence on Bagan's religious and cultural life. Anawrahta was Theravada's first major advocate; he was also the first of the great builders of Bagan. He began construction of the Shwezigon (on a site reputedly chosen by a white elephant) as a massive and centrally important reliquary shrine to encase a variety of Buddha artifacts, including a copy of the Tooth of Kandy from Ceylon, frontal and collar bones, and an emerald Buddha image from China. Apparently he had completed the three terraces before he (perhaps) was killed by a wild buffalo in 1077; some contend that he had even completed a small stupa on the terraces and had plans to encase it in a larger structure.

The reliquary shrine was completed between 1086 and 1090 by King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1113), Anawrahta's probable son (the parentage question is a looong story). Kyanzittha was perhaps Bagan's greatest king, and it was under him that Bagan became known, doubtless with a touch of exaggeration, as the 'city of four million pagodas.' He did erect hundreds of monuments and also successfully championed the Mon Buddhist culture. When the symbolic 'hti', or umbrella, was put into place over the Shwezigon in 1090, the reliquary shrine had essentially taken on the shape that it has today.



Ananda Temple

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

Shwezigon Paya

Shwezigon Paya (late 11th century)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Shwezigon Paya (pagoda, stupa or zedi), is one of the Bagan area's, and Myanmar's, most significant religious structures. Located four miles northeast of Old Bagan at the edge of the most important regional town of Nyaung U (or Nyaung Oo), it truly is a 'national' pagoda, since it served as a prototype for many later stupas built throughout Myanmar. The Shwezigon is also a major national center of worship. Pilgrims come from many parts of Myanmar for its festival held during the Burmese month of Nadaw (November/December) both because of its historic character and because of its religious significance for Burmese Buddhism. While the Shwezigon was one of the earliest symbols of the triumph



Ananda Temple

Earthquakes and other natural phenomena have, of course, taken their toll over the centuries, and it has been often repaired, perhaps most notably by King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581) in the late 16th century. The recent devastating earthquake of 1975 caused extensive damage to the spire and top of the dome that needed extensive repairs. Each attack on its main fabric doubtless introduced subtle and not-so-subtle changes to the structure. The pagoda, for example, now is encased by over 30,000 copper plates made possible through donations by local, national and international visitors. The entire

structure was gilded in 1983-1984 and again more recently. Yet the lower part of the stupa and terraces apparently remain largely as originally constructed in the 11th century.

Bagan Monument Number 1

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

Ananda Temple.

Ananda Temple (c. 1090-1105)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Ananda Pahto, or Phaya, was the first of Bagan's great temples, and remains one of the finest, most beautiful and perhaps most photographed, of all of Bagan's architectural complexes. It is a symmetrical masterpiece of Mon architectural style and, with some North Indian influence, reflects the transition from the Early to the Middle period of Bagan architecture. Located just to the east of the old city walls, its square-based beehive-like 'sikhara' crown and 'hti' umbrella, gilded to mark the temple's 900th anniversary in 1990, and expansive whitewashed temple structure dominate the surrounding countryside. Paul Strachan, one of the foremost experts on the architecture of Bagan, has suggested that "none can rival the Ananda as an experience that enriches." Heavily damaged in the devastating earthquake of 1975, it has been carefully restored.

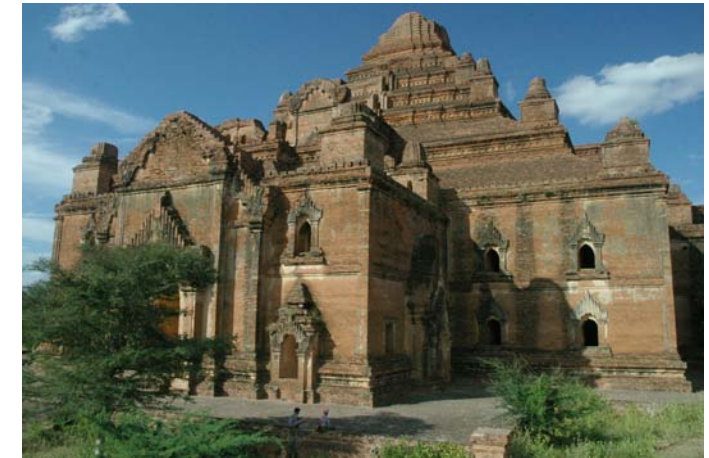
The temple was completed during the reign of King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1113), who reportedly was inspired by eight visiting Indian monks and their story of earlier life in the legendary Nanadamula cave in the Himalayas. The Ananda both sought to recreate a vision of this cave and reflect the endless wisdom of the Buddha. It also inspired

the temple-building of later rulers who constructed their own works of merit.

Bagan Monument Number 2171

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

After lunch Wendy Neil and I retain our pony carts to take us to another three pagodas:



Dhammayangyi Temple

Dhammayangyi Temple

This is the most massive shrine in Bagan

Dhammayangyi Pahto (c. 1165?)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Dhammayangyi (or Dhamma-yan-gyi) Pahto, extending approximately 255 feet on each of its four sides, is Bagan's most massive shrine. There is considerable controversy over the identity of the builder

and the construction of the building itself. It probably was built by King Narathu (1167?-1170?) over a three year period to atone for his wicked rule. Yet some have attributed it to Narathu's father and predecessor, Sithu I, who also built Thatbyinnyu.



Buddha - Dhammayangyi Temple

Legend suggests that Narathu met his end in a series of morbid events shortly after acceding to the throne. He had smothered his father and, shortly thereafter, his brother. After he had one of his wives (a former Indian princess and one of the wives of his father) executed for her Hindu hygienic rituals, he was assassinated

by eight men, disguised as Brahmin priests, sent by the princess' father. Others, however, have suggested that his death came at the hands of a Ceylonese mission that not only killed the king but sacked the city and introduced Ceylonese influence into the architectural spirit of Bagan.



Buddhas - Dhammayangyi Temple

The Dhammayangyi, similar in its ground plan similar to the Greek Cross of the earlier Ananda Pahto, is a very large square single story pyramidal temple with six monumental ascending exterior terraces. Oriented toward the east, the Dhammayangyi's brickwork is finely crafted—perhaps it is the finest in Bagan. (Narathu reportedly would execute masons if he could stick a pin between the bricks). Because of the death of the builder, perhaps, the temple was never finished. There is, however, another mysterious element to the temple, in addition to the identity of its builder. There are two inner ambulatories around a solid square central core that is approximately 82 feet on each side. Almost all of the inner ambulatory passages were filled with rubble, probably from around the time of its construction. Some suggest that if Narathu was the builder, workers stopped building at the time of his death and perhaps even filled in the inner ambulatory out of spite. The Dhammayangyi

remains one of the most unique and intriguing constructs on the Bagan plain.

Bagan Monument Number 771

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska



Frescoes - Sulamani Temple

Sulamani Temple

Apart from the grandeur of the building the interior walls are covered with frescoes in amazingly good condition.

Sulamani Guphaya (1183)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Sulamani (occasionally Sulamuni) Guphaya, or Pahto, is one of Bagan's premier temple attractions. The name itself means 'Crowning Jewel' or 'Small Ruby'. Paul Strachan, one of the leading modern authorities on the Bagan archeological plain, calls it 'the grandiloquent gesture of an empire at its meridian.'



Sulamani Temple

It was actually more than a temple, for the complex originally contained a large number of associated buildings, including a lecture and ordination hall, cells for the monks and a library.

Sulamani was the first and most important temple of the late period (1170-1300) of Bagan monument building. It was one of many temples and stupas built by Sithu II (or Narapatisithu) (1174-1211), probably as atonement for some of his many misdeeds. It was a direct model for the Htilominlo. It majestically combines the massive verticality of



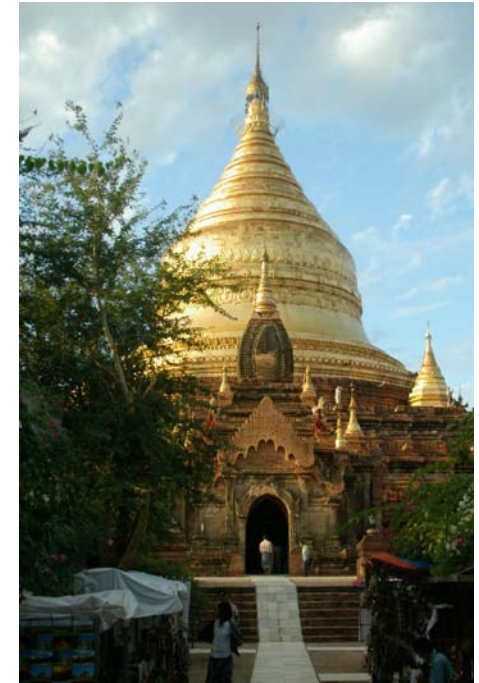
Frescoes - Sulamani Temple

the Thatbyinnyu with the horizontalism and monumentality of the Dhammayangyi.

The red brick temple is step pyramidal on a square base and is oriented to the east. There are two major levels with porches at each of the cardinal points and prominent eastward-facing doorways. Each of the ascending squares has pilasters in the form of stupas at the corners and a beautifully wrought sikhara, restored since the devastating earthquake of July 1975, crowns the entire complex. Each of the major levels has inner ambulatories running along the perimeter with niches for Buddhas. Ascent to the second story and upper levels is now prohibited here as it is with most Bagan temples.



Black Buddha - Sulamani Temple



Dhammayazika Pagoda

Important features of the Sulamani include its fine brickwork and use of stone in both load-bearing areas as well as on vulnerable external corner elements. The numerous original unique glazed roundels and panels along the plinth and terrace moldings add joy and exuberance to the exterior, while the rich frescoes on the stuccoed interior ambulatory (from the 12th to 19th centuries)--though damaged--with their lively depiction of both the sublime and the grotesque reflect a constant interplay of the physical and mythical light and darkness. The first story ambulatory is lit well enough from its doorways and windows to permit available light photographs of the frescoes. A wall with elaborate entries in the four cardinal directions surrounds the complex.

Bagan Monument Number 748

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

Dhammayazika Pagoda

<http://mandalaycity.net/travel/historic/bagan2.htm>

The Shwezigon is virtually the prototype of later Burmese stupas. But at Pagan itself there are a few examples of solid stupas having unusual features. The Dhammayazika at Pwasaw, built by Narapatisithu in 1196, has a pentagonal base with a vaulted shrine on each side. The circuit wall which is also five-sided is pierced with five gateways. The three lower terraces end of Pagan was built by Ndaungmya, popularly known as Htilominlo. It has a large bell which stands on four square terraces at each corner of which is a hollow shrine housing a standing Buddha in brick and stucco. The Sinhalese type of stupa with a square chamber between the bell and the finial is represented by the Sapada and Pekingyaong pagodas. These stand on low bases but the terraces are entirely absent.

The principal religion in Myanmar is Theravada Buddhism. However the Nat Spirits of previous worship still play an important role in religious activities



View from Dhammayazika Pagoda



Dhammayazika Pagoda

Two articles are of interest:

Buddhism in Myanmar – A Short History by Roger Bischof.

<http://www.accesstosight.org/lib/authors/bischoff/wheel399.html>

Nat Worship

http://www.exploremyanmar.com/nat_workship.htm



Approaching Sunset - from Dhammayazika Pagoda



Mythical Lion - Dhammayazika Pagoda



**A very large piece of lacquerware
- Over 1.5m high**

Overnight there has been heavy rain and this morning the rain continues so the time is spent catching up on the diary.



Aung Myin and Nandaroo



Village Well - Myinkabar



Washing Day



Girls inscribing a lacquer ware screen



Decorated oxen and cart

The rain also provides an opportunity to have another look at Aung Myin's lacquer ware. I decide on a piece that is decorated with tiny traditional Myanmar Puppets. Now I have to have it packed so I can take it home.



Gu Byauk Nge Temple

Before doing this I arrange to take a picture of him and one of the girls, Nandaroo, who worked on carving the design, with the piece.

By midmorning the rain has eased and a walk through the village is very pleasant. Later Neil and I walk to the nearby Gu Byauk Nge Temple and take a few pictures. It is not possible to go inside, but like many of the pagodas the Buddha images are cared for, if not regularly visited.

At 15:30 decorated ox carts arrive to take us to view the sunset from one of the pagodas. It is a fun ride as we meander through the pagodas and passing tourists look at us in amazement as the five carts trundle by. It takes about 45 minutes to reach the pagoda. Unfortunately the overcast sky ruins any chance of a sunset and we are far too early for dinner in a nearby pagoda.



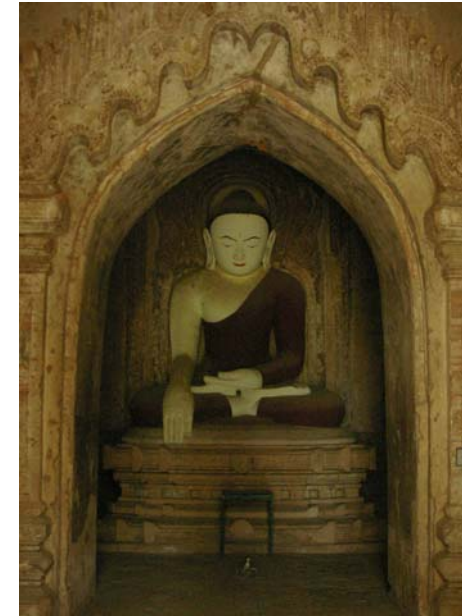
Ox carts going home

We hang around in light drizzle for half an hour and then walk to the Shwe Nan Yin Taw Monastic Centre where a local restaurant will set up dinner for us.

Originally we were to have dined by star and moonlight on the forecourt of the pagoda.

Instead tables and chairs are set up inside the pagoda and we have a very enjoyable candlelit dinner.

We return to the hotel by bus.



Buddha - Gu Byauk Nge Temple



Dining in the Shwe Nan Yin Taw Monastic Centre



Shwedagon Pagoda

The morning flight to Yangon has us back at the Yoma Hotel in Yangon at 11:30.

After lunch some go out to a bookshop that has reproductions of old books about Burma. I seem to have caught the cold going around the group and decide to spend the afternoon catching up on the diary.

The big event of the day is a visit to Shwedagon Pagoda. The pagoda is enormous; situated on 46 hectares of

land the platform is 6 hectares in area and is 60 metres above sea level. The pagoda rises 100m above the platform. It is covered in gold leaf and the umbrella and vane are encrusted with many precious stones.



There are hundreds of Buddha images and there are many people praying before them. The place is spotlessly clean and groups of people are rostered to sweep the platform. Apparently groups must apply to undertake this, as it is a way of gaining 'merit', and they may have to wait some time for their turn.

An elderly gentleman offered me a pamphlet about the pagoda and took me to parts of the pagoda where I could get some good pictures. Turned out he was formerly a history professor at a university and was working as a guide to get some income.

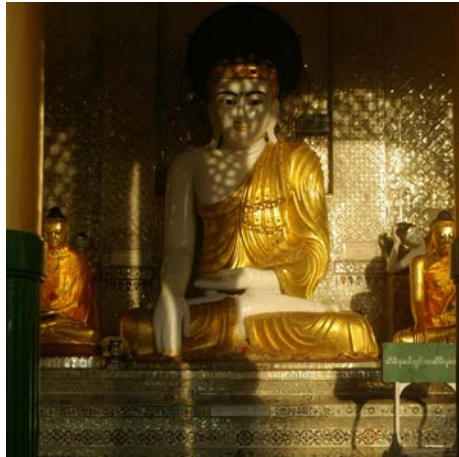


Shwedagon Pagoda

<http://www.shwedagon.org/history.php>

In the capital city of Yangon, you will find the beautifully majestic Shwedagon Pagoda. The Shwedagon Pagoda sits upon holy Singuttara Hill. To understand the reason why this hill is considered so holy, and to grasp the significance of the Shwedagon to Buddhists and to the

people of Myanmar, it is important to know both the history and the legends of how it all came to be.



Over 2,500 years ago, there lived a king by the name of Okkalapa. He was ruler of Suvannabhumi and ruled over the Talaings. At this time, Siddharta Guatama was living in northern India. He was still a young man and was not yet recognized as the Buddha.



It was and is believed that a new Buddha, or "Enlightened One", will come into being once every 5,000 years. At the time of Okkalapa, it had been approximately 5,000 years since the last Buddha, and it was considered time once again.

Singuttara Hill is important because it was the holy resting spot of the relics of three Buddhas. Their relics were enshrined within Singuttara Hill, thus making it a holy place. To keep it holy, it was believed that gifts given by the new Buddha, which would become relics, had to be enshrined every 5,000 years in the hill.



But Okkalapa was concerned, as a new Buddha had not come to be known yet, and if it took too long he feared the hill could lose its holiness. He went to the hill to pray and to meditate, unaware of Siddharta Guatama's coming into enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in northern India at the same time.

According to area legend, he appeared to Okkalapa and told him to be patient that his wish for the hill would soon be granted.

As Guatama was reaching the end of his 49 days of meditation, he was visited by two brothers. Their names were Tapussa and Bhallika, and they happened to be from Myanmar and were subjects of Okkalapa. These two merchant brothers present Guatama Buddha with a gift of some honey cake, as they recognized him as The Enlightened One.

To express his thanks to them, he pulled out 8 of his hairs off of his head, and gave the hairs to Tapussa and Bhallika. They took the hairs and headed back home. However, during their journey they were twice robbed, and 4 of the sacred hairs were taken from them. By the time they reached Myanmar, they had only 4 of The Buddha's hairs left.



However, their return was still a celebrated one by King Okkalapa and his people, and a large party was thrown in honor of the brothers. It was decided that a shrine place should be built on Singuttara Hill to house these newest relics. At the party in their

honor, the brothers presented a casket containing the Buddha's hairs to their king, and he opened it; there were great tremors upon the earth, a great rocking earthquake.



It is also said that all of the trees then burst into blossom and lovely jewels fell from the sky.

A shrine was created on Singuttara Hill to house these 8 miraculous hairs, and the area was deemed sacred. An enormous pagoda was then created atop the hill to house the shrine, and it is considered one of the most sacred places in all of Myanmar. The pagoda itself is a wondrous architectural achievement. The top soars well over

300 ft into the air (approximately 100 meters or more) above the hilltop and can be seen from quite far away. The Shwedagon, which means, loosely translated, "golden hills" is magnificently made out of gold and jewels all over.



The details as to exactly when and how the construction of the pagoda began are somewhat sketchy, but writings document that it was well-known and visible by the 11th century. Over the years, various kings and queens took part in renovating it, and enlarging the structure, making it even taller and grander than before.

Some interesting stories of the Shwedagon Pagoda deal with its enormous bells. In 1608, a Portuguese invader by the name of Philip de Brito y Nicote stole a bell that weighed in at around 6,0000 lbs, or 30 tons. However, as he was attempting to return home with the bell, it fell into the Bago River and was lost.



The bell was replaced in 1779. That was after a massive earthquake in 1768 toppled the highest part of the pagoda. Once that part, the stupa, was rebuilt, King Hsinbyushin's son Singu had a 23 ton bronze bell cast. It was called the Maha Gandha bell. In the 1820's, however, British soldiers

plundered the pagoda, and stole this bell.

En route to Calcutta, the bell fell overboard and sank into the sea. It was later recovered and now sits atop the pagoda platform, on the northwest side.

Finally, in 1841 another bell was created, this one weighing approximately 8,000 pounds (40 tons) and covered with 45 lbs (20kg) of gold plating. This bell, called the Maha Tissada bell, still resides in the pagoda, on the northeast side of the enclosure.

The years of 1852 through 1929 mark a time of British military occupation in Myanmar, with colonial rulers controlling the areas. However, the people of Myanmar were still able to have full access to the Shwedagon. In 1871 a new diamond-studded piece for the pagoda's structure was donated by King Mindon of Mandalay. The people of Myanmar were thrilled at this tribute and well over 100, 00 of them gathered at Shwedagon to celebrate. And although this made the British military somewhat uncomfortable, they had to allow it as the people were honoring their faith.

It is evident that, over the centuries, the Shwedagon Pagoda has survived

difficult times. It has withstood earthquakes, invasions, pillaging, foreign occupation and an internal stairwell fire in 1931 that destroyed many ancient monuments. Another earthquake in 1970, which was the 9th that the area had sustained since the 1500's, led the government to begin a renovation project on the crown of the main pagoda.

Each disaster brought damage to the pagoda, but it has always withstood the onslaughts and endured the renovations. The fact that Shwedagon has survived these times of hardship and damage and still stood firm adds to its sense of majesty. It also adds to the sense of pride within the people of

Myanmar, that nothing can truly leave lasting damage upon this beloved site. And people have always pitched in to make sure that any needed renovations took place to strengthen and secure it. Thus, to this day it sits, strong and steady, mystical and sacred, high upon a sacred hill.

Four of our group are leaving the tour tomorrow so we left the Pagoda at 17:45 to head to the Strand Hotel for a few drinks before moving on to the ABC bar for dinner. Not a place I would choose, but every one had a good; some too good a time as they were rather fragile the next morning

Saturday 10 December - Tour Day 15 - Yangon to Kyaiktiyo

Day 24



Mother and child

Today those who are continuing will depart Yangon for Kyaiktiyo; those heading home will head to the airport.

We do not have to rush and so we are able to see the others off before heading off ourselves at about 11:00.

Today we retrace our route of the first day to Bago, where we stop for lunch, and then turn east toward Mon State.

It is a relatively easy drive and we arrive at the Golden Sunrise Hotel, at the base camp, Kimmunsakhan, to the famous 'Golden Rock' pagoda, at about 17:00.



Break for a snack



Boy (and Paul) on the truck to the Golden rock Pagoda

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-kyaikhtiyo/history.htm>
<http://www.myanmars.net/travel/myanmar-kyaikhtiyo/history.htm>
http://www.myanmarvoyages.com/des t_goldenrock.htm

We set off at about 10:00 for a full day to trek to the mysterious 'Golden Rock'. This is a very important spiritual journey for Buddhists in this

country and from other countries. We have seen Korean pilgrims at several of the pagodas we have visited.



Golden Sunrise Hotel - Kimmunsakhan



Fellow passengers on the truck



We walk from here



Gillian and Anne - Resting

After a ten minute walk to the bus station in the village we board a truck with about 50 other people for a hair raising 45 minute trip up the mountainside. The road surface is one of the best we have been on but the road is very

steep and winding and we are thrown from side to side at each sharp.



Porter going up the mountain

When we reach the top bus stop we find the locals can continue on to the top. It is said to be too dangerous for foreigners and we have to walk the rest of the way. By now it is blazing hot and the Golden Rock is still along way above us. We set out to slowly make our way to the top and are soon assailed by palanquin carriers offering to carry us to the top. After a while it might have been tempting to accept their offers, but they were so persistent that we dug our heels and refused. They followed, and annoyed

us almost all the way to the top; finally giving up when the top was in sight. The climb has taken us an hour and a half.

The rock is said to have been miraculously carried from sea level to the top of the mountain and balanced on a rock ledge.



Some take it easy



Locals going down.



Young Monks



Finally the top!

There are several legends and folk stories about the rock

http://www.yadanabon.com/folk_tales/kyaik_hti_yo.htm
http://www.journeysmyanmar.com/highlights_of_myanmar_kyaikhtiyo.htm



The Golden Rock

This one version:

Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp1996/1-96/pag.htm>

Deep within the jungle of the Paunglaung Range of the south-eastern Yoma, perched precariously on a rocky precipice, over 1000 meters above sea level is a huge boulder 25 meters in circumference resembling a human head crowned with a pagoda five meters high. The boulders is so placed on the edge of the precipice that it seems a slight

push with a finger will tip it over into the gorge below. Yet when you try to do so it only rocks slightly. This is the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda which enshrines a strand of Hair of the Buddha.



Last view of the Golden Rock



Approaching sunset

The pagoda legend states that when Buddha visited Thuwunna Bhumi, the land of gold, (present-day Thaton), the hermit Tissa implored Buddha for a strand of Hair to

be worshipped for perpetuity. So The compassionate Buddha gave him a strand of Hair. Near the end of the hermits life, Sakka, the lord of nats spiritual beings persuaded the hermit to relinquish the Hair so that it could be enshrined in a suitable location. The hermit agreed on condition that the Hair be enshrined in a boulder resembling his head and that a pagoda be erected on that boulder.



Prayer Pole - Golden Rock Pagoda

The lord of nats, Sakka, agreed and fetched from the bottom of the sea a boulder which resembled the hermits head. The hermit on fulfillment of his wish relinquished the sacred Hair to Sakka whereupon Sakka scooped out a hole in the boulder and enshrined the Hair therein, and erected a pagoda of fitting height upon that spot.

The boulder was placed on the edge of a rocky precipice with the resolution that it would never fall come storm or earthquake or human endeavor. And so it stands there today.

The facial features of the hermit may be seen on the surface of the boulder. The view from the Kyaikhto Hotel will let you see the face very well, sometimes serious, often smiling.

Nothing miraculous about it there are similar rock formations nearby; it just happens that the space between the rock and the ledge has weathered so that the rock will tilt without overbalancing. This is similar the balanced column at Jerash in Syria.

The whole place has more the feel of a fun park than a place of worship despite there being many people praying in front of various images.

The views from the top are quite spectacular.

Of course we have to walk down again and this takes the best part of an hour and then there is the truck trip down the hill. It doesn't seem quite so bad going down. This time I am in the front seat of the truck and can see what is happening.

We arrive back at the hotel rather tired and ready for a drink and dinner. Avocado salad, grilled king prawn and sweet and sour potatoes was an interesting change from the more traditional Burmese meals which have nevertheless been delicious.

Monday 12 December - Tour Day 17 - Kyaiktiyo to Mawlamyaing

Day 26



Shwezayan Pagoda - Thaton

Early morning drive to the seaside capital of Mon state.



River craft - Hpa An

We decide to take a less direct route through Thaton and Hpa An so that the trip takes most of the day.

Thaton

http://www.marimari.com/content/myanmar/popular_places/popular_places2.html



Unloading gravel - Hpa An

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thaton>

Thaton was a center for a Mon kingdom which stretched from the [Ayeyarwady](#) delta region to as far east as [Cambodia](#). This kingdom was called [Suvannabhumi](#) ("The Golden Land"), and it was to this kingdom that King [Ashoka](#) of [India](#) sent [Buddhist](#) missionaries in the 3rd century BC. Later, under the kingdom of [Dvaravati](#), Thaton was an important seaport on the [Gulf of](#)

Martaban, for trade with India and Sri Lanka. Shin Aran named Dhammadassi, a monk from Thaton, who was born in Thaton and bought up and educated in Nakhorn Pathom, an old capital of Mon kingdom of Dvaravadi, now in Thailand, took Theravada Buddhism north to the Burmese kingdom of Bagan. In 1057, King Anawrahta of Bagan conquered Thaton



Kyauk Klat Monastery

Little of that ancient city remains today. There are only some traces of the massive city walls and some interesting pagodas for viewing. At the core of the town is a mix of colonial

mansions and thatched-roof homes. There's also a picturesque canal network that irrigates rice fields and fruit orchards. Thaton is located on the main road and rail line between Bago and Mawlamyine.



Hpa An



Mt Zwegapin

Hpa An and Kayan State

http://www.traveltomyanmar.com/in_paan.htm



Reclining Buddha - Mahamuni Pagoda - Mawlamying

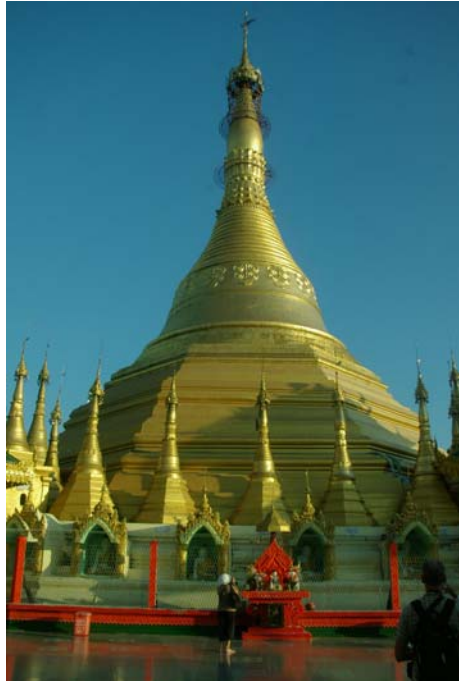
Kayin State is in South-eastern Myanmar. Pa-an (Hpa An), the capital is on the eastern bank of Thanlwin River. The plains at Kayin State are dotted by lime stone caverns and lime stone hills protruding steeply upwards. Among the hills, Zwegapin hill is the most prominent with a height of 2,372 ft above the sea level.

Zwegapin hill is 7 miles from Pa-an and it is becoming the Landmark of Kayin State. Zwegapin in Kayin parlance is the hill where ships anchor. The hill projects various images when observed from different directions. Anyhow, the titanic Zwegapin denotes the steadfastness, truthfulness and bravery of Kayin people.

The inhabitants around Zwegapin are traditionally farmers, growing paddy, beans and pulses, raising orchards. Agriculture is the mainstay of Kayin people's livelihood. As the place is several rivers with much lakes and ponds, they are also adept in fishery.

The traditional dwellings are long-legged houses, where the household live upstairs while the poultry, traditional mortar, pestle and farming tools are kept at the ground

floor. Kayin people residing at the foot of Zwegapin hill are simple, honest and content with their peaceful life.



Mahamuni Pagoda - Mawlamyaing

Near Hpa An we make a small diversion to a monastery, Kyuak Klat, in a lake and a pagoda on top of a column of rock. The pagoda is only accessible by bamboo ladder.

Throughout the day we are travelling through a very fertile part of the Mon and Kayin States. There are extensive rice fields, rubber and palm oil plantations. Across the plains there

are lime stone mountains; many have pagodas on the top of them.



Thanlwin Bridge



Mahamuni Pagoda

South of Hpa An we pass Mt Zwegapin; also a significant Buddhist spiritual site. When we arrive Ian has to locate a suitable hotel before we can check in. By the time this is all done it is too late to explore the town.

We do have time to visit the Mahamuni (Moulmein) Pagoda for a short time before heading off to the Viewpoint to watch the sunset and of course take photographs.

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp1996/7-96/old.htm>

Mawlamyaing is a busy commercial port mainly exporting rice and wood. It is the fourth largest city in Myanmar, located 270km southeast of Yangon. As it served as capital of British Burma from 1827 to 1852, many old colonial buildings still remain.



Sunset - Mawlamyaing

<http://www.mawlamyine.com/>

Mawlamyine is the third largest city in Myanmar after Yangon and Mandalay situated 300 kilometers south east of the nation's capital at the mouth of the Thanlwin river. It is the capital of Mon State with a population of almost 300,000 people. Formerly known as Moulmein, it was once a thriving teak port and the administrative capital of British Lower Burma. The town's signature landmark is Kyaikthanlan pagoda built in 875 AD and thought to be the site from where Rudyard Kipling wrote his famous poem, 'Mandalay'



**Buddha - Mahamuni Pagoda -
Mawlamyaing**



**Nat Spirit - Mahamuni Pagoda -
Mawlamyaing**



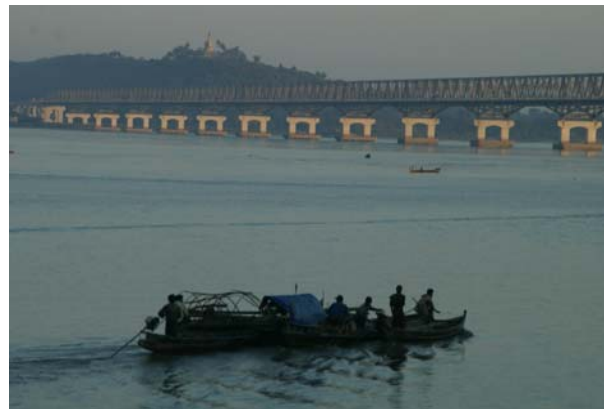
Spray painting the Buddha Image.



Kyaikthanlan pagoda at sunset



Morning sun - Mawlamyaing



Early morning fishers - Mawlamyaing



Kaladan Mosque - Mawlamyaing



Young Girl - Ogre Island

A 45-minute boat ride takes us to Kalwi on Balu Kyaun (Ogre) Island and then we take a one-hour horse cart ride through the villages, rice fields and rubber plantations to see an indigenous factory making rubber bands from the natural rubber in the village of Yua Lut.

We also visit a group of homes making wooden pipes and ballpoint pens. Another family makes quite ornately carved walking sticks.



Fisherman - Mawlamyaing



Pagoda 'farm' - Ogre Island

On our way to lunch at the home of one of the horse cart drivers we stop to view doormats being made from coconut fibre.



Beached boats - Kalwi - Ogre Island



Local bus - Ogre Island

The mainly vegetarian lunch was excellent.

On our return we set out to view the Mudon reclining Buddha under construction.



Threshing Rice



Our Boatman

Contemplating Rubber Bands

From an article by :Scott Aitken

<http://www.scottpix.com/stories/ts134.html>



Our horse carts



Avenue of Rain Trees

When I was in Myanmar, we went to an island called Bilu (Ogre) Island, off the south eastern peninsula. It is well off the beaten bath enough that the locals see very few Westerners there. The woman who was leading our group is somewhat tall, and has light blond hair now starting to go grey. Among a group of mostly shorter dark

Asians, she really stands out. Some of the people on the island remembered seeing her on her last trip there three years ago.



Pipe Maker - Ogre Island



Making rubber tubes for rubber bands

In that part of Myanmar, there are a lot of rubber plantations, a legacy of British colonial days. Most commonly, a family owns about five acres of rubber trees. They go out each morning about 4:00am and tap

the trees, then go back around 9:00am to collect the rubber sap. Then they mix the rubber sap with sulfuric acid (yes, I said sulfuric acid!) and water to get it to the right consistency. When it is the right mix, they run it through hand cranked presses to flatten it into sheets, and then dry the sheets in the sun. The government buys most of it for use by the military. For this they earn the equivalent of around 2-3 dollars per day.

The military government doesn't get all the rubber, though. Some of the rubber is used on Bilu Island to make rubber bands. Have you ever visited a rubber band factory? I didn't think so. I never had before either.

On Bilu it is decidedly low-tech. They make cylindrical poles from teak and fasten them together in blocks of eight. They're around a meter long. Then the workers dip the block of poles in large barrels of rubber. The rubber is dyed different colors with dyes bought from Thailand -- yellow, pink, red, green. The poles are dipped and dried several times. The process is a little like making hand dipped candles, though the fumes are considerably more noxious.

The result is then sheaths of colored rubber on the poles. When it is mostly dry, the workers peel it off the poles and dry it completely in the sun. At this stage it looks vaguely like a condom for an elephant (the standard joke at the factory). After the rubber is

dry, they feed the sheaths through a foot-pedalled machine that chops them into the rings of rubber bands. Most of the workers still had most of their fingers, but I kept my distance from that machine.



Feeding the tubes into the shears



Cut rubber bands

It had none of the safety devices and protections normally found on factory machinery in America. No health insurance either.



Safe working conditions?



Weaving coconut fibre mats

I use the term 'factory' loosely. If you are picturing a large sanitary building of gleaming steel, forget it. This rubber band factory is underneath a group of ramshackle teak houses built on stilts. The floor is bare dirt. It is dark, but working in the shade is far preferable to the hot sun. The teak may sound exotic, but it's not in Myanmar. It is a strong hard wood that doesn't rot easily. It is common

there, though it is being logged off at an alarming rate. In Myanmar they make packing crates from teak.

On a covered balcony above, girls sort the rubber bands from the chaff by hand with forked sticks. There is a lot of waste. There are about 10-15 people involved in the whole operation.

For the rest of my life I'm probably going to feel a twinge of guilt every time I peel a rubber band off a newspaper and toss it in the trash.

Several hundred metres long this Buddhist version of the Big Banana seems so poorly constructed that concrete cancer will get most of the structure long before it is finished.

Mudon Buddha

http://www.mawlamyine.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=98

The largest reclining Buddha image in the world, Win Sein Taw Ya, is situated about 20 km south of Mawlamyine on the main road to Mudon. It can be clearly seen for miles as you leave Mudon for Mawlamyine on the right side of the road in amongst the hills almost directly opposite the hill top Buddhist shrine of Kyauktalon Taung.

The reclining Buddha is 180 meters in length, and 30 meters in height. Inside there are numerous rooms with dioramas of the teachings of

Buddhism, similar to Haw Par Villa (Tiger Balm Gardens) of Singapore. There is also a Buddhist shrine in one of the rooms, and being a place of worship, you should remove your shoes or slippers before entering the premises.



Neil relaxes before lunch



Lunch stop

Construction is expected to be completed in 2008 (maybe)



Reclining Buddha - Mudon



Sunset

There are many buildings from the days of British Colonial Rule and time spent wandering the streets looking at them would have been better than the visit to Mudon.



Freight train in the rice fields

Wednesday 14 December - Tour Day 19 - Mawlamyaing to Yangon

Day 28

A long days drive north to Bago and then to Yangon.

The new Thanlwin Bridge makes it possible to drive to Yangon in one day. However, some had planned to return by train.

As the train does not yet cross the Thanlwin Bridge into Mawlamyine we all leave together and cross the bridge to Mottama. When we get to the station we found the train might not leave until 14:30 in the afternoon, far too late for the trip back to Yangon.



Disappointed train travelers - Mottama



Myanmar Railways freight train

Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine)— largest, longest and finest of its kind in Union

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Article/Article2005/Feb/Feb18.htm>

The inauguration of the Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) spanning Thanlwin River took place on 5-2-2005, and Head of State Senior General Than Shwe graced the occasion by his presence.



Two women on a bicycle

The Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine), linking Mawlamyine, the capital of Mon State, and Mottama side, is the longest and largest of its kind in the nation. It has a 28-foot-wide two-lane motorway with the length of two miles, a 14-foot-wide railroad with the length of four miles, and two six-foot-wide walkways on it.

Situated near Gaungsay Island, the breathtaking facility stretches from Mawlamyine to Motta-ma. Its type is simple but magnificent, enhancing the beauty of Mawlamyine.

It was built at the confluence of Thanlwin River, Gyaing River and Attayan River. The waterway is very swift, wide and deep with whirlpools.



Nuns collecting alms

We all return by bus. We take the more direct route to Thaton through tropical areas of rubber plantations and banana groves. Beyond Thaton we are retracing our route through rich rice growing areas and rubber plantations.

Along the way we come across a small freight train hauled by a steam locomotive. Rather picturesque in the rice fields!

With brief stops at Thaton, Kyaiktiyo and Bago we make good time and are back in Yangon soon after 17:00.

This, our last stop in Bago is in full view of the Shwemawdaw Paya, one of the most venerated sites in Myanmar. It has had a long and chequered history.



Rice and school children

Bago - History

<http://www.thelegalreport.com/bago>

According to legend, two [Mon](#) princess from [Thaton](#) founded Bago in 573 AD. They saw a female goose standing on the back of a male goose on an island in a huge lake. Thinking that this was an auspicious omen, they built a city called [Hanthawady](#) ([Pali](#) Hamsavati) on the edge of the lake



Shwemawdaw Paya - Bago

The earliest mention of this city in history is by the [Arab](#) geographer [Ibn Khudadhbin](#) around 850 AD. At the time, the Mon capital had shifted to [Thaton](#). The area came under rule of the [Burmese](#) from [Bagan](#) in 1056. After the collapse of Bagan to the [Mongols](#) in 1287, the Mon regained their independence. From 1369-1539, Hanthawady was the capital of the Mon Kingdom of [Ramanadesa](#), which covered all of what is now lower Myanmar. The area came under Burman control again in 1539, when it was annexed by King [Tabinshwethi](#) to his [Kingdom of Taungoo](#).

The kings of [Taungoo](#) made Bago their royal capital from 1539-1599 and again in 1613-1634, and used it as a base for repeated invasions of [Siam](#). As a major seaport, the city was frequently visited by Europeans, who commented on its magnificence. The Burmese capital relocated to [Ava](#) in 1634. In 1740, the Mon revolted and briefly regained their independence, but Burmese King [Alaungpaya](#) sacked and completely destroyed the city (along with Mon independence) in 1757.

Bago was rebuilt by King [Bodawpaya](#) (1782-1819), but by then the river had shifted course, cutting the city off from the sea. It never regained its previous importance. After the [Second Anglo-Burmese War](#), the [British](#) annexed Bago in 1852. In 1862, the province of [British Burma](#) was formed, and the capital moved to [Yangon](#). The name "Bago" is spelt "peh kou" literally. The substantial differences between the colloquial and literary pronunciations, as in with Burmese words, was a reason of the British corruption "Pegu".

The Shwemadaw Pagoda – Bago

http://www.exoticmyanmar-travel.com/myanmar_info/yangon.shtml

Shwemawdaw Pagoda or Great Golden God Pagoda is one of the most venerated in Myanmar. The Shwemawdaw is situated on the north side of the railway station and is visible for miles around. The style is similar but less grand than that of the Shwedagon Pagoda although the Shwemawdaw is 16 metres higher than the former.

The history of this pagoda follows the story of two merchant brothers, Sulatharla and Mahatharla. The brothers had an opportunity to worship Lord Gaudama Buddha during a visit to Yarzagyo town on a trading mission. In return for their offering the Buddha gave them two sacred stands of hair. These were enclosed in a golden gasket, brought back to Myanmar and enshrined

in Dozaungtu town (Zaungtu). The brothers told King Manadaleik of Thaton, who went to pay obeisance and worship the relics the same year, 361 BC. In 365 BC, King Mandaleik, under the direction of Thagyamin, King of gods, found Thudathana Hill and as preordained by Buddha, enshrined the two sacred hairs in a stupa 60 feet in height and 30 feet wide. Enshrined with the hairs were valuables donated by Thagyamin, King Mandaleik, Arahats (saints), the Queen and the two merchant brothers.



Teak Logs

A pagoda 75 feet high and 375 feet incircumference, was built over the stupa in 374 BC. The original Mon name was Kyaik-Mu-Tar. Kyaik meaning pagoda, Mu, edge or periphery and Tar, positioned. The words later became "Mu-Taw", then "Maw-Daw" and finally the name became Shwemawdaw. Over the centuries the pagoda was embellished and enlarged many times, first by King thamala in 725 AD, who raised its height to 81 feet; then by King Wimala in 740 who increased the height to 88 feet. In 982, one of Buddhas tooth relics was added by King Anuyama, and another sacred tooth relic was enshrined by King Razadarity in 1385. In 1492, King Banyarrun donated a hti or umbrella for the pagoda. King

Bodawpaya raised the height of the pagoda to 297 feet and donated a new hti in 1789.

The Shwemawdaw Pagoda has been seriously damaged by five earthquakes. The "banana bud" of this pagoda which toppled together with many other parts in the 1917 earthquake, can still be seen at the

base of the pagoda embedded in the new concrete work of the rebuilt and renovated shrine, a solemn reminder of the havoc natural calamities can wreak on manmade edifices.

The last and most devastating quake struck in 1930 and left only the earth mound base undisturbed. Restoration and renovation work began in 1952 and was completed in 1954 in a style somewhat different than the original.

There are four zaungdams or covered stairways leading to the pagoda each guarded by a large white chinthes (Mythical Half-Lion, Half-Dragon) with a sitting Buddha in the mouth. There are paintings showing the damage done by the 1930 quake on some stairways, a museum containing wood and bronze Buddha figures and relics saved from the catastrophe and a hall featuring photos of the restoration work. The West Zaungdan is the most popular among pilgrims and devotees

Thursday 15 December - Tour Day 20 - Yangon

Day 29



Pottery Kiln

Our last day; we cross the Yangon River on the local ferry and engage

two jeeps to take us through the countryside to the town of Twante.

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-yangon/twante.htm>

As we are rather special passengers, having paid \$US1.00, the locals pay about \$US0.01, we are escorted to the bridge deck to enjoy a view of the river as we cross.

The jeeps and the roads to Twante are another thing altogether. We bounce along for about 45 minutes, finally arriving at the pottery works at Oh-Bo. Terracotta pots for water, plants and other uses are made using very primitive techniques. One plant had the luxury of a small hammer mill to crush sand that is mixed with the clay; otherwise everything was done by hand. Even the potters wheels were turned by the potters foot or someone else while the potter formed the pot. Many were unglazed, whilst some were part glazed with a black glaze.

The pots are fired in small to medium sized wood fired kilns.

By now it is getting pretty hot and a drink stop is in order.

A short visit to the Shwesandaw Paya; another pagoda reputed to have some of Buddha's hair, and we hit the road again for the trip back.



Water Taxi - Yangon River

We are back at the hotel by about 13:30

Time enough to visit the Sule Pagoda and the markets before a farewell dinner at the Green Elephant Restaurant.



Jeep Rank at ferry landing

Nearby is the lofty Independence Pillar in the Maha Bandoola Park, the Immanuel Church, the mosque nearby, the imposing Town Hall of Myanmar architectural design, the High Court Buildings of



Pots drying

colonial style, and major thoroughfares from different directions making a circuit around Sule Pagoda hillock.



Flower Stall - Twante



Potter at work Oh Bo Pottery sheds



Twante Canal between Irrawaddy and Yangon Rivers



Paper Decorations - Twante

Sule Pagoda

<http://www.myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-yangon/sule.htm>

This 48 meter (152 feet) high golden dome was used by the British as the nucleus of their grid pattern for the city when it was rebuilt in the 1880s.

The pagoda's peculiarity is its octagonal- shaped pagoda, which retains its shape as it tapers to the spire



Port of Yangon



Town Hall of Myanmar - Yangon



Immanuel Baptist Church - Yangon



Shwesandaw Paya - Twante



Shwesandaw Paya - Twante



Shwesandaw Paya - Twante



Independence Pillar and Sule Pagoda.

The Sule Pagoda is an excellent landmark. It is said to be over 2,000 years old. The pagoda is said to enshrine a hair of the Buddha: its Mon

name, Kyaik Athok translates as "the pagoda where a Sacred Hair Relic is

enshrined". The golden pagoda is unusual in that its octagonal shape continues right up to the bell and inverted bowl. It is surrounded by

small shops and all the familiar non-religious services such as of astrologists, palmists, and so on.

Friday 16 December - Tour Day 21 - Yangon

Day 30

Melbourne Departure day MH741 12:15 - MH149 21:30 Arrive 08:10 17th

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Appendix

Ananda Temple (c. 1090-1105)

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The Ananda Pahto, or Phaya, was the first of Bagan's great temples, and remains one of the finest, most beautiful and perhaps most photographed, of all of Bagan's architectural complexes. It is a symmetrical masterpiece of Mon architectural style and, with some North Indian influence, reflects the transition from the Early to the Middle period of Bagan architecture. Located just to the east of the old city walls, its square-based beehive-like 'sikhara' crown and 'hti' umbrella, gilded to mark the temple's 900th anniversary in 1990, and expansive whitewashed temple structure dominate the surrounding countryside. Paul Strachan, one of the foremost experts on the architecture of Bagan, has suggested that "none can rival the Ananda as an experience that enriches." Heavily damaged in the devastating earthquake of 1975, it has been carefully restored.

The temple was completed during the reign of King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1113), who reportedly was inspired by eight visiting Indian monks and their story of earlier life in the legendary Nanadamula cave in the Himalayas. The Ananda both sought to recreate a vision of this cave and reflect the endless wisdom of the Buddha. It also inspired the temple-building of later rulers who constructed their own works of merit.

The Ananda is surrounded by an enclosing wall and four integrated arched gateways containing guardian deities in the seated 'lalitasana' position. Since it has always also served as a monastery there are also a number of associated buildings within the enclosure wall.

The Ananda is a perfectly proportioned Greek cross structure and beautifully symmetrical in form, including its vestibules and gabled portico entryways with stupa finials. It has a central square measuring approximately 175 ft (53 m) along each side. The main mass of the building is approximately 35 ft (10.5 m) high and contains two tiers of windows. The central tower soars 167 ft (51 m). There are six receding terraces; the lower terraces have a complete numbered set of 537 Jataka plaques numbered in the Pali language, while there is a further set of 375 Mon language plaques depicting the last ten

Jataka on the upper terraces retelling 'jataka' scenes from the life of the Buddha. Including those on the interior, this is the largest Bagan collection of terracotta tiles. Four smaller stupas mimic the central sikhara crown at each corner of the second main level, and several tiers of windows help illuminate the inner corridors. It is in constant use and is in good repair. The stucco and other parts and features of the temple were restored in the late 18th century in the Middle Konbaung era style.

The central cube contains two parallel ambulatories around the central core contain arched niches in the wall to contain images of the Buddha; over 80 instructional sandstone relief scenes in the outer corridor depict the life of the Buddha from his birth until his enlightenment. Four impressive gilded teak (30 ft., 9.5 m.) standing Buddhas, facing the four cardinal directions, represent the Buddhas who have attained enlightenment in the present kalpa, or world cycle. The images facing north and south are contemporaneous with the building, while the east and west images replace figures destroyed by fire or temple thieves a hundred years ago; there are differences of opinion on this, however. Paul Strachan indicates that the east and west images were extensively repaired in the late 18th when the temple was refurbished. They are done in the later Mandalay Konbaung style. The robes of the later images are rather different from the earlier one. Although the inner walls are mostly whitewashed, there is evidence that originally they also contained a number of murals.

The annual Ananda Paya Festival, held during three days during the full moon of Pyatho (December-January) to raise money for the upkeep of the temple, bring thousands from all parts of the country.

Bagan Monument Number 2171

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

Botatuang Pagoda

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/botataun.htm>

Tradition says that the name "Botataung" is from '**Bo**' a military officer and '**taung**' one thousand and that it was on a hillock at this site that one thousand military officers of the king were drawn up as a guard of honour to welcome the landing in Burma of the relics of the Buddha brought over from India more than two thousand years ago.

An account from ancient histories of the building of the Pagoda states that the Buddhist king Sihadipa gave one of his ministers a sacred hair from the Buddha's head and two body relics and this minister, renowned for his goodness and faith, consulted a famous religious leader and, on his advice, chose the Botataung Mount on the bank of Rangoon River at a distance one thousand tars (7,000 cubits) in a South-Easterly direction from the Shwedagon Pagoda and there enshrined the sacred relics.

For over two thousand years the histories and traditions told that here, beneath this sacred edifice, was buried the sacred hair, the two body relics and an unspecified amount of treasure.

Burmese histories were always noted for a degree of truth and candour greater than that of some more modern histories in the newer countries, but after more than two thousand years have rolled by in this world, so demonstrably subject to *Anicca* (impermanence) it may be forgiven if memories cloud and men's minds grow doubtful.

There were those who in pre-war Burma were ready to doubt the real existence of the ancient relics and the accounts of the old histories.

It has been said that "Sometimes out of evil cometh forth good" and the old histories were to be vindicated by the trials and misfortunes of war.

The Botataung Pagoda was a famous Land-mark on Rangoon's waterfront. Situated just below the long lines of jetties that serve this busy port whence rice, petroleum, timber and mineral are shipped to the whole world, a most vulnerable spot in war, yet the Japanese air - raids on Rangoon in 1941-42 did no damage though bombs fell nearby and bullets rained death from the sky but on the 8th of November, 1943 the R.A.F. bombed Rangoon's wharves and a whole "stick" of bombs straddled the ancient Botataung Pagoda,

leaving where had stood one of Burma's oldest and most venerated fanes, a heartrending heap of twisted and blackened ruins.

As soon as the war ended a Rehabilitation Committee of leading citizens was formed to take steps to rebuild the Pagoda. Preliminary work was commenced and plans drawn up for the rebuilding.

The top-burden of the ruins was cleared away and then on the 4th of January, 1948 marking the day on which Burma regained her freedom and independence, the Rehabilitation Committee put in gold pegs as the first step towards actual re-erection of the Pagoda. A fitting ceremony was performed and the aid of all Forces and Beings was invoked and at 8-45 a.m. on this independence day, a moment judged auspicious, five gold pegs were driven simultaneously into the ground. The centre gold peg was handled by Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin, the gold peg at the North-East Point by U Ba Thaw, Botataung Pagoda Trustee, the gold peg at the South-East point by Sir Mya Bu, Retired Chief Justice, the gold peg at the South-West point by U Po Byaw, Shwedagon Pagoda Trustee, and the gold peg at the North-West point by Thado Thiri Thudhamma U Thein Maung, Chief Justice of the Union. These gold pegs were driven home simultaneously by these five gentlemen at the precise moment.

Discovery of Rare Treasure.

After the driving in of the gold pegs the debris was cleared from the ground demarcated and bronze and silver images, coins and ornaments, some of which had been on display at the Pagoda at the time of the bombing, were recovered. Then a depth of seven feet having been excavated in order to establish the foundations of the new Pagoda, further excavations were carried out for a relic chamber in the very centre of the site. At a depth of three feet an ancient and well-constructed chamber was uncovered, in size 20' x 20' and 6 in height gradually decreasing in size towards the top and appearing like a huge pot placed up-sided down to cover completely what lay inside.

In the very centre of this treasure vault was discovered a wonderful stone casket in the shape of a pagoda with a diameter of 23 ins, and 39 ins, high. Encircling this stone casket were figures of Nats (Minor Deities) carved out of

laterite and evidently placed there to act as sentinels. The casket was immersed in mud as water had trickled into the vault during the many centuries it had been there.

With this pagoda-shaped stone casket within the relic chamber were found various kinds of treasures: precious stones, ornaments, jewellery, terra-cotta plaques and images of gold, silver, brass and stone. The total number of these images recovered from within and without the relic chamber was seven hundred. The terra cotta plaques, some of them in a fair state of preservation, depict Buddhist scenes.

Image of Lord Buddha in Terra Cotta. One of the terra-cotta plaques excavated from the relic chamber bears an image of the Lord Buddha and though affected by age and moisture it is exceptionally important. On the reverse side are inscribed characters which are very close to the ancient Brahmani script which came from Southern India. It is a precious evidence of ancient times and has been deciphered by U Lu Pe Win, Superintendent Archaeologist, Government of the Union of Burma, who points out that the initial word "e" from "*evam vadī*" shows that the script is in the manner of the ancient Mons. This is proof of the belief that the people who erected the Pagoda in ancient times were the Mons. The inscription is reproduced herein and the characters form the verse which summarises tersely the Buddha's Teaching as explained by Assaji (one of the five companions of Gotama - in his strenuous ascetic practices, to whom after His Enlightenment He returned and first preached the Doctrine), to Sariputta who in turn explained it to his friend Moggallana. Those two thereupon perceived the Truth of the Buddha's Teaching, joined the Order and became the chief disciples. The English translation is: "The Tathagata has explained the cause of all things which proceed from a cause and also the cessation thereof. This the Great Samana has taught." (*Sariputta - Mahavagga, pubbujja Khandaka, Moggallana vinaya pitaka*).

The Opening of the Stone Casket

It was at once realised that the stone casket contained relics, but as this could not be opened up unceremoniously the pilgrims who flocked from all over Burma to see these discoveries had at first just to imagine the contents. The Rehabilitation Committee met on several occasions but could not take the responsibility of opening the casket. Then a meeting was called to which were invited 15 of the leading religious leaders (Maha Theras). At this meeting, on the advice of these Bhikkhus, that as an act prompted by good motives and religious faith it would be quite meritorious to open the casket, it was

unanimously decided to do this in the presence of the members of the Committee and the public. Great precautions were taken so as not to cause the slightest damage and actually the cone was removed from the stone salver on which it stood without any very great difficulty. When this cone or stone layer was removed there was found inside another stone layer of similar shape but with a brilliant gold coating and this was more representative of a pagoda in shape while its exquisite workmanship and brilliance inspired feelings of deep religious fervour in the crowd present. Some mud had penetrated even here and the sides of the base were covered with this and when it was washed and sifted precious stones and gold and jewellery were discovered round the base. This second stone casket was then removed and inside was found a small pagoda of pure gold standing on a silver salver or base and beside this golden pagoda was a carved stone image 4 1/2 ins. high of very ancient workmanship.

When the gold Pagoda was lifted up, a tiny gold cylinder of 3/4 ins. length with a diameter of 5/12 ins. was found and in this tiny cylinder were found two small body relics each the size of a mustard seed and a Sacred Hair of the Buddha. This hair was coiled round and fastened with a little acquer on which were traces of gold plaster.

The New Pagoda

The Sacred Body Relics and the Sacred Hair of the Buddha with all the images and other precious objects recovered from the ruins of the Pagoda have been temporarily stored in a shelter near the site of the Pagoda. Meanwhile the building of a new pagoda goes on apace. There had been a good deal of encroachment on the ancient Pagoda lands when Burma was taken by the British and these lands have been restored as glebe lands by the Government of the Union of Burma and the Pagoda site is now restored to 6 1/2 acres. The new pagoda is of original design and in height 131 ft. 8 ins, on a base of 96 ft. x 96 ft. The pagoda is of reinforced concrete and is to be gilded and observers from abroad opine that this pagoda is a happy blend of the ancient and of the ultra-modern and a really wonderful piece of architecture. The date of completion and crowning is yet to be determined but it will be before that great forthcoming event in Buddhist history, the Sixth Great Buddhist Council which will be held in Burma from 1954.

Unlike many of the older shrines, the Pagoda is not a solid core but has a huge internal cavity and worshippers may enter.

Strength has not been sacrificed in the construction and the internal design is such that the odd nooks and corners, inseparable from an edifice of this shape, are being made the most of for artificial lighting and for guarded show cases in which to display the relics for public veneration. There is a well in the centre of the pagoda where was the ancient treasure chamber and this is to be kept open. An altar is to be erected in this well where the relics will rest so that they may be taken out on special occasions for worship.

The Botataung Pagoda is symbolic of the vitality and energy exhibited in the great Buddhist revival. Here from the ruins of the old culture is being salvaged all that was best of the ancient wisdom and displayed in modern manner to a modern world.

Buddhism in Myanmar

Buddhism in Myanmar

A Short History

by

Roger Bischoff

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Preface

Myanmar, or Burma as the nation has been known throughout history, is one of the major countries following Theravada Buddhism. In recent years

Myanmar has attained special eminence as the host for the Sixth Buddhist Council, held in Yangon (Rangoon) between 1954 and 1956, and as the source from which two of the major systems of Vipassana meditation have emanated out into the greater world: the tradition springing from the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw of Thathana Yeiktha and that springing from Sayagyi U Ba Khin of the International Meditation Centre.

This booklet is intended to offer a short history of Buddhism in Myanmar from its origins through the country's loss of independence to Great Britain in the late nineteenth century. I have not dealt with more recent history as this has already been well documented. To write an account of the development of a religion in any country is a delicate and demanding undertaking and one will never be quite satisfied with the result. This booklet does not pretend to be an academic work shedding new light on the subject. It is designed, rather, to provide the interested non-academic reader with a brief overview of the subject.

The booklet has been written for the Buddhist Publication Society to complete its series of Wheel titles on the history of the Sasana in the main Theravada Buddhist countries. The material has been sifted and organised from the point of view of a practicing Buddhist. Inevitably it thus involves some degree of personal interpretation. I have given importance to sources that would be accorded much less weight in a strictly academic treatment of the subject, as I feel that in this case the oral tradition may well be more reliable than modern historians would normally admit.

One of the objectives of the narrative is to show that the Buddha's Teaching did not make a lasting impression on Myanmar immediately upon first arrival. The Sasana had to be re-introduced or purified again and again from the outside until Myanmar had matured to the point of becoming one of the main shrines where the Theravada Buddhist teachings are preserved. The religion did not develop in Myanmar. Rather, the Myanmar people developed through the religion until the Theravada faith became embedded in their culture and Pali Buddhism became second nature to them.

I dedicate this work to my teachers, Mother Sayamagyi and Sayagyi U Chit Tin.
Roger Bischoff

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1. Earliest Contacts with Buddhism

Myanmar and its Peoples

There are four dominant ethnic groups in the recorded history of Myanmar: the Mon, the Pyu, the Myanmar, and the Shan.

Uncertainty surrounds the origins of the Mon; but it is clear that, at least linguistically, they are related to the Khmer.¹ What is known is that they settled in the south of Myanmar and Thailand while the Khmer made northern Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia their home. These two peoples were probably the first migrants to the region, apart from Indian merchants who established trading colonies along the coast. The Mon with their distinct language and culture competed for centuries with the Myanmar. However, today their influence and language is limited to remote areas of the south.

The Pyu, like the Myanmar, are a people of Tibeto-Burman origin with a distinct culture and language. They lived in the area around Prome long before the Myanmar pushed into the plains of Myanmar from the north. Their language was closely related to the language of the Myanmar and was later absorbed by it. Their script was in use until about the fourteenth century, but was then lost.

The Myanmar people began to colonise the plains of Myanmar only towards the middle of the first millennium AD. They came from the mountainous northern regions and may well have originated in the Central Asian plains.

After the Myanmar, the Shan flooded in from the North, finally conquering the entire region of Myanmar and Thailand. The Thai people are descended from Shan tribes. The northeast region of modern Myanmar is still inhabited predominantly by Shan tribes.

The Region

In the sixth century BC, most of what we now know as Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia was sparsely populated. While migrants from the east coast of India had formed trading colonies along the coast of the Gulf of Martaban, these coastal areas of Myanmar and Thailand were also home to

the Mon. By this time, the Khmer probably controlled Laos, Cambodia, and northern Thailand, while Upper Myanmar may already have been occupied to some extent by Myanmar tribes.

As these early settlers did not use lasting materials for construction, our knowledge of their civilisation remains scant. We do know, however, that their way of life was very simple — as it remains today in rural areas — probably requiring only wooden huts with palm-leaf roofs for habitation. We can assume that they were not organised into units larger than village communities and that they did not possess a written language. Their religion must have been some form of nature worship or animism, still found today among the more remote tribes of the region.

There were also more highly developed communities of Indian origin, in the form of trading settlements located along the entire coast from Bengal to Borneo. In Myanmar, they were located in Thaton (Suddhammapura), Pegu (Ussa), Yangon (Ukkala, then still on the coast), and Mrauk-U (Dhannavati) in Arakan; also probably along the Tenasserim and Arakan coasts. These settlers had mainly migrated from Orissa on the northeastern coast of the Indian subcontinent, and also from the Deccan in the southeast. In migrating to these areas, they had also brought their own culture and religion with them. Initially, the contact between the Hindu traders and the Mon peasants must have been limited. However, the Indian settlements, their culture and traditions, were eventually absorbed into the Mon culture.

G.E. Harvey, in his *History of Burma*, relates a Mon legend which refers to the Mon fighting Hindu strangers who had come back to re-conquer the country that had formerly belonged to them.² This Mon tale confirms the theory that Indian people had formed the first communities in the region but that these were eventually replaced by the Mon with the development of their own civilisation. As well as the Indian trading settlements, there were also some Pyu settlements, particularly in the area of Prome where a flourishing civilisation later developed.

Also, it is assumed that some degree of migration from India to the region of Tagaung and Mogok in Upper Myanmar had taken place through Assam and later through Manipur, but the "hinterland" was of course much less attractive to traders than the coastal regions with their easy access by sea. A tradition of Myanmar says that Tagaung was founded by Abhiraja, a prince of the Sakyans (the tribe of the Buddha), who had migrated to Upper Myanmar from Nepal in the ninth century BC. The city was subsequently conquered by the Chinese in approximately 600 BC, and Pagan and Prome were founded by

refugees fleeing southward. In fact, some historians believe that, like the Myanmar, the Sakyans were a Mongolian rather than an Indo-Aryan race, and that the Buddha's clansmen were derived from Mongolian stock.

First Contacts with the Buddha's Teachings

The source of information for many of the events related forthwith is the *Sasanavamsa*.³ The *Sasanavamsa* is a chronicle written in Pali by a bhikkhu,⁴ Pannasami, for the Fifth Buddhist Council held in Mandalay in 1867. As the *Sasanavamsa* is a recent compilation, many events mentioned therein may be doubted. However, as it draws on both written records, some of which are no longer available, and on the oral tradition of Myanmar, information can be included in this account with the understanding that it is open to verification.

There are many instances in the history of Southeast Asian tribes in which a conquering people incorporates into its own traditions not only the civilisation of the conquered, but also their clan gods, royal lineage, and thereby their history. This fact would explain the visits of the Buddha to Thaton and Shwesettaw in the Mon and Myanmar oral tradition, and the belief of the Arakanese that the Buddha visited their king and left behind an image of himself for them to worship. Modern historiography will, of course, dismiss these stories as fabrications made out of national pride, as the Myanmar had not even arrived in the region at the time of the Buddha. However, it is possible that the Myanmar and Arakanese integrated into their own lore the oral historical tradition of their Indian predecessors. This does not prove that the visits really took place, but it seems a more palatable explanation of the existence of these accounts than simply putting them down to historical afterthought of a Buddhist people eager to connect itself with the origins of their religion.

The *Sasanavamsa* mentions several visits of the Buddha to Myanmar and one other important event: the arrival of the hair relics in Ukkala (Yangon) soon after the Buddha's enlightenment.

The Arrival of the Hair Relics

Tapussa and Bhallika, two merchants from Ukkala,⁵ were traveling through the region of Uruvela and were directed to the Buddha by their family god. The Buddha had just come out of seven weeks of meditation after his awakening and was sitting under a tree feeling the need for food. Tapussa and Bhallika made an offering of rice cake and honey to the Buddha and took

the two refuges, the refuge in the Buddha and the refuge in the Dhamma (the Sangha, the third refuge, did not exist yet). As they were about to depart, they asked the Buddha for an object to worship in his stead and he gave them eight hairs from his head. After the two returned from their journey, they enshrined the three hairs in a stupa which is now the great Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon.

It is believed in Myanmar that the hill upon which the Shwedagon Pagoda stands was not haphazardly chosen by Tapussa and Bhallika but was, in fact, the site where the three Buddhas preceding the Buddha Gotama in this world cycle themselves deposited relics. Buddha Kakusandha is said to have left his staff on the Theinguttara Hill, the Buddha Konagamana his water filter, and Buddha Kassapa a part of his robe. Because of this, the Buddha requested Tapussa and Bhallika to enshrine his relics in this location. Tapussa and Bhallika traveled far and wide in order to find the hill on which they could balance a tree without its touching the ground either with the roots or with the crown. Eventually, they found the exact spot not far from their home in Lower Myanmar where they enshrined the holy relics in a traditional mound or stupa.⁶ The original stupa is said to have been 27 feet high. Today the Shwedagon pagoda has grown to over 370 feet.

The Buddha's Visits to the Region

The Myanmar oral tradition speaks of four visits of the Buddha to the region. While these visits were of utmost significance in their own right, they are also important in having established places of pilgrimage up to the present day.

The Visit to Central Myanmar

According to the *Sasanavamsa*, the city of Aparanta is situated on the western shore of the Irrawaddy river at the latitude of Magwe. The *Sasanavamsa* gives only a very brief summary of the events surrounding the Buddha's visit to Aparanta, presumably because these were well known and could be read in the Tipitaka and the commentaries.⁷

Punna, a merchant from Sunaparanta, went to Savatthi on business and there heard a discourse of the Buddha.⁸ Having won faith in the Buddha and the Teachings, he took ordination as a bhikkhu. After sometime, he asked the Buddha to teach him a short lesson so that he could return to Sunaparanta and strive for arahatship. The Buddha warned him that the people of Sunaparanta were fierce and violent, but Punna replied that he would not

allow anger to arise, even if they should kill him. In the Punnovada Sutta, the Buddha instructed him not to be enticed by that which is pleasant, and Punna returned and attained arahatship in his country. He won over many disciples and built a monastery of red sandalwood for the Buddha (according to some chronicles of Myanmar, the Buddha made the prediction that at the location where the red sandalwood monastery was, the great king Alaungsithu of Pagan would build a shrine). He then sent flowers as an invitation to the Buddha and the Buddha came accompanied by five hundred arahats, spent the night in the monastery, and left again before dawn.⁹

Sakka, the king of the thirty-three devas living in the Tavatimsa plane, provided five hundred palanquins for the bhikkhus accompanying the Buddha on the journey to Sunaparanta. But only 499 of the palanquins were occupied. One of them remained empty until the ascetic Saccabandha, who lived on the Saccabandha mountain in central Myanmar, joined the Buddha and the 499 bhikkhus accompanying him. On the way to Sunaparanta, the Buddha stopped in order to teach the ascetic Saccabandha. When Saccabandha attained arahatship, he then joined the Buddha and completed the total of 500 bhikkhus who usually traveled with the Master.

On the return journey, the Buddha stopped at the river Nammada close to the Saccabandha mountain. Here, the Blessed One was invited by the Naga king, Nammada, to visit and preach to the Nagas, later accepting food from them. The tradition of Myanmar relates that he left behind a footprint for veneration near this river, which would last as long as the Sasana (i.e. 5000 years). Another footprint was left in the rock of the Saccabandha mountain.¹⁰ These footprints, still visible today, were worshipped by the Mon, Pyu, and Myanmar kings alike and have remained among the holiest places of pilgrimage in Myanmar. In the fifteenth century, after the decimation of the population through the Siamese campaigns, knowledge of the footprints was lost. Then, in the year 1638, King Thalun sent learned bhikkhus to the region; fortuitously, they were able to relocate the Buddha's footprints. Since then Shwesettaw, the place where the footprints are found, has once again become an important place of pilgrimage in Myanmar. And in the dry season thousands of devout Buddhists travel there to pay respects.

The Visit to Arakan

In Dhannavati, whose walls are still partially visible today, the Mahamuni temple is located on the Sirigutta hill. In this temple, for over two millennia, the Mahamuni image was enshrined and worshipped. The story of the Mahamuni

image, at one time one of the most revered shrines of Buddhism, is told in the *Sappadanapakarana*, a work of a local historian.

Candrasuriya, the king of Dhannavati, on hearing that a Buddha had arisen in India, desired to go there to learn the Dhamma. The Buddha, aware of his intention, said to Ananda: "The king will have to pass through forests dangerous to travelers; wide rivers will impede his journey; he must cross a sea full of monsters. It will be an act of charity if we go to his dominion, so that he may pay homage without risking his life."

So the Buddha went there and was received with great pomp by King Candrasuriya and his people. The Buddha then taught the five and eight precepts and instructed the king in the ten kingly duties, namely, (1) universal beneficence, (2) daily paying homage, (3) the showing of mercy, (4) taxes of not more than a tenth part of the produce, (5) justice, (6) punishment without anger, (7) the support of his subjects as the earth supports them, (8) the employment of prudent commanders, (9) the taking of good counsel, and (10) the avoidance of pride. The Buddha remained for a week and on preparing for his departure the king requested that he leave an image of himself, so that they could worship him even in his absence. The Buddha consented to this and Sakka the king of the gods himself formed the image with the metals collected by the king and his people. It was completed in one week and when the Buddha breathed onto it the people exclaimed that now there were indeed two Buddhas, so alike was the image to the great sage. Then the Buddha made a prophesy addressing the image: "I shall pass into Nibbana in my eightieth year, but you will live for five thousand years which I have foreseen as the duration of my Teaching."

The Mahamuni image remained in its original location until 1784 when King Bodawpaya conquered Arakan and had the image transported to Mandalay where a special shrine, the Arakan pagoda, was built to enshrine the three-meter image. To have this image in his capital greatly added to his prestige as a Buddhist king, as it was one of the most sacred objects in the region. The king himself went out of his city to meet the approaching image with great devotion and "through the long colonnades leading to the pagoda, there used to come daily from the Myanmar palace, so long as a king reigned there, sumptuous offerings borne in stately procession, marshalled by a minister and shaded by the white umbrella."¹¹

The Missionaries of the Third Buddhist Council

The Third Buddhist Council was held in the reign of Emperor Asoka in the year 232 BC in order to purify the Sangha, to reassert orthodox teaching and to refute heresy. But the work of the Council did not stop there. With the support of Emperor Asoka, experienced teachers were sent to border regions in order to spread the teachings of the Buddha. This dispersal of missionaries is recorded in the *Mahavamsa*, a Sinhalese chronicle on the history of Buddhism:

When the thera Moggaliputta, the illuminator of the religion of the Conqueror, had brought the (third) council to an end and when, looking into the future, he had beheld the founding of the religion in adjacent countries, then in the month of Katthika he sent forth theras, one here and one there. The thera Majjhantika he sent to Kasmira and Gandhara, the thera Mahadeva he sent to Mahisamandala. To Vanavasa he sent the thera named Rakkhita, and to Aparantaka the Yona named Dhammarakkhita; to Maharattha he sent the thera named Mahadhammarakkhita, but the thera Maharakkhita he sent into the country of the Yona. He sent the thera Majjhima to the Himalaya country and together with the thera Uttara, the thera Sona of wondrous might went to Suvannabhumi...¹²

According to the *Sasanavamsa*, the above mentioned regions are the following: Kasmira and Gandhara is the right bank of the Indus river south of Kabul; Mahisamandala is Andhra; Vanavasa is the region around Prome; Aparantaka is west of the upper Irrawaddy; Maharattha is Thailand; Yona, the country of the Shan tribes; and Suvannabhumi is Thaton. The *Sasanavamsa* mentions five places in Southeast Asia where Asoka's missionaries taught the Buddha's doctrine, and through their teaching many gained insight and took refuge in the Triple Gem. There are two interesting features mentioned in the text. First, in order to ordain nuns, bhikkhunis, other bhikkhunis had to be present, and secondly, the Brahmajala Sutta was preached in Thaton.

The *Sasanavamsa* goes on to describe sixty thousand women ordaining in Aparanta. It states that women could not have been ordained without the presence of bhikkhunis, as in Sri Lanka where women could only be ordained after Mahinda's sister Sanghamitta had followed her brother there. In this case, the author surmises that bhikkhunis must have followed Dhammarakkhita to Aparanta at a later stage.

The Brahmajala Sutta, which the arahats Sona and Uttara preached in Thaton, deals in detail with the different schools of philosophical and religious thought prevalent in India at the time of the Buddha. The fact that Sona and Uttara chose this Sutta to convert the inhabitants of Suvannabhumi indicates that they were facing a well-informed public, familiar with the views of Brahmanism that were refuted by the Buddha in this discourse. There can be no doubt that only Indian colonisers, not the Mon, would have been able to follow an analysis of Indian philosophy as profound as the Brahmajala Sutta.

2. Buddhism in the Mon and Pyu Kingdoms 🏰

While there is no conclusive archaeological proof that Buddhism continued to be practiced in southern Myanmar after the missions of the Third Council, the *Sasanavamsa* refers to an unbroken lineage of teachers passing on the Dhamma to their disciples.

The Mon

In a third century AD inscription by a South Indian king in Nagarjunakonda, the land of the Cilatas is mentioned in a list of countries visited by a group of bhikkhus. Historians believe the Cilatas or Kiratas (also mentioned by Ptolemy and in Sanskrit literature) to be identical to the Mon populations of Lower Myanmar.

The inscription states that the bhikkhus sent to the Cilata country converted the population there to Buddhism. In the same inscription, missions to other countries such as Sri Lanka are mentioned. It is generally believed that most of these countries had received earlier Buddhist missionaries sent by Buddhist kings, but as civilisation in these lands was relatively undeveloped, teachings as profound as the Buddha's had probably become distorted by local religions or possibly been completely lost. It is possible that these missions did not so much re-establish Buddhism, but rather purify the type of Buddhism practiced there. Southern India was then the guardian of the Theravada faith and obviously remained in contact with countries that had been converted in earlier times but were unable to preserve the purity of the religion.

As has been already mentioned, the first datable archaeological finds of the Mon civilisation stem from the Mon kingdom of Dvaravati in the South of Thailand. They consist of a Roman oil lamp and a bronze statue of the

Buddha which are believed to be no later than the first or second century AD. In discussing the Mon Theravada Buddhist civilisation, we cannot remain in Myanmar only. For only by studying the entire sphere of influence of the Mon in this period, can a comprehensive picture be constructed. This sphere includes large parts of present day Thailand. In fact, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Yuan Chwang, who traveled to India in about 630 AD, describes a single Mon country stretching from Prome to Chenla in the east and including the Irrawaddy and Sittang deltas. He calls the country Dvaravati, but the annals of the court of China of the same period mention Dvaravati as a vassal of Thaton. We can, therefore, safely conclude that the Mon of the region formed a fairly homogenous group in which the distribution of power was obviously not always evident to the outsider.

The Pyu

Lower Myanmar was also inhabited by another ethnic group, the Pyu, who were probably closely related to the modern Myanmar. They had their capital at Sri Ksetra (near modern day Prome) and were also followers of the Theravada Buddhist faith. Chinese travelers' reports of the mid-third century AD refer to the kingdom of Lin-Yang where Buddha was venerated by all and where several thousand monks or bhikkhus lived. As Lin-Yang was to the west of Kamboja¹³ and could not be reached by sea, we can infer that the Chinese travelers must have been referring to the ancient kingdom of Prome. This is all the more likely as archaeological finds prove that only about one century later Pali Buddhist texts, including Abhidhamma texts, were studied by the Pyu.

The earliest highly developed urban settlement of the Pyu was Beikthano, near Prome. However, its importance dwindled towards the sixth century, when Sri Ksetra became the center of Pyu civilisation. A major monastery built in the fourth century has been unearthed at Beikthano. The building, constructed in brick, with a stupa and shrine located nearby, is identical to the Buddhist monasteries of Nagarjunakonda, the great Buddhist center of southern India. It is situated near a stupa and a shrine, a design which is identical to the one used in South India. Bricks had been used by the Pyus since the second century AD for the construction of pillared halls, which formed the temples of their original religion. Interestingly, the Pyu bricks have always been of the exact dimensions as those used at the time of Emperor Asoka in India. But the brick laying techniques used in the monastery in Beikthano were far inferior to the ones used in their southern Indian counterparts.

For such a major edifice as the monastery at Beikthano to have been constructed, the religion must have been well established at least among the ruling class. How long it took for Buddhism to become influential in Pyu society is difficult to determine, but some historians assume that the first contacts with Asokan religious centers in India took place in the second century AD. This would allow for a period of development of two hundred years until the first important shrine was built. Despite the Indian architectural influence, the inferior brick laying techniques found in Beikthano indicate that indigenous architects and artisans, rather than imported craftsmen or Indian colonisers, were employed in the construction of monasteries and other important buildings.

It should, of course, not be forgotten that the Pyu possessed an architecture of their own and a highly developed urban culture that had evolved quite independently of Indian influences. Theravada Buddhism found a fertile ground in this highly developed civilisation. It is probable that the Pyu civilisation was more advanced than that of the Mon. The Pyu sites found around Prome are the earliest urban sites in Southeast Asia found to date. The urban developments and datable monuments in Thailand and Cambodia are only from the seventh century. Older artifacts may have been found in Thailand, but they were not products of indigenous people and do not prove the existence of a developed civilisation.

The information we have of the state of the religion in the Mon and Pyu societies during the first four centuries AD is very limited. However, by the fifth century, with the development of religious activity in the region, information becomes more substantive. The historical tradition of Myanmar gives the credit for this religious resurgence to a well-known Buddhist scholar, Acariya Buddhaghosa.

Buddhaghosa and Myanmar

Acariya Buddhaghosa was the greatest commentator on the Pali Buddhist texts, whose *Visuddhimagga* and commentaries to the canon are regarded as authoritative by Theravada scholars. The chronicles of Myanmar firmly maintain that Buddhaghosa was of Mon origin and a native of Thaton. They state that his return from Sri Lanka, with the Pali scriptures, the commentaries, and grammatical works, gave a fresh impetus to the religion. However, modern historians do not accept that Buddhaghosa was from Myanmar while some even doubt his existence.¹⁴ Despite this contention,

Eliot, in his *Hinduism and Buddhism*, gives more weight to circumstantial evidence and writes:

The Burmese tradition that Buddhaghosa was a native of Thaton and returned thither from Sri Lanka merits more attention than it has received. It can easily be explained away as patriotic fancy. On the other hand, if Buddhaghosa's object was to invigorate Hinayanism in India the result of his really stupendous labors was singularly small, for in India his name is connected with no religious movement. But if we suppose that he went to Sri Lanka by way of the holy places in Magadha [now Bihar] and returned from the Coromandal coast [Madras] to Burma where Hinayanism afterwards flourished, we have at least a coherent narrative.¹⁵

The Sinhalese chronicles, especially the *Mahavamsa*, place Buddhaghosa in the first half of the fifth century. Although he spent most of his active working life in Sri Lanka, he is also credited with imbuing new life into Theravada Buddhism in South India, and developing such important centers as Kancipura and Uragapuram that were closely connected with Prome and Thaton. Proof of this connection can be found in archeological finds in the environs of Prome which include Pali literature inscribed in the Kadambe script on gold and stone plates. This script was used in the fifth and sixth century in southern India.

All in all, Myanmar has a valid case for claiming some connection with Buddhaghosa. It is, of course, impossible to prove that he was born there or even visited there, but his influence undoubtedly led to great religious activity in the kingdoms of Lower Myanmar.

Buddhism in Lower Myanmar: 5th to 11th Centuries

From the fifth century until the conquest of Lower Myanmar by Pagan, there is a continuous record of Buddhism flourishing in the Mon and Pyu kingdoms. The Mon kingdoms are mentioned in travel reports of several Chinese Buddhist pilgrims and also in the annals of the Chinese court. In the fifth century, Thaton and Pegu (Pago) are mentioned in the Buddhist commentarial literature for the first time.¹⁶ They were now firmly established on the map as Buddhist centers of learning. Despite this, Buddhism was not without rivals in the region. This is shown, by the following event some chronicles of Myanmar mention.

A king of Pago, Tissa by name, had abandoned the worship of the Buddha and instead practiced Brahmanical worship. He persecuted the Buddhists and destroyed Buddha images or cast them into ditches. A pious Buddhist girl, the daughter of a merchant, restored the images, then washed and worshipped them. The king could not tolerate such defiance, of course, and had the girl dragged before him. He tried to have her executed in several ways, but she seemed impossible to kill. Elephants would not trample her, while the fire of her pyre would not burn her. Eventually the king, intrigued by these events, asked the girl to perform a miracle. He stated that, if she was able to make a Buddha image produce seven new images and then make all eight statues fly into heaven, she would be set free. The girl spoke an act of truth, and the eight Buddha statues flew up into the sky. The king was then converted to Buddhism and elevated the girl to the position of chief queen.

Until now, archaeological finds of Mon ruins in Myanmar are meager, but at P'ong Tuk, in southern Thailand,¹⁷ a Mon city, dating from the second half of the first millennium AD, has been unearthed. Here, excavations have revealed the foundations of several buildings. One contained the remains of a platform and fragments of columns similar to the Buddhist vihara at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka; another, with a square foundation of round stones, seems to have been a stupa. Statues of Indian origin from the Gupta period (320-600 AD) were also found at the site. The Theravada Buddhist culture of the Mon flourished in both Dvaravati and Thaton. However, the Mon civilisation in Thailand did not survive the onslaught of the Khmer in the eleventh century who were worshipping Hindu gods. In Myanmar, the Mon kingdom was conquered by Pagan. The Myanmar were eager to accept the Mon culture and especially their religion, while the Khmer, as Hindus, at best tolerated it.

The Pyu culture of this period is well documented because of archaeological finds at Muanggan, a small village close to the ancient ruins of Hmawza. There two perfectly preserved inscribed gold plates were found. These inscriptions reveal three texts: the verses spoken by Assaji to Sariputta (*ye dhamma hetuppabhava...*), a list of categories of the Abhidhamma (*cattaro iddhipada, cattaro samappadhana...*), and the formula of worship of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha (*iti pi so bhagava...*). At the same site, a book with twenty leaves of gold protected with golden covers, was discovered. It contained texts such as the *paticca-samuppada* (dependent origination), the *vipassana-nanas* (stages of insight knowledge), and various other excerpts from the Abhidhamma and the other two baskets of the Buddhist scriptures. The scripts in all these documents are identical to scripts used in parts of southern India, and can be dated from the third to the sixth century AD.

In addition to these golden plates, a number of sculptures and reliefs were found in Hmawza. They depict either the Buddha or scenes from his life, for example, the birth of the Buddha and the taming of the wild elephant Nalagiri. The sculpture is similar in style to that of Amaravati, a center of Buddhist learning in South India. There were also unearthed remains of Brahman temples and sites of Mahayana worship of east Indian origin; hence it would appear that several faiths, of which the Theravada was the strongest, co-existed in Sri Ksetra, the then capital of the Pyu. The script used by the Pyu is indicative of major links with Buddhist kingdoms in South India rather than with Sri Lanka. And it can be surmised that the bhikkhus of the Deccan and other regions of southern India were the teachers of both the Mon and the Pyu in religious matters as well as in the arts and sciences.

The inscriptions show how highly developed scholarship of the Pali Buddhist texts must have been in Lower Myanmar even in these early days. Learning had gone well beyond the basics into the world of Abhidhamma studies. Pali was obviously well known as a language of learning, but unfortunately no original texts composed in Sri Ksetra or Thaton have come down to us. Interestingly, some of the texts inscribed on these gold plates are not identical to the same canonical texts as they are known today. Therefore, the Tipitaka known to the Pyu must have been replaced by a version preserved in a country that had no close contact with the Pyu. This could well have been Sri Lanka, as this country came to play an important role in the history of Buddhism in Myanmar through the friendship between the conqueror of Lower Myanmar, Anawratha, and the king who drove the Hindus from Sri Lanka, Vijayabahu.

The finds on the site of the ancient Pyu capital confirm the reports of the Chinese pilgrims and also the Tang imperial chronicles of China which state: "They (the Pyu) dislike taking life. They know how to make astronomical calculations. They are Buddhists and have a hundred monasteries, with brick of glass embellished with gold and silver vermilion, gay colours and red kino... At seven years of age the people cut their hair and enter a monastery; if at the age of twenty they have not grasped the doctrine they return to the lay state."¹⁸

Both Buddhist cultures in the south of Myanmar, the Mon and the Pyu, were swept away in the eleventh century by armies of the Myanmar who had found a unifying force in their leader, the founder of Pagan and champion of Buddhism, Anawratha.

3. Theravada Buddhism Comes to Pagan

The Beginnings of Pagan

Pagan is believed to have been founded in the years 849-850 AD, by the Myanmar, who had already established themselves as rice growers in the region around Kyauksai near Mandalay. Anawratha began to unite the region by subjugating one chieftain after another and was successful in giving the Myanmar a sense of belonging to a larger community, a nation. The crucial event in the history of Myanmar is not so much the founding of the city of Pagan and the building of its walls and moat, but more Pagan's acceptance of Theravada Buddhism in the eleventh century. The religion was brought to the Myanmar by a Mon bhikkhu named Shin Arahan.

The religion prevailing among the Myanmar before and during the early reign of Anawratha was some form of Mahayana Buddhism, which had probably found its way into the region from the Pala kingdom in Bengal. This is apparent from bronze statues depicting Bodhisattas and especially the "Lokanatha," a Bodhisatta believed, in Bengal, to reign in the period between the demise of the Buddha Gotama and the advent of the Buddha Metteyya. Anawratha continued to cast terracotta votive tablets with the image of Lokanatha even after he embraced the Theravada doctrine.¹⁹

In India, Buddhism had split into numerous schools, some of which differed fundamentally from the teachings of Pali Buddhism, which is also called Theravada Buddhism (the doctrine of the Theras). The Ari, the monks or priests of this Mahayana Buddhist form of worship, are described, in later chronicles of Myanmar, as the most shameless bogus ascetics imaginable. They are said to have sold absolution from sin and to have oppressed the people in various ways with their tyranny. Their tantric Buddhism included, as an important element, the worship of Nagas (dragons), which was probably an ancient indigenous tradition.

At this time, the beginning of the eleventh century, the Buddhist religion among the Mon in Suvannabhumi was on the decline as people were disturbed by robbers and raiders, by plagues, and by adversaries of the religion. These most probably came from the Hindu Khmer kingdom in Cambodia and the north of Thailand. The Khmer were endeavoring to add Thaton and the other Mon kingdoms of the south to their expanding empire. Shin Arahan must have feared that bhikkhus would not be able to continue to maintain their religious practice and the study of the scriptures under these

circumstances. He went, therefore, upcountry where a new, strong people were developing, prosperous and secure from enemies.

It is interesting to note that in this same period, Buddhism was under attack in other places as well. The Colas, a Hindu dynasty strongly opposed to Buddhism, arose in southern India, one of the last strongholds of Theravada Buddhism. They were able to expand their rule to include most of Sri Lanka between 1017 and 1070. The great Mon city, Dvaravati, a Theravada center in southern Thailand, fell to the Khmer, the masters of the whole of Thailand, who were Shaivaite Hindus. In the north of India, Muslim armies were trying to destroy what little was left of Buddhism there. "In this perilous period," writes Professor Luce, "Buddhism was saved only by such valiant fighters as Vijayabahu in Sri Lanka and Anawratha."²⁰

Shin Arahan Converts the King

Shin Arahan arrived in the vicinity of Pagan and was discovered in his forest dwelling by a hunter. The hunter, who had never before seen such a strange creature with a shaven head and a yellow robe, thought he was some kind of spirit and took him to the king, Anawratha. Shin Arahan naturally sat down on the throne, as it was the highest seat, and the king thought: "This man is peaceful, in this man there is the essential thing. He is sitting down on the best seat, surely he must be the best being." The king asked the visitor to tell him where he came from and was told that he came from the place where the Order lived and that the Buddha was his teacher. Then Shin Arahan gave the king the teaching on mindfulness (*appamada*), teaching him the same doctrine Nigrodha had given Emperor Asoka when he was converted. Shin Arahan then told the monarch that the Buddha had passed into Parinibbana, but that his teaching, the Dhamma, enshrined in the Tipitaka, and the twofold Sangha consisting of those who possessed absolute knowledge and those who possessed conventional knowledge, remained.

The king must have felt that he had found what had been missing in his life and a genuine alternative to the superficial teachings of the Ari monks. He built a monastery for Shin Arahan, and according to some sources, stopped all worship of the Ari monks. Tradition has it that he had them dressed in white and even forced them to serve as soldiers in his army. The Ari tradition continued for a long time, however, and its condemnation is a feature of much later times, and not, as far as contemporary evidence shows, of the Pagan era.

The *Sasanavamsa* gives an alternate version of Anawratha's conversion according to which Shin Arahān had originally come from Sri Lanka to study the Dhamma in Dvaravati and Thaton and was on his way to Sri Ksetra in search of a text when he was taken to Anawratha by a hunter. The king asked him, "Who are you?" — "O King, I am a disciple of Gotama." — "Of what kind are the Three Jewels?" — "O King, the Buddha should be regarded as Mahosadha the wise, his doctrine as Ummagga, his order as the Videhan army."²¹

This version is interesting in that Anawratha is portrayed as being a Buddhist with knowledge of Jataka stories, such as the Mahosadha Jataka referred to above, even before meeting Shin Arahān. This assumption that he was no stranger to Buddhism is supported by the fact that earlier kings had been followers of Buddhism in varying degrees. Caw Rahan, who died about 94 years before Anawratha's accession, is said to have built a Sima and five Pagodas, and Kyaung Pyu Min built the white monastery outside Pagan. Kyaung Pyu Min is believed to have been Anawratha's father.

Anawratha Acquires the Scriptures

Through Shin Arahān, Anawratha had now found the religion he had been yearning for and he decided to set out and procure the scriptures and holy relics of this religion. For he wished his kingdom to be secured on the original teachings of the Buddha. He tried to find the scriptures and relics of his new religion in different quarters. In his enthusiasm he did not limit his quest to Thaton, but also searched among the Khmer in Angkor, and in Tali, the capital of the Nanchao, a kingdom in modern day Yunnan, in China, where a tooth of the Buddha was enshrined. But everywhere he was refused. He then went to Thaton, where his teacher Shin Arahān had come from, to request a copy of the scriptures. According to the tradition of Myanmar, Anawratha's request was refused, and unable to endure another refusal he set out with his army in the year 1057 to conquer Thaton and acquire the Tipitaka by force. Before conquering Thaton, however, he had to subjugate Sri Ksetra, the Pyu capital. From there, he took the relics enshrined in King Dwattabaung's Bawbaw-gyi Pagoda to Pagan.

Some think that the aim of his campaign was mainly to add the prosperous Indian colonies of Lower Myanmar to his possessions, while others think he may have actually been called to Thaton to defend it against the marauding Khmer. Whatever the immediate cause of his campaign in the lower country, we know for certain that he returned with the king of Thaton and his court,

with Mon artists and scholars and, above all, with Thaton's bhikkhus and their holy books, the Tipitaka. Suvannabhumi and its Mon population were now in the hands of the Myanmar and the Mon culture and religion were accepted and assimilated in the emergent Pagan with fervor.

Initially the fervor must have been restricted to the king and possibly his immediate entourage, yet even they continued to propitiate their traditional gods for worldly gain as the new religion was considered a higher practice. Theravada Buddhism does not provide much in the way of rites and rituals, but a royal court cannot do without them. So the traditional propitiation of the Nagas continued to be used for court ceremonials and remained part of the popular religion, while the bhikkhus were accorded the greatest respect and their master, the Buddha Gotama, was honored with the erection of pagodas and shrines.

There were contacts between the new kings of Myanmar and Sri Lanka that are recorded not only in the chronicles of the two countries but also in stone inscriptions in South India.²² As the Hindu Colas had ruled Sri Lanka for more than half a century, Buddhism had been weakened and King Vijayabahu, who had driven out the Vaishnavite Colas, wanted to re-establish his religion. So in 1070, he requested King Anawratha of Myanmar, who had assisted him financially in his war against the Colas, to send bhikkhus to re-introduce the pure ordination into his country.²³ It is interesting to note that the *Culavamsa* refers to Anawratha as the king of Ramanna, which was Lower Myanmar, also called Suvannabhumi. He was approached as the conqueror and master of Thaton, a respected Theravada center, rather than as the king of Pagan, a new and unknown country. The bhikkhus who traveled to Sri Lanka brought the Sinhalese Tipitaka back with them and established a link between the two countries which was to last for centuries.

Anawratha is mentioned in the Myanmar, Mon, Khmer, Thai, and Sinhalese chronicles as a great champion of Buddhism because he developed Pagan into a major regional power and laid the foundation for its glory. He did not, however, build many of the temples for which Pagan is now so famous as the great age of temple building started only after his reign. It is important to realize that his interest was not restricted only to Pagan. He built pagodas wherever his campaigns took him and adorned them with illustrations from the Jatakas and the life of the Buddha. Some maintain that he used only Jatakas as themes for the adornment of his religious buildings because that was all he possessed of the Tipitaka. Such a conclusion is negative and quite superficial. After all, during Asoka's time Jatakas and scenes from the life of the Buddha were used for illustrations in Bharut and Sanchi, the great stupas near

Bombay. We cannot therefore deduce that the builders of Bharut and Sanchi were acquainted only with the Jatakas. These edifying stories which teach the fundamentals of Buddhism so skillfully are singularly suited to educate an illiterate people beset by superstitions through the vivid visual means of the stone reliefs depicting these stories. It is almost unthinkable that the Mon Sangha, who taught Anawratha, had no knowledge of at least all of the Vinaya. Otherwise, they would not have been able to re-establish a valid ordination of bhikkhus in Sri Lanka.

Anawratha left behind innumerable clay tablets adorned with images of the Buddha, the king's name, and some Pali and Sanskrit verses. A typical aspiration on these tablets was: "By me, King Anawratha, this mould of Sugata (Buddha) has been made. Through this may I obtain the path to Nibbana when Metteyya is awakened." Anawratha aspired to become a disciple of the Buddha Metteyya, unlike many later kings of Myanmar who aspired to Buddhahood. Is this an indication that this warrior had remained a modest man in spite of his empire building?

4. Pagan: Flowering and Decline

Anawratha was succeeded by a number of kings of varying significance to Buddhism in Myanmar. His successors inherited a relatively stable and prosperous kingdom and consequently were able to embark on the huge temple building projects for which their reigns are still remembered.

This is the time when kings such as Kyanzitta and others built pagodas, libraries, monasteries, and ordination halls. These kings must have possessed coffers full of riches collected from their extensive kingdom which they lavished on the religion of the Buddha. Their palaces were probably built of wood as was the last palace of the Myanmar dynasty. Though the palaces must have reflected the wealth and power of the rulers, the more durable brick was not deemed necessary for such worldly buildings. This is similar to views still found in rural areas of Myanmar today. The only structure adorned to any extent in a village is the monastery and the buildings attached to it, such as the rest house. The villagers are very modest with regard to their private houses and even consider it improper to decorate them. Their monastery, however, is given every decoration affordable.

Kyanzitta Strengthens Theravada Buddhism

Kyanzitta (1084-1113), who had been Anawratha's commander-in-chief and had succeeded Anawratha's son to the throne, consolidated Theravada Buddhism's predominance in Pagan. In his reign, such important shrines as the Shwezigon Pagoda, the Nanda, Nagayon, and Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi temples were built.

With the three latter temples, Kyanzitta introduced a new style of religious building. The traditional stupa or dagoba found in India and Sri Lanka is a solid mound in which relics or other holy objects are enshrined. The area of worship is situated around them and is usually marked by ornate stone railings. In the new style of building, however, the solid mound had been hollowed out and could be entered. The central shrine was surrounded by halls which housed stone reliefs depicting scenes from the Buddha's life and Jataka stories. Kyanzitta's aim was the conversion of his people to the new faith. Whereas Anawratha had been busy expanding his empire and bringing relics and the holy scriptures to Pagan, Kyanzitta's mission was to consolidate this enterprise. Enormous religious structures such as the Nanda Temple attracted the populace and the interiors of the temples allowed the bhikkhus to instruct the inquisitive in the king's faith.

Professor Luce writes:

The Nanda (temple)... he built with four broad halls. Each hall had the same 16 scenes in stone relief all identically arranged. The bhikkhus could cope with four audiences simultaneously. The scenes cover the whole life of the Buddha. When well grounded in these, the audience would pass to the outer wall of the corridor. Here, running around the whole corridor are the 80 scenes of Gotama's life up to the Enlightenment. The later life of the Buddha is shown in hundreds of other stone reliefs on the inner walls and shrines.²⁴

Kyanzitta's efforts for the advancement of Buddhism were not limited to his own country. For in one of his many inscriptions, he also mentions that he sent craftsmen to Bodhgaya to repair the Mahabodhi temple, which had been destroyed by a foreign king. The upkeep of the Mahabodhi temple became a tradition with the kings of Myanmar, who continued to send missions to Bodhgaya to repair the temple and also to donate temple slaves and land to the holiest shrine of Buddhism.²⁵

Kyanzitta also initiated an extensive review and purification of the Tipitaka by the bhikkhus. This was the first occasion in Myanmar's history when the task of a Buddhist Sangayana or Synod, comparing the Sinhalese and

Suvannabhumi's Tipitaka, was undertaken. It is possible and even probable that this huge editing work was carried out along with visiting Sinhalese bhikkhus.

By nature of Myanmar's geographical position, external influences swept in predominantly from northern India, and therefore tantric Buddhism, dominant especially in Bengal, remained strong. However, Kyanzitta succeeded in firmly establishing the Pali Tipitaka by asking the bhikkhus to compare the ancient Mon Tipitaka with the texts obtained from the Mahavihara in Sri Lanka. In this way, he also made it clear that confirmation of orthodoxy was to be sought in Sri Lanka and not in any other Buddhist country. Though Mahayana practices were tolerated in his reign (his chief queen was a tantric Buddhist), they were not officially regarded as the pure religion. It is characteristic of Pagan that these two branches of Buddhism co-existed — the religion of the Theras, which was accepted as the highest religion — and the tantric practices, which included the worship of spirits or *nats* and gave more immediate satisfaction. Pagodas are often adorned with figures of all types of deities, but the deities are normally shown in an attitude of reverence towards the pagoda, a symbol of the Buddha. The ancient gods were not banished, but had to submit to the peerless Buddha. Tradition attributes to King Anawratha the observation: "Men will not come for the sake of the new faith. Let them come for their old gods, and gradually they will be won over."

An approach such as this, whether it was Anawratha's or Kyanzitta's, would suggest that the practice of the old religion of the Ari monks was allowed to continue and that the conversion of the country was gentle and peaceful as befits the religion of the Buddha. Although later Myanmar chronicles refer to the Ari monks as a debased group of charlatans who were totally rooted out by Anawratha, this is far from the truth. A powerful movement of "priests" who incorporated magic practices in their teachings continued to exist throughout the Pagan period, and though they may have respected the basic rules of the Vinaya and donned the yellow robe, their support was rooted in the old animistic beliefs of the Myanmar.²⁶ It should not be forgotten that the Myanmar first started to settle in the area of Kyauksai in the sixth century AD and that the "man in the field" was in no way ready for such highly developed a religion as Theravada Buddhism. The transition had to be gradual, and the process that started remains still incomplete in the minds of many people, especially in the more remote areas of the hill country.

The example of Kyanzitta's son Rajakumar, however, shows how even in those early days the teachings of the Buddha were understood and practiced not only by the bhikkhus, but also by lay people and members of the royal

court. Rajakumar's conduct is proof of his father's ability to establish men in the Dhamma and survives as a monument just as the Ananda temple does.

Rajakumar was Kyanzitta's only son and his rightful heir. Due to political misadventures Kyanzitta was separated from his wife and therefore not aware of the birth of his son for seven years. When his daughter gave birth to his grandson he anointed him as future king immediately after his birth. Rajakumar grew up in the shadow of his nephew, the crown prince, but neither during his father's reign nor after his death did he ever try to usurp the throne through intrigue or by force. He was a minister zealous in the affairs of state, prudent and wise. He was also a scholar of the Tipitaka and instrumental in its review, vigorously supporting his father in his objective to establish Buddhism. But he is best known for his devotion to his father in his last years when his health was failing. In order to restore the king's health he built five pagodas which to this day are called Min-o-Chanda, "The Welfare of the Old King." When the king was on his deathbed:

Rajakumar, remembering the many and great favors with which the king had nourished him, made a beautiful golden image of the Buddha and entering with ceremony presented it to the king, saying: "This golden Buddha I have made to help my lord. The three villages of slaves you gave me, I give to this Buddha." And the king rejoiced and said "Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu." Then in the presence of the compassionate Mahathera and other leading bhikkhus, the king poured on the ground the water of dedication, calling the earth to witness. Then Rajakumar enshrined the golden image, and built around it a cave temple with a golden pinnacle.²⁷

Later Kings

Rajakumar's nephew was King Alaungsithu (c.1113-67), who continued the tradition of his dynasty of glorifying the Buddha's religion by building a vast temple, the Sabbannu Temple, probably the largest monument in Pagan. During his many travels and campaigns, he built pagodas and temples throughout Myanmar. The faith that Shin Arahana had inspired in Anawratha and his successors continued to inspire Alaungsithu. Shin Arahana, who had seen kings come and go and the flowering of the religion he brought to Pagan, is believed to have died during the reign of King Alaungsithu, in about 1115.

After the death of Alaungsithu, Pagan was thrown into turmoil by violent struggles for the throne. Several kings reigned for short periods and spent most of their time and resources in power struggles. One even succeeded in alienating the great king of Sri Lanka, Parakramabahu, by mistreating his emissaries and breaking the agreements between the two countries. Eventually Parakramabahu invaded Myanmar, devastating towns and villages and killing the king. The new king, Narapati (1174-1210), blessed the country with a period of peace and prosperity. This conducive atmosphere was to allow outstanding scholarship and learning to arise in Pagan.

Kyawswa (1234-50) was a king under whom scholarship was encouraged even more, undoubtedly because the king himself spent most of his time in scholarly pursuits including memorizing passages of the Tipitaka. He had relinquished most of his worldly duties to his son in order to dedicate more time to the study of the scriptures. Two grammatical works, the *Saddabindu* and the *Paramatthabindu*, are ascribed to him. It would appear that his palace was a place of great culture and learning as his ministers and his daughter are credited with scholarly works as well.

During the twelfth century, a sect of forest dwellers also thrived. They were called *arannaka* in Pali and were identical with the previously mentioned Ari of the later chroniclers of Myanmar.²⁸ This was a monastic movement that only used the yellow robes and the respect due to them in order to follow their own ideas. They indulged in business transactions and owned vast stretches of land. They gave feasts and indulged in the consumption of liquor, and, though they pretended to be practicing the teachings of the Buddha, their practices were probably of a tantric nature. It would appear that they had a considerable amount of influence at the royal court and one of the main exponents of the movement was even given the title of royal teacher. Superstition and magic were gaining dominance once again and Anawratha's and Kyanzitta's empire was slowly sliding into decadence.

The last king of Pagan, Narathihapate, whom the Myanmar know by the name Tayoupyemin²⁹ (the king who fled the Chinese), repeatedly refused to pay symbolic tribute to the Mongol emperors in Peking who in 1271 had conquered neighbouring Yunnan. He even went so far as to execute ambassadors of the Chinese emperor and their retinue for their lack of deference to the king. He became so bold and blinded by ignorance that he attacked a vassal state of the Mongols. The emperor in Peking was finally forced to send a punitive expedition which defeated the Pagan army north of Pagan. The news of this defeat caused the king and his court to flee to Patheingyi (Bassein). As the imperial court in Peking was not interested in

adding Pagan to its possessions, the Yunnan expedition did not remain in the environs. When the king was later murdered and the whole empire fell into disarray, the Yunnan generals returned, looting Pagan. The territories were divided amongst Shan chiefs who paid tribute to the Mongols.

G.E. Harvey honors the kings of Pagan with the following words:

To them the world owes to a great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known. Brahmanism had strangled it in its land of birth; in Sri Lanka its existence was threatened again and again; east of Burma it was not yet free from priestly corruptions; but the kings of Burma never wavered, and at Pagan the stricken faith found a city of refuge.³⁰

Contacts with Sri Lanka and the First Controversies

The contact with Sri Lanka was very important for the growth of the religion in Pagan. As was shown previously, it started with the friendship of Anawratha and Vijayabahu, both of whom fought for Buddhism: Anawratha to establish a new kingdom, Vijayabahu to wrench an old one from the clutches of the Hindu invaders. They supported each other in their struggles and then together re-established the Theravada doctrine in their respective countries, Anawratha sending bhikkhus to Sri Lanka to revive the Sangha, while Vijayabahu reciprocated by sending the sacred texts. The continued contact between the two countries was beneficial to both: many a reform movement, purifying the religion in one country spread to the other as well. Bhikkhus visiting from one country were led to look at their own traditions critically and to reappraise their practice of the Dhamma as preserved in the Pali texts. After the fall of the main Buddhist centers in southern India, centers which had been the main allies of the Mon Theravadins in the south, Sri Lanka was the only ally in the struggle for the survival of the Theravada tradition.

Leading bhikkhus of Pagan undertook the long and difficult journey to Sri Lanka in order to visit the holy temples and study the scriptures as they had been preserved by the Sinhalese Sangha. Shin Arahana's successor as the king's teacher left the royal court for Sri Lanka, returning to Pagan only to die. He was succeeded by a Mon bhikkhu, Uttarajiva, who led a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka in 1171. This was to cause the first upheaval in the Sangha of Pagan.

Uttarajiva traveled to Sri Lanka accompanied by Chapada, a novice who remained behind on the island in order to study the scriptures in the Mahavihara, the orthodox monastery of Sri Lanka and the guardian of the Theravada tradition. After ten years, he returned to Pagan accompanied by four elders who had studied with him. The Kalyani inscription, written about three hundred years later, relates that Chapada considered the tradition of the Myanmar bhikkhus impure. He had consequently taken four bhikkhus with him because he needed a chapter of at least five theras in order to ordain new bhikkhus. It is possible that the Myanmar bhikkhus, who seemed to have formed a group separate from the Mon bhikkhus, had paid more attention to their traditional worship than was beneficial for their practice of the Dhamma. It is also possible that there was an element of nationalist rivalry between the Mon bhikkhus and the Myanmar bhikkhus. As he showed a penchant for the reform movement, the Myanmar king Narapati seems to have accepted the superiority of the Mon bhikkhus, though he did not neglect the other bhikkhus. Chapada and his companions refused to accept the ordination of the Myanmar bhikkhus as legitimate in accordance with Vinaya. They established their own ordination, following which the Myanmar bhikkhus sent a delegation to Sri Lanka to receive the Mahavihara ordination for themselves.

After Chapada's death, the reform movement soon split into two factions, and eventually each of the four remaining bhikkhus went his own way, one of them leaving the order altogether. "Thus in the town of Arimaddana (Pagan) there were four schools... Because the first of these to come was the school of the Elder Arahan from Sudhamma (Thaton) it was called the first school; while the others, because they came later, were called the later schools."³¹

Scholarship in Pagan

It is surprising how quickly a relatively simple people absorbed the great civilisation that arrived in their midst so suddenly. Even before the conquest of Thaton, Pagan possessed some ornate religious buildings, which is indicative of the presence of artists and craftsmen. It is quite likely, however, that these were Indians from Bengal and the neighbouring states. The type of Buddhism that had come to Pagan from India was an esoteric religion, as some old legends indicate. It was the jealously guarded domain of a group of priests, who made no attempt to instruct the people but were happy if their superiority remained unquestioned by a superstitious populace.

The advent of Theravada Buddhism with its openness and its aim to spread understanding must have been quite revolutionary in Pagan and obviously the

people were eager to acquire the knowledge offered to them by the bhikkhus. Mabel Bode says in her *Pali Literature of Burma*:

Though the Burmese began their literary history by borrowing from their conquered neighbours, the Talaings (Mon) — and not before the eleventh century — the growth of Pali scholarship among them was so rapid that the epoch following close on this tardy beginning is considered one of the best that Burma has seen.³²

The principal works of the Pagan period still extant are Pali grammars. The most famous of these is the *Saddaniti*, which Aggavamsa completed in 1154. Uttarajiva gave a copy of this work to the bhikkhus of the Mahavihara in Sri Lanka and it "was received with enthusiastic admiration, and declared superior to any work of the kind written by Sinhalese scholars." The *Saddaniti* is still used to teach grammar in the monasteries in Myanmar and has been printed many times. B.C. Law regards it as one of the three principal Pali grammars along with the grammars by Kaccayana and Moggallana. K.R. Norman says: "The greatest of extant Pali grammars is the *Saddaniti*, written by Aggavamsa from Arimaddana [Pagan] in Burma..."³³ Aggavamsa was also known as the teacher of King Narapatisithu (1167-1202) and was given the title Aggapandita. Unfortunately, no other works by this author are known today.

The second famous author of Pagan was Saddhammajotipala who has been previously mentioned under his clan name of Chapada. He was a disciple of Uttarajiva and is credited with a great number of works, but in the case of some it is doubtful whether he actually composed them himself or merely introduced them from Sri Lanka.³⁴ His works deal not only with grammar, but also with questions of monastic discipline (Vinaya) and the Abhidhamma, which in later centuries was to become a favorite subject of Myanmar scholars. His work on Kaccayana's grammar, the *Suttaniddesa*, formed the foundation of his fame. However, his specialty would appear to have been the study of Abhidhamma, as no less than four noted works of his on the subject attained fame: *Samkhepavannana*, *Namacaradipani*, *Matikatthadipani*, and *Patthanagananaya*. According to the Pitaka-thamain, a history of Buddhism in Myanmar, he also devoted a commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhaghosa called the *Visuddhimagga-ganthi*.³⁵ There are no written records that refer to meditation being practiced in Myanmar before this century. However, his interest in the *Visuddhimagga* is indicative of an interest in meditation, if only in the theory rather than in the practice.

Another scholar of Pagan, Vimalabuddhi, also wrote a commentary concerning Abhidhamma, the *Abhidhammatthasangahatika*, in addition to another important grammatical work, the *Nyasa*, a commentary on Kaccayana's grammar.

Other grammatical works of some importance were written, but none acquired the standing of Aggavamsa's *Saddaniti*. However, a rather peculiar work worth mentioning is the *Ekakkharakosa* by Saddhammakitti. It is a work on Pali lexicography enumerating words of one letter.

5. Shan Rule

Upper Myanmar

After Narathihapate had fled Pagan in fear of the Mongol army, he was never able to re-establish his authority, even though the Mongols supported the Pagan dynasty. The Mongol court in Peking preferred a united neighbouring country under a single ruler, but in spite of its efforts Myanmar was divided into several principalities mainly under Shan tribal leaders. These self-styled princelings paid tribute to the Chinese Mongol court and were nominally its subjects. The Shan, at this time still nomadic tribes in the north, broke into an already destabilized Myanmar like a tidal wave. They penetrated the entire region as far as the Mon country and established themselves as rulers in many towns and cities. The intrigues, fratricidal wars, and murders that make up the history of their courts are innumerable.

A division of the country into Upper and Lower Myanmar is somewhat arbitrary, as, after the fall of Pagan, the two regions were composed of many competing principalities. However, there were the two principle kingdoms of Ava in Upper Myanmar and Pago (Pegu) in Lower Myanmar. Hostilities between these two prevailed, as well as with the neighbouring smaller states including the Shan fiefs of Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya in Thailand. Intrigues within and between courts were rife. Sometimes these claimed victims only within the circle of the powerful and mighty, and sometimes whole towns were looted and destroyed, and their population massacred or carried off into slavery. But, in spite of politically unsettled conditions, the Sangha survived, because the new rulers, initially somewhat barbaric, soon accepted the religion of their subjects. Just as the Myanmar had adopted the religion and culture of the more refined Mon, so the Shan submitted to the sophisticated civilisation of the peoples they subjugated. The Shan initially established their

capital at Pinya in Upper Myanmar to the north of Pagan and transferred it to Ava in 1312. Ava was to remain the capital of Upper Myanmar until the eighteenth century.

The *Sasanavamsa* praises Thihathu, the youngest of three Shan brothers who wrested power from the Pagan dynasty in Upper Myanmar, as a Buddhist king who built monasteries and pagodas. He had a bhikkhu as his teacher and supported thousands of bhikkhus in his capital Pinya and later Ava. However, Pagan remained the cultural and religious capital of the region for the whole of the fourteenth century. Scholarly works were composed in its monasteries throughout this period whereas no such works are known to have been written in the new centers of power. The works of this period of scholarship were mostly concerned with Pali grammar.

Two generations later, a descendant of Thihathu secured himself a place in religious history as a great patron of scholarship. As in the courts of some previous kings, his court was also devoted to scholarly learning; and not only bhikkhus, but also the palace officials, produced treatises on religious subjects and the Pali language.

Although the political situation remained unsettled in Upper Myanmar throughout the fifteenth century, in the main, this affected only those in power and their usurpers. Consequently the Sangha appears to have flourished, while the traditional devotion to the support of the Sangha through gifts of the four requisites remained unchanged. The royal court, followed by the leading families, made great donations of monasteries, land, and revenue to the bhikkhus.

In approximately 1440, two Mahatheras from Sri Lanka settled in Ava.³⁶ Here they joined a group of famous scholars, of whom Ariyavamsa was the most outstanding. The *Sasanavamsa* tells us of his great wisdom and humility in an anecdote.³⁷

The elder Ariyavamsa had studied the books of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, but felt he had not gained real understanding. Eventually he came to a bhikkhu in Sagaing who kept his mouth always filled with water in order not to have to engage in meaningless chatter. Ariyavamsa did not talk to "the Elder Water-bearer," as this bhikkhu was known in the Myanmar language, but simply performed the duties of a disciple to his teacher for two days. On the third day, the Venerable Water-bearer spat out the water and asked Ariyavamsa why he was serving him. When Ariyavamsa told him that he wanted to learn from him, the Venerable Water-bearer taught him the *Abhidhammattha-vibhavani-tika*, a subcommentary on the *Abhidhammattha-sangaha*. After two

days, Ariyavamsa grasped the meaning and his teacher asked him to write a commentary on this book in order to help others to gain understanding.

During the composition of his first work, Ariyavamsa submitted his writings to the assembled bhikkhus on every Uposatha day, reading out what he had composed and asking his brethren to correct any mistakes they found. On one occasion, a visiting bhikkhu twice made a sound of disapproval during the reading. Ariyavamsa carefully noted the passages where the sound of disapproval had occurred. On reflecting on them in the evening, he found one error of grammar where he had used the wrong gender and also a repetition, an error of style. He approached the bhikkhu who had made the sounds during the reading and out of gratitude for the correction gave him his own outer robe.

Ariyavamsa composed several works in Pali: works on the Abhidhamma, on grammatical subjects, and a study of the Jatakas. But his very important contribution to Buddhism in Myanmar was the fact that all his writing was in the Myanmar vernacular. He was probably the first bhikkhu to write treatises on religious subjects in the local idiom, thus making the religion accessible to a greater number of people. The work by Ariyavamsa still known today is a commentary on the *anutika* (sub-commentary) of the Abhidhamma.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, a bhikkhu by the name of Silavamsa composed several epic poems in Pali. They were, of course, of a religious nature dealing with subjects such as the life of the Buddha, or Jataka stories. This genre was later very popular in the Myanmar language and there are many poems relating Jataka stories which were sung by bards throughout the country until recently. In the *Sasanavamsa*, however, Pannasami disapproves of bhikkhus writing or reciting poetry as he considers it to be in breach of the Vinaya rules. He says that because of this, Silavamsa's name was excluded from the Theraparampara, a listing of eminent bhikkhus of Myanmar by ancient chroniclers.

Lower Myanmar

The Mon civilization in Lower Myanmar flourished after Pagan's importance waned, once again reliving the era of glory that it had experienced prior to Anawratha's conquest.

Wareru, the Shan ruler who had established himself in Martaban in 1287, was soon converted to Buddhism. He was a Shan peddler who had astutely

wrested power from a son of the last king of Pagan, a son who had revolted against his father and founded an independent kingdom. Under Wareru's rule, scholarship in the Mon monasteries flourished and a code of law was compiled which still forms the foundation of the legal literature of Myanmar. The Mon bhikkhus based this code on ancient Hindu codes of law which had found their way into Mon tradition through Indian colonisers and merchants.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century two respected Mon theras named Buddhavamsa and Mahanaga revived the tradition of their countryman Chapada in making a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka. There, they accepted new ordination in the Mahavihara monastery, the guardian of Sinhalese orthodoxy. The bhikkhus of the Mahavihara asked those ordained in other countries to revert to the lay-state before being re-ordained as novices and full bhikkhus, as it was considered of the utmost importance that the ordination be handed down in an unbroken tradition from the time of the Buddha. This was especially significant in Myanmar where there were some reservations about the continuity of the tradition. By disrobing, a bhikkhu forgoes the seniority he has acquired through the years spent in robes and, in this case, he also states that he considers his former ordination invalid. One can imagine that such a step is not taken lightly but only after careful consideration.

The Great Reformation of the Sangha

King Dhammazedi (1472-92) takes a special place in the history of the religion in Myanmar. He unified the Sangha in the Mon country and purified the order of the bhikkhus. He recorded his great service to the country in the Kalyani inscription, which will be quoted below.

Dhammazedi was a bhikkhu of Mon origin who taught one of the queens at the royal palace in Ava. This lady, Shin Sawbu, was the daughter of the king of Pagan. She had been queen to several unfortunate kings of Upper Myanmar and had been conveyed into the hands of the subsequent kings along with the throne. She had become disenchanted with the life of a queen and desired to return to her native land. Dhammazedi and a fellow Mon bhikkhu helped her to escape and brought her back to Pagan. Eventually she became queen of Pagan, but after reigning only a few years she wished to retire and do works of merit. She found that the only people worthy of the throne of Pagan were her teachers, the two bhikkhus. She let fate decide which would be the future king by concealing miniature imitations of the regalia in one of the two bowls in which she offered them their daily alms food.

She handed the throne over to Dhammazedi who had received the fateful bowl and spent the rest of her life at Dagon (Yangon) building the terrace

around the Shwedagon Pagoda and gilding the sacred mound. The Shwedagon became what it is today chiefly thanks to Shin Sawbu's munificence.

Dhammazedi assumed government in Pago after leaving the Order of the bhikkhus. He moved the capital closer to the Swemawdaw Pagoda and built several pagodas and shrines. His name is also connected with a collection of wise judgments and the translation of Wareru's Code of Law into the vernacular. In 1472, Dhammazedi sent a mission to Bodhgaya to repair the temple and make plans and drawings of it.

Dhammazedi had received his education in monasteries of Ava which adhered to the Sihala Sangha. The Sihala Sangha was the faction of the Sangha of Myanmar that accepted only the Mahavihara of Sri Lanka as the ultimate authority in religious questions. King Dhammazedi knew from direct experience the state of the Sangha in Lower Myanmar and was determined to improve it. Having lived as a bhikkhu for so many years, he was also singularly qualified to change the Sangha for the better.

He chose twenty-two senior bhikkhus to lead the reform movement and informed them:

Reverend Sirs, the *upasampada* ordination of the bhikkhus of the Mon country now appears to us to be invalid. Therefore, how can the religion, which is based on such invalid ordination, last to the end of 5000 years? Reverend Sirs, from the establishment of the religion in the island of Sri Lanka up to this present day, there has been existing in this island an exceedingly pure sect of bhikkhus... Receive at their hands the *upasampada* ordination... and if you make this form of the *upasampada* ordination the seed of the religion, as it were, plant it, and cause it to sprout forth by conferring such ordination on men of good family in this Mon country... Reverend Sirs, by your going to the island of Sri Lanka, much merit and great advantage will accrue to you.³⁸

At the beginning of 1476 the chosen bhikkhus with their twenty-two disciples embarked on the journey to Sri Lanka. They sailed in two ships, one taking about two months while the other needed six full months to arrive on the shore of the Buddhist island. They received the *upasampada* ordination at the Mahavihara from 17th to 20th July 1476. The return journey of the forty-four Mon bhikkhus was not so smooth, however. One group arrived home in August 1476, while the other group took three years to return to Pago and ten of the bhikkhus died en route. Following their return, Dhammazedi had a pure ordination hall(*sima*) consecrated and made the following proclamation:

May all those who possess faith and desire to receive the bhikkhu's ordination at the hands of the bhikkhus ordained in Sri Lanka come to the Kalyani sima and receive ordination. Let those who have not faith and do not desire to receive the bhikkhus ordination of the Sinhalese, remain as they are.³⁹

In order to confer the bhikkhu ordination outside the middle country (i.e. northern India), a chapter of five bhikkhus is needed, one of whom must be qualified to serve as preceptor (*upajjhaya*) and another as teacher (*acariya*). The latter two must have spent at least ten years in robes as fully ordained bhikkhus. So if Dhammazedi wanted to have local bhikkhus ordained in the new ordination, it was necessary to find two senior bhikkhus. Since those returning from Sri Lanka had been ordained for a period of only three years, they could not act as preceptor or teacher. Local bhikkhus who had not received the ordination of the Mahavihara in Sri Lanka were unacceptable, as otherwise the ordination would again have been invalidated by one who was not of pure descent. Fortunately, the two theras who had undertaken a pilgrimage to Sri Lanka at the beginning of the century and had received the Sinhalese ordination at that time, were still alive. As a result, one was able to act as preceptor and the other as teacher of the newly ordained bhikkhus. The stage was now set for the reformation and unification of the Mon Order of bhikkhus and soon the re-ordination of almost the entire Order of bhikkhus began. The Kalyani inscription records the number of 15,666 ordinations in hundreds of ordination halls newly constructed for the purpose.

It is interesting to note how forcefully the king reformed the Order through royal decrees that would hardly be tolerated today. He declared that all bhikkhus who were, for example, practicing medicine or other arts and crafts or who even slightly infringed on the Vinaya rules would be expelled. The king as a layman, however, did not have the power to defrock a bhikkhu who had not broken one of the four Parajika rules.⁴⁰ Dhammazedi circumvented this by threatening to punish with royal penalties the mother, father, relatives, and lay supporters of bhikkhus whose behavior was not in accordance with the rules of the Vinaya.

It goes without saying that a king who could allow himself to take such drastic measures in regard to the Sangha must have had the support of a broad section of the Order and also the people. After years spent in robes, he was keenly aware of the problems of monastic life and because of this even senior bhikkhus respected and accepted his council. We can assume that all his actions to reform the Order were firstly discussed with his bhikkhu teachers

and then implemented with their blessings. There being no such thing as a Buddhist Church with a central authority, the Sangha has little possibility to regulate itself. Only the committed support of a worldly power can protect the Order of bhikkhus from those who take advantage of the respect that is given to the yellow robe.

Dhammazedi's support for the religion was so great that his fame spread well beyond the borders of Myanmar and bhikkhus from neighbouring countries such as Thailand came to his realm to receive ordination there. Though the reform movement did not spread to Upper Myanmar and cause the same mass ordinations there, it did not remain without influence in the kingdom of Ava and other principalities, and many bhikkhus came to the Mon bhikkhus to receive the Kalyani ordination.⁴¹

6. The Myanmar Build an Empire

Shan versus Myanmar

The beginning of the sixteenth century was one of the most difficult periods for Buddhism in Upper Myanmar. While the religious fervor of Dhammazedi still lived on in the kingdom of Pagan in Ava, Shan rulers were endeavoring to bring about the destruction of the Sangha. A Shan king named Thohanbwa (?1527-1543) was particularly well-known for his barbarity. He destroyed pagodas and monasteries and robbed their treasures. Although he was a king, he was uneducated and ignorant. Hence fearing the influence of the bhikkhus and suspicious of their moves, he brought about the massacre of thousands. Under these terror regimes of the Shan rulers the Myanmar did not feel safe. Many, including learned bhikkhus, fled to Toungoo, the stronghold of the Myanmar race in the south. Despite the anarchy prevailing, some respected treatises on Pali grammar were written in Upper Myanmar in these years. Better times, however, lay ahead for Buddhism in the Golden Land. Two successive kings of Myanmar origin from Toungoo would unite the country and fulfill the duties of Buddhist kings. The wars fought by these two kings, King Tabinshwehti (1531-50) and King Bayinnaung (1551-81), were long in duration and exceedingly cruel. They succeeded in gaining control of the Mon kingdom in Lower Myanmar and the kingdom of Ava. They conquered all of what is today Myanmar including the Shan states as far east as Chiang Mai, and made incursions into lower Thailand and Yunnan where some kings paid tribute to the Myanmar court.

Bayinnaung deferred to the Mon as far as culture and religion were concerned and dressed in Mon style. Under his royal patronage, the Mon Sangha produced scholarly works on grammar and the Abhidhamma and also helped with the collection and standardisation of a code of law based on the old Mon code compiled during Wareru's reign.

Bayinnaung not only unified the country politically, but also made Buddhist principles the standard for his entire dominion. He forbade the sacrificial slaughter of animals, a custom still practiced by the Shan chiefs, the worshippers of certain spirits, and the followers of some other religions. He built pagodas and monasteries in all the newly conquered lands and installed learned bhikkhus in order to convert the often uncivilised inhabitants to gentler ways. The main religious building of his reign is the Mahazedi Pagoda, a majestic monument to the Buddha in the capital, Pagan. He also crowned the main pagodas in Myanmar with the jewels of his own crown, a custom practiced by many rulers of the country. He continued in the tradition of Dhammazedi, in supporting the Sihala Sangha and in sponsoring the ordination of many bhikkhus in the Kalyani Ordination Hall near Pagan. It is said that he built as many monasteries as there were years in his life.

It remains a mystery how a king who had such deep devotion to the religion of the Buddha and who was so generous towards it could spend his life fighting campaign after campaign to expand his realm. He caused bloodshed and suffering in the conquered regions and at home people starved because farmers were drafted into the army. However this may be, Bayinnaung seems to have been able to reconcile fighting expansionist wars with being a pious Buddhist.

After King Bayinnaung, Pagan rapidly lost its significance. Bayinnaung's son persecuted the Mon and consequently re-ignited racial tensions that would plague Myanmar for centuries. Later, Pagan was to fall into the hands of a Portuguese adventurer who pillaged the pagodas and monasteries. Eventually the whole of Lower Myanmar, already depopulated by the incessant campaigns of Bayinnaung and his successors, was pillaged by all the surrounding kings and princelings. The country was devastated and people starved.

The *Sasanavamsa* records one major problem of the Vinaya during the sixteenth century. At the beginning of the century, the bhikkhus of Toungoo were divided over whether or not bhikkhus could partake of the juice of the toddy palm which was generally used to prepare fermented drink. The dispute was settled by a respected thera who decided that toddy juice was permissible only if it was freshly harvested.

Political Influence of the Sangha in Early Myanmar

What motivated the royal court probably remained largely a mystery to the ordinary citizens, except when they were pressed into service in the king's army. There was little sense of collective responsibility as it is cultivated in today's democracies. Everyone looked after himself and his immediate circle and governments were sometimes more of a scourge than a protection. Kings did not always provide a visible administration beyond appointing governors at whose mercy local people were. These governors often endeavored to establish independence as soon as they perceived inherent weaknesses in their masters. Many accumulated great wealth for themselves.

There was, however, one element in the policy of rulers which, with a few exceptions, remained fairly stable throughout Myanmar history. Most kings supported Buddhism and the Sangha provided a framework of continuity as no other entity could. Ray writes:

They (the kings) were good Buddhists and never did they waver from their kingly duty of acting as the patron-guardian of the faith of the country. Moreover, whatever their numerical strength, the bhikkhus were real spokesmen of the people and the monasteries were the popular assemblies as it were; and each king that came to the throne sought to win the bhikkhus over to his side.⁴²

The best insurance of a peaceful life in Myanmar was to become a bhikkhu, as they were not drafted into armies or enslaved by conquerors and as long as the lay people had food to eat they were also fed. The bhikkhus not only provided a link between the people and those in power, they often played a role in the affairs of state. This is illustrated by an event which occurred in the middle of the seventeenth century and is related by the *Sasanavamsa*.

The king, Ukkamsika, popularly known as King Thalun, was a devoted Buddhist and thanks to him, learning flourished in Myanmar. The king's son, however, tried to dethrone his father, and Thalun, taken by surprise, had to flee accompanied only by two companions. Coming upon a river, the only vessel in sight was the boat of a samanera. The samanera agreed to take them onboard as passengers, and they ended up in the samanera's monastery where they revealed their true identities and asked for protection from their persecutors. They were referred to another monastery where lived

a bhikkhu wise in worldly affairs. Following his advice, the bhikkhus formed a living wall around the monastery and, as no Buddhist will attack a man in robes, the rebels who had come to kill the king had to withdraw. Another example of the beneficial influence of the Sangha is their appeal for clemency to King Bayinnaung. Bhikkhus often tried to stay executions in accordance with the principles of *metta* (loving kindness) and *karuna* (compassion) and sometimes their efforts achieved success.

During one of Bayinnaung's Thai campaigns, the peasantry around Pago revolted and razed the royal city to the ground. Bayinnaung, after hurrying back from Ayutthaya, captured several thousand rebels and was ready to burn them alive. It was the custom then to burn deserters from the army alive and obviously rebellion was considered to be a crime of similar gravity. The bhikkhus of all races intervened on behalf of the poor wretches and were able to save all from the pyre, except for seventy ring leaders, the most serious offenders.

There are several instances in Myanmar history when bhikkhus also mediated between contending kings or princes and helped to avoid bloodshed. This was often the case when cities were besieged and both parties realised that they could not win. The king who was besieged would normally take the initiative and send his bhikkhus to the king in attack. Often the bhikkhus were authorized to negotiate on behalf of the monarch. An armistice agreed by or in the presence of bhikkhus was more likely to be honored than a promise given without their blessings. Therefore, if the two parties were sincere in their offers to negotiate, they usually requested bhikkhus to be mediators and judges.

The Spread of Abhidhamma

The seventeenth century was a period of dynamic growth in the history of Buddhism in Myanmar. Many outstanding developments took place, and principal among these were the numerous translations of texts into the Myanmar language and the great increase in the study of the Abhidhamma. It is quite possible that the two developments were inter-connected.

In the first half of the century, Manirathana Thera translated the following texts into the Myanmar language: *Atthasalini*, *Sammohavinodani*, *Kankhavitarani*, *Abhidhammatthavibhavinī*, *Sankhepavannana*. Of these five, only the *Kankhavitarani*, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Patimokkha, is not concerned with Abhidhamma. In the second half of the century Aggadhammalankara translated Kaccayana's Pali grammar, the

Abhidhammatthasangaha, *Matika*, *Dhatukatha*, *Yamaka*, and the *Patthana* into the Myanmar tongue. Later, the *Nettipakarana* was also translated.

It cannot be a coincidence that nine out of twelve translated works were texts of the Abhidhamma or its commentaries. The reason for these translations must have been a developing interest in the psychology of Buddhism among the Buddhist followers who could not themselves read Pali. Whether these were only bhikkhus or whether lay people were also interested in exploring the scriptures for themselves is difficult to determine now. However, what is known is that almost every boy and many of the girls attended monastic schools, whose curriculum was probably established by this period, if not earlier. Included in the curriculum were studies of the Mangala Sutta, Metta Sutta, Ratana Sutta, and the other parittas, as well as basic literacy which included some Pali. In addition a number of the Abhidhamma texts had to be committed to memory.

The intention behind these translations and commentaries in the Myanmar language was obviously to make the words of the Buddha accessible to a wider audience who would, then, not be solely dependent on the authority of the Pali scholars.

In the later half of the century, the bhikkhu Devacakkhobhasa designed a system for the study and teaching of the *Patthana*, the last book of the Abhidhamma, which in Myanmar is believed to be the highest teaching of the Buddha. The king at the time of Devacakkhobhasa was so impressed by the bhikkhu's proficiency in these higher teachings and by his system of instruction, that he ordered the *Patthana* to be studied in all the monasteries of Myanmar. It is not unreasonable to assume that the king himself studied these teachings. Otherwise he would hardly have been in a position to appreciate them and make them compulsory reading for the Myanmar bhikkhus.

This emphasis on Abhidhamma in general and the *Patthana* in particular has survived in Myanmar to the present day. The movement, therefore, that began in the seventeenth century is still of great significance for Buddhism there. The *Patthana*, for instance, is ubiquitous in Myanmar. The twenty-four conditions of the *Patthana* can be found printed on the fans of the bhikkhus, on calendars, and on posters. In some monasteries, the bhikkhus are woken every morning by twenty-four strokes on a hollow tree trunk, while the bhikkhu striking the tree trunk has to recite the twenty-four conditions as he does so. Even little children learn to recite the twenty-four conditions along with the suttas of protection. As the *Patthana* is the highest and most difficult teaching

of the Buddha, it is believed that it will be the first to be lost. In order to slow the decline of the Sasana, many people of Myanmar, bhikkhus and lay people alike, memorize the *Patthana* and recite it daily.

In Pagan, the Jataka stories and the history of the Buddha's life were the main subjects of religious study. In later centuries, Pali grammar and the study of the Vinaya were foremost on the agenda. Dhammazedi's reform movement drew the attention back to the foundations of all monastic life, the code of conduct for the bhikkhus as laid down by the Buddha himself.

Though stricter observation of the Vinaya would have to be re-emphasised in the future, its foundation was firm enough to insure that progressive reform movements would be instigated within the Sangha and not be dependent on external impetus. How far a bhikkhu was allowed to stray from the ideal had been defined in strictures that had become integral to the Sangha. Based on this foundation of *sila* (right conduct, morality), the Sangha was now free to give increased attention to higher teachings.

The age of the Abhidhamma had dawned. The Abhidhamma remained no longer the domain of a chosen few, but began to be studied by many. The wealth of translations from the Abhidhamma would suggest that in the seventeenth century it had become so popular that it may have been taught even to lay people. The Myanmar language had developed and had been enriched with Pali terms so that it could convey the difficult concepts of Abhidhamma. Civilisation had matured to an extent never seen before. Myanmar was ready to study the analysis of mind and matter as taught by the Buddha. The stage was being set for the widespread practice of insight meditation (*vipassana bhavana*) in later times.

7. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

In the succession of rulers of the eighteenth century some were strong and despotic, while others were ineffective and withdrawn. Some tried to expand their power and fought wars, while others appeared satisfied with existing conditions. There were several wars with Thailand and the population of Myanmar had to bear the deprivations that war invariably brings not only to the conquered, but also to the country where the conquering armies are levied.

After a war between the Mon and the Myanmar in which the Mon initially attacked and then conquered Ava itself, the Myanmar king Alaungpaya (1752-60), who believed himself a Bodhisatta, crushed Mon resistance once and for

all. After Pago had fallen into his hands in 1756, Lower Myanmar was devastated and many of the Mon survivors fled to Thailand or were deported as slaves.

Like Bayinnaung, Alaungpaya established a Myanmar empire, at the same time decimating the population of the country by drafting the peasantry into the army for campaigns against Ayutthaya (Thailand) and other countries. The *Sasanavamsa* does not comment on the atrocity of war. War is perceived as it is, cruel and pitiless — but it is the affair of rulers, not of bhikkhus. The manner in which rulers conduct their affairs is entirely their responsibility. Pannasami probably took very seriously the Buddha's injunction that a member of the Sangha should not talk about rulers and royal affairs.

The *Sasanavamsa* pays much attention to a controversy which raged in monastic circles throughout the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the century, some bhikkhus began to wear their robes outside the monasteries as they were worn within them, that is, covering only one shoulder. Even when going on their daily alms round, they failed to drape the robe in the traditional way. When challenged as to the orthodoxy of this practice, they produced various interpretations and opinions, but could not validate their practice through the authority of the scriptures. Different kings endorsed one or other of the two opinions and bhikkhus of the orthodox school even died for their conviction when a king had outlawed the covering of both shoulders.

The most interesting aspect of this historical period of the religion is not so much the actual controversy as the power the king had in religious affairs. The kings of Myanmar were not normally expert in the Vinaya and yet they took the final decision in matters of monastic discipline after due consultation with the leaders of the Sangha. In the more than one hundred years that this controversy prevailed, different kings supported the orthodoxy of either view. This shows that this system is not entirely satisfactory. However, the right view which was in accordance with the Vinaya did eventually triumph due to the persistence of the majority of the Sangha. Only the worldly power was in a position to regulate the Sangha into which undesirable elements entered repeatedly. To keep the Order pure, it had to be always under careful scrutiny and bogus ascetics had to be removed. The kings of Myanmar in co-operation with the Sangharajas⁴³ and the other senior bhikkhus had established a system of supervision of the bhikkhus by royal officials. In every township, the king's representatives were responsible for ensuring that the bhikkhus adhered scrupulously to the rules of the Vinaya. Bhikkhus who transgressed were taken before religious courts and punished according to the code of discipline.

The controversy concerning the correct manner of wearing the robes came up for arbitration for the last time under Bodawpaya (1782-1819), the fifth son of Alaungpaya. He decided in favor of orthodoxy and thenceforth all bhikkhus had to cover both shoulders on the daily alms round. This ruling created one unified sect throughout Myanmar under the leadership of a council of senior bhikkhus appointed by the king. These were called the Thudhamma Sayadaws and the Thudhamma sect has survived in Myanmar down to the present day.

Bodawpaya appointed a chapter of eight eminent bhikkhus as Sangharajas, leaders of the Sangha, and charged them with the duty to safeguard the purity of the Order of bhikkhus. As a direct result of the discipline and stability created by the work of these senior bhikkhus, the Sangha prospered, and consequently scholarship flourished under Bodawpaya's reign.

The name of the Mahasangharaja Nanabhivamsa is especially noteworthy in this respect. Nanabhivamsa was an eminently learned bhikkhu who had proven his wisdom even as a young man. Only five years after his ordination as a bhikkhu, he had completed a commentary (*tika*) on the *Nettipakarana*. Eight years after full ordination, at the age of twenty-eight, he became Sangharaja, and then Mahasangharaja, the title conferred by the king on the highest bhikkhu in his realm. Soon after this, he wrote his well respected "new sub-commentary" on the Digha Nikaya, the *Sadhujjanavilasini*. At the request of the king, he wrote a commentary on Buddhaghosa's *Jatakattakatha* and several other treatises.⁴⁴

The king was so devoted to the head of the Sangha that he dedicated a "very magnificent five storied monastery" to him and later many other monasteries as well. According to the *Sasanavamsa*, Nanabhivamsa was not only a scholar, but also practiced the ascetic practices (*dhutanga*) sitting always alone. He divided his time between the various monasteries under his tutelage and was an indefatigable teacher of the scriptures.

Scholarship flourished in the reign of King Bodawpaya and Myanmar was able, for the first time, to return thanks to Sri Lanka for nurturing the religion in the Golden Land. The bhikkhu ordination (*upasampada*) preserved in Myanmar was re-introduced to Sri Lanka where the Sasana had been interfered with by an unwise king.

The Amarapura Nikaya in Sri Lanka

In the later half of the eighteenth century, the *upasampada* ordination in Sri Lanka was barred to all except the members of the landed aristocracy. This was a result of royal decree probably issued with the support of at least a section of the Sangha. However, this was a flagrant defilement of the letter and the spirit of the Buddha's instructions. The conferring of the *upasampada* ordination is dependent only upon such conditions as the candidate being a man, free from government service, free of debt, free of contagious diseases, and upon his having his parents' consent, etc. Members of the lower castes had now only the possibility of becoming novices (*samanera*), a condition that created dissatisfaction. A sizeable section of ordained bhikkhus also disapproved of the royal order, but were in no position to defy it within the country. The only recourse for those of the lower castes desiring the higher ordination was therefore to travel to other Buddhist countries to ordain. At first, missions were sent to Thailand where Dhammazedi's reforms lived on through the ordination conferred to Thai bhikkhus in Pagan and through the scores of Mon bhikkhus who had found refuge in Thailand from the Myanmar armies.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Sinhalese bhikkhus began traveling to Myanmar to find the pure ordination there. The fame of the then Mahasangharaja of Myanmar, Nanabhivamsa, influenced their choice. Scholarship had developed in all fields: Pali grammar, the Vinaya, the Suttanta, and the Abhidhamma. Myanmar had, after a long period of development, become the custodian of Buddhism.

The first delegation from Sri Lanka arrived in 1800 and was welcomed with a magnificent reception by King Bodawpaya himself. Nanabhivamsa, the wise Sangharaja, ordained the samaneras as bhikkhus and instructed them for some time in the scriptures.⁴⁵ On returning to Sri Lanka, they were accompanied by five Myanmar bhikkhus and a letter from Nanabhivamsa to the Sinhalese Sangharaja. Five bhikkhus form a full chapter and apparently the Myanmar bhikkhus were permitted to ordain bhikkhus without class distinction. Even today, Sri Lanka possesses three schools, the Amarapura Nikaya, the Siyama Nikaya (Thai school), and the Ramanna Nikaya.

The Amarapura Nikaya was so called because King Bodawpaya had established his capital in Amarapura (between Mandalay and Ava) and the bhikkhus had received their ordination there. The Ramanna Nikaya⁴⁶ was presumably founded by bhikkhus who had received ordination from Mon

bhikkhus in the tradition of the Dhammazedi reforms and who had fled to southern Thailand from the wrath of the Myanmar kings. Both these schools were allowed to ordain bhikkhus without discriminating against the lower classes. Only the Siyama Sangha (the Thai ordination) continued to follow the royal command, and ordained only novices of the higher castes as bhikkhus. Missions from Sri Lanka continued to travel to Amarapura to consult with its senior theras and they were all given royal patronage and sent back with gifts of the Pali scriptures and commentarial texts.

Bodawpaya's Relationship with the Sangha

Although King Bodawpaya would appear to have been a pious and devout king, his relationship with the Sangha was somewhat problematic. He supported it at times and even used it to extend his own glory, but at times he seemed almost jealous of the respect the bhikkhus received from the people. He realised that the bhikkhus were not respected out of fear, but were held in genuine esteem and affection by his subjects. His jealousy became apparent on different occasions.

At one time, he declared that from then on the bhikkhus were no longer to be addressed by the traditional title "Hpoungyi" meaning "The One of Great Merit." This form of address was to be reserved for the king. Then again he tried to confiscate land and other goods given to the Sangha and to pagodas by previous generations. When the Sangharajas could not answer his questions to his satisfaction, he invited the Muslim clergy for a meal to test their faith. He had heard that they were so strict in the observance of their discipline that they would rather die than eat pork. Unfortunately for them, they did not display great heroism as they all ate the pork offered to them by the king. Bodawpaya is also reputed to have been beset by a form of megalomania. He wanted to force the Sangha to confirm officially that he was the Bodhisatta of the next Buddha to come in this world cycle, the Buddha Metteyya. On this issue, however, the Sangha was not to be bent even in the face of royal wrath. The bhikkhus refused, and the king was finally forced to accept defeat. Another expression of his inflated self-esteem was the Mingun Pagoda near Sagaing. It was to be by far the biggest temple ever built. Scores of slaves and laborers worked on its construction until funds were depleted. However, it was never completed and remains today as a huge shapeless square of millions of bricks.

To his credit, King Bodawpaya imposed the morality of the Five Precepts in his whole realm and had offenders executed immediately. Capital punishment

was prescribed for selling and drinking alcohol, killing larger animals such as buffaloes, spreading heretical views, and the smoking of opium. Bodawpaya ruled the country with an iron fist and brought offending lay people as well as bhikkhus to heel. His successors were benevolent, but possibly they could be so only because of the fear his rule had instilled in the populace.

The Fate of Buddhism in Upper and Lower Myanmar

Bodawpaya's successor, Bagyidaw (1819-1837), was the first of the Myanmar kings to lose territory to the white invaders coming from the West. The Myanmar court was so out of touch with the modern world that it still believed Myanmar to be the center of the world and her army virtually invincible. Hence the king was not unduly disturbed when the British raj, governing the Indian sub-continent, declared war on the Kingdom of Ava in 1824 (Bagyidaw had moved the capital back to Ava). It came to a battle near the coast in which the Myanmar general Mahabandhula achieved little or nothing against modern British arms. The Indian colonial government occupied all of the Myanmar coast as far south as Tenasserim in 1826 and forced the treaty of Yandabo on King Bagyidaw. In the treaty, he was forced to accept the new borders established by the Indian government and pay compensation to the invaders for the annexation of the coast of Lower Myanmar.

However, Bagyidaw made a very important contribution to the development of the Sangha and to the literature of Myanmar in general. His predecessor, Bodawpaya, had united the Sangha by resolving the dispute relating to the draping of the robe over one or two shoulders. Bagyidaw saw the necessity of creating stability for the Sangha. He felt that this could be achieved to some extent by bestowing on it a sense of its own history. He commissioned a work on the history of the religion starting from the time of the Buddha, which was to show an unbroken succession of the pure tradition from teacher to pupil. Its purpose was to praise the diligent theras and expose the shameless ones.

This work, the *Thathana-lin-ga-ya-kyan*, was composed at the king's request by the ex-bhikkhu Mahadhamma-thin-gyan, a leading member of the committee appointed by King Bagyidaw to compile the famous *Hman-nan-ya-za-win*, *The Glass-palace Chronicle*, a secular history of Myanmar. The *Thathana-wun-tha (Sasanavamsa) -lin-ga-ya-kyan* was completed in 1831; and in 1897, it was printed in the form of a modern book for the first time in Yangon. Pannasami based his *Sasanavamsa* on this work. About forty percent of the *Sasanavamsa* is straight translation from the original work,

about forty percent summaries and paraphrasing of the latter, and only some twenty percent Pannasami's own work.⁴⁷ Pannasami states in his introduction to the *Sasanavamsa* that his treatise is based on the works of the ancients (*porana*). The concept of mental property or copyright had not been born and there was no moral need to refer the reader to sources except to give authority to a statement. The only references that would lend authority to a treatise would be the scriptures, their commentaries, and sub-commentaries, but not a work as recent as the *Thathana-wuntha-lin-ga-ya-kyan*.

The preface to the original work in Myanmar explains the reason for its compilation. The king's representative had many times pleaded with the author to write a history of the succession of [righteous] religious teachers so that the people would not become heretical. Apparently the king felt that the lack of a work recording the history of the pure religion in its entirety left scope for wrong views to arise. But with an authoritative record of the lineage of teachers, bhikkhus could not call on views of shameless bhikkhus of the past anymore in order to support their heresies. This is exactly what had happened again and again through the centuries and especially in the robe-draping dispute. The *ekamsikas*, the one-shoulder-drapers, had repeatedly dug out obscure teachers in order to support their point of view. This was to be made impossible once and for all.

Whether this has been successful is difficult to ascertain without a detailed study of the developments in the Sangha since the publication of this work. However, the fact that the original Myanmar chronicle was revised and translated into Pali for the Fifth Buddhist Council indicates that it was by this time considered a useful tool to put the king's authority behind a well-defined orthodox lineage, thus making it easy to refute heresy by referring to the historical teachers.

Tharrawaddy-Min

King Bagyidaw never overcame his shock over the loss of part of his realm. He was declared insane and was removed from the throne by Tharawaddy-Min (1837-1846), King Mindon's father.

In the reign of Tharrawaddy-Min, another mission from Sri Lanka visited Myanmar and was received by the Sangharaja Neyyadhammabhivamsa. Neyyadhamma instructed the two bhikkhus and the accompanying novice in the teachings and conferred the bhikkhu ordination on the novice. He is known for his critical emendation of the text of the *Saddhammapajjotika* and

its translation into Myanmar. He was also the teacher of the later Sangharaja Pannasami, the compiler of the *Sasanavamsa* and one of the most influential theras at the time of King Mindon. Neyyadhamma showed the need for a recension of at least some of the Pali texts by editing the *Saddhammapajjotika*. His disciple, Pannasami, was to preside over the recension of the entire Tipitaka as Sangharaja under King Mindon.

Pagan-Min

Tharrawaddy-Min was himself deposed because of insanity by his son Pagan-Min (1846-52), the brother of Mindon-Min. Pagan-Min appointed Pannajotabhidhaja as his Sangharaja. In his tenure, scholarship received encouragement as the Sangharaja himself wrote a commentary and its sub-commentary in Myanmar on the Anguttara Nikaya. Other works of the time, all in the vernacular, are a translation of the *Saddhammavilasini* and commentaries on the Samyutta Nikaya and the Digha Nikaya. This is also the time when the author of the *Sasanavamsa* appears. He started his scholarly career with the translation into Myanmar of a commentary on the *Saddatthabhedacinta*. His next work was a comparison of the existing versions of the *Abhidhanappadipika* and the translation of his emended text.

In accord with the pre-eminence Myanmar had achieved in the Theravada Buddhist world, the kings of the country became less fierce and wars were fewer. The successors of Bodawpaya seem to have shown a genuine interest in religion as well as in improving the administration of the country. Upper Myanmar moved into a period of peace, which meant improved conditions for the bhikkhus.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the translation of many Pali texts into the Myanmar language. Almost the whole of the Suttanta was now available in the vernacular and many commentaries and sub-commentaries on Suttanta, Abhidhamma, and the Vinaya were composed in it. This not only made it easier for bhikkhus with limited linguistic skills to study the texts, but also made them readily accessible to the laity. That people in a peaceful country have more time for the study of religion is obvious and soon Myanmar would see the first Buddhist texts printed on modern printing presses. This made it possible for a great number of people to acquire texts relatively cheaply without having to pay a scribe to copy them laboriously onto palm leaves.

Politically Pagan-Min was no luckier than Bagyidaw, as he lost the provinces of Patheingyi (Bassein) and Yangon (Rangoon) to the British, who were ever ready to create some pretext for war. So, in 1852, the Kingdom of Ava lost access to the sea and became increasingly dependent on the colonial power. Like his father, Pagan-Min was overthrown in a palace revolt. Although not a leader of the uprising, his brother Mindon was placed on the throne. He did not execute the deposed king as was usually the case after a revolt, but allowed him to end his days in dignity.

The Colonial Administration and the Sangha

The occupation by the British forces was of utmost significance for the Sangha as the British administration did not grant the traditional protection afforded it by a Buddhist ruler. In accordance with the colonial policy established in India, that the colonial government should be strictly secular, the new lords refused to take on the role of a Buddhist monarch and accept responsibility for the enforcing of the bhikkhus' discipline. Without this, Buddhism in Lower Myanmar soon suffered and offending bhikkhus went unpunished. The colonial administration would recognise its mistake only much later, when it was too late, and when they were not able to establish control in the Sangha any longer.⁴⁸

King Mindon

Even today King Mindon's reign (1852-1877) is surrounded by the mystique of a golden era in the minds of the Myanmar people. No war occurred during the twenty-five years of his tenure and the king himself is said to have been of gentle disposition and adverse to violence. He even declared a dislike for capital punishment which was customarily inflicted by sovereigns for the slightest disobedience or even disagreement.⁴⁹ He was not only held in esteem by his subjects, but even praised by a British envoy. The colonisers' comments on the Myanmar and their kings were usually dictated by a parochial narrow-mindedness and a simplistic view that was only widened by contact with the conquered. Therefore General Fytche's words describing King Mindon are all the more impressive: "Doubtless one of the most enlightened monarchs that has ever sat on the Burmese throne."⁵⁰ He is polished in his manner, has considerable knowledge of the affairs of state and the history and the statistics of his own and other countries. In personal character he is amiable and kind and, according to his light, religious."⁵¹

King Mindon transferred the capital from Ava to Mandalay, the last royal capital before the British annexation of the whole of Myanmar in 1886. In the early years of his reign, Mindon strove to improve monastic discipline. Although a system of official investigation of complaints relating to bhikkhus' misdemeanours existed, each king had to take his own initiative in re-establishing order in the Sangha.

Mindon found that the attitude of many members of the Sangha to their code of conduct was exceedingly lax. He therefore wanted all bhikkhus of his dominions to take a vow of obedience to the Vinaya rules in front of a Buddha image. He consulted the Sangharaja who convened an assembly of mahatheras, the Thudhamma Council. As opinions regarding the vow differed, the primate's disciple, Pannasami, had to deliver a religious address in support of the king's views. He reasoned that vows were also taken by the bhikkhus at the time of ordination and that if the king sincerely desired to improve the discipline in the Order, he should be supported. All agreed, and the vow was prescribed.

The greatest challenge King Mindon had to face as a Buddhist monarch was undoubtedly his duty to look after the spiritual welfare of his subjects not only in his own dominions, but also in the parts of Myanmar occupied by the British. Moreover, he and many of the leading sayadaws of his court were increasingly aware that the British were only waiting for an occasion to annex the whole of Myanmar. Mindon's army clearly would not be able to stand up to the might of the Indian colonial government. Therefore, it was not only important to support religious activities in the occupied territories but it was also essential to prepare the religion for the time when it would have to survive without the support of a Buddhist monarch.

The British had made it clear at the outset that they would not take over the traditional role of the Myanmar kings, that of protector of the Sasana. The new masters' religion, Christianity, rapidly gained influence through the missionary schools. The schools were popular because their education provided much assistance in securing a job and favor with the colonisers. Christian religious education was a compulsory part of their curriculum.

After the conquest of Lower Myanmar, many bhikkhus had fled north in order to remain within the jurisdiction of the Myanmar kings. Many monasteries in British Myanmar were left without an incumbent and whole villages were therefore bereft of the opportunity to receive religious and general education. King Mindon, aware of this situation, tried to convince bhikkhus to return to Lower Myanmar in order to serve their people. The king's efforts proved successful and many bhikkhus returned to their places of origin. But soon it

became clear that without the king's ecclesiastic officials to control the discipline of the Sangha, many bhikkhus developed a careless attitude towards their code of discipline.

The Okpo Sayadaw, from Okpo between Yangon and Pago, had stopped many bhikkhus on their way to Upper Myanmar when the movements of bhikkhus out of the conquered territories was at its peak around 1855. He assembled the bhikkhus around himself teaching that the Sangha needed no protection from the secular power if it observed the rules of the Vinaya strictly. His monastery was the birth place of a movement of strict monastic discipline. He also emphasised that mental volition was what really mattered in the religion of the Buddha and that acts of worship done with an impure intention were worthless. He obviously felt that much of the Buddhist practice had become a ritual and that the essence had been lost. In addition to this, however, his movement also challenged the authority of the king's Council of Sayadaws, the leaders of the unified Thudhamma sect, when he declared their ordination was invalid due to a technicality. As a result, he took the higher ordination anew together with his followers.

The Okpo Sayadaw was not the only critic of the Thudhamma sayadaws. In Upper Myanmar, the Ngettwin Sayadaw criticized many religious practices and maintained that a radical reassessment of religious teachings was necessary. The Ngettwin Sayadaw was also a source of inspiration for the Okpo Sayadaw and other reformers. He had been the teacher of Mindon's chief queen and had also advised the king on many occasions. Interestingly, he was a driving force in a movement in Upper Myanmar that wanted to return to the fundamentals of the religion, but more radically than the Okpo Sayadaw. The Ngettwin Sayadaw, together with many other bhikkhus, left the royal city and went to live in the forest near Sagaing. He started to preach that meditation was essential for all bhikkhus and he required an aspirant to novicehood to prove that he had practiced meditation before he would ordain him. All the bhikkhus around him had to spend a period of the day in meditation and he emphasised that meditation was of much greater importance than learning. He advised lay people to stop making offerings of flowers, fruits, and candles to Buddha images, but to meditate regularly on the Uposatha days. Of course, his instructions that offerings to Buddha images were fruitless and merely dirtied the places of worship, caused considerable unhappiness with the traditional Thudhamma Council and presumably with many ordinary people. However, the Ngettwin Sayadaw never strove to form a different sect by holding a separate ordination as did the Okpo Sayadaw. His reforms were within the community and within a Buddhist society that was presided over by a king. The Okpo Sayadaw had no place for royalty in his

view of the world and did not hesitate to confront the system that was still alive, though obviously doomed.

Two other important sayadaws of King Mindon's reign deserve mention: the Shwegyin Sayadaw and the Thingazar Sayadaw. The Shwegyin Sayadaw also tried to reform the Sangha and his movement is still very much alive and highly respected in Myanmar today. He had studied under the Okpo Sayadaw, but when he returned to his native Shwegyin near Shwebo in Upper Myanmar, he avoided controversy in never rebelling against the Thudhamma Council. He introduced two new rules for his bhikkhus, that they must not chew betel and consume tobacco after noon. He also maintained that the Sangha must regulate itself without help from the authority, but he never doubted the validity of the traditional ordination ceremony.

The Thingazar Sayadaw was one of the most popular of the great sayadaws of his time. He was also part of the movement to return to the basics of the teachings and greatly emphasised the importance of practice as opposed to mere scholarship. Though he was greatly honored by the king and made a member of the Thudhamma Council, he preferred spending long periods in solitude in the forest. In the numerous monasteries built for him by the royal family and the nobility of the country, he insisted on the practice of the purest of conduct in accordance with the Vinaya. However, he did not involve himself in disputes with the extreme reformers or the Thudhamma council. He became very popular through the humorous tales he told in sermons preached in his frequent travels up and down the country.⁵²

King Mindon had no easy task. One section of the Sangha was pressing for far reaching reforms, yet it was the king's duty to maintain a certain continuity of the traditional ways for the benefit of the people in general. What complicated the situation was the fact that the Sangha of Lower Myanmar felt more and more independent of the Buddhist monarch and his Thudhamma council of senior mahatheras. This is illustrated graphically by the Okpo Sayadaw's declaration that the Sangha needed no regulation by the worldly power. This view gained popularity also in Upper Myanmar. Luckily, King Mindon's devotion to Buddhism was genuine and he was not deterred by the difficulties confronting him. He was determined not to allow the Sangha to split into factions that were openly opposing each other. This he achieved to some extent through careful diplomacy and through the calling of a great Synod, a Sangayana, in the royal city of Mandalay.

The Sangayana, or Buddhist Council, is the most important function of the Buddhist religion. The first Sangayana was held during the first Rains Retreat

after the Parinibbana of the Buddha; the texts to be regarded as authentic were determined at this time. There had been three more Sangayanas since, according to the Theravada tradition. The council convened by the great Emperor Asoka, whose missionaries brought Buddhism to Myanmar, probably provided the most inspiration for Mindon. The Fourth Council, the one prior to Mindon's council, was held in Sri Lanka in the first century BC, at the Aluvihara near Matale, for the purpose of writing down the Tipitaka, which up to that time had been passed on orally.

King Mindon himself presided over the Fifth Buddhist Council, during which all the canonical texts were recited and the correct form was established from among any variant readings. The task took more than three years to accomplish, from 1868 to 1871. When the bhikkhus had completed their great project, the king had all of the Buddhist scriptures, the Tipitaka, engraved on 729 marble slabs. The slabs were then housed each in a separate small pagoda about three meters high with a roof to protect the inscriptions from the elements. The small shrines were built around a central pagoda, the Kuthodaw Pagoda, the Pagoda of the Noble Merit. To commemorate the great council, King Mindon crowned the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon with a new Hti or spire.

The Fifth Buddhist Council and the crowning of the Shwedagon Pagoda reminded all the people of Myanmar of the importance of their religion, as well as of the fact that the king and the Thudhamma Council of senior monks were still the guardians of the Sasana. The authority of the Thudhamma Council was greatly enhanced also in Lower Myanmar through the synod. Although the British had not allowed King Mindon to attend the raising of the new spire onto the Shwedagon, the crowning was a symbol of the religious unity of Myanmar which persisted in spite of the British occupation. The religion was also later to become the rallying point for the Myanmar nationalists who fought for independence from the colonisers.

King Mindon's reign produced a number of scholarly works as well as translations from the Pali. Neyyadhamma, the royal preceptor, himself wrote a sub-commentary on the Majjhima Nikaya, which had been translated by one of his disciples under his guidance. A commentary in Myanmar on the Pali Jatakas was composed by Medhavivamsa and the compiler of the *Sasanavamsa*, Pannasami, put his name to a great number of works. One of the queens of King Mindon requested Pannasami to write the *Silakatha* and the *Upayakatha*. His teacher asked him to compose the *Voharatthabheda*, *Vivadavinicchaya*, *Nagarajuppattikatha*. He also wrote a commentary on Aggavamsa's *Saddaniti*. Whether all these works were composed by

Pannasami or whether they were composed under his supervision and control is difficult to assess. It is interesting to note that a majority of his works were composed in Pali, which was no doubt an attempt to encourage bhikkhus not to forgo Pali scholarship now that Myanmar translations were readily available. The calling of a great Buddhist council to purify the scriptures was part of this movement towards the revival of the study of the original texts.

During King Mindon's reign bhikkhus from Sri Lanka came to Mandalay on several occasions to solve difficult questions of Vinaya and to receive the bhikkhu ordination in Myanmar. After Mindon's death in 1877, his son Thibaw ascended the throne. He was weak and of feeble intellect, and his reign was short. In 1886, he lost his kingdom to the British empire and was exiled to India.

With the complete annexation of Myanmar by the British, a historical era came to an end. Theravada Buddhism developed in Myanmar over more than two millennia. The visits of the Buddha were the first brief illuminations in a country that was shrouded in darkness. The worship of the Buddha that is thought to have resulted from these visits and from the arrival of the hair relics, may have been merely part of a nature religion. The pure religion could not endure for long in a country which was yet on the brink of civilisation. Later, however, the teachings of the Buddha were brought repeatedly to those lands by various people.

The visits of the Arahats sent out after Emperor Asoka's council are historically more acceptable than the visits of the Buddha. Their teachings were understood and perpetuated possibly in Indian settlements along the coast and later in communities of people from central Asia such as the Pyu. Through their contact with India, these cultural centers of the Pyu and Mon could remain in contact with Buddhism. At first the important centers of Theravada Buddhism were in northern India and later in South India and then Sri Lanka. Through repeated contact with orthodox bhikkhus abroad, the understanding of Buddhism grew ever stronger in the minds of the people of Myanmar. The religion was distorted dozens of times through ignorance and carelessness, but someone always appeared to correct the teachings with the help of the mainstays of the Sasana abroad. Gradually the role was reversed: instead of traveling abroad for advice, the bhikkhus of Myanmar became the guardians of Theravada Buddhist teaching and their authority was respected by all. Eventually, when Theravada Buddhism had long been lost to India and its future was uncertain in Sri Lanka, it found a secure home in Southeast Asia, especially in Myanmar.

Notes

- [1.](#) The Mon are also called Talaing, but this term is considered to be derogatory. It is thought to come from Telugu, a language of South Indian origin whose script the Mon adopted.
- [2.](#) G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (London 1925; reprint 1967) pp. 5, 6.
- [3.](#) Translated by B.C. Law, *The History of the Buddha's Religion* (London 1952), pp. 40 ff.
- [4.](#) Bhikkhu is the term applied to a fully ordained member of the Buddha's Order.
- [5.](#) Identified as Okkalapa near Yangon. Some believe it to be modern Orissa (Utkala) on the east coast of India.
- [6.](#) Shway Yoe, *The Burman* (reprint: Scotland 1989), pp. 179f.
- [7.](#) Punnovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya I, 267ff.; Theragatha, v. 70, Theragatha Atthakatha I, 156ff.
- [8.](#) See entry 'Punna' in G.P. Malalasekera, *A Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* (PTS 1937-38).
- [9.](#) The *Sasanavamsa* says the Buddha stayed for seven weeks and converted eighty-four thousand beings to the Dhamma.
- [10.](#) Ashin Dhammacara, *Kyaungdawya zedidaw thamain* (Yangon 1978), pp. 28, 29.
- [11.](#) Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 268.
- [12.](#) *The Mahavamsa* (reprint: London: PTS, 1980), p. 82.
- [13.](#) Kamboja, a country referred to by Emperor Asoka in his inscriptions, is generally believed to be to the west of India. It could, however, also be identical with the Cambodia of today, and it is conceivable that two Kambojas existed.
- [14.](#) Smith, Asoka's alleged mission to Pegu (*Indian Antiquary*, xxxiv, 1905), pp. 185-86.
- [15.](#) Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, I, p. 32.
- [16.](#) Mentioned in several places in the *Manorathapurani*, the commentary to the Anguttara Nikaya.
- [17.](#) Cf. L.P. Briggs, Dvaravati, the most ancient kingdom of Siam (JAOS, 65, 1945), p. 98.
- [18.](#) Parker, *Burma with special reference to the relations with China* (Rangoon 1893), p. 12.
- [19.](#) For a detailed treatment of Mahayana Buddhism in Pagan, see G.H. Luce, *Old Burma Early Pagan* (New York, 1969), I, p. 184ff.
- [20.](#) Ibid, I, p. 14.
- [21.](#) Cf. Maha-ummagga-jataka, No. 546, *The Jatakas* (reprint: PTS, 1973), p. 156.

- [22.](#) Cf. Wickremasinghe, *Epigraphica Zeylan.*, I, pp. 242-55.
- [23.](#) *Culavamsa*, ch.60, vv. 4-8.
- [24.](#) Luce, *Old Burma Early Pagan*, I, p. 79
- [25.](#) Cf. D.K. Barua, *Buddha Gaya Temple, Its History* (Buddha Gaya, 1981), pp. 59, 62, 63, 163, 176, 195, 244-247.
- [26.](#) Cf. Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma* (Arran, 1988), pp. 85ff.
- [27.](#) Cf. Luce, *Old Burma Early Pagan*, I, p. 74.
- [28.](#) Cf. Than Tun, op. cit.
- [29.](#) The Myanmar word for Chinese to this day is *teyou* or *tarou* which is derived from "Turk," for the Mongols are ethnic Turks.
- [30.](#) G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 70.
- [31.](#) *History of the Buddha's Religion*, p. 74.
- [32.](#) *Pali Literature of Burma* (reprint: London, 1966), p. 14
- [33.](#) K.R. Norman, *Pali Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), p. 164.
- [34.](#) Ven. A.P. Buddhadatta, in his *Corrections to Geiger's Mahavamsa and Other Papers*, offers an argument that there were in fact two Chapatas and that the one called Saddhammajotipala, who wrote on the Abhidhamma, probably dates from the late fifteenth century. The *Sasanavamsa* mentions a contemporary second Chapata who was a shameless bhikkhu.
- [35.](#) Pitaka-thamain, p. 37.
- [36.](#) See *History of the Buddha's Religion*, p. 95
- [37.](#) Ibid, pp. 102-104.
- [38.](#) Kalyani inscription, *Epigraphica Birmanica*, Vol. III#, Pt. 2, pp. 220-21.
- [39.](#) Ibid, p. 249.
- [40.](#) A bhikkhu who kills a human being, has sexual relations, falsely claims to have attained superhuman achievements, or steals automatically ceases to be a bhikkhu and therefore even a layman can take his robes away.
- [41.](#) The forty-four Myanmar bhikkhus were ordained in Sri Lanka in a water sima, a place of ordination floating on the water, on the Kalyani river. The first ordination hall built by Dhammazedi near Pegu was therefore called the Kalyani Sima and the Sinhalese ordination the Kalyani ordination. Ibid, p. 249.
- [42.](#) Niharranjan Ray, *Theravada Buddhism in Burma*, p. 212.
- [43.](#) *Sangharaja* is a position created by the king. The holder of the title is appointed by the monarch. It is the highest position as far as influence at the court is concerned as the king will consult the Sangharaja in most religious matters. The Sangharaja was usually assisted in his duty by a body (similar to a cabinet) of other senior bhikkhus also chosen by the monarch.
- [44.](#) For more information on his work, see Bode, *Pali Literature of Burma*, pp. 79-82.

[45.](#) Bhikkhus of differing linguistic background used to communicate in Pali. Even today a visiting Thai bhikkhu will speak with his Burmese brethren in the language of the scriptures.

[46.](#) The Ramannadesa is Lower Myanmar, the Mon country.

[47.](#) For a full discussion of the relation between the *Tha-tha-na-wun-tha-lin-ga-ya-kyan* and Pannasami's *Sasanavamsa*, see Victor B. Lieberman, A New Look at the *Sasanavamsa* (S.O.A.S Bulletin, Vol. 39, 1976), Pt. 1, p. 137.

[48.](#) In the political struggle for independence the bhikkhus of Myanmar played a significant role. Political activity is, of course, not normally admissible for a bhikkhu. However, as the British administration had failed to fulfill its duties towards Buddhism and the religion was in decline, the bhikkhus felt they had to oppose the government in order to save their culture. When the government suddenly wanted to re-establish authority to keep the bhikkhus in their monasteries, their effort lacked credibility and authority and was not heeded. The colonial government had to resort to imprisoning bhikkhus in ordinary civilian prisons, but it was too late to break the movement of civil disobedience of the young activists, including the bhikkhus.

[49.](#) In times of peace kings would use a eulogistic formula instead of giving the order for execution, like "I do not want to see his face ever again." In times of war the orders were clearer. Sometimes even bhikkhus were executed. Mahadhammarajadhipati (1733-52), for instance, executed the Sangharaja and a Brahman because an important Buddha image was stolen. See *The Glass Palace Chronicles* (Hmannan I, 376).

[50.](#) It was the considered policy of the Indian colonial government to portray the Myanmar kings as cruel villains. It annexed Upper Myanmar under the pretext of liberating a people who were oppressed by an ineffective government, much in the fashion of the Soviets liberating Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. After the annexation of Upper Myanmar, British publications describing the excesses of King Thibaw's court and the relief of the liberated people amounted to a propaganda campaign.

[51.](#) Fytche, A. *Burma, Past and Present* (London, 1878).

[52.](#) Cf. Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales* (New York & London, 1966).

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Dhammayangyi Pahto (c. 1165?)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Dhammayangyi (or Dhamma-yan-gyi) Pahto, extending approximately 255 feet on each of its four sides, is Bagan's most massive shrine. There is

Thomas, E.J. *The Life of the Buddha As History and Legend*. London 1949.
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The Buddhist Publication Society

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<http://www.accesstosight.org/lib/authors/bischoff/wheel399.html>

considerable controversy over the identity of the builder and the construction of the building itself. It probably was built by King Narathu (1167?-1170?) over

a three year period to atone for his wicked rule. Yet some have attributed it to Narathu's father and predecessor, Sithu I, who also built Thatbyinnyu. Legend suggests that Narathu met his end in a series of morbid events shortly after acceding to the throne. He had smothered his father and, shortly thereafter, his brother. After he had one of his wives (a former Indian princess and one of the wives of his father) executed for her Hindu hygienic rituals, he was assassinated by eight men, disguised as Brahmin priests, sent by the princess' father. Others, however, have suggested that his death came at the hands of a Ceylonese mission that not only killed the king but sacked the city and introduced Ceylonese influence into the architectural spirit of Bagan.

The Dhammayangyi, similar in its ground plan similar to the Greek Cross of the earlier Ananda Pahto, is a very large square single story pyramidal temple with six monumental ascending exterior terraces. Oriented toward the east, the Dhammayangyi's brickwork is finely crafted—perhaps it is the finest in Bagan. (Narathu reportedly would execute masons if he could stick a pin

between the bricks). Because of the death of the builder, perhaps, the temple was never finished. There is, however, another mysterious element to the temple, in addition to the identity of its builder. There are two inner ambulatories around a solid square central core that is approximately 82 feet on each side. Almost all of the inner ambulatory passages were filled with rubble, probably from around the time of its construction. Some suggest that if Narathu was the builder, workers stopped building at the time of his death and perhaps even filled in the inner ambulatory out of spite. The Dhammayangyi remains one of the most unique and intriguing constructs on the Bagan plain.

Bagan Monument Number 771

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

Dhamrai

Tradition

Preserving a 200-year-old Family Tradition

Kavita Charanji

Go to Dhamrai village, located 39 kms northwest of Dhaka, and you will glimpse an old mansion which dates back over 100 years. This is the picturesque home and workplace of Sukanta Banik, proprietor of Dhamrai Metal Crafts. Carrying on a flourishing



200-year-old family business, Sukanata unveils an eight metal statue which depicts a pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses. There is the central figure of Vishnu, the preserver, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu.

The eight metals are copper, tin, zinc, iron, mercury, lead, gold and silver. Despite a hefty price tag of Taka 12,000, 'there is a huge potential market for statues in countries such as India and the US,' says Banik. 'People in many parts of the world believe that the metals represent the planets and keep evil spirits away,' he adds.

Also displayed in Banik's showroom are a variety of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu statues, bowls, decorative items and pots made out of metal.

Among Banik's major current works is a traditional Indian chess set which he began this June. The product, to be completed by the end of November, is priced at Taka 1 lakh. Overall, he says, the price tag for metal crafts varies from Taka 500 to Taka 60,000.

There are five techniques in metal craft. Banik's firm most commonly uses the Lost Wax Method for statues.

The predominantly Hindu Dhamrai metal craft business dates way back to the Pala dynasty (800-1100 AD). During this period both early Buddhist and Hindu settlements once flourished. Now Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and folk statues are a popular draw.



Sukanta Banik

Banik's family are pioneers in the metal craft. Beginning with his great grandfather Sarat Chandra Banik and going downwards to his grandfather Sarba Mohan Banik and his father Phani Bhushan Banik, Sukanta took over the reins of the family business in 2000. A post graduate in political science from Savar College, Bhanik recalls those difficult early days: "When I joined, the business was in a bad shape because of the slump in demand from expatriate customers. This lasted from 1993-2000. Now the business is run by my parents and me. The export market is booming, especially US and India."

A major supporter of Banik is the Matthew S Friedman, an USAID official, who he describes as his 'friend, philosopher and guide'. Friedman, who left Bangladesh last year, has authored books on

metal casting. He also helped Banik with slide shows to show the techniques of this craft. This helped generate awareness about the metal cast industry.

So what is his company's unique selling proposition? "Other countries have a master mold so that they can make more pieces easily. In Bangladesh, we use the freehand technique and use a one time use mold, so that there is a richer variety of products. Also our statues are finer than that of others, more ornate and better designed. We work with different metals so there is a variation in statues, says Banik."

One of Dhamrai Metal Crafts' major buyers is Kyle Tortora, a US art dealer. The enterprising Kyle visits Dhamrai twice a year. On one such visit, he bought a statue for Taka 9,000 and reaped a bonanza when he sold it for US\$ 1,500 in his own country.

Though the export market is flourishing, Banik says it is still a struggle for metal cast firms to eke out a living. Before Liberation, for instance, people of about 33 villages in Dhamrai-Shimulia were in the business, but now only around five families are involved in the craft. Likewise with stiff competition from cheaper aluminum and plastic products coming in from India and other countries in the region, the market for these handcrafted items has dwindled.



There are other bottlenecks to deal with. It is quite a hassle for example, to get the necessary export clearance from the Archaeology Department which may declare that the crafts are not antique. Then there is the problem of raw materials such as metal scrap which are smuggled out from Bangladesh to India.

Banik has some strategies to counter these hurdles as chairperson of the NGO called Initiative for the Preservation of Dhamrai Metal Casting (IPDMC). This organisation trains artisans in metal craft and the Lost Wax Method through workshops in Dhamrai, Savar and other places.

'We need more publicity and advertising about all the five techniques of metal casting,' says Banik. What's heartening is the response from school children to the craft. Last year, IPDMC held a one-day workshop on the Lost Wax Method for 200 students from American International School Dhaka, French International School and Japanese International School. Recalls Banik, 'We had a very good response. The children sat near the artisans who explained the technique and then made butterflies, snakes, elephants and so on. We cast these and gave them back to the children. This year we have trained 160 students so far.'

A major support to the IPDMC is the US \$ 14,000 aid from the US Ambassador's Fund. This will go to broaden the market through documentaries, skill exchange programmes with Nepal, training workshops in Dhamrai and school programmes.

For those less adventurous, it is possible to see Banik's delicate and eye catching metal work in Aarong and Aranya. His company is also exploring marketing options with Probortana, a craft's shop.

Lost Wax Method

In this technique, bees' wax is mixed with paraffin and the wax is used to make statues. A 800 watt electricity bulb is placed in the light box to help to keep the wax soft and pliable. First the craftpersons make the legs of the statue and then the other parts of the body. Then the wax is heated and the parts are put together. The product is then decorated. Subsequently, three layers of clay are put on the metal piece. The first layer is a very fine clay solution using a brush. The second layer is clay mixed with jute fibre and sand. The third layer is clay with rice husk.

The next step is casting the mold. Around 100-120 kg of metal is cast at a time. After the metal usually brass in Bangladesh-- has been added to the crucible (a container in which the raw unheated metal is placed) the mold and the crucibles are placed in an oven for firing at a high temperature. Subsequently, the melted metal is poured into molds and given finishing touches.

UNDP - FAO Report on Inland Aquaculture and fisheries

MYANMAR - MISSION REPORT ON INLAND AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/004/ad497e/ad497e04.htm

Myanmar - aquaculture and inland fisheries

Inland fisheries and aquaculture resources

Myanmar has impressive freshwater capture fisheries. The inland waters are made up mainly of the interlocking/ mingling of riverine and estuarine systems of the Ayeyarwaddy (Irrawaddy, 2 150 km long), Chindwin (844 km; a tributary of the main Ayeyarwaddy) and Sittaung (563 km) rivers, plus the large Thalwin River (2 400 km) to the east. The first three have adjacent deltas and are arguably part of a larger joint system. Together these systems extend

from the eastern part of the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Moattama and along the eastern edge of the Andaman Sea. The Ayeyarwaddy River alone has a mean discharge of 13 500 m³/second from its catchment of 424 000 km² (Welcomme, 1985), notably, practically all within Myanmar.

Aquatic resource area of the river systems within Myanmar encompasses a total of 8.2 million ha (FAO, 1996) of permanent and seasonal water bodies and there were 29 000 ha of freshwater fishponds and a further 40 716 ha of shrimp ponds in 2001, and 115 687 ha of reservoirs (see Table 1). The Department of Fisheries (DoF) in Yangon estimates a figure of six million ha of floodplains, which likely excludes river area and floodplain lakes. This approaches that of the entire Mekong Basin (>seven million ha, MRC, 2001).

The country also includes a small section of the Mekong River basin but is not a member of the Mekong River Commission. The Mekong River which has only a slightly higher discharge (15 000 m³/second) but a greater length (4 880 km) and larger catchment (795 000 km²) (MRC, 2001). With a total population of about 50 million, Myanmar potentially has an inland fishery greatly exceeding that of any single national part of the Mekong River basin, and quite feasibly rivals that of the lower Mekong Basin in its entirety. There are also great similarities in the fisheries of the Ayeyarwaddy and Mekong and Myanmar presents a fascinating opportunity to compare statistics and experiences between these regions, with potential for extension to elsewhere such as South America.

For management (licensing/regulation) purposes Myanmar divides its inland capture fisheries into two main categories:



1. "Inn" leasable fisheries. These are almost exclusively key fishing grounds on floodplains which are primarily fished through the erection of barrage fences around the lease area with fish collected in various collection pens or traps. The peak season involves capturing fishes migrating off the floodplain at the beginning of river draw-down. Lease holders enjoy exclusive rights to fish the lease area including preventing access by others and a certain degree of environmental management and control. This is referred to locally as the "Inn" fishery. For present purposes it is the same as the floodplain (and Great Lake) barrage

fishing components of the "Lot" system in Cambodia. There are currently 3 722 leasable fisheries in Myanmar of which 3 490 are still exploitable. Of these, 1 738 (52.3 percent) are located in Ayeyarwaddy Division (the lower floodplains and delta of the river). Leases have been auctioned every year but DoF is extending the lease period to up to 9 years to promote improved long-term management. There are no government owned leases. A register of leases is kept and details of lease arrangements are held on Land Revenue Forms.

2. Open fisheries. These are fisheries in all other areas including all types of fishing operation. The right to fish in these areas is licensed out by DoF. All fishing gears require a license. For most this is a set fee. Some of the larger gears, particularly "bagnets" set in rivers (comparable to those used in the lower Mekong), are allocated by a tender system ("tender fisheries"). Fees are variable between regions according to production and capacity. License fees for smaller-gears are low. Although the policy is for complete coverage of licenses for all gears (a monumental task in such a fishery) it was intimated that licenses tend to be neglected for smaller gears and the system concentrates on those people perceived as fishing for "profit".

Livelihoods from small-scale fish marketing - These women derive a livelihood from two days of fishing and two days of selling every five days. Inle women who catch and sell fish at several of the markets held on the traditional 5-day rotating basis. (See discussion of Inle fish catchers and seller)

Officially, it is a requirement for all licenses that holders report their catches, although in practice, this is only likely for the larger leasable fisheries and larger fixed gear fisheries. This is another source of underestimation of the actual status of the production from inland fisheries. The entire fishery is closed during June, July and August (to allow spawning and recruitment). In practice this is probably enforced only for the Inn fishery, tender fisheries and larger gears. The smallscale fishery occurs year-round and is considered technically "illegal" during these months.

The role of inland fisheries and aquaculture in people's livelihoods in Myanmar

There are repeated references to the crucial importance of fish and fish products in the nutrition of the Myanmar people. Whilst it is certainly recognized the fish is second only to rice in the diet of Myanmar, there is little information available on the patterns of consumption, inter-regional differences, availability and types of fish consumed. In this respect Myanmar is similar to many of Asian countries where emphasis is paid to rice production as a crucial element of food security, with little or no recognition the fish component which gives the rice-based diet much of its nutritional value - in addition to calories and crude protein.

The size and scale of activities and opportunities within the inland fisheries and aquaculture sector varies from very smallscale to large-scale commercial operations. The livelihoods that were identified during the visit are:

- Leasable fisheries (including sub-leasing);
- Small-scale capture fisheries (artisanal fish trap operations, larger trapping gears, trapping of fish resources in paddy fields);
- Small-scale fish marketing (women who catch and sell fish, the fish marketing system at Thaung Tha Man in Mandalay Division [U Min Wai, personal communication], dried fish sellers);
- Small-scale aquaculture (family ponds, hatchery and additional services, nursing);
- Licensed fish pond; and
- Aquaculture support services (feed production; naturally occurring fodder supply).

This section is drawn from discussions and information collected during visits to Government Fisheries Stations and Fisheries Offices, Leasable Fisheries and Licensed Fisheries and large and small-scale Aquaculture Operations in Yangon Division, Mandalay Division and Shan State (see Annex 1, mission itinerary for details of places visited and Annex 3, persons met).

Participation in capture fisheries

Very few of the countries record participation in the capture fisheries sector to any significant degree in their statistics. Most do not record it at all. Some only report licensed fishers. None record participation in fishery-related activities often include those involved in processing, marketing, transportation and gear construction etc. Myanmar has a more extensive licensing system than other countries in the region and reports 1 398 410 fishers operating in inland waters in 2000-2001. This is higher than for the marine sector (1 278 000

fishers) and is approximately 3.5 times the number of fish farmers. Even so, the figure for inland waters is based on licensee records and in practice many small gears are not included and rice-field and reservoir fishing is excluded (the latter as a result of the ban on reservoir fisheries since 1998).

The inland fisheries of Myanmar almost certainly involve more people than reported since many families will engage in occasional, seasonal or rice paddy type fisheries, which is unlicensed and largely unreported. Thus this sector is probably impacting a far greater percentage of the population than currently recognized.

The number of people employed in the aquaculture sector are cited as 612 000 of which 175 000 are employed full time (Kyaw, 1998). This type of categorization does not particularly reflect the relative livelihood importance of the activity and the contribution to household income security and vulnerability reduction.

Gender aspects

Gender is used to describe all the socially given attributes, roles, activities and responsibilities connected to being female or male in a given society. It is one marker among others such as age, race, ethnicity, class, disability, connections, education and sexual orientation etc., that determines status.

Table 1: Freshwater resources in Myanmar

Freshwater fisheries resources	Area (ha)	Number	Likely productivity (kg/ha)	Theoretical annual production (tonnes)
Seasonal floodplains	8 100 000	no data available	no data available	no data available
Permanent water bodies	1 300 000	no data available	no data available	no data available
Leasable fisheries	no data available	3 483 (3 722)	no data available	no data available
Reservoirs	115 687	103	150	17 350
Freshwater aquaculture ponds (fish)	29 000	no data available	750	21 750

Women operate hatcheries as well as undertake routine management of fish ponds - "I inherited three acres of land from my parents in 1983 and created borrow pits elevating flood land on which to build a house. As the borrow pits flooded I grew fish. Then I came to realise that nursing fry to fingerlings was better business. Most market demand is for Rohu and Common carp." Over the last 20 years demand has increased year on year. It is not possible to satisfy the demand, small size is most popular" - small fish nursing and supply business east of Mandalay.

The involvement of both men and women in fisheries and aquaculture is evident in all of the locations visited by the mission. Fishing and harvesting from aquaculture is practised by male household members but women also often play an important role. Some small-scale fishers around Inle Lake are women and the marketing of fish is almost exclusively the domain of women.

In several of the small fish pond culture and hatchery operations visited by the mission the women of the household either managed the operation or were engaged in routine management operations, such as feed preparation and/or feeding.

It is possible that in Myanmar, in common with other places in Southeast Asia, much of the foraging of paddy field aquatic resources (such as fish, frogs, etc.) is an activity of women (and children). For this reason surveys that focus on male head of households often fail to completely capture fishing activities of a household.

Securing food

In common with many of its neighbours, rice and fish are key staples in Myanmar. Fish, commonly small fresh fish, dried fish, fish paste and fermented fish products from inland fisheries and aquaculture was observed to exceed other animal protein sources such as meat and eggs in local markets by a factor of 10:1. All those interviewed whose livelihoods fall within the fresh water fisheries sector reported demand in excess of supply. The price difference between red meats and fish (common varieties) are in the region of 4:1.

However, the key food production focus of the government is currently rice, and significantly the Department of Agriculture has representation down to

village level. The conversion of rice land to other uses is carefully controlled. Low yielding land (e.g. 5-6 baskets/acre) however may be allocated by the Land Distribution Committee (with representatives from Department of Fisheries, Department of Forestry, Department of Agriculture, Department of Rural Development and District Government) to investors for conversion to fish ponds. An example of this is found to the north of Inle Lake in Shan State, where water management is purported to have reduced the quality of former paddy land which now floods regularly. Two thousand acres of this land is now being licensed for fish production by the Fisheries Department. A number of aquaculture entrants (who have converted their paddies to ponds) have suffered 'livelihood shocks' (see further for detail) such as fish loss due to flooding, four years out of the last four and had to sell up. This land is retailing for around K500 000/acre and therefore represents an opportunity mainly for medium-scale or large-scale entrepreneurs.



The development of small-scale fish ponds (less than 25 x 25 feet) is not licensed by the Department of Fisheries and therefore land converted to fish ponds below 60 m² is not controlled or recorded. However, such small-scale ponds, managed initially with minimal investment have proven highly successful contributions to the livelihoods of poor farming families in neighbouring countries, especially where large fingerlings can be stocked or

nursed in "hapas" before release. It is highly recommended that future poverty focused food security development involving small-scale pond aquaculture be considered also in Myanmar.

Fish consumption

Based on DoF estimates for national fish production (1 283 489 tonnes) and subtracting exports (144 624 tonnes) gives the total available fish for consumption in Myanmar at approximately 1 138 865 tonnes, suggesting a per capita consumption of 22.7 kg/caput/yr. However, the hidden production from unreported fishing and also the likely under-reporting of leasable and licensed fisheries catch means that the current national estimate should be far higher. Using estimates based on the inland fisheries areas (6 million ha of floodplain, 1.3 million ha of permanent water) of Myanmar the national per capita figure could range between 26-34 kg/capita/yr. These are only approximations and need to be verified by a household consumption study, since there will be strong differences in access to fisheries resources and distributional issues between lowland and highlands (see Table 2 for a detailed list of species present in fresh fish markets). It is interesting to note that even upland dwelling peoples, such as those in Shan State, whose cultural tendency is towards vegetarianism, will still consume small fish. For these people, access to dried as well as fresh fish is important and might be assumed to be an essential component to their vegetarian habits.

Table 2: Captured and culture fish species observed in markets in Mandalay and Shan State

Common Name	Scientific name
Freshwater species	
Featherback	<i>Ompok/Notopterus</i>
Snakeskin gourami	<i>Trichogaster</i>
Snakehead	<i>Channa spp.</i>
Spiny eel	<i>Mastacembelus</i>

Catfish	<i>Clarias spp.</i>
Glass fish	<i>Amblypharyngodon</i>
Rasbora etc.	<i>Rasbora spp., Danio</i>
Gobies (sand)	<i>Glossobobius spp.</i>
Freshwater eel	<i>Anguilla spp.</i>
Various barbs	<i>Puntius spp.</i>
Rohtee	<i>Osteobrama spp.(Rohtee coti).</i>
Black shark minnow	<i>Morulius chrysophekadion</i>
Common carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>
Rohu	<i>Labeo rohita</i>
Mrigal	<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i>
Grass carp	<i>Ctenopharyngodon idellus</i>
Loaches	<i>Cobitidae</i>
Large river catfish	<i>Pangassius & Selonia</i>
Wallago	<i>Wallago attu</i>
Atyid shrimp	<i>Atidae spp.</i>
Freshwater prawn	<i>Macrobrachium rosenbergii</i>
Freshwater crabs	<i>Paratelphusa (?)</i>

Marine species	
Hilsa	<i>Tenualosa ilisha</i>

Other indicators can show the relative importance of fish consumption. Official figures indicate per capita consumption of fish was three times higher than that of meat in 2000 (DoF, 2002).

Fish is a rich source of lysine (which complements lysine deficient rice protein) as well as all the other essential amino acids, vitamin A, essential fatty acids and calcium all of which are difficult to secure in non-fish products including many meats. The focus of investigations of the Myanmar diet should therefore include these aspects of nutritional quality, not merely the quantity.

Preserved fish plays an evident role in the Myanmar diet although the small quantities consumed make this an often hidden contribution to the overall fish consumption, since these products can be consumed at almost every meal, they can contribute a significant proportion of the diet. In one market in Shan State alone, there were 28 different types of preserved fish (freshwater and marine, see Table 3).

Table 3: Number of types/species of preserved fish in Nyaung Shwe market, Shan State

Freshwater species	Number of types on sale
Fermented fish	4
Dried fish (Snakehead, <i>Puntius</i> , Rotee, <i>Rasbora</i> , etc.)	12
Fish paste	1
Salted fish	2
Marine species	

Fermented fish	0
Dried fish	5
Fish paste	0
Salted fish	1
Shrimp paste (gnapi)	1

Identifying the poor

Part of the terms of reference for the mission was to identify key constraints to future development of aquaculture and aquatic resource management, including its role in poverty alleviation and to recommend practical strategies to address these constraints. This first involves identifying the poor. Those studying poverty in Myanmar have reported difficulty in finding data and measuring trends, and report no systematic poverty study of Myanmar. There appear to be few indices of poverty or income distribution data available, though expenditure and percentage expenditure on food, purchasing power, calorific intake and GDP per capita is reported in the government Statistical Year Book. According to a study by Satio and Kiong in 1999 drawing on the Statistical Year Book, GDP per capita rose from around K700 after World War I to K1 600 in the late 1990's. The slow rise in GDP was punctuated by falls and periods of stagnation.

A nationwide census of expenditure was carried out in 1997 (Statistical Year Book, 1998). Expenditure on food and beverages amongst States/Divisions ranged between 65-75 percent of total expenditure. Lower Myanmar, closer to the main goods import base, Yangon (with consequent lower transport costs for imported goods) and with a productive coastal fishery tended to have lower food costs and may account for lower percentage expenditure on food compared to Upper Myanmar. Total expenditure (at 1997 prices) ranged between US\$ 0.28-0.57 with an average of 0.44 US\$/day (compared to the World Bank's somewhat broad-brush poverty level of 1 US\$/day). On this basis, Chin state (bordering poor South Asian neighbours, Bangladesh and India, lying in the unproductive dry zone) is the poorest in Myanmar (0.28 US\$) and Thanintharyi State (bordering Thailand and the lucrative Thai

market, and benefiting from productive coastal resources) the richest (0.57 US\$/day). Expenditure in Mandalay Division equates to the country average.

"Fish supply is much diminished from previous times" (Shan Community Development Workers) in Nyaung Shwe.

Much of Myanmar is a fertile, productive environment where food production is unlikely to be limiting. However, slender and volatile purchasing power and limited state managed welfare would be likely to impact heavily on non-food producer's access to food. One indicator of diminishing purchasing power is



changes in price of food commodities compared to minimum wage, e.g. rice has increased in price 46 times (in Mandalay between 1960 and 1995) resulting in an 80 percent decrease in purchasing power of the minimum wage over the period (calculated from figures of Khin Maung Kyi et al., 2000).

The World Bank's generic poverty indicator "income to attain basic nutritional needs of 2 250 calories per day" is almost double the calorific intake calculated from monthly food consumption reported in the Statistical Year Book (1998), which varies from below 800 in Chin to 1 200 in Bago. Urban Yangon is reported (SYB, 1998) to

be 1 000 calories.

These four indicators appear to suggest that Myanmar is poor compared to most other countries. Poverty is most likely to equate to hunger for people who purchase rather than produce food. It is recommended that poverty alleviation objectives of the Department of Fisheries focus on those most vulnerable to hunger, who are likely to be the landless, the urban poor and small-scale producers, each with limited capacity to secure entitlement to food.

An example of a more detailed local investigation into poverty is the Village Profile from 463 villages in Nyaung Shwe Township (UNDP, 1999), made

available to the mission from the UNDP Human Development Initiative for "planning micro-interventions in different sectors".

UNDP findings from Nyaung Shwe Township suggest:

- Approximately 40 percent landlessness (although a proportion of these people live over water on Inle Lake and can make a livelihood with floating gardens).
- 1.89 percent of houses with grass/palm thatch roofs (which might indicate poor housing condition).
- More than 95 percent of villages within 1.6 miles of a primary school, but 64 percent of the rural population without primary education.
- Health care facilities include 2 station hospitals, 5 Rural Health Centres (RHC) and 23 sub-RHC; one health centre per 17 villages at an average distance of 2.9 miles.
- 72 percent of households which use "unsanitary open pits or no latrines".

These indicative proxy indicators of poverty used by UNDP attempt to include basic factors which contribute to wellbeing such as access to farm land (food production), type of roofing system (shelter), education level and health care facilities and sanitation (health).

Understanding peoples livelihoods

According to contemporary development thinking, such data begin to explore the physical (infrastructure), natural (land, forests, fisheries) and human assets (such as health, fitness and skills) upon which people build their livelihoods. Further assets which play a vital role include financial capital (including access to credit), and the relationships of trust which link people with each other and which can also affect their access to services and support from service providers (sometimes referred to as social capital). It is the capacity of people, drawing on these assets, within the context of their vulnerability, for example to:

- Seasonal effects (on labour opportunities, climate and commodity prices);
- 'Shocks' such as flooding, drought, fire, loss of a family member or friend (and their labour or other support), or of livestock, property or services; and
- Trends (such as over-fishing, pollution, increasing population density) which determine what they can achieve.

Such knowledge and thinking can help to us understand the role that, in this case, inland fisheries or aquaculture may play in different peoples livelihoods. This in turn can help to frame Fisheries Department Policies in support of people's livelihoods, including those people that are poor who can benefit.

It is recommended that the capacity of line agency staff to investigate and understand the livelihoods of poor people who manage aquatic resources, and their capacity to use this knowledge in the development of policies, legislation and support services be strengthened. It should be recognized that this is a considerable undertaking.

Nyaung Shwe market

Leasable fisheries



Leasable fisheries are floodplain fishing grounds which are leased to individuals (or groups) for fishery activities annually (see Table 4). In a leasable fishery, the lessee has the sole right to exploit all the fish resources, using any gear. The lessee is also expected to stock species of their choice, as the flooding occurs, but the numbers to be stocked is not defined. On the other hand, there are leasable fisheries that are dependent entirely on natural recruitment of indigenous species and in exceptional cases on exotics such as *Oreochromis niloticus*. Leasable fisheries contribute to the livelihoods of large commercial operators or institutions and depending on the management of the system can support large numbers of sub-lessees and fish sellers. (A background history of the management of leasable fisheries is presented in Annex 2).

Prior to World War II there were 4 006 'Inn' Leasable fisheries but post war this had declined to 3 710. By 1999 the number of leasable fisheries had further reduced to 3 474 with some of the leasable fisheries sites being

converted to agriculture. If agriculture subsequently failed, the land essentially becomes 'open fishery' or available for exploitation by local business interests. This has apparently been the case where the promotion of agriculture, especially deepwater rice cultivation by private sector interests has seen the transformation of substantial areas of leasable fisheries into agricultural land. The subsequent failure of the deepwater rice cultivation locations did not see a return to government managed leasable fisheries and the current status, ownership and management of these ex-fisheries was not available to the mission, although obviously of concern to the DoF due to the impacts on fisheries resources. Total current area of the leasable fisheries is estimated at about 148 500 ha.

Auction process, duration of lease and renewal

In principle, the awarding of leases for leasable fisheries is undertaken by auction (sealed bid). The auction is overseen by an auction committee which includes representatives of DoF, the Revenue Dept, the Land Allocation Committee and the Township Committee. The lease may also involve some input/suggestion from higher authorities concerning extension or to whom the lease should be awarded.

Whilst this is the nominal process, in practice the system is similar to that referred to in the description of the history of leasable fisheries from 1948 (Annex 2 - U Maung Khin, 1948). In this case there is some discretionary power to re-award the lease to a 'good leaseholder' and also support from members of the auction committee obviously strengthens a case. The lessees visited had all had continuous leases for the past 8 years, although it can be expected that smaller leasable fisheries and less influential lessees might not enjoy such extended terms of leasing. It needs to be noted that the mission did not have the opportunity to meet with any previous lessee nor visit a lease that has changed "ownership".

There is an apparent proviso in the terms of leasing that allows an authority at the division level (possibly upon the recommendation of DoF or MFF) to extend the lease of the current lessee. In this situation the lessee would be judged to be managing their lease well and possibly even enhancing the production. The cost of the lease is generally relatively low and in cases where leases are renewed; there may be an annual incremental increase of 10 percent.

Fishery management

The mission visited several leasable fisheries locations that represented a range of management methods and habitat types. Leasable waters are mostly seasonal floodplain waters that recede into smaller permanent water bodies or dry up completely. Almost all of the leasable fisheries visited are productive although not typical of leasable fisheries that are reliant on wild recruitment. The productivity is due to the enhancement and management activities of the lessees.

Some leases in urban areas have been dammed and are now permanent water bodies. In two cases the proximity to urban areas and the inevitable drainage of domestic sewage/runoff greatly increased the productivity of the water.

One of the key factors that was evident to the Mission was that although leasable fisheries is managed by the lessee, all the fisheries provide a direct livelihood for a minimum of 40 to 60 families; these families are engaged in fishing, securing the resource, nursing, preparation of the water body if required and marketing. Moreover the families are drawn from the nearby village(s) and thus there is some spread of benefits into surrounding communities.

"The price (of fish) is increased, the supply is less, the environment is more degraded, there are pesticides from floating vegetable gardens (in Inle Lake), and more sediment". HDI Programme Manager Nyaung Shwe, Shan State.

All of the leasable fisheries visited were questioned regarding the manner in which illegal fishing/poaching of fish was controlled. The lessees had various capacities to control this depending upon the size of their leasable



fishery, the number of people paid to patrol and control, and the population density in the lease area.

In a small leasable fishery, poaching was controlled by patrolling and guarding to deter the activity. Where fishers were caught fishing illegally action may or may not be taken depending upon the frequency of the infringement or the scale of poaching. It is likely that poaching at a level that incurs significant catches is probably dealt with severely. All of the leasable fisheries sites seemed to tolerate a level of fishing by local people since it is essentially impossible to prevent. There is therefore not complete exclusion, but at the same time there are certainly limitations on the local population from accessing the resource.



It was evident to the Mission that the improvements that have been made to the culture-based fishery practices of the leasable fisheries have been rather limited with some notable exceptions. Typically, the lessee has been complacent with the production levels, and that very few, if any, trial and error changes have been made to improve the production. Any changes that have been made have been mostly physical/ structural.

In this respect, there appears to be considerable scope for further enhancement of these fisheries through stocking of advanced large sized fingerlings, using appropriate stocking rates and possibly strategic feeding in some of the smaller leases.

Sub-leasing - Sub-leased lake-based fishing, such as the unique 'saung' trap (opposite) used by Intha fishers on Inle Lake in Shan State provides a livelihood for canoe owners for an annual fee of K1 000. Fishers can fish every day and sell their catch at K600/Viss.

Thaung Tha Man - Mandalay

In the case of this fishery (600 ha; permanent water body), which is so large that effective control is impossible, a system of engaging the local population in the activity had been initiated by the lessee. The lessee has introduced *Oreochromis niloticus* into the water body and now this species contributes nearly 60 percent to the total production (estimated at 2 800 kg/ha), the rest being stocked species such as *Labeo rohita* and minor, indigenous cyprinids, gobids, etc.

The lessee has developed an effective system of exploiting the fish resources and a marketing strategy which engages the community in the exploitation of the resource. The local men involved in the fishery activity and the women of the villages were involved in the subsequent marketing of the catch. Since this is an interesting case of management through involvement rather than exclusion, this is worth explaining further.

There are netting crews (2 crews) employed by the lessee who receive 20 percent of the catch to dispose themselves either by consumption or by sale to the lessee. The majority of fishers are not part of the netting crew and they sell their catch directly to the lessee at one of four landing stations. The prices paid in all cases are below the market rate, but the sale is guaranteed and convenient. The sale of the fish from the landing stations appears to be on a quota basis with women from the local villages (approximately 1 500 in total) queuing up for a fixed 15 kg of fish to sell. The sale price is below the market rate and the women can make a mark up (approximately 15 percent) when they sell at one of the many small markets in and around Mandalay. At the landing station visited by the mission over 100 women were waiting to purchase fish and all transactions were made in cash, indicating that a book or loan system was not operating.

Apart from involving the local communities in the exploitation of the resource, the lessee has also introduced protected areas that have been identified as tilapia breeding grounds and also releases some other species. There is a certain amount of feeding at the time that the lease floods, allegedly to prevent fish from migrating from the lease).

In total it is estimated by the mission that this leasable fishery provides the livelihood for nearly 5 000 persons living in the vicinity of the water body.



Mandalay town

Another leasable fishery in the heart of Mandalay, Kan Daw Gyi (300 ha; permanent water body) has adopted an exclusively stock (2-3 million fingerlings/annum-1) and recapture system (500 000 to 600 000 full grown fish/ year-1). Species harvested are bighead carp (3-4 kg size) and silver carp (2-3 kg size) as well as major Indian carps. The yield from this leasable fishery is about 4 200 kg/ha. This leasable fishery is now treated as a pond, and accordingly a license fee of 45 000 kyats is levied from the owner. This lease has experienced fish kills in the past, and the current practice of feeding 3 tonnes/day needs to be given serious consideration, as this practice is bound to exacerbate the nutrient load of this already eutrophied water body. It

could be that the present production could be achieved with a significantly reduced feed input, and consequently not only make the fishery more cost-effective but increase the possibility of reducing the price to the consumer.



Livelihoods from leasable fisheries - Large-scale fisheries of 10s to 100s of acres are leased, via auction, to those with means to operate and sustain them. Lease holders are required to manage these as cultured-based fisheries.

Involving the community and spreading benefits - Leasable fisheries such as this one at Thaung Tha Man in Mandalay Division represent a decentralized management system for large fisheries and are the main income generating activity of the

Department of Fisheries.

South Mandalay

The Mission visited what could be considered as a typical leasable fishery, a non-perennial flood plain water body, in its eighth year of lease, with a water spread of 222 ha at full flood level. The fishery is culture-based, primarily depending on common carp. Currently, the fishery yields 680 kg/ha, of which the stocked fish account for over 98 percent.

Inle Lake

Inle Lake, Shan State is the second largest natural inland water body in Myanmar. The township of Nyaung Shwe, encompassing 451 villages surround the Lake. The Lake provides the livelihood for about 460 fisher families and many "floating garden" agriculturists, and service providers such as boatmen. Importantly, the Lake provides the main animal protein source (as fresh and dried/preserved fish) for the township populations and the surrounding townships.

Production from the lake is estimated to be about 550-650 tonnes, representing a production of about 20-25 kg/ha/yr, which is about the

expected level of exploitable production from a mesotrophic water body. The main fish resources appear to be snakeheads (*Ophicephalus* spp.), murrels (*Channa* spp.), featherbacks (*Notopterus* spp.), *Wallago* spp., spiny eel (*Mastacembalus* spp.), common carp. Fishers also exploit *Rasbora* spp., *Puntius* spp. (e.g. *P. dorsalis*), atid shrimps, etc., using traps and cast nets, the bulk of which is salted and sun-dried, and sold.

It is apparent that fish species occupying all the trophic levels are exploited, irrespective of size and or species. However, what was evident was that the number of gear types are extremely limited, the main ones being moveable, drop traps ('saung'), small stationary traps, cast nets, long lines (baited) and gill nets. In addition, the lake also provides the livelihood for an unknown number of weed collectors for grass carp farming inland.



Inle lake - Small traps are set also in larger lakes such as these being transported across Inle Lake (Shan State). Small fish play a valuable role in food security, providing essential minerals such as calcium, iodine (goitre is a common debility) and sulphurous amino acids, complementing protein from rice based diets.

This canoe owners at Inle Lake claims hook and line gear provides a better return for the same K1 000 annual fee. This man will leave his 200 m line (with hooks at meter intervals baited with shrimp) overnight every day of the year. Best catches are in April.

The lake, which is purported to have a relatively unique flora and fauna, that includes two finfish genera (Chaudhuri, Sawbwa) and seven species endemic to the Lake (Annandale, 1918), is fast changing in character as a consequence of the large scale establishment of floating gardens for soft vegetable production. There is also development of the northern part of the lake where excavation of sediment to reclaim land for industrial scale horticulture/agriculture is commencing. Such expansion and intensification is associated with high fertilizer use and pesticide use, the latter capable of influencing the nutrient loading and thereby the trophic status of the lake.

Although it is difficult to predict the outcome of these changes, particularly on the fishery, it is almost certain that the rooted, aquatic weeds (predominantly *Charra* spp.) will disappear due to light limitations due to planktonic growth, and hence affect the livelihood of the weed collectors directly, and the inland grass carp culture indirectly through the limitation of a readily available food source. In addition, it could also influence the newly established bird sanctuary, through a reduction in the diversity of the avian fauna over the years.

Open fisheries and rice field resources

All fishing gears require a license from DoF, although in practical terms it is difficult to collect license fees from all the small gear holders. There is widespread fishing activity in water bodies, streams, lakes, reservoirs and rice fields. These activities may be legal or illegal depending upon the location and the existence of fishing regulations or lease holding.



It is currently unclear as to the extent of fishing activities in the open fisheries as these are often occasional, seasonal and may or may not be strictly legal. The DoF has little opportunity to gather information on this dispersed activity and tends to accept that fishing for household purposes cannot and need not be regulated.

This gives rise to the situation whereby it is unclear as to the extent of participation in this activity and whether or not it is a significant part of rural food security or rural livelihood strategies. If comparisons are made with the other Southeast Asian countries then it would

be expected that this resource is in deed a vital part of the household livelihood and especially for the rural poor. Myanmar has extensive ricefield resources and associated channels and streams. This network of water and shallow flooded paddy is a rich source of fisheries production, although since it is the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Department of Fisheries does not have any data regarding the fisheries production of these environments.

Artisanal fishing - Small-scale yet widespread. Artisanal fish trap operations contribute to livelihoods of poor women and men (see discussion of poverty in Myanmar). A traditional Myanmar saying "Eat 100 heads" describes the virtue of consuming a diversity of products for good nutrition. In this regard small fish are especially popular amongst many Myanmar, Shan and Inle people.



Table 4: Description of the leasable fisheries visited by the mission

Location	Years of leasing	Management interventions	Cost of lease (Kyat/yr)	Area of leasable fishery (ha)	Estimated Production (tonnes/yr)	Approx. value of production
South of Mandalay	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Small seasonally flooded area · Agricultural activities take place in the dry season. · Release of nursed advanced 3-4" fingerlings which also comprise a large proportion of the subsequent catch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Harvesting of fish · Guarding/patrolling · Supplemental feeding (1:1 rice bran & oil cake) · Employs 40 people 	500 000	222 ha	151 tonnes (680 kg/ha) Bad season 100 tonnes (450 kg/ha)	\$30 000
Mandalay Lake	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stocking of advance fingerlings Chinese and Indian carp (2-3 million per year) · Feeding at 3 tonnes per day, 50 percent of income · High natural fertility from urban runoff into the lake · Netting crews, continuous harvesting 	45 000	300 ha	1 260 tonnes (4 200 kg/ha)	\$630 000
Thaung Tha Man	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A huge lake with permanent water. · There is some stocking of nursed 4-5" fingerlings (1 000 000/yr) in accordance with lease regulations. · Operates a 5 ha nursery pond for this purpose · Tilapia have been introduced and form the bulk of the catch. · There is demarcation of some Tilapia breeding grounds and fishing in these areas is not allowed · Some of the species released are re-caught. · Distribution of free fishing gear to villages surrounding the lake · Two Catching teams are employed with a 20 percent of catch bonus · Other fishers can catch but must sell to the landing stations · Purchase of catch at 4 stations paying lower than market rates · The onward sale of the catch to the wives of the fishers/local traders for resale in markets surrounding Mandalay town. (each gets 15 kg) 	5 000 000	600 ha	1 680 tonnes (2 800 kg/ha)	\$840 000
Inle Lake	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The lake is divided into two leasable fisheries 	100 000	27 000 ha	>550-650 tonnes	\$550 000

		· MFF holds the the lease in two and sub-leases to about 300 fishermen at 1 000 Kyat/yr			(20-25 kg/ha)	
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Setting of small bamboo and basket traps by women and men in wet paddy and small water courses catch valuable small fish (e.g. Amblypharyngodon, Ophicephalus, Rasbora and barbs). Catches can be a few fish up to 2 Viss/day. (1 viss = 1.6 kg).



Enhancement of freshwater leasable fisheries/culture-based fisheries

Myanmar also has extensive capture fisheries in its freshwaters and these are either leasable or open fisheries. As part of the regulations covering the leasable fisheries lessees must release some fish to their lot. The effectiveness of this is undoubtedly variable since the size of the fish released and the environment into which it is released will determine greatly the

likelihood of survival of the fish. As a general rule, the larger the fingerling released the greater the chances it will survive long enough to be recaptured. In one leasable fishery visited the recapture of the same species as those stocked by the lessee was a strong indication of the potential of this form of management and was considered to be related to the size of the fingerlings stocked.

A common form of aquaculture is related to enhancement of culture based fisheries or leasable fisheries. As part of the regulations concerning leasable fisheries, fish fingerlings must be released to the fishery. The lessees therefore purchase fry or fingerlings and nurse prior to release to their fishery sites once the flood waters have risen. The impact of this activity on the productivity of the leasable fishery is probably variable.

The mission visited one site (Su Sann Inn, perennial water, 48 ha) where the fish returned were almost entirely of the species stocked (Rohu and common carp). The stocking rate was about 0.4 piece/m² and the size at stocking was an advanced fingerling of about 5". The yield was approximately 3.3 tonnes/ha, with total harvest reaching 160 tonnes.

Licensed gears - Larger gears, like this stream trap (Nyaung Shwe, Shan State) provide more visible livelihoods and are licensed by the Department of Fisheries. They are therefore recordable and can be strategically managed by government. Such systems set below paddy land can capture up to 75 kg/day during peak months (e.g. November-December) prior to the rice harvest. In the market Ophicephalus bring K700 and Amblypharyngodon bring K800/Viss.

Su Sann Inn, Mandalay - Before setting up his 160 tonnes carp farm, this farmer went to the DoF everyday to learn fish farming. "My wife's parents are 'middlemen' in the fish trade and encouraged me because demand for Rohu could not be satisfied in this region". Su Sann Inn, Ta Mar Kone Village, 27 Miles from Mandalay.



In other leasable fisheries where small fingerlings were released or the numbers released were insignificant relative to the area of water, there was little indication that the fish stocked were being recaptured and the catch was mainly self-recruiting species or wild fish species - suggesting that the impact of stocking was limited.

The mission was of the opinion that the culture and release of advanced large sized fingerlings does enhance leasable fisheries catch and is responsible for the quite high catches that are obtained from them. However, there had not been any cost-benefit studies on stocking of these large waters in Myanmar, and the economic rationale of the activity remains unqualified.



The reservoir resource in Asia is the highest in the world, and reservoir fish production in Asia contributes significantly (80 percent), and increasingly to the estimated global inland fish production of about 10 million tonnes. Asian countries that until recently did not have major programmes for reservoir fisheries development have embarked on such programmes, as for example in Viet Nam; the Government of Viet Nam expects to increase reservoir fish production to 250 000 tonnes by year 2010 from 50 000 tonnes at present.

Myanmar has very large lake and reservoir resource estimated by DoF at about 115 867 ha. Previously, reservoir fisheries were encouraged in Myanmar, and it provided the livelihood for many thousands of families, and contributed significantly to the rural fish supplies, as well as contributed to the national revenue through the revenue generated from the issue of fishing licenses.

However, since 1995 fisheries activities have been banned through a decree by the Department of Irrigation which has jurisdiction over all reservoirs in Myanmar. The Department of Fisheries nevertheless continues with a reservoir stocking programme of Indian and Chinese major carps for conservation purposes.

Reservoirs

Reservoirs are rarely built for fishery purposes. However, fisheries are a significant user of reservoir water resources, and increasing emphasis is being laid on reservoir fisheries development, particularly in developing countries, almost without exception, such as for example, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, etc. The primary reasons for such a developmental emphasis are:

- Increase the fish supplies to the community, often at an affordable price, and thereby increase the nutritional status of the poorer sectors of the community,
- Provide a means of livelihood to a significant number of families living in the vicinity of reservoirs, and
- An effective means of utilizing natural productivity of water bodies, without perceived direct environmental degradation, for community benefit.

DoF does not include reservoir catches in its current reports since it does not collect license fees. The Mission had the opportunity to visit only one reservoir (in Upper Myanmar; Se Dew Gyi Reservoir; 2 890 ha; impounded in 1986/87) and had discussions with some fishers. It transpired that there was some degree of fishing in the reservoir, but to a very much lesser extent prior to the issue of the decree of banning fishing. Although fishing continues on reservoirs, it is considered only for home consumption and also nominally allowed only for families that have a livelihood in the area. Consequently, this "illegal" fishing for household purposes not only deprives the Government of Myanmar of revenue, but also inevitably means that the fishers are operating in a manner that is likely to affect fishing efficiency and marketing strategies.

Even if a production level, as low as 150 kg/ha is used, the reservoir fishery resources of Myanmar should yield about 17 350 tonnes of fish per year, and also provide employment opportunities to at least 20 000 to 30 000 persons in the rural areas.

It was unfortunate that the Mission was unable to obtain copy of the decree banning fishing nor documentation of the underlying reasons for the decree issued by the Department of Irrigation. The numerous discussions that the Mission had with officials, fishers and persons knowledgeable on the matter indicated that the decree has been issued for the following reasons:

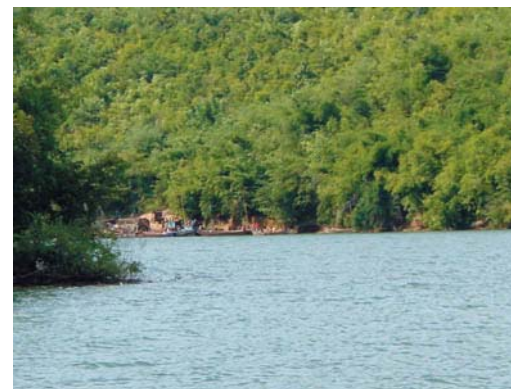
- The perception that fishing could physically affect the reservoir and/or the dam and
- Fishery activities in the reservoir would deprive the fish availability to farmers in the command area through the spill-over of stocks from the reservoir to the command area.

Based on the experiences of other nations which continue to have well developed reservoir fisheries, for more than 50 years, it is concluded that fishery activities in the reservoir would have little or no relationship to the fish availability to farmers in the command area. Reservoir fisheries are considered one of the least environmentally invasive forms of fishery and should be encouraged. This is an area which could contribute significantly to total fish supplies. It is the conclusion of the Mission that fishing activities will not physically affect the reservoir or the dam.

Based on the above reasons the Mission is of the view that Myanmar should take steps to reintroduce reservoir fisheries, initially on a small scale, and in conjunction with the irrigation authorities, and over time, supported by research, evolve suitable strategies to optimize yields, including the cost-

effectiveness of any proposed stocking programme that is to be included, and sustain it in the long term.

Freshwater aquaculture



Freshwater aquaculture contributes to the economy of Myanmar in a number of ways. The production of fish fingerlings and stocking into aquaculture ponds is the typical form of aquaculture and is currently practised for a range of species. This is also the form of aquaculture that is promoted by the DoF along with some cage aquaculture. Typically the aquaculture operations that were observed by the mission were

over 1.2 ha and were not of a type that could be widely adopted by Myanmar farmers in general, due to the scale and the requirement for capital investment.

Some small operations visited (in Mandalay and Shan State) had been constructed over a number of years by the owners, investing the opportunity cost of their time and typically converted their compound gardens (in Mandalay) or marginal/ abandoned rice fields.

Land use for aquaculture

The strict control by the agriculture department regarding the conversion of rice lands into other uses (especially aquaculture) is one of the strongest restraints to more widespread development of aquaculture in freshwater areas. Paddy lands flat and typically inundated by flooding or rainfall for rice cultivation. Paddy land also has few alternative uses for agriculture because of the tendency to be covered in water for parts of the year. Aquaculture is one of the few activities that are profitable enough to repay the cost of conversion of paddy (through raising earth walls and excavation into ponds). In areas where the profitability of rice farming is quite marginal, fish pond aquaculture can be an attractive alternative.



Se Dew Gyi Reservoir 2 890 ha - Previously, reservoir fisheries were encouraged in Myanmar, and it provided the livelihood for many thousands of families and contributed significantly to the rural fish supplies, as well as contributed to the national revenue through the revenue generated from the issue of fishing licenses.

"I went into fish hatching because I knew it was good business" - Small Farm Owner, Baw Ri Tha Village, Taungyi District, Shan State.

Rice-fish culture

The DoF in response to the need to improve income from paddy farming, whilst still maintaining some rice production, DoF reports that it has had nominal approval from the Ministry of Agriculture to start experimentation with the culture of fish in rice paddies. Rice-fish culture has a very long history in most of Southeast Asia and there is a great deal of information available regarding the various reasons why it has been successful in some circumstances and failed elsewhere. The success of rice fish culture is extremely variable and relates to the reliability of water supply, control of theft, prevention of flooding or escape of the fish and the availability of large sized fingerlings at the start of the paddy culture season. In a country such as Myanmar, where the wild fisheries resources are still very extensive, the presence of large numbers of carnivorous fish in the paddy fields is another cause of poor return from stocked fish. This is generally avoided by the

stocking of large fingerlings but this adds another step in the culture process and increases the overall cost of stocking making it unattractive to some farmers.

Ultimately rice fish culture can only be tried in a practical situation and the impacts evaluated, ideally with the participation of farmers so that any results are grounded in the realities of their farming systems (i.e. participatory/farmer based research).

Pond aquaculture

Pond aquaculture in Myanmar is set against a Buddhist tradition of non-culture of fish (religious avoidance of cruelty to fish) and unwillingness or preference not to kill animals. It is apparent though that freshwater aquaculture is increasing and is growing fastest where ethnic Chinese are becoming involved since they do not have this cultural avoidance. The ethnic Chinese are also able to raise the input capital for aquaculture development more readily and also have access to information and technologies from China.

Government of the Union of Myanmar has formed a State level committee to facilitate a three-year project of fresh water fish production through aquaculture. This is directed towards sustaining food security (freshwater aquaculture and enhancement of fisheries) and increased export earnings (principally shrimp aquaculture but also some freshwater culture and brackishwater aquaculture). The goal of this is to increase fishpond area up to 40 650 ha (100 000 acres) at the end of the project.

The size of aquaculture ponds observed in Mandalay province are rather large and may be constructed or more likely converted from low lying or flooded ground. There were reports of large numbers of small-scale ponds but the mission did not observe many and this can only be speculated upon. In Shan State a number of smaller fish culture operations and hatcheries were visited, but these still occupied water areas of over 1 hectare.

There is no record of small pond holdings because this information is not collected and ponds less than 8 m x 8 m do not require licensing. Based on the observations of the Mission, there appear to be very few small (less than 400 m²) fish pond operations. This is unusual relative to other countries of Southeast Asia, where small ponds are quite popular, but may reflect a cultural reluctance to farm fish (unlike the ethnic Chinese in Myanmar, who

readily engage in fish culture), or possibly uncertainty over the legality or potential of small scale fish culture. Another possibility is that wild fish are sufficiently available to lowland rural people to render fish culture in small ponds unattractive.

Identification of the underlying reasons for this would have significant implications for aquaculture development in rural areas especially where the rural poor are targeted. It is recommended that this be clarified and documented.

Freshwater species cultured in Myanmar

Typical aquaculture ponds are stocked with a number of species on an annual basis. The favoured species are Rohu and common carp, although some tilapia may also be found in larger ponds. Grass carp are also cultured in Shan State, since they are easy to feed and there is a market with the ethnic Chinese communities. Some market prices are shown in Table 5.

Stocking and harvesting

Fingerlings may be nursed to larger sizes before stocking by the owners and there is also nursing of fingerlings prior to release to culture based fisheries and leasable fisheries. Prices vary with the regions although a typical price for 0.5-1" fish was 3 kyat each.

In ponds with perennial water harvesting may occur after a period of one year and in some instances a year and a half. There is a growing tendency to produce smaller table sized fish than the larger (0.2 kg) fish that were previously produced which shortens the culture period. This also allows the marketing of fish during the season during which there is a shortage of fish from the wild fisheries due to the closed season (May-June).

Typical stocking densities are about 0.5-0.8 pieces/m² but there is reportedly and trend to increasing stocking density that is part of the reduced size at harvest. The source of fingerlings is varied - either from the government hatcheries (there are four in Mandalay division, none in Shan State) or from a number of small-scale private hatcheries (Shan has three private hatcheries and will shortly have five due to a rapidly increasing demand from development of aquaculture ponds at the northern part of Nyaung Shwe).

The greater availability of fingerlings in this area may further stimulate aquaculture pond construction further away. The ready availability of

fingerlings is a strong driving force for aquaculture development especially when coupled to improved road communications and access to markets.

The breeding of fish using hypophysation is reasonably routine in Myanmar government hatcheries and there is now access to Chinese fish-breeding hormones (HCG, Luteinizing hormone and possibly LHRHa). This allows the mass spawning of the Indian and common carps and also unseasonal/repeat-breeding of common carp. Small-scale hatcheries can also obtain the breeding hormones but may tend towards the use of carp pituitary which they can produce themselves.

Government hatcheries

There are currently 16 DoF hatcheries located in 5 divisions and one state. DoF estimates of fingerling production are difficult to interpret as no distinction is made between fry (typically 7 days post hatching) and fingerling (0.5-1" or 4-5") production.

The release of 7 day old fry to natural waters is considered to have questionable benefits since the survival rate of such small fish can be expected to be so low as to have no significant impact on the fish population already presenting the water body.

The DoF hatcheries produce both fingerlings for stocking out in aquaculture and for sale to leasable fisheries. These are typically 0.5-1" in size and there is usually some onward nursing by the buyer.

A DoF estimate of its hatchery production is approximately 398 million fry (size unspecified) of which 98 million were destined for fisheries enhancement. Private sector production is considered far higher at 700 million from 3 hatcheries and there are about 54 private hatcheries operating nationally (Win Lat, 2002). The considerable vagueness of reporting of hatchery production is quite typical and the number of hatchlings is only a vague reflection of the number of surviving fingerlings that are stocked into aquaculture or released to fisheries.

Table 5: Prices of cultured freshwater fish in Shan State and Mandalay Division

Commercial scale	Mandalay	Shan
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		Kyat/kg	Kyat/kg
Rohu	<i>Labeo rohita</i>	-	480
Mrigal	<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i>	600	-
Catla	<i>Catla catla</i>	-	-
Common carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	200	720
Grass carp	<i>Ctenopharyngodon idellus</i>	-	480
Silver carp	<i>Hypophthalmichthys molitrix</i>	-	-
Big head	<i>Aristichthys nobilis</i>	-	-
Snakehead spp.	<i>Channa spp.</i>	-	980
Tilapia	<i>Oreochromis spp.</i>	480	-
Hybrid catfish	<i>Clarias gariepinus</i> x <i>C. macrocephalus</i>	-	700
Striped catfish	<i>Pangasius hypothalamus</i>	-	-
Great white sheatfish	<i>Wallago attu</i>	1 350	-
Experimental			
Freshwater prawn	<i>Macrobrachium rosenbergii</i>	1 400	-
Local barb	<i>Rotee cotio</i>	-	-

Pacu		<i>Collosoma</i>	-	-
Thai Barb	Silver	<i>Barbodes gonionotus</i>	-	-

Small-scale hatcheries - Small-scale hatchery and nursing supplies not only Mandalay and the surrounding area but buyers even come from surrounding states to purchase - additional services are provided such as technical and market information.



Private hatcheries

The mission visited several small-scale private hatchery operations. These operations are producing common carp and Rohu at both fry and fingerling size for sale to aquaculture pond owners and the owners of leasable fisheries (particularly in the northern parts of Mandalay division and further). In Shan State there was demand for common carp and grass carp and these were being produced for stocking both local ponds and for export to Yangon.

The hatcheries have different strategies for production either producing their own fry or purchasing fry from the DoF hatchery and nursing on for sale. The small private operations produced about 1-1.5 million fingerlings annually and a substantially greater number of fry (50 million).

These private hatcheries compete for markets with the larger DoF hatcheries (where DoF hatcheries exist), but have a number of mechanisms by which they can provide additional services to customers - one hatchery provided accommodation for customers that lived far from Mandalay, another provided (for a price) a pump rental service for draining and filling ponds. These types of services are crucial for smaller farmers that cannot afford to purchase capital items. In addition to this the experience of the hatchery owners is often greater than that of their customers and they also provide advice on the culture of fish as well as advice on harvesting times and likely markets. The four sites visited ranged between 2.0-2.8 ha.

The entry into the hatchery business has been gradual and both owners mentioned that they had started as fish pond owners and gradually developed the hatchery business as they realized the profit return for a small site was greater if they focussed on hatchery and nursery activities.



Feeds and feeding

According to information available to the mission, typical productivity of aquaculture ponds is about 1.0-3.5 tonnes/ ha depending upon the level of stocking and feeding. Feeding of aquaculture ponds is variable with tendency to supplemental feeding of rice bran and agricultural by-products. Some farms are integrated with livestock (principally chickens) production but these are certainly a minority.

The production of significant amounts of Rohu, tilapia and common carp as well as other cyprinid wild fish form the leasable fisheries in Mandalay inevitably means that cultured fish compete in the same markets. This means that there is a relatively low price for tilapia, Rohu and common carp (typically 600-800 Kyat/kg) and this makes high investment in aquaculture unattractive. Since market prices are low, the investment in feeds and fingerlings must be equally low and hence the intensity of production and use of pelleted feeds is limited.

There is one feed mill in Mandalay (in upper Myanmar) producing fish pellet feeds with a capacity of 75 tonnes per day although it is currently producing less than this due to lack of market demand. The quality of the feed is low (claimed to be >27 percent crude protein, <percent fish meal/dried fish content) and it appears to be used only as a supplement. In the future, the development of further demand for aquacultured fish, expansion of culture into higher value species may increase demand for fish feeds. It is also important that as demand for improved fingerlings for stocking into aquaculture ponds or for release to water bodies, the need for better quality feeds will emerge.

There is a period during which the leasable fisheries are closed (April to June) and at this time the price of fish rises. Aquacultured fish have a window of opportunity to exploit the shortage of fish and some operators may schedule harvests to exploit this advantage. Larger riverine fish (Wallago, larger cyprinids, *Pangassius* like species) command a higher price (1 000-1 200 Kyat/kg) and there is some interest to culture these species.

Fresh fish sellers - Nyaung Shwe - These women bring 40 kg/day to the main market. The rising demand and cost may limit access to fish for more remote people who depend also on the lake resources for their fish protein. Iodine deficiency is quite prevalent.

Marketing

Inle Lake fishery and marketing

In Shan State, community markets are held on a traditional rotating basis, in which every town within a given area hosts a market every five days. At Nyaung Shwe market and Nam Pan market at opposite ends of the Inle Lake,

women gather to sell their fish, totalling around 1 tonne for the day. Some bring fish they have caught with basket traps and hook and line that day or the previous day, others have purchased from fishermen. Two women from a village on the eastern shore who operate together have 10 kg of fresh fish, mostly snakehead both large and small and catch and sell fish twice in 5 days. The women have no scales and sell the fish strung together in groups. Their catch is worth US\$ 16 and represents 4 days effort earning them the equivalent of 1.14 US\$/day nearly three times the average daily expenditure for Myanmar of US\$ 0.44 (as reported in Statistical Year Book, 1998). Some women who sell all there fish return with a second batch sometimes selling 40 kg in the day.

Institutions and their roles

The role of the Department of Fisheries (DoF)

Recent history

Fisheries were recognized in the late 1920's and early 1930's as an important provider of income and employment and as a source of revenue to the colonial administration. The 1931 Census of Burma, reported that the industry employed 55 000 full time fishers as well as 16 000 part-time. According to the Department of Fisheries, administration of aquaculture originated in 1954 when the Agriculture and Rural Development Corporation (ARDC) set up an Aquaculture Section, starting with a station in Yangon. Tilapia (probably *Oreochromis niloticus*) was introduced from Thailand and cultured locally. By 1956, ARDC had established 100 fish farms. Aquaculture expanded via the capture and nursing of wild-caught Rohu, Catla and Mrigal fingerling (collected June-October and nursed by ARDC). The Corporation also conserved the spawning grounds of these species especially in Thrawaw, Hinsata Shwe Daung Pyae townships in lower Burma and Mandalay district and Amarapura (Mandalay), around Myit Ngae river and Sintgu areas.

In 1964, common carp were introduced from Israel and Indonesia for aquaculture. Their growth rate was greater and they proved popular for culture. In 1967, with the support of FAO, induced breeding of Rohu was established. In 1990 hybrid Clarias was introduced to Myanmar and in 1994 Pangasius culture was initiated. There remains a government focus in freshwater aquaculture with induced breeding of Indian major carps, as well as grass carp, big head carp, silver carp and common carp.

Aquaculture support industries - This feed mill in Mandalay produces a low quality fish feed for supplementing pond culture and the owners leasable fishery. Improvements in feed quality might be targeted at nursery production for stocking into aquaculture ponds and leasable fisheries.



Current role

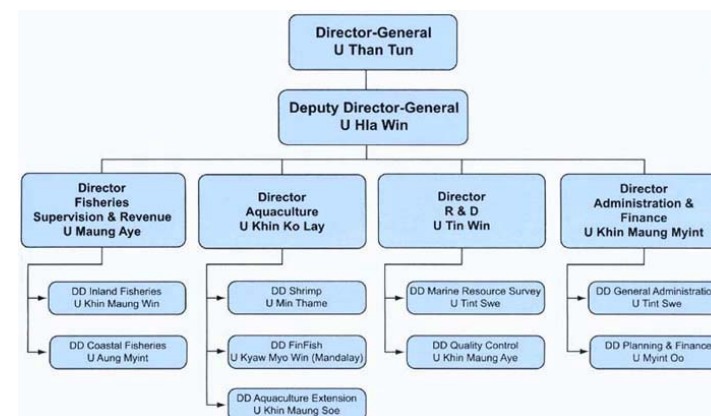
The Department of Fisheries in Myanmar comes under the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, its key role being the management of fisheries and aquaculture. The Department was reorganized in April 2002 to better address the increasing importance of aquaculture in Myanmar. However its size and the scale of resources for the Fisheries Department does not reflect the central importance of fish in Myanmar, both in terms of its expanding economic contribution and the contribution it makes to food security nutrition and livelihood opportunities. The new administrative structure has four directorates dealing with capture fisheries, aquaculture, research and development and administration (see DoF Organogram, Figure 1). Some roles are cross-cutting whilst others relate to fisheries or aquaculture administration; they can be summarized as follows:

- The issuing of licenses for fisheries gear/vessels/sites and aquaculture sites/ventures.
- Evaluation of sites for aquaculture or fisheries.

- The production of fingerlings for sale to aquaculture and leasable fisheries (revenue generation) and stocking of Open Water Fisheries (reservoirs, rivers and other water bodies including community ponds)
- As an advisory body to the Minister of Livestock and Fisheries and the Divisional and State Government on fisheries and aquaculture matters.
- As a regulatory body for the correct and proper conduct of fisheries and aquaculture (i.e. inspection of fishing gears/sites).
- As an inspection body for the fish trade (i.e. inspection of legal size of export products, quality assurance and certification, etc.).
- Administration of the system for the auctioning of Leasable Freshwater Fisheries (the auction price of the lease is collected by DoF). This is a key income generating activity from the inland fisheries sector.
- Stocking of Open Water Fisheries. This is performed in a number of ways ranging from the release of millions of 7-day old fish fry (typically Rohu) to the release of larger (0.5-1") fingerlings. (e.g. one hatchery may release up to 50 million fry to natural waters).
- Administration of water bodies for aquaculture including so-called virgin land, degraded agricultural lands, perennially flooded areas, small dams, village ponds, borrow pits near roads and houses, spill water from irrigation, feasible cage culture sites in rivers, rice fish, environment friendly mangrove culture, salt pens (in rainy season), barge and raft culture in brackish and marine areas.
- The collection and communication of aquaculture knowledge (under the Deputy Director for Aquaculture Extension).
- Training/extension.

The national DoF office in Yangon has a staff of about 1 000, whilst the State and Divisional Fisheries administration varies with the importance of fisheries locally. Mandalay Division which is an important fish production centre for Upper Myanmar has 4 Fisheries Stations. Thayetkone Fisheries Station near Mandalay town is an example, which has a staff of 35 engaged in carp hatching, restocking, fingerling sales, training and to a limited extent extension.

Figure 1: Organogram for Myanmar Department of Fisheries (12.2002)



There is typically one DoF officer per 3-4 townships (and this officer does not usually have a vehicle). The officers will check fishing gears, mesh sizes and licenses. In Shan State, all 20 DoF staff currently operate in the south of the state west of the Thalwin River, 18 of whom monitor the Inle Lake and two others work further east.

Aquaculture Development and Stock Enhancement planning in Myanmar

The first plan produced for aquaculture in Myanmar was written as a project spanning 2000-2003. It remains unclear if this will become a regular, perhaps 3-yearly, planning process. The stated objectives of the plan are quoted directly as follows:

1. To set up aquaculture of fish by government and the private sector to increase production per acre, to expand fish ponds and to distribute suitable species for states and divisions.
2. To increase the fish consumption amongst local people nationally.
3. To upgrade the style of fish eating so as to support the wellbeing.
4. To initiate and expand marine fish culture (as most marine fish have an export market).
5. To expand production of other freshwater fish which have an export market.
6. To conserve the freshwater fish resources in man-made, natural and marine water bodies and
7. To increase and sustain overall production, especially via stocking of seed.

Implementation procedure for the current 3-year national 'plan for aquaculture' involves upgrading fish farming methods, looking at feasible methods in relation to conditions, monitoring effectiveness, supporting access to electricity and fuel, and safeguarding fish farmers. This will take place in the context of sustaining and increasing natural stocks, reviewing internal and export markets and identifying the best methods for improvement.

The 3-year plan is 'projectised' and target based, with targets for fry and fingerling production, for seedlings distribution in natural water bodies, coastal aquaculture and brackish water stocking, fish hatchery expansion and the development of research programmes and demonstration sites. An example is that Fish Farm Number 2 in Upper Myanmar has stocked 12 million fry this year and sold 52 million for aquaculture and leasable fisheries, (which exceeds the project target). In open waters the DoF stock 100 fry/acre, including, popularly, into communal village ponds.

Based on experience elsewhere in the region which suggests there was negligible enhancement effect from stocking fry into natural waters, the mission is of the opinion that the stocking of 7 day old fry is unlikely to have any enhancement effect on a natural water body. Successful enhancements are typically found with the stocking of nursed fish of a larger size (>4 inches), as practised by some of the leasable fisheries visited by the mission.

It is recommended that more nursing of stock for enhancement be undertaken by DoF stations to increase the effectiveness of enhancement programmes.

In future the likely emphasis of management policy will require consideration of enhancement, sustainability, and maintenance of bio-diversity and possibly a selective effort reduction in some fisheries, with promotion of alternative employment especially in coastal areas. Coastal brackish water aquaculture is becoming constrained by environmental and disease concerns (white spot syndrome of shrimp, mangrove removal) while freshwater aquaculture expansion may already find itself in competition for water and land with agriculture (paddy) and irrigation. The fisheries that are currently 'open' may change in the future with increasing commercial interest and resultant limitations in access to the current users of the resources and will require the safe guarding of the livelihoods of aquatic resource users who are poor. In all these contexts, benefit would be gained from increased networking within the region with others.

Research and Communication

Although the formalization of research within the Department of Fisheries in Myanmar only occurred in April 2002, it had already gained considerable experience and knowledge through its monitoring and development functions and through formal and informal research conducted at its fisheries stations. Such as improvements on artificial propagation of the species that are currently cultured and/or stocked in to perennial water bodies. As highlighted by the Minister at the outset of the mission, the increasing importance of aquaculture and continued role of fisheries in the livelihoods and diet of the Myanmar population, as well as an important foreign exchange earner in the future, highlights the need for regular research and extension support to sustain fisheries and aquaculture development in the long term, and also to maintain environmental integrity.

In this regard, the recent establishment of DoF Directorates dedicated to Research and Development and to Aquaculture Extension is extremely timely. This provides a useful administrative framework, to strengthen and systematise a process, firstly to bring together and share the lessons learnt, and thereafter to communicate widely the knowledge gained.

The creation of a Directorate for Research and Development and to Aquaculture Extension has to be followed up, rather quickly, with capacity building in major areas of research thrusts that are pivotal to sustained development of the fisheries sector in Myanmar, and it is suggested that the DoF liaises with the Department of Planning and formulate a proposal for UNDP support in this regard. It is strongly recommended that the cross-cutting functions of these two new directorates be co-ordinated, strengthened and developed. This could take the form of scheduled semi-annual meetings perhaps hosted by station teams on a round-robin basis.

There is an increasing recognition within Southeast Asia of the benefit of increased communications and of sharing lessons with other fisheries line agencies which face common issues. This would be likely to include not only technologies, but also strategies (including communications) as well as ways of working (incentive structures, monitoring systems).

It is strongly recommended that Myanmar Department of Fisheries increase its formal and informal networking with other line agencies and organizations within Myanmar and also with similar national networks in other countries. It is recommended that Myanmar contact the NACA Secretariat to investigate playing a role in the STREAM Initiative in this regard.

Communications and extension

In common with other extension systems in developing countries around the region, the reach of the extension system for fisheries in Myanmar is constrained by the resources available. As the Myanmar government begins to work more closely with local aquatic resource managers from poor rural communities, increased attention will need to be paid to the use of communication strategies and tools. In particular, the Department of Fisheries will be seeking mechanisms to share information about aquatic resources co-management practices and the livelihoods of people who depend upon the resource.

Poverty, limited education and a lack of access to telecommunications, transport and other communication opportunities all isolate poor rural communities from the rest of civil society in Myanmar. In practice, most rural communities have limited access to general information, and even less to information specific to the management of aquatic resources. Accessing such information can be impossible without the assistance of an external third party. And even if aquatic resource management information is within their midst, pressing and immediate livelihoods needs amongst the poorest can lead them not to take heed.

An initial assessment of communication suggests that:

- Rural communities rely heavily on traditional information sources which will include the Village Chief, Monks and to an extent the Village Elders. Word of mouth and village meetings are still the most popular forms of information dissemination within a village.
- Both radio and television are important sources of information, though they are not considered as accessible as other sources within the village (e.g. Village Chief, etc.). According to DoF estimates, in most villages 50 percent of households have access to a radio and a television around 5 percent have access to satellite broadcasts. Lack of electricity is commonly not a barrier; with rural electrification often available from local private power sources (e.g. a generator owner who sells connections within a village). In other developing countries in the region an overwhelming majority of villagers prefer to watch television than listen to the radio. Preferences and access have not been surveyed in Myanmar. Broadcasting stations and times are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Television & radio stations in Myanmar

Channel	Owerahip	Broadcast
Myanmar Radio and TV (MRTV)	Government	07.00-09.00 10.00-15.00 16.00-21.30
Myawady	Army (semi-government)	Mon-Fri 07.00-09.00 16.00-24.00
Yangon City Development Station	Municipal	Sat-Sun 10.00-14.00 11.00-15.00

Possible mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of communications might include investigating some of the following recommendations:

- *Increase the use of mass media, in particular television, radio and any other appropriate communications mechanisms, e.g. travelling theatre/puppetry.*
- *Organize more focused communication activities in villages such as facilitated sessions using posters and flip charts, picture books, etc., farmer field training schools, video sessions broadcast from a mobile broadcasting unit, and pre-recorded information and music broadcast on a village public address system.*
- *Increase the use of village volunteers, study tours, community theatre/role plays, t-shirts, music and song to complement the use of mass media and village-focused communication activities.*
- *Maximise the use of local resources to produce communication materials and involve communities in the development process.*
- *Understand the audience - conduct a base-line knowledge, attitudes, practices survey before developing a communication strategy.*
- *Improve stakeholder networking at the national, provincial and community levels, increase accessibility of existing newsletters, prepare more case study materials, catalogue existing literature in a central resource, and encourage informal networking and cross-sectoral communication.*

The role of Myanmar Fisheries Federation

(MFF)

Two important drivers have recently given rise to the creation of a Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF). One was the pressure on Myanmar during the period of its accession to ASEAN to increase the representation of civil society in local and national administration. Another is the Yangon Government policy focus on developing a market economy through encouraging private enterprise. In 1998, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation was created from the Myanmar Fishery Association. The organization has national and local coverage; most of the larger (fish) farmers are members of the local MFF branch. A Central Executive Committee (with office holders each having a 3 year tenure) plays a co-ordinating role. The current office holders are drawn more from academia and the private sector. Each local MFF chair is selected by a steering committee every 3 years. A 3-day annual meeting is held in Yangon bringing together 10 local MFF branches whose membership includes Fishery operators, fish farmers and related industries and people. The MFF has a variety of roles in supporting its members:

- In particular MFF is able to support applications made by its members to DoF to undertake fisheries and aquaculture activities.
- MFF can also support applications to the Livestock and Fisheries Bank for loan applications.
- There is some indication that MFF enjoys considerable political favour with the higher levels of government and can negotiate directly for its member's applications.
- Local MFF branches raise issues of collective importance to their members (e.g. from Shan State MFF which currently has 30 members from the south of the state) such as accessing initial investment, raw materials for feeds, negotiating with local authorities to change use of land.
- MFF helps with negotiation of selling and harvesting, working collectively.
- The national MFF remit includes "transferring technologies to farmers" and "communicating and cooperating with trans-boundary organizations", although mechanisms for undertaking this do not exist other than through the organization of, and participation in meetings.

In many locations the membership is comprised mainly of wealthy business people who are lessees of leasable fisheries or who own substantial aquaculture operations. There are a number of members with smaller holdings and this is more evident in an area such as Shan State. The

membership cost is 300 Kyat/year (or 5 000 Kyat for life) and as such it is probably not the cost of membership that currently limits participation.

The MFF could represent an important vehicle for co-ordination and communication amongst aquaculture producers and fisheries actors both inside and outside of Myanmar.

It is recommended that the communication remit of MFF be expanded and that links be made with other organizations in other parts of the world so that lessons learnt elsewhere may be shared with fisher and farmers in Myanmar and so that Myanmar can share its insights and learning with the rest of the world.

Inle Lake opposite is leased as two fisheries at K60 000 and K40 000. The current lease holder is the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF). The Federation sub-leases to at least 300 fishers raising an income for MFF Shan State of K200 000

Inland fisheries and aquaculture: conclusions and recommendations

Information and statistics and appropriate valuation of fisheries resources

1. The role of fish and aquatic foods needs to be adequately evaluated, with special attention paid to the distribution aspects and penetration of both fresh and preserved fish into remote areas.
2. The leasable fisheries and open fisheries resource areas vary every year according to the extent of flooding. More effective mapping of these resources would facilitate DoF in estimating the likely production of these fisheries as well as allow better demarcation of individual leases.
3. It is crucial that fisheries related questions are appropriately incorporated into the household survey proposed by UNDP. Care must be taken to identify issues relating to access to fish, and the extent to which fish gathering, collection and purchase are undertaken by households. Asking families if they fish is not sufficient

and will almost certainly give a misleading impression of the importance of fish in the livelihoods and diets of the Myanmar people.



4. Department of Livestock and Fisheries could incorporate some simple questions about rice-field fisheries into a proposed agriculture census (because the Department's statistics do not cover rice-fields).

Aquaculture and aquatic resources in rural development

5. It is highly recommended that future poverty focused food security development involving small-scale pond aquaculture be considered also in Myanmar.

6. It is recommended that poverty alleviation objectives of the Department of Fisheries focus on those most vulnerable to hunger, who are likely to be the landless, the urban poor and small-scale producers, each with limited capacity to secure entitlement to food.

7. It is recommended that the capacity of line agency staff to investigate and understand the livelihoods of poor people who manage aquatic resources, and their capacity to use this knowledge in the development of policies, legislation and support services be strengthened. It should be recognized that this is a considerable undertaking.

8. There appears to be considerable scope for further enhancement of leasable and floodplain fisheries through stocking of advanced large sized fingerlings, using appropriate stocking rates and possibly strategic feeding in some of the smaller leases.

9. The Mission is of the view that Myanmar should take steps to re-introduce reservoir fisheries, initially on a small scale, and in conjunction with the irrigation authorities, and over time, supported by research, evolve suitable strategies to optimize yields including the cost-effectiveness of any proposed stocking programme that is to be included, and sustain it in the long term.

10. Rice fish culture can only be tried in a practical situation and the impacts evaluated, ideally with the participation of farmers so that any results are grounded in the realities of their farming systems (i.e. participatory/ farmer based research).

11. It is recommended that more nursing of stock for enhancement be undertaken by DoF stations to increase the effectiveness of enhancement programmes.

Institutions, communications and networking

12. It is strongly recommended that the cross-cutting functions of these two new directorates be co-ordinated, strengthened and developed. This could take the form of scheduled semi-annual meetings perhaps hosted by station teams on a round-robin basis.

13. It is strongly recommended that Myanmar Department of Fisheries increase its formal and informal networking with other line agencies and organizations within Myanmar and also with similar national networks in other countries. It is recommended that Myanmar contact the NACA Secretariat to investigate playing a role in the STREAM Initiative in this regard.

The following recommendations relate to communications:

14. Increase the use of mass media, in particular television, radio and any other appropriate communications mechanisms, e.g. travelling theatre/puppetry.

15. Organize more focused communication activities in villages such as facilitated sessions using posters and flip charts, picture books, etc., farmer field training schools, video sessions broadcast from a mobile broadcasting unit, and pre-recorded information and music broadcast on a village public address system.

16. Increase the use of village volunteers, study tours, community theatre/role plays, t-shirts, music and song to complement the use of mass media and village-focused communication activities.

17. Maximise the use of local resources to produce communication materials and involve communities in the development process.

18. Understand the audience - conduct a base-line knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey before developing a communication strategy.

19. Improve stakeholder networking at the national, provincial and community levels, increase accessibility of existing newsletters, prepare more case study materials, catalogue existing literature in a central resource, and encourage informal networking and cross-sectoral communication.

20. Communication remit of MFF be expanded and that links be made with other organizations in other parts of the world so that lessons learnt elsewhere may be shared with fisher and farmers in Myanmar and also share its insights and learning with the rest of the world.

Research

The Mission recognized the following areas as research priorities, and recommends that the DoF, Myanmar liaise with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), and other donor agencies to develop research projects on one more, as an initiative.

21. The Mission is of the view that moderate research inputs in to typical leasable fisheries in a selected region, e.g. Upper Myanmar, will enable to increase the fish production in such fisheries, and consequently have positive influences on improving the lives of the communities and the fish supplies in rural areas. Research on leasable fisheries in non-perennial waters; develop suitable stocking strategies, including species combinations, cost-effectiveness of stocking, and the socio-economics of such fisheries. The project will also address the role of naturally recruiting indigenous species in leasable fisheries. It is expected that such research could lead to enhancing production in leasable fisheries, and also will provide useful information on the biology of important species, and thereby on biodiversity and conservation aspects, and enable to uplift the standard of the "communities" involved in leasable fisheries. It needs to be re-emphasised that although an individual is the lessee, the overall activity is essentially a community activity which provides livelihood to many families, ranging from 40 to whole villages. The Mission is of the view that such a programme would be able to draw from the ongoing activities, under the auspices of the ACIAR, in Sri Lanka and Viet Nam on culture-based fisheries, and consequently generate synergies beneficial to all three programmes.

22. Inle Lake in Shan State is an important natural resource to persons, and is important from a biodiversity view point with over 20 animal species being endemic to the Lake. In the recent years the traditional, small-scale "floating gardens" have been expanded significantly through the intervention of commercial growers. The Lake provides the livelihood for at least 800 fisher families and is the main source of animal protein for the inhabitants of Nyaung Shwe township and many of the surrounding townships that purchase the fresh and dried fish produced. The increasing intensity of the surrounding agricultural activities is bound to increase the nutrient and pesticide load in the Lake. The consequences of such increases are difficult, if not impossible, to predict at this stage. It is proposed that a study be conducted on water quality and the fishery of Inle Lake, including the socio-economic status of the fishers. It is expected that such a study will help in bringing about suitable management measures for the fishery, in the light of increasing and possible eutrophication of the water body.

23. In the event the DoF, Myanmar adopts the recommendation to reintroduce reservoir fisheries, it will be imperative that a new

management strategy be developed for the fisheries. In order to do so it is suggested that a research programme be undertaken to estimate potential levels of productivity, using suitable yield-predictive models that are already available. The study is also expected to look at the historical data on stocking and returns, and evaluate a rational stocking strategy accordingly. Based on such results, and in conjunction with potential fishers/fishing communities DoF could develop a co-management strategy(s) to ensure the long term sustainability of the fishery resources.

24. The perennial water leasable fisheries tend to use large amounts of artificial feeds, in spite of the high natural productivity of the waters. Fish kills of a minor scale have already occurred in some waters.

Detailed studies on the productivity of the water bodies and modelling based thereof could provide useful information on the effectiveness of use of artificial feeds in such large waters, and consequently on the carrying capacities and cost-effectiveness of current practices. It is expected that the research could lead to long-term sustainability of the practices and reducing the cost, thereby reducing the price of fish to the consumer.

25. Biology and artificial propagation and culture of the indigenous river catfish (no firm identification possibly *Selonia*) and other important, potentially culturable indigenous species.

Myanmar Geography

East Myanmar

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/east.asp>



The eastern region of Myanmar consists of highlands known as the Shan plateau, although the "plateau" is formed by a succession of mountain chains of varied relief and generally of rounded outlines. These are much older than the western mountains and are part of the Indo-Malaysia block of ancient rocks which form the core of the Southeast Asian peninsula. The average height of the Shan Plateau is 900 m (3000') and rises abruptly from the Central Basin.

The ranges are generally aligned north-south and the highest peak in the Loiling range is 2630 m (8770') above sea level. The general elevation is about 900 m' - 1200 m (4000') and is continuous with the Yunnan highland. The Shan massif is continued into Kayah and further southward into the Kayin and Mon states. There are some structural basins formed as a result of folding or faulting forming several lakes which have silted up and become dry land like the Heho plain, the Kyaington plain and Theinni plain. The only lake of importance remaining is the Inle Lake.



The Inle Lake is about 19 km (11 mi) long and 6.4 km (4 mi) broad at an elevation of 875 m (2915'). Its depth in March is nowhere greater than 3.6 m (12') while at the end of the rainy season its greatest depth would be 6.0 m (20'). It is fed mainly by the Nam Lap from the north and the Heho and Nyansin from the west. The lake is surrounded by floating islands

formed from the growth and decay of vegetation which form a mass. The

vegetation consists primarily of large grasses and sedges which capture floating plants such as duckweed. At the same time submerged weeds grow up to the surface where their upper parts are killed by the heat of the sun. A floating island covered with rich soil is thus formed and a variety of plants can now be cultivated, such as tomato and cucumber and flowering orchids. The water flows out of the lake by the Biluchaung which, after passing the Moby Dam, finally cascades to turn the turbines of Lawpita.

The Thanlwin rises in the mountains of eastern Tibet and is known there as the Blue River because just before it freezes in winter, it is a most beautiful dark blue in color. For a large

part of its course it is hemmed in between the Ayeyawady and Mekong. This region is interesting because within a width of 320 km (200 mi) flow six rivers in parallel: the two feeders of the Ayeyawady, and the Thanlwin which ultimately flow into the Gulf of Muttama, the Mekong which finds its way into the South China Sea, while the Yangtze and its tributary,

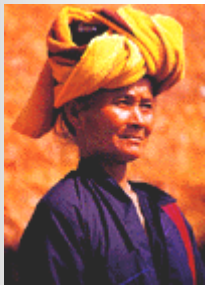


the Wuliang Ho debouch into the eastern China Sea. The Thanlwin, Mekong and Yangtze each drain large areas, but in Tibet they approach within 48 km (30 mi) of each other and flow through a mountain zone only 77 km (48 mi) wide. After entering Myanmar the Thanlwin flows in a general north to south direction like a gigantic trough with unimportant bends. [very where the hills rise 900m - 1 500m (3000'-5000') above the level of water on both banks. There is flat land on the banks only when it enters lower Myanmar in the Kayin State. There are paths here and there along the river, sometimes for many miles, but can seldom be used. The difference between high and low water levels could be as much as 18-21 m (60--70~). There are many rapids

in the river so that local boats can navigate only short stretches in the dry season, River launches ply the lower reaches of the river between Mawlamyaing and Kamamaung for 118 km (74 mi).

The Takaw-at suspension bridge over the Thanlwin in the Shan State was opened to traffic on Union Day, 1997, while the steel-frame bridge at Pa-an in Kayin State was opened in July 1997

Thanlwin tributaries Thaungyin, which serves as part of the boundary with Thailand, Donthami, Gyaing and Attaran are navigable for some distance. Below Mawlamyaing the river is bifurcated by the big island of Bilugyan and then enters the Gulf of Muttama. The northern mouth is the Dayebauk River, the southern is the Mawlamyaing River. With good pilotage, ocean-going vessels can anchor at Mawlamyaing. This port exports rice, timber, rubber, marine products, fruits and products of small industry.



There are many limestone caves in the Mawlamyaing area. Kharon is 16 km (10 mi) from the city. Dhammathat is 30 km (19 mi) up the river Gyaing, and contains 1000 images of Buddha. Hsaddan Cave is 24 km (15 mi) from Paan. In the Shan highlands, the most famous is Pindaya Cave, accessible from Taungyi via Aung Ban. The entrance is on the side of a hill, and penetralia inside the grotto consist of a richly gilt pagoda and thousands of Buddha images, some of stuccos, other carved into the stone sides of the cave which is of considerable length with a stream running underground. Padalin Cave in the Shan State is where implements of the Old Stone Age and cave drawings have been found.

The Delta

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/delta.asp>



The apex of the Delta begins at Myanaung about 290 km (180 mi) from the sea. The distance east to west is about 240 km (150 mi). The Delta is advancing at the rate of 5-6 km (3-3.75 mi) in a hundred years. The Western Yoma which is about 400 m. (2970') high at the apex becomes lower as it comes south and is about 150 m (500') high west of Pathein, The striking feature of this great Delta is its general flatness, low level and

Temperature in the highlands are much lower than in the Central Basin. The winter temperature is about 1 Soc and the summer about 200C. The chief source of rain is the south-west monsoon. The southern part is wetter than the north. Taungyi receives about 150 cm (58.5") and Lashio 140 cm (54.6"). On the whole it is not too wet, not too hot, not too cold. The Shan highland is particularly attractive when it is 400C in the plains.

There are silver; lead, zinc, antimony, gold and precious stones in those hills. Tea, potato, orange, onion, beans and pulses, groundnut, sunflower; tobacco grow there.

Teak, padauk, pyinkado, pyinma, ingyin and thitya flourish under 900 m (3000'); above that there are pines and oaks. Monkeys, gibbons, black bears and badgers are found together with smaller animals. The eastern highlands are an anthropologist's paradise. There are Shan, Kachin Lisu Kayah, Kayin, Padaung, Intha, Pa-O, Palaung, Kwi, Akha, Kokang, Wa, Gon, Taungyoe, Danu, Myaungzi, Yingjar Yinnet, Lahu, Kayaw, Manu-Manaw, Yindaw, Bama. Inle Lake and Pindaya cave are places to visit in the Taungyi region while farther south in continuation of the highlands stands the surprising Pagoda on the Golden Rock at Kyaikhtiyo which is accessible by driving up hill by people in a hurry or by an 11 km (7-mi) trek through lovely scenery with occasional steep climbs. The environs of the Pagoda should also be explored.

network of creeks. The most important of the creeks are Ngawun, Daga, Panmawadi, Ywe, Pyinsala, Einme, Shwedaung, Bogale and Pyapon.

The Ayeyawady enters the sea by five mouths, the Ngawun being the westernmost and the Yangon River being the westernmost. However; these two outlets discharge little of the volume of Ayeyawady water The highest volume is discharged by the Eya mouth.



Turtles abound. Turtle Island, off the Pagoda point, is a turtle breeding station. Crayfish and lobster are popular exports. Ngathalauk (hilsa) is caught offshore.

The rich, heavy alluvial soil makes this region the biggest producer of rice in the country. Another big product is jute. The region supplies Yangon with mango, banana, various vegetables and fish. Embankments keep out the brackish water while small dams secure fresh water for second paddy crop.

Innumerable criss-crossing creeks accounted for a lack of roads in the region and travel was restricted to the chaungs.

Now the State Peace and Development Council has changed all that and the region boasts a network of roads with the chaungs spanned by bridges, 13 in number. Two of these will be major bridges to span the Ayeyawady at Maubin and Nyaungdon. The bridge at Maubin has already been opened to traffic and Nyaungdon is under construction. The Western Highway runs along the west bank of the Ayeyawady all the way from Patheingyi to Monywa on the Chindwin

River in the north west region and also connects with the highway over the Western Yoma into Rakhaing and Sittwe.

A rail line runs from Yangon to Hinthada on the Ayeyawady and turns south to get to Patheingyi thus securing a rail link not only with Yangon but Bagan, Mandalay, and places in the Shan state.

The easternmost mouth the Yangon River, is linked to the Ayeyawady by the Panhlaing. Actually the Yangon River has its source in the Bago Yoma where, as the Myitmakim, it is a useful stream to float logs down to the timber yards where they are assembled for export. As the Myitnaha enters the plain it becomes known as the Hlaing River. After the confluence with the Panhlaing it assumes the name of Yangon River and swings east where it forms the water frontage until it meets the Bago River from the Bago Yoma and turns south to enter the sea, 64 km (40 mi) downstream. On the banks of the Yangon River sprawls Yangon City, capital of the country and its metropolis.

The North



<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/north.asp>



pushes chains and knots of mountains into the

On the western side of the Southeast Asian peninsula, there lies an enchanting land with silver beaches washed by the surf of the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, in the north the Himalaya

country, some rising to 2700m. (8870') with peaks usually higher than 3300m (10800'). The Khakabo Razi, the highest peak, a majestic 5881m (19296') is to be found here. The peak had not been climbed until 1996 when the Myanmar flag was planted on the summit. Close to the south is the Gamland Razi at 5834.5m (19142'). There are other peaks which reach over 5200m (17000'). This is snow-land which reaches down to 2165m (6500') in the winter. The lower ranges are clad in various types of evergreen and coniferous forests. There are pleasant Alpine meadows and valleys where swift streams of clean water flow. The stream beds are pebbly and the



banks are strewn with rocks of all sizes and colors.

The climate here is different from most of the rest of the country since it lies in the temperate zone and is at a considerable altitude. It can get fairly cold in winter though its interior location surrounded by mountains makes it quite warm in summer with a high of 26¼. Above 2700m(8900'), the temperature falls to freezing point. Rainfall is fairly heavy with Sumprabhum getting an annual fall of 348cm (135.7") and Putao 400cm (156").



Indawgyi, the country's largest lake, larger than the well-known Inle lake is in this area. It is 25.6 km (15.8 mi) long and 9.6 km (6mi) wide. It is a lake of tectonic origin and is believed to have been formed by an earthquake which submerged a village. There is a pagoda on an island in the lake. It is interesting that the water level subsides for the period of the pagoda festival, exposing a causeway from the main land to the island.

The source of the Ayeyarwady, the country's artery, is also situated here. The mighty river originates as the confluence of two rivers, the Nmai Kha and the Mali Kha. The confluence occurs about 48 km (30 mi) above Myitkyina. The Mali Kha contributes a smaller volume of water than the Nmai Kha so that the latter

stream may be considered as the true upper Ayeyarwady. Nmai Kha's source is the snowcapped Tila massif, north of Putao.

The Ayeyawady is unique in Southeast Asia as being a river which has its basin wholly within one country and wholly within the monsoon climatic region.



The Uru is a major chaung (creek) which sources in this region to feed the Chindwin River, the main tributary of the Ayeyawady, flowing into the big river 64 km (40 mi) above Bagan.

This northern land is jade land, the land of jadeite, the true jade and the only gem-quality stone which has the title 'Imperial' in its name:

Imperial jade. Jade was esteemed by emperors and is valued at the present day by ordinary people for bringing prosperity and happiness.

The geology favours the occurrence of large tracts of ores which yield the world famous "pigeon blood" ruby, sapphire, and such precious stones as peridot, spinel, tourmaline and assorted Mogok stones. Annual and midyear Gems, Jade and Pearl Emporiums are held where 300-400 foreign customers come to bid for jade, rubies, sapphires and pearls.

The rare takin is found on ridges 2400-3000' (8000-10000') high. The takin has a body length of about 200cm (80 1/2") and weighs 315kg (700 lbs). Its thick brownish fur is oily and leaves a reddish-brown stain on the fingers. In winter it grazes in the foothills, in summer it moves up to the timber line. It lives on grass, small plants and bamboo shoots. The red panda is found above 1800m (1600'), the goral or mountain goat above 900m (3000'), and the tailed deer on heights between 900m to 2700m (9000'). The black bear roams widely.

Many national races live harmoniously in this northernmost Kachin State. They are Kachin, Jinghpaw, Maui, Rawan, Lashi, Lisu, Shan. Khamti-Shan and other races. Kachins number 270000, Shan 280000, Lisu 67000 and Rawan 46600 according to the 1997 count.



The Bala Min Htin bridge is being built at Waingmaw (Myitkyina). It will be the northernmost of six bridges to span the Ayeyawady.

The Ayeyawady, which in places is over half a mile wide, flows through hills and plains until at Sinbo, 88km (55 mi) south of Myitkyina, it enters the first defile by a mouth only 45m (150') wide. The water rushes with eddies and whirlpools making navigation difficult. The cliffs flanking the river arc about 180m (600') high but are backed by mountains of over 900m (3000'). The river emerges from the 64km (40 mi) long defile at Thahpanbin and immediately broadens out on an alluvial plain. It then swerves west to reach the town of Bhamo. It next enters the second defile which is 90m (300') wide at its narrowest. The second defile is shorter than the first but is flanked by scenic cliffs.

The South

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/South.asp>



Go 2050 km (1270 mi) directly south from Khakabo Razi and get to Bayinnaung point, Myanmar's land's end. A statue of Bayinnaung, one of Myanmar's great kings, looks over the water. This is the end of the Taninthayi coastal strip, a narrow 375 km (232 mi) coastal plain running up to mountains generally known as the Taninthayi Yoma, which is a continuation of the Shan highlands. It consists of a series of parallel ranges separated by deep valleys. Dawna is the eastern range while the western ranges are known in different areas as the Muttama ridge, Taungnyo ridge, and Taninthayi ridge. The parallel ranges have a breadth of about 96 km (60 mi). The highest peak is Myinmolekhat at 2040 m (6800'). These mountains are older in age than the Rakhaing Yoma of the Western coastal Strip.



The coast itself is cut into islands by the channels of rivers which divide as they prepare to enter the sea. A large and well populated island is Bilugyun in the Thanlwin River; but most small islands down the coast are morasses of mangrove and slime.

The islands off the coast rise well from the sea, some as high as 600 m. (2000'), while others are a few hundred feet high. They are the upper parts of submerged mountain ranges and are clad with thick tropical vegetation or are bare rock. They form a string of islands, from the north, the Heinze group, the Mounmagan group, the Launglon group, the Myeik Archipelago. Some of the familiar islands of the Myeik group are Mali Letsutaw, Owen Katherine, Carrie, Lampi, Pale, Zadetgyi, Zadetgale. Some names are Myanmar now while some retain their English names, though there are local names too. King Island, the largest rises to 755 m. (2515') while Domei to 670 m. (2230'). Edible bird's nest is gathered from some islands. The process of

island formation goes on, some being formed with a narrow strait connecting two arms of the sea and dividing the two islands. Tidal waves and mai. The erosion deepens the channel and a regular connection is formed which small boats can navigate. The local term is 'galet'. There are many galets south of Myeik.

The Taninthayi coastal strip has a tropical monsoon climate. The dry season here is much shorter and the rainfall greater than the rest of the country. Dawe has an average rainfall of over 500 cm. (195") and about 145 rainy days a year, compared with 262 cm (102") and about 125 days in Yangon.



Several rivers flow down the hills into the sea. They are the Ye, Dawe, the Palauk, Palaw, the Greater Taninthayi, the Lesser Taninthayi, Lenyar and the Pakchan which forms the boundary with Thailand.



Hot springs are plentiful in this region. The Yebu is the hottest, almost reaching boiling point. The Maliwun springs are more accessible, and used as a health resort. The water contains iron, alumina, lime, potash soda, silicon, hydrochloride, sulphuric acid and nitrogenous organic matter.

There are valuable stands of teak and hardwood on the mountains. Croplands between the hills and the sea support plantations of rubber, oil palm and equatorial fruits such as durian, mangosteen, jackfruit, rambusteen. Coconut and 'dhani' nipa palm

flourish along the coast.



The mountains and high valleys are well populated with macaque, monkey, gibbon, loris, wild boar, deer, gaur, goral, black bear and elephant. The great thawka (*Amherstia nobilis*) is native to this region. A road runs from Maulamyaing through Ye and Dawe to Myeik and on to Bokpyin. A railway is being laid down by Tatmadaw personnel from Ye to Dawe over bridges across Ye and Dawe Chaungs. Dawe, Myeik, Kawthaung have airlinks with other towns. Fish ngapi (fish paste), dried

prawns, shrimps, crayfish, rubber, timber, tin, tungsten are exported. Maungmagan with its broad and lengthy beach is a developing resort. Thahtaykyun, opposite Thailand's Ranaung, is popular with foreign tourists arriving direct from Thailand. It operates a casino. Another hotel casino is coming up on Noagyi and Noahlay islands in the same group. Though the population is mainly Bama, the language is spoken with a distinct accent and different idiom. There are also Kayin and Mon.

The West

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/West.asp>



The Western Yoma, known popularly as the Rakhaing Yoma, comprises a series of hills belonging to the south-eastern extension of the Himalaya. Up north are the hills of the southern extension which form the Patkoi Range. As they go south they raise the Saramati mountain 3767 m (12557'), followed by the hills of Manipura,

the Lushai hills, and the Chin hills, where the steep slopes and precarious trails divide the population into various tribes speaking different dialects. Saramati is sometimes snow-covered and is seen from the Chindwin River as a great cone rising from the dark forests of the intervening ranges.

The coastline from the Naaf River in the north to the Thandwe River midway down the coast is broken into numerous low islands by a network of estuaries of creeks and mountain torrents. From Thandwe down to Mawtin-zoon Point, the coastline feature changes to rugged and rocky spurs, offshoots of the Rakhaing Yoma, jutting boldly into the sea to form precipitous headlands. Between them are shell-spangled bays of golden sand and lengthy, level beaches forming quiet resorts with the sparkling Bay ahead and the lush tropical forest behind.



The coastal plain is narrow and not continuous as the hills reach down to the edge of the sea in many places. The rivers, except those in the Sittwe area are short mountain streams. The rivers are the Naaf, Mayu, Kissapanadi and Leymro. The only sizeable plain is the one formed by these rivers.

The Baronga islands in the north are three narrow, elongated islands which are really detached ranges of hills running into the sea.

Further south are two big islands, Rarmree and Cheduba, Ramree seems to be a raised archipelago with hills occasionally rising to 150 m (500'), clad with jungle. The west coast has beaches of shingle, sand and sea-shells, and old sea-cliffs.



Cheduba or Manaung, south of Ramree is a wooded island of low, undulating hills which rise in the south to 4200 m. (1400')



The Rakhaing coast has at least three lovely beach resorts at Ngapali, Chaung tha and Kannthaya.

The average temperature is about 29 C in the warm season and about 21 C in the cool season. The whole region is backed up by mountain ranges. As it lies directly in the path of the rain-bearing south-west monsoon, rainfall is

heavy. Sittwe receives about 515.5 cm (201"), Kyaukpyu 487.7 cm (190") and Thandwe 543.6 cm (210") of rain. Storms originating in the Andaman Sea or Bay of Bengal occasionally hit the coast.



The Yoma forms an effective barrier between Rakhaing and the Central Basin. But there are three passes linking the two regions. The An pass is the link to Central Myanmar; the Taungup pass is the middle link and the Gwa pass further south is the link with the Delta. Now the Sittwe-Yangon highway will link the chief town of the north with the country's capital. It will go over the Yoma via An, Minbya, MroukU, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun to Sittwe. The many streams lying across the highway will require the construction of 897 small bridges and nine big ones of which three have been completed.

The Yoma contains extended stands of valuable hardwood and expansive areas of wild bamboo. Wild elephants roam the jungle and tigers drink the pools where deer come. An occasional black bear roams.



Many rational races inhabit Rakhaing, especially in the north. These include Rakhaing, Bama, Chin, Kaman, Khamwee, Daingnet, Myo, Thet and Maramagye.

Rakhaing has a long recorded history and there are many interesting historical sites which are now becoming increasingly accessible to visitors.

Move north from Rakhaing and one enters the Chin Hills from the south. The whole region is of high hills with deep valleys nestling among them. This is hardly any plain or plateau.

The heights of the hills vary between 1500 m (4950') and 2700 m (8910'). The highest peak here is Mt Victoria 3120 m (10200'). The Chin hills form the southern limb of the Himalaya extension together with the Lushai hills, the Manipur hills, the hills of Naga country, the Patkoi hills and the hills of Assam.

The Manipur River which rises in the Manipur hills and the Kaladan which flows through Rakhaing to enter the Bay are the important rivers of the region. The Myittha River flows from south to north in the Chin Hills region just outside the state line, Yaw, Salin and Mu all take their source in the Chin hills and flow into the Ayeyawady.

Between the altitudes of 900 m (3000') and 1500 m (4950'), the climate is



temperate. At Tiddim the average summer temperature is 20.50 ½, the winter temperature 13.3C. Places in the Chin hills are generally colder than those on the Shan highlands. The amount of rainfall varies with a general decrease toward the interior Haka receives 230-255 cm (89.7"-99.5"), Tiddim about 100-130 cm (39"-50.7").

Teak and other hardwoods are found to a height of 900 m. Above this are oaks, then pines at 1500 m. The pine here is pinus Khasya, the best resin-producing pine.

Monkey is found here, loris and barking deer too. The goral lives on the heights and the badger underground. The mythum or wild ox has been domesticated.

Travelling is difficult but the roads are being upgraded, airports extended and a rail line from central Myanmar is headed for the foothills.

The Central Basin

<http://www.yangoncity.com.mm/background/central.asp>



Myanmar's spiritual and cultural life, rich with productive activities, criss-crossed with a network of infrastructural facilities, a plethora of breath-taking scenery, and through it all flows the magnificent Ayeyawady.



plains or now and then by precipitous cliffs as at Lanywa and Yenangyaung where the cliffs rise 27-30 m. (90'- 100') above high-water level

The Central Basin is arbitrarily defined as the basin of the Ayeyawady beginning at Shwebo. (Shwebo is not on the river though Kyaukmyaung, 30 km (18 mi) away is). The basin ends at Myanaung the apex of the Delta about 80 km (50 mi) below Pyay. This is the heartland of Myanmar, loaded with history, replete with religious edifices, ambient with

The Ayeyawady which has passed through the third defile suddenly swings round a right-angled bend to the west in the Shwebo area. The river broadens out into the Mandalay alluvial plain and once again swings to the west, below Sagaing opposite Mandalay. The river flows through the dry belt of Myanmar, an area which is in the rain shadow of the western Yoma. It wanders irregularly in this zone, bordered by alluvial

Oranges, apples, coffee, mulberry, honey and resin are important products.

As it courses through the dry zone, delivering precious water to the fields, it swings again to the west to receive the main tributary, the Chindwin, which has risen in the north western hills. At Bagan it swings around Myanmar's famous volcano Mt. Popa. Here the fall is slight, about 10 cm (4") per mile and the current slow. It is still 750 km (470 mi) from Yangon.

Below Thayetmyo, the crest of the Rakhing Yoma approaches within 80-90 km (50-60 mi) of the crest of the Bago Yoma and the spurs from the two ranges are thrown towards the centre of the valley.



The Ayeyawady receives water from the Shweli flowing in from the Shan highlands, the Meza on the right bank, the Myitnge on the left, the Mu on the right. The Chindwin is navigable as far as Hamlin, 640 km (400 mi) upriver from the confluence.

In the central belts several chaungs join the river from the right as well as the left. The central zone is also the area of the greater number of dams and reservoirs for irrigation. Water is also pumped from the river for irrigation. In some areas, ground water is tapped. A special department has been set up for the greening of the dry areas.

The Central Basin also includes the Sittaung River which flows east of the Bago Yoma and enters the Gulf of Muttama. Sittaung's tributaries are short, swift streams quickly filling up with flash floods.

The dry zone of the Central Basin receives little rain Myingyan receives 75-100 cm (29"-39"). Rainfall increases outward in all directions from the dry zone. The Sittaung valley receives over 250cm (97.5") Bago has about 132 days of rain a year; Pyaw about 88 days.



Elephant, tiger, wild boar, deer, monkey, gibbon, gaur are found in the jungles. The Ayeyawady dolphin draws the interest of scientists.

Fossils of the 40-million year old Pondaungia Coterie, Amphipethacus Mogaungenisis and Amhipeticus Bahinensis have been found together with fossils of rhinos, alligators, turtles and fish in the Pondaung-Ponnya area in the north-west of the Central Basin. Millions of years ago the foothills of the Pondaung-Ponnya range were sea-shore, the Bago Yoma an archipelago. The areas between the Bago Yoma and Shan highlands was the Eastern Gulf of Myanmar and the sea between Bago Yoma and Western Yoma was the Western Gulf of Myanmar The embryonic Ayeyawady was in the

Kachin highlands.

The hills are clad with teak and popular hardwoods: the fields are under three crops of paddy, cotton, oilseeds, pulses, tobacco, sugar cane and bamboo.

The ground yields oil and natural gas, man makes industrial products and handicrafts.

There is an elaborate network of roads and railways which are daily being built, extended or upgraded.

The Ayeyawady used to be spanned by one bridge at Inwa-Sagaing, destroyed by retreating British forces and rebuilt by the Myanmar Government. Now the State Peace and Development Council has opened two bridges at Pyaw and Maubin to traffic and three others are under construction at Waingmaw (Myitkyina), Chauk in central Myanmar and Nyaungdon in the Delta. Bago Yoma Circle Line has been completed. Rail and road has been extended to Bagan, the unique cultural site of the 11th and 12th centuries. Airports have been extended and new international airports are being constructed for Yangon and Mandalay. The number of boats plying the Ayeyawady, Chindwin and Thanlwin has been augmented.

New religious edifices have been erected, old palaces and monasteries reconstructed or renovated to their historical splendour.

The majority of the population is Bama. There are Kadu, Kanan, Shan, Naga in the northern areas and Kayah and Mon scattered.

Golden Rock Pagoda

Kyikhtiyo Pagoda

http://www.myanmarvoyages.com/dest_goldenrock.htm

About halfway between Thaton and Bago lies the town of Kyaikhto , famous for its Pagoda situated east of the town at the end of a 10 km (6miles) long footpath. This landmark is the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda – Called " **The Golden Rock** ".

Location



Kyaikhtiyo pagoda is located in the small town called

Kyaikhto, in the Mon State. This destination is 160km away from Yangon. The pagoda is 1100km above sea-level. It is a 11 kilometer uphill climb for the hikers from Kinpun base camp. There is also a steep winding road for 4-wheel drive cars from the base to the nearest point of the pagodas. The pagoda is also known as "the golden rock".

The meaning of Kyaik Hti Yo

According to Mon tradition, the name is a corruption of Kyaik-ithi--yo being derived as follows. In Mon language the word "Kyaik" means " pagoda" and " yo" " to carry on the hermits head", in Pali the word " ithi" means a hermit and therefore the name means " the pagoda carried on the hermit's head.

Structure

The pagoda, about 18 feet high, and 50 feet in girth. is situated on the hill of the same name on the ridge between Sittaung and Thanlwin. It is built on a



huge, almost egg- shaped, rounded granitoid boulder perched on the very summit of a projecting and shelving tabular rock, which in itself is separated several feet from the mountain by a rent or chasm, now spanned by a small foot bridge of iron and on the further side drops perpendicularly into a valley blow.

History

It is said that the boulder has been over 2500 years. The tradition is that after the hermit had obtained the hair from the Buddha, he was carrying it on his head inside his hair knot till he found a boulder which resembled his head, and so he built the pagoda on its enshrining the relic, substituting the boulder for his over head.

On the extreme verge of this sloping rock table, and actually over hanging it by nearly half, is perched this wonderful boulder (now completely gilded with gold), thirty feet high and surrounded by the pagoda. By gently rocking the boulder a thread can be passed underneath; seemingly appears as if the additional weight of a few pounds, or a strong wind, would send it sliding down from the place it has occupied for unknown centuries watching over

three thousand feet into the sloping valley beneath and we know what freakish law keeps it in its position. Anyway pious Buddhists attribute it to the power of the relic enshrined in the pagoda.



This relic is a hair of Gotama Buddha given to a hermit residing on the mountain by the Buddha himself as he was returning from the second heaven of the Nats whither he had gone to preach the law to his mother.

Festival

It is of considerable celebrity and attracts crowds of worshippers annually beginning from October to March which is the seasonal pilgrimage period for worshippers. Especially on the full moon day of Tabauung, the platform of the pagoda is lighted with ninety thousand candles offered to the Buddha and thousands of worshippers gather around the pagoda offering fruits, foods incense to the Buddha. Sometimes reflected rays of color from the Buddha's image were said to have been observed by the worshippers.

Kyaikhtiyo Wildlife Sanctuary



This wild life sanctuary was established in 1998. It covers a total area of 180.05 Sq. km. It is situated in Tropical Rain forest type. Recorded birds are only 50 species, the others are not yet recorded. Highlight species that can be found are Great Hornbill, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Blue-throated Barbet, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Germain's Swiftlet, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Black-headed Bulbul, Streak-eared

Bulbul and Black-throated Laughing thrush. Other mammals such as : Goral, Gaur, Sambhur Deer, Bear and Monkey can also be seen. There are also about 50 species of butterflies. Trekking at Mt. Kyaikhtiyo can also be enjoyed. The distance is 1,102m.



Yango – Kyaikhtiyo

Yangon is linked with big cities and towns by air, by car and by train in Myanmar . You can go to Kyaikhto by train or by the 200 km road by car via Bago. Direct drive to Kimmunsakan (Base camp of Kyaikhtiyo) and By Car is more easily to get there. OR by train , you will take off the Kyaikhto Rail Station and then take a car to the kimmunsakan . The distance from Kyaikhto to the base camp Kimmunsakhan is 12 km.

Kimmusakhan (Base Camp Of Kyaikhtiyo – Up Area)

In the old days, the only route to get to the pagoda was by a 12 km. hike through the jungle. There are about 20 camps along the tract and on the way there are stalls in which tea, cold drinks and fruits are available. The whole route is sheltered from the sun by the jungle canopy.

For quicker access and for convenience sake a new road has been cut through the jungle from the base camp to the foot of the Kyaikhtiyo ridge. To reach the Pagoda from Kin Pun base camp, take a open truck up a bumpy track to Ye the daung Camp (45 mins drive) and hiking up to mountain top take about next 45 minutes .For Old ages , Sedan chair carried by 4 men to up area can be arranged

KYAIKHTIYO PAGODA

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp1996/1-96/pag.htm>

Deep within the jungle of the Paunglaung Range of the south-eastern Yoma, perched precariously on a rocky precipice, over 1000 meters above sea level is a huge boulder 25 meters in circumference resembling a human head crowned with a pagoda five meters high. The boulder is so placed on the edge of the precipice that it seems a slight push with a finger will tip it over into the gorge below. Yet when you try to do so it only rocks slightly. This is the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda which enshrines a strand of Hair of the Buddha.

The pagoda legend states that when Buddha visited Thuwunna Bhumi, the land of gold, (present-day Thaton), the hermit Tissa implored Buddha for a strand of Hair to be worshipped for perpetuity. So the compassionate Buddha gave him a strand of Hair. Near the end of the hermit's life, Sakka, the lord of nats spiritual beings persuaded the hermit to relinquish the Hair so that it could be enshrined in a suitable location. The hermit agreed on condition that the Hair be enshrined in a boulder resembling his head and that a pagoda be erected on that boulder.

The lord of nats, Sakka, agreed and fetched from the bottom of the sea a boulder which resembled the hermit's head. The hermit on fulfillment of his wish relinquished the sacred Hair to Sakka whereupon Sakka scooped out a hole in the boulder and enshrined the Hair therein, and erected a pagoda of fitting height upon that spot.

The boulder was placed on the edge of a rocky precipice with the resolution that it would never fall come storm or earthquake or human endeavor. And so it stands there today.

The facial features of the hermit may be seen on the surface of the boulder. The view from the Kyaikhto Hotel will let you see the face very well, sometimes serious, often smiling.

You can take the railway to Kyaikhto or the 200 km road by car through Bago and over the bridge spanning the Sittaung River. The distance from Kyaikhto

to the base camp Kinmunsakhan is 12 km. For quicker access and convenience to make possible a day trip from Yangon, a road has been cut through the jungle from the base camp to the foot of the Kyaikhtiyo ridge. From there you can make the half-hour climb to the top or be carried up in style on 1 palanquin.

Formerly, the only way to get to the Pagoda was by a 12 kilometer hike through the jungle. The path was well trodden but steep in several places with names like "Choke in the chest", "Grandpa Goes Back", "The wild Ox Tilts Up Its Head". There are about 20 camps along the route so that there's some place to rest whenever you feel tired; tea, drinks and fritters are available. The main wayside-camp is at Yemyaung-gyi (Water Gulch) where baths are led from mountain streams and food is plentiful. Some people who can leave Yangon only in the afternoon spend the night at Yemyaung-gyi. The whole route is sheltered from the sun by the jungle canopy. Half the attraction of a pilgrimage to the Kyaikhtiyo is the trek which tests the physical stamina of the city-dweller. Now the pleasure has been lost to people who take the new motor road.

A circumbulatory plaza built below the sacred Boulder has taken the unique experience of looking down into the deep gorge from the Pagoda platform. However, the construction of several large rest-houses for pilgrims is a welcome addition. On fullmoon nights or on the eve the place is so crowded that people have to sit or lie the night through on the platform in the cold mist which rolls in from the surrounding mountains after midnight.

The Pagoda platform is not the only place to visit. At the foot of the hill are Kyeepasuk (Crow Beak) cave, Nagaphayas (Dragon Pagoda), and Phaphayar (Frog Pagoda). For sturdier

Lacquer Ware of Bagan

<http://www.myanmar.com/ACOCI/CULTURE/1999/10lacquer.htm>



Lacquerware of Bagan has a long tradition. Isolated evidence from ancient lithic inscriptions in and around Bagan, references in old literature and chronicles provide proof that the art of lacquerware had existed with other arts and crafts at Bagan in its heyday (11th to 13th century AD). Besides there are archaeological finds of ancient lacquerwork dug up at the excavations. A tube lacquerwork dated AD 1274 was found in the Mingala Ceti at

Bagan. On display at the Bagan Museum are a number of excavated antique lacquer works such as Buddha images, votive objects and household pieces.



Reasons for the continued survival of the art at Bagan

The availability of materials used in lacquerwork, making the transmission of the art to the next generation in the family and local, and later, foreign demand for the lacquerwork explain why this time honoured art of Bagan has not died out totally but continues to survive.

Local materials available



Lacquer in Myanmar is called "Thitsi" meaning the sap of a Thitsi Tree (*Melanhorrea Usitata*) which is native to Southeast Asia. In China and Japan the tree from which lacquer is tapped is a different species "*Rhus Vernicifera*." In Myanmar, the Thitsi tree grows wild in the Shan State and hilly regions. The resin of this tree has been extracted and used for coating and varnishing by Myanmar folks since time immemorial. A person who earns his living by the art of coating and varnishing with Thitsi is called "Thitsi thama".

Bamboo and wood that are used as frame or base in making lacquerwork are easily and cheaply available around the Bagan area. Besides cowdung, saw dust and animal bone which are some of the ingredients used in the preparation of some lacquerwork are found in the countryside as Myanmar is an agricultural country.



Traditional art of Bagan

Though not all Bagan people are lacquerware makers, a majority of them are engaged in this art which has been transmitted from generation to generation either within the lacquerware making families or in village guilds which are run by lacquer masters with a few apprentice pupils. Lacquerware making in Bagan is a cottage industry as it always has been. The lacquerware training school set up under the Department of Home Industry in the post- Independence period has been upgraded to institute-level by the present Government and trainees are recruited from around the Bagan area. They receive stipends and scholarship grants from the Government. There are quite a few private Guilds which train lacquerware makers and also open lacquerware shops at Bagan and at other centres of tourist attraction in other ancient cities.

Local and foreign markets

With the promotion of local and foreign tourism, the adoption of market-orientated economy and accession of Myanmar into the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) in 1997, lacquerware making has become a thriving industry. Particularly Bagan lacquerware is noted for its genuineness, skilful workmanship and traditional colour and design. Bagan lacquerware is enjoying good market at home and abroad.



Types of Bagan Lacquerware

Roughly speaking the following types may be listed:

- (i) Plain lacquerware (ii) Incised lacquerware
- (iii) Gilt lacquerware (iv) Relief moulded lacquerware and
- (v) Glass mosaic and gilt lacquerware

Plain lacquerware is called Kyauk Kar in Myanmar. It is a native product made of wood or bamboo and lacquerware resin. Because it was first produced in a place named Kyauk Ka, a village near Monywa, it

came to acquire that name. Plain lacquerware has only two colours, black and red which are natural pigments. Such products comprise trays, goblets, cups, rice containers, boxes, chests to keep clothing or books and salvars to serve pickled tea and sweetmeats etc.

Incised lacquerware is called "Yun" ware. The framework is made of the same materials used in plain lacquerware. Mostly wicker frames of bamboo strips are used. Many coatings of lacquer are applied to the frame. The design and decoration are exquisite. Designs and motifs are incised on the surface of the object with a fine iron stylus. Incised areas are filled with colours red, yellow, orange, blue, green, white and black. Such types of lacquerware are produced for ornamental, decorative and votive purposes. There are folding screens, folding tables and chairs, flower vases, caskets for keeping relics, chests, plaques, plates, napkin rings, bangles and souvenir pieces.

Gilt lacquerware is Shwezawa in Myanmar. Incised designs and figures on the surface of the lacquer coated objects are filled up with gold foil, achieving an extremely regal beauty. Such type of gilt lacquerware in olden days was reserved exclusively for royal use or for offering to Buddhist shrines. Some old temples and monasteries still have their walls and ceilings covered with gilt lacquer plaques.

Relief moulded lacquerware is called Tha-yo in Myanmar. Tha-yo means animal bone. Ashes of animal bone, paddy husk and sawdust are concocted into a very sticky plaster. Sometimes cowdung powder is added to it. This pliable plaster is mixed with lacquer and rolled into long threads of required thickness. With an iron or wooden stylus these threads are stuck onto lacquer coated surfaces of the object forming a relief on the designs already sketched out. Skilful craftsmen

can create any design or figure freehand. When the Tha-yo threads dry up and are pasted firmly on the surface, many lacquer coatings are executed on them. Finally colouring or gilding takes place. A good work of Tha-yo is so neat and so fine that it can be easily mistaken for a carving.

Hmansi Shwe Cha Yun is the Myanmar word for glass mosaic and gilt lacquerware. Pieces of mirror or coloured glass are cut into different shapes. They are inlaid in the surface of Tha-yo lacquerware by applying special lacquer as adhesive. The whole object is gilt and then washed with water which carries away the gold foil from glass pieces leaving only those on the Tha-yo. Plinths and thrones for keeping Buddha images or couches for head monks to sit on while preaching, chests, betel boxes, caskets, containers for

jewellery, covers of folding manuscripts and palm leaf manuscripts are made of such lacquerware.

All stalls and shops at the principal temples and pagodas at Bagan as well as in town, sell a variety of lacquerware. But for your selection the following are the centres you should not fail to visit :

- (i) Chan Thar Lacquer Workshop, Main Road, Myin Ka Par, Bagan
- (ii) Golden Bagan Lacquerware Shop, Khaye Road, New Bagan.
- (iii) Maung Aung Myin Lacquerware and Handicrafts Shop, Bagan.
- (iv) Moe Moe Lacquerware Shop, New Bagan, near the Sarapa Gate.
- (v) Tun Handicrafts and Lacquerware, Khanlaung Qtr., Bagan.

(vi) U Ba Nyein and Son Lacquerware Shop, New Bagan.

(vii) Shwe Leik Min Lacquerware, New Bagan.



Shwe Mann Maung

Mandalay

<http://www.mandalaycity.net/index1.htm>

About Mandalay

Location

Mandalay is located on the eastern bank of the Ayeyawaddy River, in the central part of Myanmar, about 700 kilometres north of the capital Yangon. It is located at 96° 06 minutes of east longitude and 21° 59 minutes of north latitude and at the altitude of 74. 07 metres above sea level.

Located to the east of the city are the Yan Kin Hill and the Shan mountain ranges; to the west, the Ayeyawaddy, the Sagaing Hills, the Minwun Ranges, the Moe Meik Hill and Min Gun; to the south, the Dokhtawaddy (Myit Nge) River; and to the north, the town of Mattaya.

Areas

The city of Mandalay is 113.26 square kilometres wide, having the length of 16.83 kilometres from north to south and that of 8.75 kilometres from east to west.

Population

The city of Mandalay is made up of five townships, namely, Aung Mye Tharzan, Chan Aye Tharzan, Maha Aung Mye, Chan Mya Tharzi and Pyi Gyi Tagun, having eighty-six quarters. The population of Mandalay is 801,707 people in 2000 and the population increase rate is 2.8 percent. According to the census of 1992, the population of Mandalay was 653, 322 people. It is estimated that the population will rise to over one million and a half by the year 2020.

Climate

Mandalay being located in the central part of Myanmar, and being an inland area far from the sea, the temperature is high in the dry season and the cold is intense in the cold season. The rainfall is scarce, and the city has a dry climate.

The hot season is from March to June, the hottest month having the temperatures of 105° Fahrenheit (40.5° C) to 110° Fahrenheit (43.3° C). The average temperature of the dry season is 88° Fahrenheit (31.3° C).

The cold season lasts from November to February. The temperature in the coldest month is lower than 50° Fahrenheit (10° C). The average temperature in the cold season is 70° Fahrenheit (21.1° C).

The period from July to October is the rainy season, which has the average rainfall of 86.36cm. The average rainfall per year being lower than 101.6cm, the city has the warm and dry climate.

The Mya Nan San Kyaw The Golden Palace

King Mindon, who founded the Royal City of Yatanabon, built the Mya Nan San Kyaw, the Royal Palace, on 6th waning day of Kason, M.E 1221 (A.D



1857). It is surrounded by the rectangular shaped walls, each of which stretches 8.25 kilometres long, and again by the moat which is 68.58m wide and 3.35m deep. Formerly, there existed 114 royal apartments, which, being built on 3.35m high platform, covered 152.4m wide.

On 17 March, 1945, during the air raid of the British forces against the Japanese, the Royal Palace was ruined into ashes.

With the objective of re-establishing the milestone in Myanmar tradition and ancient times, when Myanmar had their own monarchs, their own royal palace and their own sovereignty, the Royal Palace has been renovated and restored faithfully into its original structure. The 89 main halls were re-built with reference to the original photographs, pictures, palm-leaf manuscripts with reference to the original photographs, pictures, palm leaf manuscripts about the royal apartments and the miniature model of the royal palace. On 18-9-96, the complete construction of the Mya Nan San Kyaw the Golden Palace was successfully celebrated.

Mandalay City Development Committee has been undertaking the task of removing the pond scum of the moat as the cleaning work of the royal moat, which bears a grace and a pride to the city : 4 large-scale pond scum-removing machines, 3 small pond scum-removing machines and 62 appointed workers remove about seven tons of pond scum per day. Activities such as mowing and making the crash barriers even, replacing the dead plants with new ones, and giving care to the growth of the plants have been routine tasks.

The Mandalay Hill

The Mandalay Hill is situated to the north-east corner of the Mandalay Royal Palace. It lies from north to south, its altitude being 236.5m above sea level and its height going up to 167.64m.

The Mandalay Hill is surrounded by the nine satellite hills called the Shwe Taung (The Golden Hill), the Ngwe Taung (the Silver Hill), the Paddamya Taung (the Ruby Hill), the Hse-dan Taung (the Hill of Arsenious trisulphide), the Myin Thila Taung (the Hill of Arsenic trisulphide), the Dokhta Hill (the Hill of Blue vitriol), the Ye-hle Taung (the Hill of Whirling Water), the Kye-ni Hill (the Copper Hill) and the Baluma Taung (the Hill of the Ogress). The third is called the Paddamya Taung since a ruby was some time ago found in that hill lying to the north west; the seventh one, the Ye-hle Taung since, in the rainy season, the rain water whirled first and flowed down like a funnel in the hill to east; and the ninth hill, the Baluma Taung, since it was believed that the Ogress Sanda Mukhi made her abode in the small hill near to the western passageway.

One famous Buddha Image on the Mandalay Hill is the Image of Standing Lord Buddha at the top of the hill where Lord Buddha made a prophesy. It was built by king Mindon. Eight years after the king's death, the image was

damaged by fire, and a new image was restored. The image of standing Lord Buddha is 8.22m high.

There are two one-way bus roads up to the top of the Mandalay Hill, one to the west of the Great Lions statues winding up the way and the other at the southern passageway going down.

There are four stairways going up the Mandalay Hill, two on the north and on the west, and two on the south.

The southern covered passage with the Two Great Lions on Haungches is the most frequently used by pilgrims. There exists the Museum of the Hermit U Khanti at the head of the passageway, which was built in honour of the benevolent hermit who first pioneered to develop the plans of building religious edifices and memorials on the Mandalay Hill. Near the archway ascending the southern passage is located the Shrine of the Guardian Spirit, known as Mandalay Bo Gyi, where the natives of Mandalay often come and make offerings. The iron statues of the two snakes are well known to the visitors of Mandalay. An elevator and an escalator are also in service for going up the hill.

Like a Tower given by nature, the Mandalay Hill offers a panoramic view over the Golden City of Mandalay. One can take a sweeping view towards the Yan Kin Hill, not far from it, the Sagaing hill and the Min Wun Ranges and the glimmering Ayeyawaddy and the Shan Yoma ranges at a far distance.

It will be a memorable experience for the visitor of Mandalay to enjoy the sunset beauty over the blinking, winding Ayeyawaddy and the blue Sagaing Hill and the Min Wun ranges.



Famous Pagodas

The Maha Muni Buddha Image

It is the most revered Buddha image in Mandalay. It is also known as the Maha Myat Muni, or Phaya Gyi. It is the most ancient Buddha image in Myanmar. It was cast in the life-span of Lord Buddha in the seated posture of

relaxed deportment, namely Bumi Phasa Mudras, symbolic of His Conquest of Mara.

In B.C 123, in the reign of King Sanda Thuriya, Monarch of Rakhine-Dharyawaddy, and carry the Image reverently so as to enshrine it at the present site. It took four months to carry the image reverently across the Rakhine Yoma Ranges, by inland route and by waterway a tough and rough journey indeed. The Height of the Maha Muni Buddha Image is 8 Cubits and 1 Maik (3.83m). The altar is 2.13m high. There, 2 bronze Siamese images, 3 bronze lion images and 1 bronze three headed Ayeyawun elephants are housed and displayed in the precinct on the left side of the northern exit passage. Whoever visits Mandalay from local areas or from abroad unfaillingly come and pay homage to the Maha Muni Buddha Image.

In the precinct of the Phayagyi is located the " Maha Buddha-Win Beikman ", the Museum of the Life of Buddha. It is a many-tiered building with Myanmar architectural finials. It houses a scenic map showing in old and current terms the spread of Theravada Buddhism, centered in central India, Buddha's birthplace, famous religious edifices in various lands, the routes of Lord Buddha on itinerary, and the routes of King Asoka's sending Buddhist missions to nine regions of nine countries in A.D 3rd century. Illustrations are displayed, which indicate the Four Noble Sites of Lord Buddha, namely, His birthplace, the site where He attained the Enlightenment, the site where he passed away.

The Buddha Images, representing various countries where Buddhism prospers well, and the Buddha Images revered through successive eras are exhibited in the forms of photographs, paintings and sculptures. Not only Buddhists but also foreigners studying Buddhism pay a visit to this museum. On the left side of the eastern passage, in the precinct of the pagoda, is the Sanctuary Pond of Tortoises and on the right side, the Sanctuary Pond of Fish.

Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda (Mandalay)

The Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda is situated on the Maha Dhamma Yan Thi Hill, to the east of the Yangon-Mandalay Highway, Shar-taw Lay Village, Amarapura Township. The Maha Dhamma Yan Thi Hill was chosen for the site of building the pagoda, and the Parikamma Ground Cleansing Ceremony was celebrated on 6-7-95. On the land which covers 364.23 hectares is built the main shrine of 49.38m in diameter and 49.38m in its Height. It took one year, five months and eight days to complete the construction of the pagoda

from the day of the Ground Cleansing Ceremony to the day of Offering the Golden Ornamental Finial to the pagoda. The pagoda's passages face nine directions. Its model is of the late 20th century architectural design, a harmonious combination of the two models of the Ananda Temple of the Bagan Period and the Shwedagon of Yangon. It evokes awe and reverence in the beholder. In the nine gateways are enshrined nine Buddha images in the posture of nine Mudras, and are entitled the sacred Nine Attributes of Lord Buddha.

The pagoda enshrines over two thousand Buddha images. It has gilded pillars, teak pillars and a gold painted lacquer canopy, the very work of superb craftsmanship. What is of great significance about the pagoda is that with the enshrining of the Buddha tooth relic, it can be entitled as the Dhatu Ceti, while, with the housing of the Buddha Images, it can also be entitled as the Ganda Kudi Taik Kyanung Taw. The Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda was built at the cost of 40.35 lakhs of kyats with the subsidiary fund of the government and the people's donations. The tooth relic casket's value is over 320 lakhs of kyats, having a thirty one step gold Mt.Meru stair embedded with jade, a silver altar, nine jade Buddha images and eight jade columns. The entrance gateway of the Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda, Mandalay, was donated by Mandalay City Development Committee, and was opened on 9-12-96. Not only local pilgrims but also tourists visit and pay obeisance at the pagoda, offering donations.

Buddha Tooth Relic Pagoda (Mandalay)

It is situated to the south of the Mandalay Hill, at its foot. The donor was King Mindon. Starting from M.E 1266, the gigantic alabaster rock was sculptured, and after three years in M.E 1296, it was completed. It was at the Sakyin Hill, 51.48km away from Mandalay in M.E 1266 that a gigantic alabaster rock shining white was found by the Ayeyawaddy. The rock was carried up and was sculptured at Sakyin Village. Then it was carried reverently aboard the Mya Nan Sekkya Village under the supervision of the Kanaung Prince to the Royal City. The Anekaja Ceremony and the Libation Ceremony were held and the Kyauktawgyi Buddha Image was donated for all pilgrims' worship. When King Mindon passed away, the Ganda Kudi Religious Edifice of the Buddha Image and the Prayer Hall were built by the Nyaung Shwe Shan lords. In the precinct around the pagoda are small brick shrines which house the eighty Arahats images. In each of the four corners of the precinct is grown a Bodhi tree carried reverently from Sri Lanka. (Today, however, only one Bodhi tree can be Marazein Buddha Image is 8.07 metres and its weight, 901620.12kg. Before the existence of the Lawka Chan Tha Abaya Larba Muni Buddha

Image, it was formerly the world largest alabaster Buddha image. The pagoda festival is held annually from 11th waxing day of Thadingyut to 3rd waning day, and is the most crowded pagoda festival in Mandalay

The Maha Lawka Marazein Kutho Taw Pagoda

It is situated at about 274.2m from the foot of the Mandalay Hill, to the southeast of the Mandalay Hill. The pagoda was built by King Mindon in M.E 1221. Its height is 57.27m. It was completed along with the construction of three great walls in M.E 1224. Within these three walls, in the 5.26hectres wide precinct, the Buddhist scriptures of the Three Baskets were inscribed on stone slabs and housed in shrines, the total number of the inscriptions being 729. This task of meritorious deed was completed in M.E 1230. The inscriptions were inscribed on alabaster slabs of 1.52m long, 1.06m wide and 0.15m thick, and about 0.46m of the slab was erected in the ground. It is figuratively called the World's Biggest Book. With the public donated money, an ornamental umbrella of stone was offered to shelter each standing inscription slab so as to preserve the inscriptions through time and changes. Between one cave-shrine housing the inscription slab and another were systematically grown star-flower trees and *Madhuca longifolia* at equal distances under the supervision of the Moe Bye Sit-ke (Second-in-command of a military unit) in M.E 1254. Today visitors to the pagoda can pay obeisance to the Buddha Image, and enjoy sweet recreation beneath the sweet-smelling, cool, shady trees.

The Sanda Muni Cast Buddha Image

The Sanda Muni Buddha Image is situated to the east of the Kyauktaw Gyi Pagoda. It was cast by King Bodawpaya before the founding of the city Mandalay. During the time of building the Great Mingun Pagoda, during King Bodawpaya's temporary reign in Nan Taw Kyun ("the Royal Palace Island"), the image was cast out of 18563.94kg of iron in M.E 1164, and was carried reverently to the Royal City of Amarapura. In the reign of King Bagytaw, the Buddha Image was carried reverently to Yadanapura Inwa, and, after being paid obeisance there for some time, was carried reverently back to Amarapura in the reign of King Shwe Bo. In M.E 1229, the Buddha Image was carried reverently to Mandalay, and was enshrined on the Royal Palace Ground of the Nan Mye Bon Tha, King Mindon's temporary royal residence.

The Buddha Image, being endowed with the graceful attributes of the Full Moon, is entitled as the Sanda Muni.

In M.E 1229, the temporary palace apartments were destroyed and the bodies of the Grown Prince and his sons Prince Malum, Prince Saku and Prince Pyinsi, who were killed during the Myin Kun Uprising, were buried and entombed. At the distance (.91m) from the tombs, the Sandarmuni Buddha Image was enshrined in a tier-roof brick building. The pagoda was called the Sandarmuni pagoda after the Image.

In M.E 1275, the Hermit U Khanti built with the donations of the people the Dhamma Ceti, 508 shrines housing the inscriptions, 1524 inscriptions recording the Pitakas of the Three Baskets, five Nikayas and commentaries on Buddhist Pali texts (in total, 758 Dhamma Ceti shrines and 1774 inscription slabs).

The Kan Taw Gyi Lake of Mandalay and The Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge

It was formerly known as the Tet Thay In. It is situated in west Than Lyet Maw, Chan Mya Thazi Township. It covers 322.43 hectares. It is 3657.6m long from north to south and 975.36m from east to west.

In the olden times, the Tet Thay In was a natural pond of used water and sewage of the native people, where the Shwe Ta Chaung and the Thingaza Chaung merged.

The Tet Thay In, which has been cleared up, was named Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi Lake on 9 July 1997.

The modern housing project was implemented. Starting from 29. 2. 2000, the Mye Padetha Kyun Project has been systematically carried out.

There floats the Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge in Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi. It was first situated above the moat waters to the south east of the Mandalay Royal Battlemented wall in 1990_a royal barge built out of the blending of the former Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge and the modern



Myanmar handicrafts. Today the royal barge has been moved to a more proper site, i.e., the Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi Lake. It was renovated on 25. 2. 99, and it was completed on 11. 2. 2001.

The Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge is 37.18m long and 14.93m wide. Its deck is .91m high above water. The height of the royal barge up to the diamond finial of the tiered roof building is 18.28m above water; its height up to the head of the Dragon is 3.65m above water; and its height up to the tip of the Tail, 8.83m above water. It rests on 215 pillars riveted deep into the water. The garden covers 0.607hectares.

The Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge was the type of water vessel taken by the kings of the olden days while touring the country and in celebrating the Annual waterway Parade. Remarkably, it was on this royal barge that the Maha Muni Buddha Image, carried reverently by King Bodawpaya, the founder of the Royal Kingdom of Amarapura, was carried reverently from Amarapura to the present site in Mandalay along the Nadi Chaung.

The scenic beauty of Mandalay is added to by the pleasant panoramic view of the Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi where the Mye Padetha Island and the Pyi Gyi Mon Royal Barge are located. The Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi Circular Road, 7.14km long, adorning the beauty of the lake, is connected with the Mandalay-Sagaing road to the east and with the eight lane motorway to the west. Mandalay City Development Committee has been taking measures to make a clean pleasant lake, like the moat and to green the surrounding of the lake.

There is the city boundary Strand Road close to the west of the Mandalay Kan Taw Gyi Lake.



The sunset beauty and the scenic view seen from the Mandalay boundary Stand Road with the red sun setting behind the Minwun-Sagaing ranges dotted with whitewashed and gold shrines along the Ayeyawaddy, this is the panoramic impressionistic painting, unsatiable and

unforgettable.

The Taung Tha Man Lake and The U Pein's Bridge

It is situated to the east of Amarapura. It is on the borderline of Amarapura Township, and to the east of the lake is the Pyi Gyi Tagun Township.

The Lake stretches 2438.4m from the east to the west, and 3048m from the north to south. With the background scene of the Sagaing Hill, the lake is surrounded by scenic sights, famous pagodas around it, historical religious edifices and crowded villages and quarters. Its water level rises to 2.43m in the rainy season. The famous historical edifices around the lake are the Amarapura Maha Gandayon Monastery, the Pa Hto Taw Gyi Pagoda, the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, the Maha Thekkya Yan This Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda, U Bein's Bridge and the beautiful row of shady Maze (Madhuca longifolia) trees.

Like the Taung Tha Man Lake, one worldwide famous landmark is U Bein's Bridge, which is the longest wooden bridge in Myanmar. It was called U Bein's Bridge after the supervisor's name, or the Taungthaman Bridge since it spans across the Taungthaman Lake.

U Bein's Bridge was constructed by the chief clerk U Pein in the reign of Kingin Bagan 1849 (in M.E 12211). The supply of wood for the bridge came from the former old palace of Inwa. It took 2 years to complete the construction. The couplet marking the completion of the construction is " Inga Aw-nygi-Hsauk-lok-Phyi ". The bridge consists of 1,086 support posts of teak (formerly 984 posts), which were erected 2.13m deep in the ground, 482 spans and 4 rest houses. The bridge stretches 1209.14m long. At 9 points, drawbridges were built to allow the royal barges like the Pyi Gyi Mon and war boats to pass through.

The Myanmar engineers of those days did not use any scale or lead line. Instead, quite amazingly, the distance between their footsteps was the standard measurement in constructing the bridge. Moreover, the bridge did not line up straight. Instead, it was constructed in the shape of right angles heading to the south so as to counter the battering waves and the blowing wind.

It is rightly said that any visitor to Mandalay who has not yet been to the Taungthaman Lake and who has not taken a walk along U Bein's Bridge is not really visiting Mandalay. Even the tourists are quite delighted to come and relax themselves along U Bein's Bridge and enjoy sweet recreation beneath the cool shady glade by the Taungthaman Lake, untouched by the simmering heat of Mandalay.

The bridge has stood as a historical ancient heritage for 2 centuries, as well as an enduring architectural building of old Myanmar engineers. It fits in well with the scenic beauty of the Taungthaman Lake. One can row boats for fun. There is also a playground there.

Today, MCDC is implementing the beautification of the Taung Tha Man lake, and building the Taung Thaman circular road, 12.67km long, connecting the Shwe Saga Pagoda of Taguntaing, the Pha-hto-tawgyi Pagoda, the Taung Mingyi Pagoda, the Village of Khasis, the Bon Oo In, the Nat-altar of Kywe Nan Caaung, the Koe Taung Pye Pagoda and the Me Bayet Pagoda.

The Yankin Hill

It is situated in Patheingyi Township, 8.1km to the east of Mandalay. The Hill is 215.18m high, ranging from north to south, and 2013.5m lang, facing the Shan Yoma range. There exist to the east the Hsetaw Gyi Canal and the Agricultural Science school and Mandalay Technological University to the south, the Yetagun Taung Golf Course, to the west, Mandalay Co-operative Degree College and the Atula Maha Mya Kyauk Pagoda, built by King Mindon, where natural pure water (PH7) is produced and to the north, the town of Pathingyi.

In M.E 457, Min Shin Saw, son of King Alaung Si Thu in Bagan Period, carved the figures of fish (*Ophiocephalus striatus*) for paying obeisance to prevent the draught. If these figures should be enshrined inside the cavern at the top of the hill, people could enjoy a good rainfall and be free from illnesses. Naturally it is known as the Yankin Hill (" Protecting from dangers "), or the Hill of the King of fish. In times of draught in Mandalay, people would take the figures of fish, and carry them reverently around the quarters and villages, which, it is believed, would bring good rain fall.

In the Period of Yadanabon, the figures of fish were brought to the palace and were housed in a tier-roofed building. In the month of Nayon, venerable monks chanted Pali verses of Buddha-to-be, King of the fish.

At the southern passage way of Yankin Hill, there is a bus route winding up the hill. The west passage way is commonly used. From the hilltop one can enjoy the panoramic scenic beauty of the Sagaing hill, the Ayewaddy, Mandalay City and the Mandalay Hill.

The Yadanabon Zoological Garden

It is situated on 12th street, between 70th and 73rd street, north west of Mandalay Hill. In 1989 the Yadanabon zoological garden was opened in Mandalay Hill. Visitors can view Myanmar's flora and fauna in the atmosphere of recreation. It covers over 21.44hectares. Animals that hold visitors' interest are 28 species of mammals such as elephant, zebra, tiger and leopard, 25 species of birds, 7 species of reptile such as crocodile node python, altogether 305 animals. The Zoological Garden is opened daily, with the special dances of snake and clever elephant on Sabbath days and Sundays. The Zoological Garden is supervised by Wild Animals and Reserved Forest Preservation Branch, Forestry Department, the Ministry of Forestry.

History

Mandalay, as the center of Myanmar culture, was outstanding in the past, it holds the stage now; and it will continue to be a place of pride in the future.

It is situated about 600 kilometers north of Yangon on the Ayeyarwaddy river, is, with about half a Million inhabitants Myanmar's second largest city.

Mandalay is the historical old capital, a capital of Myanmar culture, Buddhist Sasana and Myanmar traditional arts and crafts, with the life span of one hundred and forty two years, a city which abounds in historical sites, cultural memorials and Buddhist edifices. Accordingly, it is the richest historical landmark next to Bagan.

Despite the wonderful sound of its name, inviting associations to an archaic fairy tale kingdom, Mandalay is neither very old nor particularly beautiful. But Mandalay was the capital of the last, independent Burmese kingdom, which in 1886 was finally conquered by British colonial forces.

The town had been founded only 29 years earlier in 1857 by King Mindon, making it the capital of an independent kingdom for less than 30 years.

Contrary to other Burmese towns, especially Yangon,



Mandalay has not grown from a smaller settlement to town proportions. In 1857 Mandalay was set up in an empty area, because, according to an ancient prophecy, in that exact place a town would come into existence on occasion of the 2,400th jubilee of Buddhism.

The city was named after the Mandalay Hill, which is situated at the northeast corner of the present city. The hill has for long been a holy mount and it is believed that Lord Buddha prophesied that a great city, metropolis of Buddhism, would be founded at its foot. It was King Mindon who fulfilled the prophecy.

King Mindon decided to fulfill the prophecy and during his reign in the Kingdom of Amarapura he issued a royal order on 13 January, A.D 1857 to establish a new kingdom. The Ceremony of Ascending the Throne was celebrated in July, 1858. The royal city and the kingdom was demarcated. The whole royal city was called Lay Kyun Aung Mye ("Victorious Land over the Four Islands") and the royal palace, the Mya Nan San Kyaw ("The Royal Emerald Palace"). The kingdom was called the Kingdom of Yadanabon, along with other name Ratanapura, mean " The Bejeweled Site ". Later it was called Mandalay after the Mandalay Hill, 2.5km far to the north east of the royal palace, and today the name still exists. The name " Mandalay " is a derivative of the Pali word " Mandala ", which means " a plains land " and also that of the Pali word " Mandare ", which means " an auspicious land ".

At that time a transfer of the capital not only meant leaving an old town and erecting a new town in a different place. As all secular buildings of that time, including the royal palaces, were built from wood, a transfer of the capital meant the complete dismantling of the houses of the old settlement, which then were loaded on carts and the backs of elephants to be reconstructed at the place chosen for the new town.

This way of moving entire capitals is a tradition in Myanmar. The transfer of the capital from Amarapura to Mandalay had not been the first of its kind. The most important Burmese town of the northern Ayeyarwaddy valley had for a long time been the town of Ava, founded in 1364 about 20 kilometers southwest of Mandalay. In 1636 the at that time powerful royal family from Taungu about 280 kilometers north of Yangon and 320 kilometers south of Mandalay moved to Ava and made it the capital of a Burmese realm roughly equaling the extent of the present Burmese state.

But in 1782 the town was packed up and moved about 8 kilometers to the Northeast, to the aforementioned Amarapura. In 1823 the entire capital was

dismantled again and rebuilt 8 kilometers Southwest in Ava. But in 1838 Ava was damaged by an earthquake, and was therefore in 1841 packed up again and once more transferred to Amarapura. But this was not of duration either, as only 16 years later the entire town was moved again this time 12 kilometers to the Northeast to the present Mandalay.

Who, in the face of all this moving of the Burmese capital, might assume that it was more or less only a temporary camp of tents, is very wrong. At least the royal palaces, despite their being made from wood, were immensely large. Many, enormous teakwood tree trunks served as pillars to support the royal palaces, often several stories high.

The rhyming couplet easy to memorize the year of building the royal city is " Okkyit-Kyaw Aye / Mandalay " or " Aung Kyaw Chan Aye / Mandalay " (i.e, M.E 1221). The city's layout of the construction is the same at that of the earlier Kingdom of Amarapura, and from the bird's eye-view, it has the structure of geographical squares and rectangular shapes, with streets and roads crossing one another at right angles. There are four parts dividing the city, namely, Ashe-pyin (East Part), Anok-pyin (west Part), Taung-pyin (southern part) and Myauk-pyin (Northern Part), with 54 plots.

With the Ground-breaking ceremony, King Mindon laid the foundation of Mandalay on the 6th waning day of Kason, M.E 1221, (A.D 1857). The King simultaneously laid the foundations of seven edifices: the royal city with the battlemented walls, the moat surrounding it, the Maha Lawka Marazein Stupa, the higher ordination hall named the Pahtan-haw Shwe Thein, the Atumashi (the Incomparable) monastery, the Thudhama Zayats or public houses for preaching the Doctrine, and the library for the Buddhist scriptures.

At the time of building, the royal moat was 68.58m wide and 3.35m deep, and was fed with water from the Yadana Nadi, now called the Ye Ni Canal. In 1995 the moat was dug renew and the banks were laid neatly and firmly with rocks. There existed 20 gardens, a huge earthen wall and 57 doors palace. There existed 5 bridges spanning over the moat and 12 bridges. At present, there are four spanning bridges, namely the U-hteik Bridge to the east the Kyaw Moe Bridge to the south, the Kye Mon Bridge to the west and the Lay Thein Bridge to the north.

When King Mindon passed away, his son King Thibaw ascended the throne, and in M.E 1247, Myanmar fell under the British colony. It was the old capital ruled by two successive kings the one where the last of Myanmar's monarchs reigned.

After the British had conquered Mandalay in 1886 they turned the royal palaces of Mandalay into their military headquarters and christened the complex Fort Dufferin.

During World War II the Japanese installed a military camp in the same place, which then was bombed by the allies, until nothing was left of the ancient palace buildings.

Mandalay today is a striking phenomenon composed of modern and classic images with the ancient cultural beauty of the royal palace and the moat surrounding it, and the natural impressionistic beauty of the Mandalay Hill, harmoniously added with new architectural photography of modern houses and brick buildings.

The former palace ground is known by the name of Fort Mandalay. Of the ancient palaces a few concrete replica have been built and further reconstructions are being conducted.

Mon History

<http://www.eumon.org/history.php>

Pre-Colonial

The Mon were one of the earliest distinct groups to occupy Burma, moving into the area possibly as early as 1500 BCE. The Mon history has their first kingdom, Suwarnabhumi, founded around the port of Thaton in 300 BCE. They were converted to Theravada Buddhism in the 200s BCE. Ashoka is known to have sent an envoy of monks for this purpose, however tradition states that the Mon had previous contact with the religion through seafaring.

The Mon prospered in southern Burma until around 1000 when they came under pressure from new ethnic groups arriving from the north. Successive waves of Burman and Thai groups slowly eroded the Mon kingdoms until the final collapse. The last Mon kingdom was Hongsavatoi - they reconquered much of their lost territory until the energetic Burman leader U Aungzeya forced them back and captured the kingdom by 1757. The Mon religious leaders were forced to flee to Siam and the Mon were harshly repressed.

Colonial

Burma, including the Mon territories, was conquered by the British by 1824 after the Second Anglo-Burmese War. The Mon aided the British in the overthrow of the Burman monarchy.

Post-Colonial

The Mon soon became anti-colonialists and following the grant of independence to Burma in 1948 they sought self-determination, U Nu refused them this and they rose in revolt to be crushed again.

They have remained a repressed and defiant group in the country since then. They have risen in revolt against the central Burmese government on a number of occasions, initially under the Mon People's Front and from 1962 through the New Mon State Party. A partially autonomous Mon state, Monland, was created in 1974 covering Tenasserim, Pegu and Irrawaddy. Resistance continued until 1995 when NMSP and SLORC agreed a cease-fire and in 1996 the Mon Unity League was founded. SLORC troops continued to operate in defiance of the agreement.

In 1947 Mon National Day was created to celebrate the ancient founding of . (It follows the full moon on the 11th month of the Mon lunar calendar, except in Phrapadaeng, Thailand, where it is celebrated at Songkran.)

IQ Encyclopædia Article

Dvaravati

ancient kingdom of Southeast Asia that flourished from the 6th to the 13th century. It was the first Mon kingdom established in what is now Thailand and played an important role as a propagator of Indian culture. Situated in the lower Chao Phraya River valley, Dvaravati extended westward to the Tenasserim Yoma (mountains) and southward to the Isthmus of Kra.

The Mon, who are believed to have originated in western China, entered the area in the 1st millennium BC, penetrating westward from the upper Mekong River. Dvaravati emerged as an independent entity late in the 6th century AD, maintaining its independence until late in the 11th century. Rarely politically dominant and continually under the shadow of stronger neighbours, Dvaravati was prevented by geographic barriers from establishing close political ties with other Mon states to the west in southern Myanmar (Burma) and with the Mon state in northern Thailand. Dvaravati experienced political domination by neighbouring peoples on three separate occasions: in the 10th century, when the Burmese conquered the Mon state of Thaton west of the Tenasserim Yoma; from the 11th to the 13th century, when the Khmer empire (Cambodia) arose in the east; and finally, in the late 13th century, when Dvaravati was absorbed by the Thai empire. Subjugation did not, however, mean extinction. The Dvaravati Mon retained their customs and a relative degree of racial homogeneity under their own rulers.

Dvaravati was historically important as a transmitter of Indian culture. Having had early commercial and cultural contact with India, the Mon assumed the role of disseminators of the main features of Indian culture. They were the most receptive of Southeast Asian peoples to Indian art and literature. Indian influence was apparent in matters of sculpture, writing, law, and governmental forms.

Despite political domination, Dvaravati exerted another important force in relation to its conquerors. Whereas contacts with India had contributed to the development and character of Mon civilization, the Dvaravati Mon in their turn became the teachers of their conquerors, the Khmer, the Burmese, and the Thai. All three conquerors were influenced by Dvaravati in writing systems, art forms, government, religious terminology, and scholarship.

Encyclopædia Britannica Article

Mon Kingdom

It also called Hanthawaddy Kingdom, kingdom of the Mon people, who were powerful in Myanmar (Burma) from the 9th to the 11th and from the 13th to the 16th century and for a brief period in the mid-18th century. The Mon migrated southward from western China and settled in the Chao Phraya River basin (of southern Thailand) about the 6th century AD. Their early kingdoms, Dvaravati and Haripunjaya (*qq.v.*), had ties with the ancient Cambodian kingdom of Funan and with China and were also strongly influenced by Khmer civilization.

After the Mon moved westward into the Irrawaddy River delta of southern Myanmar in the ensuing centuries, they acquired Theravāda Buddhism, their state religion, from Ceylon and South India, and they adopted the Indian Pāli script. By 825 they had firmly established themselves in southern and southeastern Myanmar and founded the cities of Pegu and Thaton.

About the same period, southward-migrating Burmans took over lands in central Myanmar and established the kingdom of Pagan. In 1057 Pagan defeated the Mon kingdom, capturing the Mon capital of Thaton and carrying off 30,000 Mon captives to Pagan. This event was to prove culturally decisive for the Burmans because the Mon captives included many Theravāda Buddhist monks, who converted the Burmans to Theravāda Buddhism; Pāli replaced Sanskrit as the language of the sacred literature, and the Burmans adopted the Mon alphabet.

After the fall of Pagan (1287) to the invading Mongols, the Mon, under Wareru, regained their independence and captured Martaban and Pegu, thus virtually controlling their previously held territory. The next 200 years witnessed incessant warfare between the Mon and the Burmans, but the Mon managed to retain their independence until 1539, when they came under the

domination of Toungoo Myanmar. In the mid-18th century the Mon rose in rebellion and reestablished their kingdom of Pegu, but it lasted only some 10 years. The Burmans triumphed permanently over the Mon when their leader Alaungpaya razed Pegu in 1757. Many of the Mon were killed, while others fled to Siam (now Thailand). The Mon are still centred in southeastern Myanmar, though their numbers are small compared to those of the ethnic Burmans.

Encyclopædia Britannica Article

Haripunjaya

an ancient Mon kingdom centred in the Mae Nam (river) Ping Valley in northwestern Thailand. It was founded in the mid-7th century by a queen of Lopburi, the capital of the Mon Dvaravati kingdom to the south. Although originally established as a colony of Dvaravati, Haripunjaya maintained its independence and its own ruling dynasties as a member of a loose confederation including the Mon states of Dvaravati and Thaton.

Haripunjaya flourished and developed an advanced civilization. Espousing the conservative Theravāda Buddhism, the kingdom acted as a transmitter of Indian cultural influences. The development of irrigation systems, law, and art forms were among its accomplishments.

Haripunjaya was barely able to maintain its independence against attacks by the Thai in the 9th century and the Khmer (Cambodians) in the 10th century. It also conducted continual warfare against Dvaravati, which was conquered by the Khmer in the early 11th century.

After centuries of independence, the advanced civilization of Haripunjaya was absorbed by the Thai when the Thai ruler Mangrai conquered Haripunjaya in 1292, establishing the city of Chiangmai a few miles from Lamphun, the old capital of Haripunjaya. The Mon became the teachers of the Thai and influenced the development of Thai writing, scholarship, and art forms.

 Encyclopædia Britannica Article

Nat Worship

http://www.exploremyanmar.com/nat_workship.htm

The widespread adoption of Buddhism in Myanmar suppressed, but never replaced the pre-Buddhist practice of nat <spirit> worship> Originally animistic - associated with hills, trees, lakes and other natural features - the Burmese nat has evolved into a spirit that may hold dominion over a place <natural or human-made>, person, or field of experience. Orthographically, the written Burmese word nat is derived from the Pali Sanskrit natha <Lord or guardian>, though this spelling may have overlaid an existing indigenous term. Despite the continued efforts of some Buddhist leaders to downgrade the nat cult, it means an important dimension of everyday Burmese life.

Before King Anawrahta came to power in Bagan in the 11th century, it was common for the Burmese to build small shrines or spirit houses dedicated to land nat who were displaced by the construction of houses, monasteries or other buildings, or by the planting of rice and other crops. The owners or tenants of the buildings made daily offerings of food, incense and flowers at the shrines to placate these "guardian" nat. Unpropitiated, such nat might cause misfortune to befall the land's human tenants.

Separate, larger shrines were built for a higher class of nat, descended from actual historic personages <including previous Thai and Bamar Kings> who had died violent, unjust deaths. These suprahuman nat, when correctly propitiated, could aid worshipers in accomplishing important tasks, vanquishing enemies and so on. A few Hindu devas <spirit-beings> and Mahayana Buddhist bodhisattvas - also participated in the nat pantheon.

In his push to make Theravada Buddhism the national faith, King Anawrahta tried to ban nat worship in Bagan, which was <and still is > the strongest bastion of spirit worship in Myanmar. As part of his anti-nat campaign, he ordered the destruction of all nat shrines in the kingdom, and banished all Hindu images to a desecrated Vishnu temple renamed Nathlaung Kyaung <Monastery of the Prisoner Nat>. He also forbade the practice of animal sacrifice at nearby Mt Popa, a volcanic outcropping considered the abode of the 36 most powerful human nat. Instead of abandoning their belief in nat, however, the Bamar merely took their practices underground, rebuilding the guardian nat shrines in their homes.

Realising he was turning the people away from Buddhism, rather than destroying their faith in the nat, the king rescinded his total ban and allowed nat images and shrines on paya grounds. He himself led the way by placing images of the 36 nat from Mt Popa at the base of the sacred zedi of Shwezigon. To these universally recognised 36, Anawrahta added 37th, Thagyamin, a Hindu deity based on Indra, who he crowned "King of the nat". Thagyamin thus outranked the previous nat King, Mahagiri nat <Lord of the Great Hill, a reference to Mt Popa>. Since, in traditional Buddhist mythology, Indra paid homage to Buddha on behalf of the Hindu pantheon, this theistic insertion effectively made all nat subordinate to Buddhism.

Anawrahta's scheme worked, and today the commonly believed cosmology places Buddha and his teaching at the top, with the Hindu and Bamar nat in second and third place. In spite of the nat lower position in the hierarchy, the Burmese nat cult is nearly as strong as ever. The Burmese merely divide their devotions and offerings according to the sphere of influence: Buddha for future lives, and the nat - both Hunu and Bamar for problems in this life. A misdeed, for example, might be redressed by offering made to Thagyamin, who once a year records the names of those who perform good deeds in a book made of gold leaves, and the those who do evil deeds in a book made of dog's skin. Offerings to Thurathati <Sanskrit Saraswati> , a nat in charge of education, may help a student pass a tough exam.

Since the Bagan era, the house guardian nat has stayed indoors and merged with Mahagiri to form Eindwin-Min Mahagiri <Lord of the Great Mountain [who is] in the House>. In most homes, this dual Nat is represented by a large, unhusked coconut which dressed with red Gaung baung <turban>, perfumed, and hung from a pillar or post somewhere in the house. This nat must receive daily offerings from the house's inhabitants; for many Burmese, this is the only Nat worshipped on a regular basis. Other Nat, particularly in Bamar dominated central Myanmar, have shrine in Paya or monastery grounds, which receive occasional offerings only during pilgrimages, or bimonthly full-new-moon visits.

Some of the more animistic guardian nat remain outside home and paya. A tree-spirit shrine, for example, may be erected beneath a particularly

venerated old tree, thought to wield power over the immediate vicinity. These are especially common beneath larger banyan trees <Ficus religiosa>. as this tree is revered as a symbol of Buddha's enlightenment: an offering made to a banyan Nat conveniently doubles as a Buddhist offering. A village may well have a nat shrine in a wooded corner for the propitiation of the village shrines are simple dollhouse-like structures of wood or bamboo: their proper placement is divined by a local Saya <teacher or shaman> trained in spirit lore.

Knowledge of the complex nat world is fading fast among the younger Burmese generation, many of whom pay respect only to the coconut-head house guardian. Red and white are widely known to be Nat colours: drivers young and old tie red and white strips of cloth to side-view mirrors and hood ornaments of their vehicles for protection from the nat. Those with a general fear of nat will avoid eating pork, which is thought to be offensive to the spirit world. The main fear is not simply that spirits will wreak havoc on your daily affairs, but rather that one may enter your mind and body, then force you to perform unconscionable acts in public - acts that would cause other Burmese to shun you. Spirit possession or metaphysical - is a real phenomenon in Myanmar.

Staunch Burmese Buddhist claim to pay no attention to the nat, as if the nat didn't exist. On close questioning, however, they will usually admit this is only because they outrank nat due to their adherence to Buddhism, and thus they

have no reason to fear them. It is commonly believed that Buddhists can stay out of the nat's reach as long as they keep the five lay precepts against lying, stealing, killing, harmful sexual behavior and intoxication, In particular, drunkenness is considered an invitation to spirit possession.

Nat festivals

On certain occasions, the nat cult goes behind simple propitiation of the spirits <Via offerings> and steps into the realm of spirit invocation. Most commonly, this is accomplished through Nat Pwe <spirit festivals>, special musical performances designed to attract nat to the performance venue. Nearly all indigenous Burmese music designed for this purpose; the classical forms seen in tourist restaurants came relatively late in the country's music history. When enough money is available, a Nat Pwe may be hosted the night before a Shinpyu <Buddhist novice ordination ceremony> as a way of receiving the nat blessings - perhaps, on some level, even asking the nat permission for the novice ordination. Often the nat pwe is part of a variety of musical, dramatic and conedic performances that last from dusk till dawn; those spectators who object to nat pwe <or are fearful of the nat world> can then leave during the nat pwe and return later for the rest of the show.

Pagodas and Legends

PAGODAS AND LEGENDS

<http://www.myanmar.com/ACOCI/CULTURE/2000/legends.html> also
<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp2000/11-2000/pag.htm>

Pagodas are indeed unique landmarks of Myanmar. In no other country can you find such manifestation of devotion demonstrated by Myanmar Buddhists to Buddhism. Verily no hill is so high, no valley so deep, no forest so dense, no plain so barren as to prevent a pious buddhist to build a pagoda of glittering gold or snow-white coat, no matter how large or small, for no work of merit is believed to be so richly rewarded as building and donating a pagoda for the propagation of Buddhist faith. A writer noted that a group of trekkers scaled Mt Victoria, reputed to be the third highest peak(1000 ft), and was surprised to find a pagoda already there, the region they least expected to witness such a feat of devotion considering the immense height and intensity of work to accomplish such a wonder.



History has recorded that Myanmar enjoyed prosperity as early as the Bagan Dynasty, principally during the reigns of the first Myanmar Emperor King Anawratha (1044 - 1077) and King Kyansittha (1084 - 1112), popularly known as the Bagan Golden Age. It also witnessed another gold, i.e. the golden age of pagoda building.

In that age of rote, where Myanmar and Pali literature was preserved to memory by word of mouth, rhyme or verse is the easiest way to remember things by. Thus the number of Bagan pagodas in the 42 square kilometers of land was recorded in rhyming couplets. Where each word represented a digit the first four words were meant to be reckoned as 4446. But the common legend extended to seven digits inflating the numbers to millions. Thus it is not surprising that an unsuspecting compiler of Myanmar Guide or coffee table book taking the word from the untutored local samaritan had dubbed Bagan

as 'the city of four million pagodas'. The inventory of Bagan pagodas researched and recorded by the Myanmar Archeology Department posted the number as 2217.

That was just but one area of the country. Another city which reached the golden era through maritime trade around 16th century was the city of Mrauk-U in the Rakhine State. Imposing pagodas such as Shit-Thaung Pagoda, the pagoda of 80000 Buddha images, Koe-Thaung Pagoda the pagoda of 90000 images, the Mahamuni of Kyauk Taw are also sacred depositories of Buddhist faith. I believe no pagoda can surpass Moe-Hnyin Pagoda of Monywa where 512028 Buddha images repose.

The most well-known and revered landmark is naturally the Shwe Dagon, one of the wonders of the world. Other no less revered pagodas are the Golden Rock (Kyaik Hti Yoe) of Kyaikhto, the Maha Muni gold laden image of Mandalay, the Five Golden Images of Inle Phaung Daw Oo, and the sacred Sagaing Hills, refuge of the holy monks and nuns.

Lord Buddha's last instructions to his disciple Ashin Ananda included permission to build and revere shrines, pagodas as places of worship. Thus many pagodas and images were built through the centuries as the most sublime forms of meritorious deeds. In the course of years, many legends grew, attributable to certain pagodas, heightening devotion and obeisance or increasing the aura and omnipotence, in the belief that prayers and wishes will be answered. Naturally these legends



passed through the generations by word of mouth, difficult to authenticate, or too diffident to challenge for fear of incurring the wrath of the guardian spirits. Some of the well worn legends which may excite the inquiring minds are presented herein.

Shwesigone Pagoda of Bagan is one of the most visited sights. There is one legend associated with Shwesigone. One day the King of Bagan in full regalia came to pay homage to the great pagoda. Not wanting to lift his royal head aloft to observe the pinnacle where the 'hti' was hoisted, he commanded his engineers to bring the pagoda into his royal vision while he bowed and prayed. The engineers made a quick survey, then bored a hole at the designated point. Finishing thus they poured water into the hole to level with the terraced platform. The engineers supplicated the mighty king to glance at the pool of water where the whole pinnacle would be in full view without batting even one royal eyelid. The king paid obeisance to the sacred pagod

a thanks to the ingenuity of the engineers. The visitors will have the same satisfaction too if you follow the same steps of the royal king one thousand years ago.

There is also another legend involving four pagodas, viz: Shwesigone, Lawkanandar, Tant-kyi-taung and Tuing-taung, within which four replicas of sacred tooth relics were enshrined by the great king Anawratha. It is said that praying at the four pagodas before noon will have your wish granted. The method of supplication is as follows. You must offer the same flower or fruit at all the pagodas. You must supplicate for one identical wish and the round trip must be completed before noon. In the earlier days when communication was difficult, it was a Herculean task. Modern day transportation and improved road network may shorten the time span, but it still remains an arduous, exciting as well as a rewarding visit.

Mahamuni, the golden image of Lord Buddha situated in Mandalay also has a store of legends attributed to his omnipotence. All Buddhists believe that Lord Buddha breathed life to the sacred image to propagate the Buddhist faith for 5000 years of Sasana duration. This holy image was originally cast in Rakhine and was brought to Mandalay by King Bodaw Phayar in 1784. The legend that the holy image breathes life is demonstrated by the holy ceremony of washing the face every dawn, the ritual personally performed by the holy monk of the Order of the Sanghas named 'Yedaw Sayadaw'. Many devout Buddhists from Mandalay and beyond throng the narrow passage to catch a glimpse of the ceremony and also to offer towels, perfumes and alms to the great image.

These are redistributed to the pilgrims who keep them as they bring good fortune.

Carried along with the sacred image were bronze statues. A light foray into the origins of these statues brought forth an interesting glimpse of history highlighting their sojourn. They hailed from Cambodia, standing guard at the famed Angkor Wat. They were moved to Thailand, then to Bago, then to Rakhine and then to Mandalay where they had taken permanent residence since, in the compound of the Mahamuni Pagoda. There are six of them, viz: two dvarapalas (temple guardian warriors), three lions and a three-headed

elephant. Never would they have imagined to be rubbed and poked by peoples, who sincerely believed that they had healing powers. The present day visitors will surely notice with amusement why certain parts of the bronze anatomy are so smooth and shiny, which indicate where peoples through the centuries most tend to suffer.



Legend also abound around Kyaik-hti-yoe or the Golden Rock Pagoda, where the sacred hair of Lord Gautama Buddha was enshrined. Hiking towards the top of the Golden Rock hill through many climbs and forest path offer exhilarating joy however so exhausting that if the pilgrim can attempt three times in succession in 1 year to reach the sacred Rock he will be blessed with riches and fame. Nowadays with the paving

of concrete roads right to the top of the hill pilgrimage especially for the elderly has become much easier. There is also another miracle in the way the Golden Rock is perched on the edge of a promontory of the hill. In the olden days it is believed that there is enough space for a hen to crouch in the vacuum between the Rock and the perch. Even now a thin bamboo reed can pass through it defying reason.

There is a legend surrounding a famous pagoda in the middle of a great lake called Inndawgyi, in the Kachin State. The pagoda is also called Inndawgyi Pagoda. Being in the hilly region the weather is crisp and cool. At all times the pagoda can be reached only by a boat except in the month of the pagoda festival held in 'Taboung' the twelfth month of Myanmar lunar calendar (March). As if by miracle a footpath appears spanning the bank and the foot of the pagoda, as if created by the celestial beings to facilitate the pilgrims

visiting the pagoda. Devout people of the region named the path as 'Path paved by the Nat spirits'. As miraculously as it appears, the path submerges under the water after the festival ends, 'au revoir' till next year.

Two famous pagodas in the Sagaing region stand out as being worthy of mention. One is named 'Soon Oo Ponnya Shin' at the foot of the Sagaing Hill, a gateway to the peaceful Sagaing Hill Ranges 'Sagaing Taungyoe', a living centre of Buddhist faith where, in the 570 monastery complexes more than 5000 venerable monks and nuns live in celibacy, learning the Buddhist scriptures and practising meditation. Legend says that no human being can offer the earliest alm to the pagoda, because at all times the alm will be seen at the alter, offered by someone who can always beat you in this endeavour.

Another famous pagoda lies on the road between Sagaing and Shwebo. It is a huge round domed shaped edifice, towering loftily in its snow-white coat amidst flat plains, visible from afar. It goes by the name 'Kaung-hmu-taw', auspicious donation of King Thalun, built in 1636. It is simply huge, 900 feet in circumference at the base. Records note that Buddha's tooth relic from Kandy was enshrined and the dome shape took after the glass casing of the tooth relic. But the legend has a more interesting explanation. The story goes that during construction the engineers found out that the base was too huge. Fearing the wrath of the King they approached the Queen and begged her to find a good reason to placate the King. The Queen, a very learned lady struck upon a witty solution, and made motions to undo her chemise. Hidden from public eye was the fountain of life, which through unbounded motherly metta transformed life-giving red blood into rich white whole milk to nurture a new-born babe. The engineers, no less quick-witted took the cue and thus Kaung-Hmu-Daw was successfully built for later generations to admire and revere. Though veering from the truth, this legend has a better appeal and in spite of refutations to the contrary holds sway to this day.



The legend evolving around the five golden images of Phaung Daw Oo in Inlay Lake is also interesting. Every year in the month of Thadingyut (October) the Images tour along the Inlay Lake and stop at pre-determined points for the devout Buddhists to pray, donate and gain merit. The standing legend is that one holy image stays behind in the Monastery. The lore goes that on one occasion all the five images left the monastery, when a storm broke out, capsizing the royal barge.



The frantic search redeemed only four images. In desperation the trustees returned to the monastery only to find with consternation, the missing image reposed sedately on the pedestal. A weed was found stuck to the image, may be to authenticate that it had been returned from the depths of the lake by some guardian spirits. Since then only four images make the sacred

trip every year.

The pagodas, images and icons are but physical and material manifestations as objects of worship and meditation. Such abundance in Myanmar may have led many uninitiated foreigners to dub the Buddhists as worshippers of the idol. In fact a true Buddhist worships neither relic nor image. It is a refuge to contemplate on the enlightened omniscience of Lord Buddha and His teachings. The ultimate aspiration of a true Buddhist is the achievement of Nirvana, meaning the cessation of the unending cycle of birth, suffering and death.

But in the mundane world such legends will continue to fascinate peoples, come what may.

Phaung-Daw-Oo Pagoda and the Inle Lake

<http://www.myanmar.gov.mm/Perspective/persp1996/9-96/pha.htm>

Inle is situated in the Shan State of North Eastern Myanmar. The inhabitants are Inthas, who according to history, migrated from Southern Myanmar to this lake. They have preserved their archaic Myanmar language to this day. Because of their unique history, their life is so much connected to the lake that they seldom leave its waters and shores. About 200 villages are situated around this lake and most of the houses stand on stilts and are accessible only by boat. Some houses look more like palaces, especially the marvelously large monasteries. The floating market is one of the most popular events in this region.

During the rainy seasons motorboats have to drive very carefully, the waves could easily sweep the floor of such a house. The lake is about 60 square miles during the wet season, but gets smaller and smaller every year. The silting action of the feeder streams and overcrowding water hyacinths threaten to choke it.

There is something rare and special which can be seen exclusively in this lake. These are the famous leg-rowers. It is not only rowing with the leg, but the upper end of the oar is tucked under the armpit while the man braces the shaft with the calf of his leg. Sculling like this, the rower has his hands free for adjusting a fish net, or pushing down the fish trap. The method is for shallow waters only.

The spiritual centre of the lake is the massive Phaung-Daw-Oo Pagoda. The modern construction contains five Buddha statues. According to legend they were placed in a cave near the lake by King Alaungsithu in the 12th century. When they were discovered centuries later their religious significance had increased tremendously. In homage, the faithful have heaped so much gold leaf that the five statues can hardly be recognized as Buddha Images.

Once a year the peaceful scenery at the lake is filled with joy and excitement. It is the time when four of the five Buddhas are brought to the karaweik, a boat in the form of a swan, symbol of Myanmar's former Buddhist royalty. Then the Buddhas make their annual visit to the villages around the lake. The procession starts at the end of Buddhist Lent and it takes about 19 days till the Karaweik is back at Phaung-Daw-Oo Pagoda.

Extensive work has to be carried out before the procession can start. The boat has to be prepared, the decorations, like the umbrellas, have to be restored and, last but not least, all the canals the Karaweik will pass through have to be cleaned of all water plants and marked by signs.

Till only a few years ago, all five Buddhas went on this voyage. But one day a strong wind caught the karaweik and it capsized and went to the bottom of the lake, including everything in it. Luckily the lake was not very deep, so divers went down in desperate search. Four of the Buddhas were found and brought to the surface. There was absolutely no trace of the fifth. Everybody was sad at the loss of the precious figure. In deep despair the search boat went back to the pagoda. But when the procession arrived there, to the surprise of everyone, they saw that the statue was already in its original place. Today, the figure is not moved for people believe that this particular Buddha is the guardian of the Pagoda.

When the karaweik starts its journey across the lake it is joined by several boats which are beautifully decorated with umbrellas and ornaments. As the karaweik does not go to every village, people residing in adjacent villages are the ones who converge on the lake area to see the spectacular event and pay homage to the Buddha. As soon as the karaweik turns home, more boats join the procession. The climax of the event is the day when the barge comes from the last overnight stop at Ye-Tha back to Phaung-Daw-Oo Pagoda. It usually falls on the third day after full moon in October.

Early in the morning the monks of the Ye-Tha monastery gather together with the villagers and give homage to the Buddhas side by side with the rowers of the karaweik, who are clad in white clothes.

After a sermon by the Chief Monk, the heavily gilded Buddhas are brought back to the karaweik. Slowly the barge starts the last part of the 19 day trip. As the morning sun goes up, more and more boats, all brightly decorated, join the karaweik. On the last stretch the karaweik is moved to a larger canal while the entourage stays behind. Hundreds upon hundreds of people, their heads bowed down in deep devotion, wait calmly along the banks for the appearance of the karaweik. The going gets rough, however, in the last few metres of the homestretch portion of the journey. Practically every space of the lake

becomes occupied by small boats: the rowers can hardly find a place to maneuver the big barge through. When finally it succeeds in gaining the entrance of the Pagoda, the crowd gets excited. They shower the figures with coins, rice and flowers, while others surge forward to be near them. The men carrying the statues can hardly move, it takes some doing before they finally replace the statues in their proper places. Then men come up and add new gold leaf to the decor of the Pagoda. Women are not allowed to touch these statues.

The annual pilgrimage of the Buddhas is over, but the festival continues.

The karaweik has been anchored opposite the Pagoda and people are busy preparing everything for the big event of the day: the regatta of the leg-rowers. To see one leg-rower moving his boat across the lake is an artistic pleasure, but to see more than 40 of them moving one boat is an incredible sensation. In the centre of each boat there is a long shaft going from bow to stern. so the men can hold themselves with one hand and concentrate fully on rowing.

Six boats join the contest, four of which are big, with about 46 rowers, and two smaller ones, with 96 rowers aboard. As the course is not too large only two boats are in the race. They come from the different villages and naturally there is much cheering and encouraging from the spectators when the boats are moving to the starting point about 3.600 feet away. The minutes before the boats begin their race seem to be endless for the onlookers. Finally, at the far end of the canal the boats start to move. The boats gain more and more speed as they approach the pagoda. Sometimes here seems no space left between

the boats and a crash seems unavoidable. Now everybody stands up to have a better view as people become more and more excited. The simultaneous movement of more than 20 rowers at each side of the boat offers an unforgettable spectacle. The motion of the oars looks like the closing and opening of a gigantic fan.

The winning boat slips through the winning post to a tremendous finish.

At noon the regatta is over. In traditional Myanmar custom, the winning crew gets a silver bowl. This symbolic bowl belongs not only to the victorious participants in the regatta but belongs as well to the whole village and it cannot be sold unless the whole village agrees.

In the afternoon the boats go back to the different villages. Slowly, also, the karaweik moves away from the pagoda; it will take another year before the grand spectacle is repeated. When finally the sun comes out from behind the clouds it looks as though the karaweik has vanished little by little into a golden shower.

There seem to be only a very few places left where motors are not yet completely dominating the scene. Such a place is the Inle Lake. This region is one of the most popular resorts for tourists visiting Myanmar, who are well-informed about it.

Kyaw Win (Culture)

Shwedagon Pagoda

THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA

http://www.myanmardigest.com/culture/shwedagon_pagoda.htm

The Shwedagon is the greatest pagoda of its kind in the world, comparable in size and grandeur to the Angkor Wat of Cambodia and the Boro Budur of Indonesia. "Shwe" means gold and Dagon is a former name of Yangon. Hence, Shwedagon means the golden pagoda at the city of Dagon. It is believed to have been built nearly 2600 years ago, that is, during the Buddha's life time. According to the legend of the pagoda, two trader brothers from Myanmar, by the names of Tapussa and Bhallika, led a caravan of bullock-carts to India and there they came across the Buddha who had recently attained His Enlightenment or Buddhahood.

The two brothers offered honey balls and another kind of cake called Kywet kyit cake to the Buddha and received in return eight strands of the latter's hair. The two brothers and their followers joyfully returned to their native town Okkalapa which was an even older names of Yangon. The Ruler of Okkalapa who had received the wonderful news in advance welcomed the sacred hairs with great pomp and ceremony. Then the hairs were enshrined in a zedi or pagoda which was specially erected for the purpose, amidst .

The sacred relics of three other Buddhas of this world are also said to be enshrined in the pagoda .So you can imagine how profoundly Buddhists all over the world revere this pagoda. According to traditional Buddhist cosmology, there are innumerable kalpas or worlds in the universe only some of which are blessed with the appearance of Buddhas. One to five Buddhas may appear in some worlds while none may appear at all in others. Such Buddhaless worlds are known as zero worlds. Those where five Buddhas arise are called Badda Worlds (kalpas) and our world is one of them. So far, four Buddhas have visited our world the last of whom was Siddhartha Gautama of Kapilavastu in India.

One Buddha is yet to appear in our world and devout Buddhists are preparing themselves for His Advent. A Buddha means an enlightened one -- a human

being who attains Buddha: hood by means of His discovery of the Four Noble Truths. Of course, His realization of the Four Noble Truths is at a much higher level than that of ordinary human beings. Buddhas appear in some worlds at certain times to guide erring creatures- to their liberation. D. According to one oft-quoted saying, as many Buddhas as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River have appeared so far.

The pagoda was only 66 feet high when it WAS first built. It attained its present height and shape only in the 14th and 15th centuries when it was overbuilt and enlarged by a succession of Mon Kings and a queen who were rulers of Lower Myanmar in some periods of our ancient history. Of course various Myanmar Kings also made major improvements upon it and around it, installing new "htees" or umbrellas and great bells, gilding it and building rest-houses and "tazaungs " or prayer halls.

Today, the pagoda has a height of 326 feet and a circumference of 1420 feet at the base. At first the pagoda was only gilded from top to bottom. But the upper part of the pagoda-- from the "banana bud" at first and later, from the "baung yit" upwards -has been covered with plates of gold each measuring one square foot and weighing five-later six-ticals since 1900. As to the umbrella, it is covered with gold and encrusted with numerous gems so that its value will be very hard to calculate indeed. You are probably aware that the Myanmar are very generous and charitable by nature.

Hence, they offer only the very best to the pagodas especially the great Shwedagon -- which are symbols of the Lord Buddha. The result is that the Shwedagon has become a repository of the best in Myanmar culture - architecture, sculpture, arts, crafts and all. In other words, it is a unique museum of Myanmar arts and crafts. That's why the Shwedagon complex has become our chief tourist attraction. From the covered stairways to the numerous structures and the pagoda itself, everything about the Shwedagon is permeated with beauty and art born of loving veneration. The Shwedagon is

the holiest place of worship to Buddhists all over the world and practically the whole complex is a work of art.

Most of the buildings around the pagoda are decorated with the best specimens of Myanmar painting and sculpture so that a few hours' study of the pagoda and its environs can give you a fairly good idea of Myanmar arts and crafts. Various parts of the pagoda are known by different names describing their shapes. The highest part of the pagoda is the "seinbu" or diamond bud which is a spherical globe of gold 10 inches in diameter and inlaid with 4,350 diamonds and 93 other precious stones. Just below the seinbu is the "hngetmanar" (meaning where birds do not perch) or vane which is a flag-shaped metal frame.)

Some people also call it "hngetmyatnar" meaning a perch for the holy bird.

Next come the htee and the "hngetpyawbu", the banana bud. Below the banana bud come the "kyalan" (the up-turned lotus), the "thabeik" (the alms - receiving bowl), the "kya-hmauk" (the downturned lotus), the "baungyit" (the turbanwrapper), the "panswe" (the hanging flower) and the "khaung laung" (the bell) in that order. The lower part of the pagoda comprises three pyitsayas or platforms namely the first, the second and the third pyitsayas.

At the bottom lies the main platform measuring 900 feet from north to south and 700 feet from east to west. The pagoda is known to have suffered from no less than eight earthquakes since 1564 A.D. and a big fire in 1931. i. One intriguing event in the recent history of the pagoda was the "visit" of a tigress that was found crouching at the lower edge of the bell shaped part in 1904. i. At last, it was shot dead by British soldiers.'. Another interesting development was the long fight waged by Myanmar Buddhists against Europeans wearing shoes at the pagoda. The fight was won by the Buddhists in the end and no one has been allowed to wear shoes, socks and the like at the pagoda ever since. The Shwedagon Pagoda is of the utmost interest to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

To foreign visitors, the pagoda represents the best in Myanmar culture - her piety, arts and crafts and so on. The pagoda and its environs constitute a veritable museum of everything Myanmar. In other words, they present Myanmar Naing-ngan – the land of Myanmar-in a nutshell. Hence, if a person wants to be acquainted with Myanmar and he or she has only two-three hours to spare, then I would urge that person to visit the Shwedagon Pagoda.

That's talking in general and now I'd like to go into some specific points of interest. First of all, I should like to mention what is known as "the sacred-hair well." Here's something out of the ordinary - "the sacred-hair well" It lies in a building just about two dozen steps away to the north of the northern prayer hall which-is attached .- to the pagoda. The entrance to it has been closed to prevent the adventurous and the curious from going down at the risk of their lives. As you can see, the entrance to it has been barred so that inquisitive people might not go down risking their limbs and lives. According to an oft-told tale, a Buddhist novice went down the well a few decades ago and never came back.

Maybe that's the reason why the entrance to the well has been closed. This pit or well is widely believed to lead to the hall right at the bottom of the Seat pagoda where the sacred hairs and other relics of four Buddhas are enshrined. A translation of an intriguing "eye-witness account" of a European - - an Italian if remember right -- who supposedly went down the well "long ago" was carried by the local papers about thirty years ago. . He claimed to have reached the relic - chamber.

According to his account, the sacred relics were placed -- presumably in a reliquary -- on a raft, implying that there was/is water at the bottom of the pagoda. That statement is highly plausible as the common experience is that water comes out wherever you dig the ground a few feet in Yangon. A legend says that the relic chamber was/is guarded by "sword and spear machines" or automats armed with swords and spears to fend off would-be robbers and plunderers.

You probably know that most relic-chambers inside Myanmar pagodas are virtual treasure houses filled with offerings of jewellery worth zillions. It will be a fantastic journey indeed if we can go down the well today with lights and other necessary equipment. As befitting the holiest Buddhist shrine in Myanmar -and debatably-in the whole world - the Shwedagon Pagoda abounds in secrets or points of interest and mystery, To mention one, there is the Bo Bo Aung (donated) Image. Lying in a small shrine adjacent to the Eastern Shrine or prayer hall. The image is said to have been donated by Bo Bo Aung, the most well-known Weikzar in Myanmar folklore.

According to our tradition, a Weikzar is a human being who has achieved supernatural powers by pursuing alchemy successfully or by other means. Incidentally, the Shwedagon Pagoda is generally believed to be a favourite haunt of Weikzars, hermits endowed with magical powers and similar beings who have come to do obeisance to it in order to gain eternal merit for their

well-being in future lives. Hence, you might run into one if you are destined to do so and that being might grant you a boon or two, so watch out! Of course that mystic will not be obviously dressed: he or she is more likely to be in disguise to test your charitableness or generosity.

So, the mendicant you gave one kkyat to might turn out to be a Weikzar after all and bring you lots of blessings. Three images of the Buddha at the Shwedagon Pagoda are generally believed to be especially endowed with powers for answering prayers. One of them is the One entrance-cave Image which is situated right at the middle point of the eastern upper platform of the pagoda. It is said that in the days of Myanmar Kings, princes were prohibited from visiting this image for fear that its prayer-answering powers might be utilized in conspiring against the king.

One snag is that it is impossible for ladies to visit this image as it lies on the upper platform which is off limits out of bounds to them. But, never mind. You ladies can always pray to your heart's content if you wish, at the other two especially wish-fulfilling pagodas or images. One is the big image-sitting in the eastern prayer hall. Its unusual and wish-fulfilling feature is the mudra or position of its right hand: its palm is turned upward or outwards, indicating that it is about to give away boons or disperse blessings.

Perhaps you are aware that most other images of the Buddha have their right palms turned downwards. The other is popularly known as the Shinsawpu Pagoda. It was probably built by Shinsawpu, the only Queen in the recorded history of Myanmar, who made great changes or rather improvements in the shape and size of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Lying near the iron shrine in the Rahu (north-west) Corner, the pagoda is also called 'The Four Bars Pagoda'. The implication is that four monks whose titles (names) began with Bar such as Bartamort and Barmeh and who were famous for their occult powers played a major role in the creation of the pagoda or rather the image.

Four ZAGAR trees growing nearby may be part of the magical scheme. One well-known habitat of zagar trees is Mt. Popa in Central Myanmar which may be compared with Mt. Olympus in Greece in that it is believed to be a favourite abode of Nats or spirits in Myanmar. Some spirit worshippers in Myanmar pay respects to the memory of Pabai Maung Tintdai (Mr. Handsome, the blacksmith). He was said to be burnt to 'death' at the foot of a zagar tree in the Tagaung Era. He is believed by some to have become the guardian spirit of the interior-of-the house. He is also known as Interior-of-the House Lord-of-the--Great-Mountain, that is Mt. Popa.

I'm telling you all this to let you know that zagar trees or flowers always have a special association with the spirit-worship in our country. Besides the three prayer-answering pagodas or images. I've mentioned, there are many other pagodas of special interest to those in the know, at the Shwedagon. One of them is the image believed to have been cast by the famed Monk Goat-Bull of the Bagan Era. Monk Goat-Bull was an alchemist who presented his philosopher's stone to the king saying in writing that it needed to be treated with excrement before it achieved its supernatural powers.

Unfortunately the king's reader dared not read out the offensive word--excrement in the royal presence and substituted it with 'something sour' which is a similar word in Myanmar language. The king passed an order that it be done and the order was carried out. Needless to say nothing happened and the stone remained a lifeless, powerless stone since its last alchemic requirement wasn't fulfilled. Considering that the monk had improperly pulled his royal leg, the king had the monk's eyes-pulled out and returned the stone to him.

The monk was so angry at his stone that he had it thrown into the latrine at the monastery. And lo and behold! The stone underwent magical transformation and became a full-fledged philosopher's stone, sending out flashes of light at the same time, since the last condition in the alchemic-process had been met. Realizing that his stone had achieved success, the monk had it retrieved and sent his novices to the market to bring back whatever eyes of carcasses they could find to restore his eyesight by means of his philosopher's stone.

However, the novices managed to bring back only an eye of a goat and an eye of a bull as it was late in the morning and the market was about to break up. Not making a fuss of it the monk put the eyes into his empty eye-sockets and touched them with his philosopher's stone. Instantly, the eyes became his and he could see again. Henceforward, he came to be known as Monk Goat-Bull. Being a monk, he had plenty of fortitude and magnanimity and he forgave the king. Not only that he also showered gold and silver all over the land of Bagan. He brought so much wealth to Bagan that even widows were said to be able to build pagodas.

You now know at least one version of why there are so many pagodas in and around Bagan. Since this image has one eye larger than the other just like Monk Goat Bull's, you can easily imagine who the builder of this pagoda might have been. It can be seen in the northwest corner of the prayer hall lying to the south of the Naungdawgyi (Older Brother) Pagoda. The Shwedagon

Pagoda and its environs abound in so many mysterious and intriguing objects of worship and works of art that it will take one week if not months to visit and study all of them in some detail.

Let me draw your attention to some more of them in addition to the ones I have already described. There are two more pagodas associated with Weikzars and Zawgyis just like the Bo Bo Aung and Shin Saw Pu pagodas. They are the Weikzar Zawgyi Pagoda and the Shin Mahtee Pagoda. The former is situated at the Saturday (South-western) corner of the (Shwedagon) Pagoda and the latter can be found inside the Shin Mahtee prayer hall lying to the north of the Naungdawgyi (Older Brother) Pagoda. A Zawgyi is somewhat similar to a weikzar in that both of them are human beings who have risen to supernatural status through occult means.

I'm sorry I can't tell you the exact difference between the two as I'm no expert in such matters. Some surmise that the name Zawgyi is derived from the Indian (Sanskrit ? Pali ?) word Yogi denoting a person who practices yoga— various systems of bodily and mental control—to attain physical and mental well. On the other hand, weikzar is a Pali word meaning enlightenment. So a weikzar is someone who has attained enlightenment and the resulting special powers. However both a weikzar and a zawgyi are said to be not above enjoying sex now and then .

It is said that there is a forest in the Himalayas where trees bear fruits which are exact replicas of the human body, both male and female. When weikzars and zawgyis who spend most of their time at the Himalayas feel like having a little fun, they touch the female-shaped fruits known as 'illusory females' with their magic wands bringing the fruits to life for a short duration

You can imagine the rest to be sure.

You can see figures of zawgyis at the weikzarzawgyi pagoda. If you want to see an 'illusory female' however, you will have to go to the old brick entrance hall behind the figures of ogres near the southern entrance to the pagoda. There you can see her in her birthday suit, gamboling with her zawgyi friends. The Shin Mahtee Pagoda or Image is believed to have been made about a thousand years ago by Shin Mahtee, a monk who was reputed to be a weikzar.

There are quite a number of people who believe that special blessings or favours will be granted to them if they worship at the pagodas or images built or donated by weikzars and zawgyis. A few of them may even be aspiring to

be weikzars or zawgyis themselves. Another image of the Buddha associated with the occult world is the Padarshin (living Mercury Ballsome thing Similar to a philosopher's stone) Image.

The forehead of that image is slightly protruding in the middle suggesting that a padarshin ball has been enshrined there. The implication is that since the image has an all-powerful padarshin ball enshrined in its forehead, whatever you pray for at this image is likely to be granted. One striking feature of this image is the fact that it is very proportionally made. In fact, it is one of the handsomest brass images of the Buddha to be seen at the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Another image of special note is the Myetshin (Living Eye) image well-known for its remarkably clear eyes. It is a brick image sitting cross-legged inside a shrine to be found in the Sunday (Southeastern) Corner of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Some people practice meditation at its foot in the belief that their vows will be fulfilled more easily owing to its special powers. By now, it should be obvious to you that the Shwedagon and its environs abound in things of cultural interest. . Look anywhere at the pagoda and you are likely to find something that will intrigue you either by its appearance or its background or the myth behind it.

For instance, there's the figure of king Okkalapa, the builder of the original Shwedagon Pagoda which has been overbuilt again and again until it has attained the present shape and grandeur. You can see it at the Rahu (west-northwest) corner, hanging just below the first Pyitsaya (Platform). The figures of Sakka and MaiLamu (Miss Mangrove), the legendary parents of King Okkalapa, can be seen at about the same height in the Saturday corner.

Incidentally, it might be a good idea to bring binoculars to the pagoda so that you could see these figures and other interesting sights especially the jewels in the 'umbrella' of the pagoda, in close up. And you might be interested to know that: Sakka was the king of Devas or gods and MaiLamu was a fruitmaiden born of a mango tree. To be more specific, there are six realms of gods altogether existing one on top of another according to traditional Buddhist cosmology and Sakka was only the ruler of the two lowest realms.

MaiLamu grew up into a fine young woman with whom Sakka fell in love and King Okkalapa was the offspring of their union. D. Oh, would you like to visit the birth place of MaiLamu? You can do so easily. It is none other than the site of the Mai Lamu Pagoda, less than two miles to the north of the World-

Peace Pagoda. There you can still see many mangrove trees growing near the pagoda which is worth a visit per se as it is noteworthy for its unusual tableaux in concrete depicting some incidents from the life of the Buddha or some of His disciples.

If you want to sample some avant-garde Myanmar Buddhist sculpture, that's the place you ought to visit. Now let me tell you about some more notable features of the Shwedagon on. There's a figure of a 'Brahma-a superior kind of god embracing a baby, to the east of the southern entrance prayer hall. Some people believe that prayers to the figure for the gift of a child are answered as a merit is also said that infants possessed by evil spirits can also be made well by praying to the figure.

If you are interested in ogres, you can see two behind the two large figures of lions sitting on either side of the southern entrance and two more beside the wall near the top of the northern stairway. The former were donated by King Tharrawaddy when he visited the pagoda in 1841 and the latter were the gifts of Queen Shin Saw pu. Of special interest to scholars are the (stone) inscriptions of King Dhammaceti set up in 1485.

There are three of them telling the story of the foundation of the pagoda in Mon Pali and Myanmar languages. They can be found in the north eastern corner of the main platform. Buddhists revere the Buddha so much that they even pay homage to His footprints- genuine or symbolic. There are three symbolic footprints of the Buddha at the Shwedagon, one in a shrine near the northern prayer hall and two in a shrine in the Tuesday Corner. Two big bells of special interest can also be seen at the Shwedagon.

One cast in 1778 and donated by King Singumin weighs about 24 tons. It was taken away as a trophy by the British during the First Anglo Myanmar War (1824-26), but sank in the Hlaing River. It was salvaged and replaced in the Rahu Corner of the pagoda in 1926, after a lot of Buddhists. The largest bell at the pagoda is the one donated by King Tharrawaddy in 1841. It weighs about 42 tons and can be seen in the Sunday Corner.

This bell has a very pleasant sound which is said to have three tones at least; its name in Pali is Maha Tisadda Ghanta meaning the great three toned bell.

Shwedagon Pagoda - 2

<http://www.shwedagon.org/history.php>



In the capital city of Yangon, you will find the beautifully majestic Shwedagon Pagoda. The Shwedagon Pagoda sits upon holy Singuttara Hill. To understand the reason why this hill is considered so holy, and to grasp the significance of the Shwedagon to Buddhists and to the people of Myanmar, it is important to know

both the history and the legends of how it all came to be.

Over 2,500 years ago, there lived a king by the name of Okkalapa. He was ruler of Suvannabhumi and ruled over the Talaings. At this time, Siddharta Guatama was living in northern India. He was still a young man and was not yet recognized as the Buddha.

It was and is believed that a new Buddha, or "Enlightened One", will come into being once every 5,000 years. At the time of Okkalapa, it had been approximately 5,000 years since the last Buddha, and it was considered time once again.

Singuttara Hill is important because it was the holy resting spot of the relics of three Buddhas. Their relics were enshrined within Singuttara Hill, thus making it a holy place. To keep it holy, it was believed that gifts given by the new Buddha, which would become relics, had to be enshrined every 5,000 years in the hill.

But Okkalapa was concerned, as a new Buddha had not come to be known yet, and if it took too long he feared the hill could lose its holiness. He went to

the hill to pray and to meditate, unaware of Siddharta Guatama's coming into enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in northern India at the same time.

According to area legend, he appeared to Okkalapa and told him to be patient that his wish for the hill would soon be granted.

As Guatama was reaching the end of his 49 days of meditation, he was visited by two brothers. Their names were Tapussa and Bhallika, and they happened to be from Myanmar and were subjects of Okkalapa. These two merchant brothers present Guatama Buddha with a gift of some honey cake, as they recognized him as The Enlightened One.

To express his thanks to them, he pulled out 8 of his hairs off of his head, and gave the hairs to Tapussa and Bhallika. They took the hairs and headed back home. However, during their journey they were twice robbed, and 4 of the sacred hairs were taken from them. By the time they reached Myanmar, they had only 4 of The Buddha's hairs left.

However, their return was still a celebrated one by King Okkalapa and his people, and a large party was thrown in honor of the brothers. It was decided that a shrine place should be built on Singuttara Hill to house these newest relics. At the party in their honor, the brothers presented a casket containing the Buddha's hairs to their



king, and he opened it; there were great tremors upon the earth, a great rocking earthquake. It is also said that all of the trees then burst into blossom and lovely jewels fell from the sky.

A shrine was created on Singuttara Hill to house these 8 miraculous hairs, and the area was deemed sacred. An enormous pagoda was then created atop the hill to house the shrine, and it is considered one of the most sacred places in all of Myanmar. The pagoda itself is a wondrous architectural achievement. The top soars well over 300 ft into the air (approximately 100 meters or more) above the hilltop and can be seen from quite far away. The Shwedagon, which means, loosely translated, “golden hills” is magnificently made out of gold and jewels all over.

The details as to exactly when and how the construction of the pagoda began are somewhat sketchy, but writings document that it was well-known and visible by the 11th century. Over the years, various kings and queens took part in renovating it, and enlarging the structure, making it even taller and grander than before.

Some interesting stories of the Shwedagon Pagoda deal with its enormous bells. In 1608, a Portuguese invader by the name of Philip de Brito y Nicote stole a bell that weighed in at around 6,000 lbs, or 30 tons. However, as he was attempting to return home with the bell, it fell into the Bago River and was lost.

The bell was replaced in 1779. That was after a massive earthquake in 1768 toppled the highest part of the pagoda. Once that part, the stupa, was rebuilt, King Hsinbyushin's son Singu had a 23 ton bronze bell cast. It was called the Maha Gandha bell. In the 1820's, however, British soldiers plundered the pagoda, and stole this bell.

En route to Calcutta, the bell fell overboard and sank into the sea. It was later recovered and now sits atop the pagoda platform, on the northwest side.

Finally, in 1841 another bell was created, this one weighing approximately 8,000 pounds (40 tons) and covered with 45 lbs (20kg) of gold plating. This bell, called the Maha Tissada bell, still resides in the pagoda, on the northeast side of the enclosure.

The years of 1852 through 1929 mark a time of British military occupation in Myanmar, with colonial rulers controlling the areas. However, the people of Myanmar were still able to have full access to the Shwedagon. In 1871 a new diamond-studded piece for the pagoda's structure was donated by King Mindon of Mandalay. The people of Myanmar were thrilled at this tribute and well over 100, 00 of them gathered at Shwedagon to celebrate. And although this made the British military somewhat uncomfortable, they had to allow it as the people were honoring their faith.

It is evident that, over the centuries, the Shwedagon Pagoda has survived difficult times. It has withstood earthquakes, invasions, pillaging, foreign occupation and an internal stairwell fire in 1931 that destroyed many ancient monuments. Another earthquake in 1970, which was the 9th that the area had sustained since the 1500's, led the government to begin a renovation project on the crown of the main pagoda.

Each disaster brought damage to the pagoda, but it has always withstood the onslaughts and endured the renovations. The fact that Shwedagon has survived these times of hardship and damage and still stood firm adds to its sense of majesty. It also adds to the sense of pride within the people of Myanmar, that nothing can truly leave lasting damage upon this beloved site. And people have always pitched in to make sure that any needed renovations took place to strengthen and secure it. Thus, to this day it sits, strong and steady, mystical and sacred, high upon a sacred hill

Shwezigon Paya (late 11th century)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Shwezigon Paya (pagoda, stupa or zedi), is one of the Bagan area's, and Myanmar's, most significant religious structures. Located four miles northeast of Old Bagan at the edge of the most important regional town of Nyaung U (or Nyaung Oo), it truly is a 'national' pagoda, since it served as a prototype for many later stupas built throughout Myanmar. The Shwezigon is also a major national center of worship. Pilgrims come from many parts of Myanmar for its festival held during the Burmese month of Nadaw (November/December) both because of its historic character and because of its religious significance for Burmese Buddhism. While the Shwezigon was one of the earliest symbols of the triumph of the 'purified' Theravada Buddhism, it was also the first pagoda to allow 'nat' images (pre-Buddhist spirits who had the power to do good or evil) within its walls. Its original builder, King Anawrahta (r. 1044-1077), even had images of the 37 traditional nats put on the lower terraces. As a result 'nat' worship joined for the first time with the nascent Theravada Buddhism to form a unique and vibrant Burmese religious experience that also contributed to the general growth of Theravada. Eventually the nats of Shwezigon were removed from the terraces to a small hall within the compound, but the Shwezigon Festival still brings multitudes to honor and worship the nats at Shwezigon.

King Anawrahta's conversion to Theravada Buddhism in the mid-11th century had a profound influence on Bagan's religious and cultural life. Anawrahta was Theravada's first major advocate; he was also the first of the great builders of Bagan. He began construction of the Shwezigon (on a site reputedly chosen by a white elephant) as a massive and centrally important reliquary shrine to encase a variety of Buddha artifacts, including a copy of the Tooth of Kandy from Ceylon, frontal and collar bones, and an emerald Buddha image from China. Apparently he had completed the three terraces before he (perhaps) was killed by a wild buffalo in 1077; some contend that he had even completed a small stupa on the terraces and had plans to encase it in a larger structure.

The reliquary shrine was completed between 1086 and 1090 by King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1113), Anawrahta's probable son (the parentage question is a loong story). Kyanzittha was perhaps Bagan's greatest king, and it was under him that Bagan became known, doubtless with a touch of exaggeration,

as the 'city of four million pagodas.' He did erect hundreds of monuments and also successfully championed the Mon Buddhist culture. When the symbolic 'hti', or umbrella, was put into place over the Shwezigon in 1090, the reliquary shrine had essentially taken on the shape that it has today. Earthquakes and other natural phenomena have, of course, taken their toll over the centuries, and it has been often repaired, perhaps most notably by King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581) in the late 16th century. The recent devastating earthquake of 1975 caused extensive damage to the spire and top of the dome that needed extensive repairs. Each attack on its main fabric doubtless introduced subtle and not-so-subtle changes to the structure. The pagoda, for example, now is encased by over 30,000 copper plates made possible through donations by local, national and international visitors. The entire structure was gilded in 1983-1984 and again more recently. Yet the lower part of the stupa and terraces apparently remain largely as originally constructed in the 11th century.

The Paya is a solid symmetrical stupa oriented to the east; it is built of sandstone blocks that average approximately 15 x 10 x 3 in. (38 x 26 x 8 cm). Its gracefully shaped 'bell' or 'anda' reaches a height of 160 ft. and sets on an intermediate octagonal base and on three rising square terraces accessible from the four cardinal points. Each of these terraces has 'Jataka' tablets relating the life of the Buddha. Smaller stupas mirror the main stupa at the corners of each terrace. The square base of the stupa matches the height of the stupa at 160 ft on each side. There is a wide variety of decorations and thick circular moldings on the bell itself, and the central spire is crowned by the traditional 'hti', or umbrella, a symbol of sovereignty.

In front of each of the axial stairways leading to the terraces are square satellite temples with central shrines that were integrally planned to be part of the total mass. Each shrine (or 'Kyg-gu Taik') contains an 11 ft Gupta-style standing gilded bronze Buddha (the largest original statues in Bagan) dating from the early 12th century. The four represent the Buddhas who attained enlightenment in this world: Kakusana, Konagom, Kassapa and Gotama.

The Shwezigon is located at the center of an enclosure wall, roughly 750 ft (230 m) on each side, that is penetrated by four gates. There is a large and

varied number of shrines, monuments, smaller zedi and temples within the enclosure walls. They date from numerous eras, and more are regularly added. On the eastern side two inscribed pillars placed there by King Kyanzittha record the pagoda's history in the Mon language. Interestingly, the inscription does not mention King Anawrahta, who started the construction in the mid-11th century.

Sulamani Guphaya (1183)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

The Sulamani (occasionally Sulamuni) Guphaya, or Pahto, is one of Bagan's premier temple attractions. The name itself means 'Crowning Jewel' or 'Small Ruby'. Paul Strachan, one of the leading modern authorities on the Bagan archeological plain, calls it 'the grandiloquent gesture of an empire at its meridian'. It was actually more than a temple, for the complex originally contained a large number of associated buildings, including a lecture and ordination hall, cells for the monks and a library.

Sulamani was the first and most important temple of the late period (1170-1300) of Bagan monument building. It was one of many temples and stupas built by Sithu II (or Narapatisithu) (1174-1211), probably as atonement for some of his many misdeeds. It was a direct model for the Htilominlo. It majestically combines the massive verticality of the Thatbyinnyu with the horizontalism and monumentality of the Dhammayangyi.

The red brick temple is step pyramidal on a square base and is oriented to the east. There are two major levels with porches at each of the cardinal points and prominent eastward-facing doorways. Each of the ascending squares has pilasters in the form of stupas at the corners and a beautifully wrought sikhara, restored since the devastating earthquake of July 1975, crowns the entire

Bagan Monument Number 1 (for the Paya itself, monuments numbered 2-28 for other monuments inside of Shwezigon's enclosure walls).

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

complex. Each of the major levels has inner ambulatories running along the perimeter with niches for Buddhas. Ascent to the second story and upper levels is now prohibited here as it is with most Bagan temples.

Important features of the Sulamani include its fine brickwork and use of stone in both load-bearing areas as well as on vulnerable external corner elements. The numerous original unique glazed roundels and panels along the plinth and terrace moldings add joy and exuberance to the exterior, while the rich frescoes on the stuccoed interior ambulatory (from the 12th to 19th centuries)-though damaged-with their lively depiction of both the sublime and the grotesque reflect a constant interplay of the physical and mythical light and darkness. The first story ambulatory is lit well enough from its doorways and windows to permit available light photographs of the frescoes. A wall with elaborate entries in the four cardinal directions surrounds the complex.

Bagan Monument Number 748

Text by Robert D. Fiala, Concordia University, Nebraska

Thatbyinnyu Phaya (c. 1144)

<http://www.orientalarchitecture.com/bagan/anandaindex.htm>

Thatbyinnyu (or That-byin-nyu, “the Omniscient”) Phaya was one of King Sithu I’s (or Alaungsiyhu, r. 1113-1167) finest legacies to the Bagan region. Although there are no contemporary inscriptions that identify him as the builder, reliable chronicles from the 14th century affirm his role in its construction .

Located just inside the southeastern corner of the old city wall, Thatbyinnyu is Bagan’s tallest temple at almost 200 ft. (or 61 m.; some indicate 217 ft. or 66 m.) and represents a transition from the Mon period to a new architectural style that would soon be followed at the Sulamani, the Gawdawpalin and at Htilominlo. Constructed during one of the high points of Bagan political power and during a period of rededication to Theravada Buddhism and religious scholarship, it reflected that era’s innovative architectural and artistic creativity. Paul Strachan, the important Bagan scholar, calls Thatbyinnyu “an expression of the self-confident Burmese spirit of nationhood.”

Somewhat similar in style to the nearby Ananda Pahto, Thatbyinnyu is a brick masonry building covered in white stucco and with stone in pavements, thresholds and as reinforcing elements. The bricks, incidentally, average a hefty 16.4” x 8” x 2.5”. The temple is set on a platform that formerly was at the center of a walled enclosure (only the north gateway remains); the complex served also as a monastery and stupa, as well as a temple. The ground level square base is approximately 190 feet on each side. There are modest protrusions of about ten feet centered on the north, west and south sides and six entry points on each of these sides. The east side has a projected 24 ft. by

38 ft. entry hall. The exterior is a ‘play of cubes.’ There is a series of square receding terraces on both the lower (three terraces) and upper (four terraces) levels. At the corner of each of the terraces are stupa obelisks set on square bases. The elevated central core tower is 98.5 ft on each side. The “sikhara,” or tower is squat compared to earlier temples such as the Ananda, and thus reemphasizes the mass of building beneath it. Thatbyinnyu was never fully completed and, perhaps, never even consecrated; the Jataka set relating the life of the Buddha was never added. The terraces contain indentations for the planned series of over 500 ceramic plaques.

The interior, which unfortunately I was unable to enter because of some personal physical limitations, also has a unique character. There is a rich use of pointed arches in the spacious hallways and barrel vaults in other areas. The two tiers of windows in each level create a vibrant and light interior. Monks originally lived on the first two levels, and the major shrine was on the upper level. Consequently the inner stairway to the upper levels is prominent, rather than being hidden away as in other temples.

The heavy damage caused by the 1975 earthquake was mostly repaired by 1979, and the structure was further strengthened in the early 1990s. Formerly one of the best places to view the great archeological zone, the erosion of its bricks unfortunately has closed its upper terraces to the general public.

Bagan Monument Number 1597

