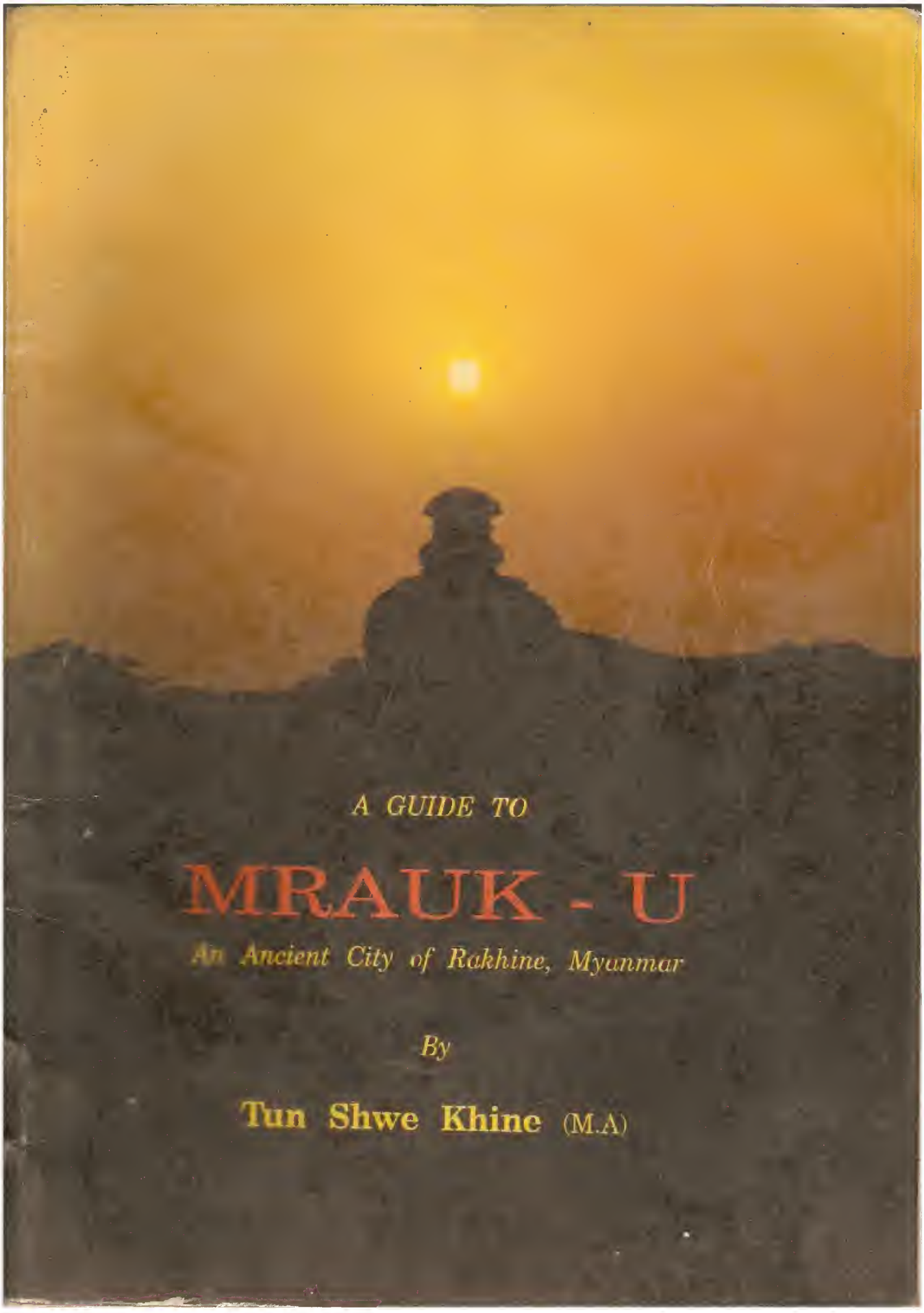

A GUIDE TO

MRAUK - U

An Ancient City of Rakhine, Myanmar

By

Tun Shwe Khine (M.A)

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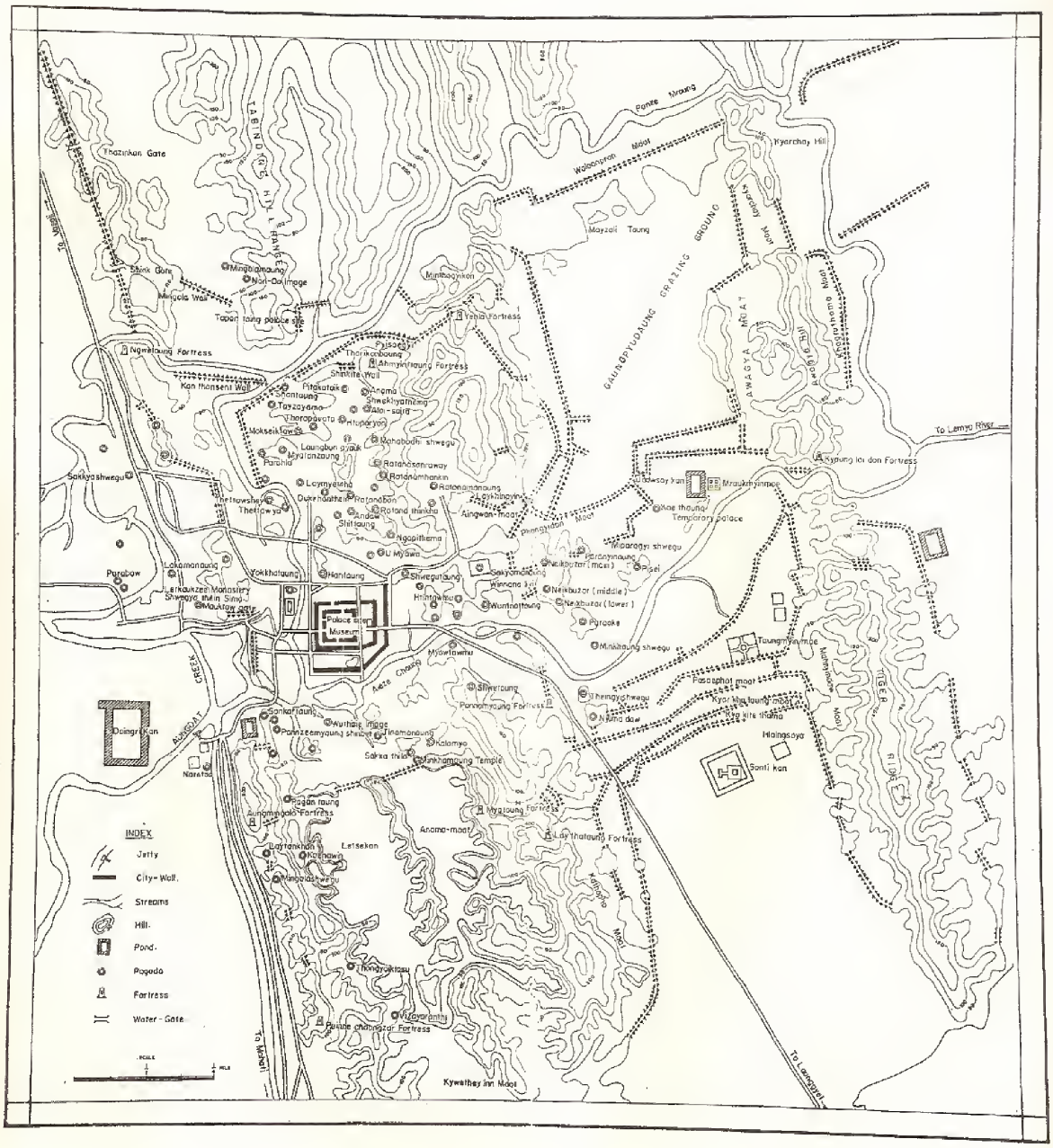

Historical Sites in Mrauk-U

Aerial view of Mrauk-U

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THE GOLDEN CITY

OF MRAUK-U

17th Century Depiction of Mrauk-U

The Author

Tun Shwe Khine was born in Rambyae, Rakhine State in 1949; graduated from Yangon University in 1972 and obtained master degree in Geography in 1976. He has served as a tutor in Yangon Worker's College; assistant lecturer and registrar (2) in Sittway Degree College. Now he is the Registrar (1) of Sittway Degree College. He has written several research articles and books, and edited some books, magazines and journals.

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(1) *Rakhine State Regional Geography* (in Myanmar), (2) *Ancient Cities of Rakhine* (in Myanmar), (3) *The History of Rakhine Dynasty* (in Myanmar), (4) *The* Thet *Tribe in Northern Rakhine* (in Myanmar), (5) *Rakhine Buddhist Art in Vesali Period* (in Myanmar), (6) *Rakhine Folk-Tales* (in Myanmar), (7) *Earlier Writers in Rakhine* (in Myanmar), (8) *A Study of Rakhine* Minthami Aye-gyin (in Myanmar), (9) *The History of Rakhine Mahamuni* (in Myanmar and English) and (10) *Historical Sites in Rakhine* (in English).

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PREFACE

Mrauk-U, a fine last royal capital of Rakhine has scenic beauty and historical remains which are inextricable and remarkable. Innumerable pagodas belonging to all ages can be found throughout the city. Everywhere one looks within Mrauk-U city wall on every mound, every field and every hill are Buddha images, temples, *sima* (*Thein*) and pagodas.

It is no wonder that Mrauk-U is popularly known as the 'Land of Pagodas' and Europeans remarked Mrauk-U as 'The Golden City'. The Rakhine of those days were proud of Mrauk-U. They were entirely satisfied to be the inhabitants of Mrauk- U. The history shows what happened in the city in early times.

Mrauk-U was founded in 1430 A.D. and became the seat of the Rakhine dynasty of that name. It had attained its highest prosperity for 355 years till 1785 A.D. Before Mrauk-U, several other former royal cities, Dhanyawaddy, Vesali, Sambawet, Pyinsa, Parein, Launggret , Hkirt and Nayyinzaya-taungngoo had flourished from generation to generation for many years (see chapter 2).

Geographically, Mrauk-U lies at the head of a tributary, Kaladan River, about 45 miles from the sea coast, but the largest sea-going ships of that period could reach it through a network of deep creeks by which it was surrounded. Mrauk-U's unique

position in the Bay of Bengal, with both land and sea routes to the east and west, resulted in the development of its commercial and cultural centre which later emerged as a highly flourishing country because of its strategic location between India and South East Asia. It also received Buddhist religion and Indianized civilization from the west.

A visitor, Schouten, a Dutchman who visited the area in 16th century A.D , remarked that the city was comparable in size and wealth to such western cities as Amsterdam and London. He also mentioned that it was the richest city among the ports of Asia. The city was called by the Europeans as 'Golden City'. That term applies very fittingly to Mrauk-U whose wealth depended mainly on its extensive regions of riceland which surrounded the city. The crops never failed because of an annual 200 inches of rainfall. The export of rice increased from year to year. Moreover, the goods were allowed to enter the city duty-free in order to encourage trade. Thus the city was crowded with a large number of foreign merchants from the neighbouring countries and western countries as well, such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Various kinds of goods were on sale in the markets of Mrauk-U.

The export of elephants was most popular in the Mrauk-U period. An elephant cost 1300 silver coins in those days. The Portuguese and the Dutch were permitted to build a factory at Aungdat port in Mrauk-U. Since a ship after leaving Bengal on a voyage to Java or any city on the eastern coast, and did not sail straight across the bay had to keep to the coast. Hence, trading ships naturally put in at Mrauk-U to replenish food, water and other necessities.

In this way Mrauk-U became usual focus for trade on the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal. Mrauk-U, therefore, was very prosperous during those days. At the beginning of the 16th century the sea-faring nature of Rakhine was even more accentuated. The King **Minbin** (1531-1553 A.D.) was able to build a large naval fleet with modern cannon to guard the long coastal territory of about one thousand miles. According to the *Magh Raider in Bengal* it had ten thousand warboats and their cannon were so numerous

that flotilla exceeded the waves of the sea. Now, several types of old cannon can be seen in Mrauk-U Museum.

Mrauk-U was built as a defence city by the kings of those days. Taking advantage of the ridges surrounding the city, the citywalls have been built by joining the higher points of the ridge. The walls were built with local sandstone and earth. Inside the wall some portions of the mountain had to be levelled at the appropriate points to make ramparts. Some secret paths were constructed from top to bottom and stone gates had been erected for going in and out. Above them some bulwarks or forts were provided with modern artillery. A maze-like chain of lakes and moats were also constructed both inside and outside the city walls. These moats and water tanks not only supplied fresh water for the inhabitants but also provided a measure of defence.

Besides the venerable pagodas, visitors of today can see citywalls, moats, ramparts, watch towers and forts as the most interesting archaeological remains. They were all constructed with well-fitting cemented stones and they remain in good condition up to the present time.

Some Japanese *samurai* came to Mrauk-U in 1623 A.D and served as domestic guards of Mrauk-U kings. Because of their valiant and incomparable swordsmanship they were selected as royal bodyguards by the kings.

The dynasty of Mrauk-U had successfully defended itself against all foreign invaders for many years. A few wars were fought, which ended in victory for the Rakhine kings. No civil strife had ruined the peasantry of Mrauk-U. Because of Buddhist teaching and an efficient administrative code, law and order had been maintained in the whole of the kingdom.

The kingdom of Rakhine was divided into twelve provinces, each administered by a governor who pledged allegiance to the king.

It was the traditional obligation of the time for the governor of the provinces to build pagodas in the royal city of Mrauk-U.

The people of Mrauk-U also offered very lavishly to religious causes. A pagoda, 400 feet to the east of Shitthaung Pagoda, was said to have been donated by a woman who sold fish-jelly, (Rakhine term *Ngapithama*). This pagoda has been known as *Ngapithama Pagoda.*

Monuments seem to overwhelm the landscape of the city of Mrauk-U. The whole city has numerous lakes, pagodas, traces of buildings and other vestiges indicating that it was the site of a once-important city. These monuments are of different sizes and of various types. They are in varying stages of preservation and disrepair.

Some of these have been repaired and restored by public donors. Most of them were demolished not by unruly people but by the tropical monsoon climate.

Nevertheless, these mounds of bricks here and there remind us of the site of the ancient Mrauk-U, once a splendid capital of Rakhine.

Anomakan of Mrauk-U

General Information

(a) Geography

Mrauk-U (lat 20˚25'N, long 93 11' E) is situated 45 miles to the north of Sittway, which can be reached by river route. It lies on a tributary river named Henkayaw, on the right side of the Kaladan River. The city holds a much better position strategically. It controls both the Kaladan and the Lemro valleys and extends to the two main rivers both by water and land. The city was built on a valley within the series of parallel ranges extending a little to north-west. The whole city was covered with a network of numerous creeks and canals forming a maze of interconnecting channels.

(b) Climate

The Mrauk-U region has three

Rakhine **Shinpyu mingala**

seasons. Summer, which is dry and hot, begins in March and ends in May; the rainy season, wet and damp, from June to October; and winter is a cool dry season from November to February. The average annual temperature is about 78° F. So there are no extremes of heat and cold. Even the hottest months, March to May, becomes quite bearable because of the cool sea breeze and the evergreen forests around Mrauk-U. The temperature can rise to 100° F in Summer.

Annual rainfall ranges from 160" to 200". The rainy season is not quite suitable for visitors. Natural vegetations and weeds grow occasionally everywhere around the city, including pagodas. Other problems such as malaria and wild cyclones can be encountered in Rakhine during this season.

The best time to visit Mrauk-U is winter from October to February. During this cool season the weather in Mrauk-U is fine and pleasant. All the pagodas are cleaned and painted white and they look very beautiful.

(c) Flora

Mrauk-U is densely covered with variety of plants; this is because of tropical climatic condition . Bamboos are dominant, covering the largest part of the hilly regions. Trees, herbs and shrubs are commonly found during the rainy season. They are

Rakhine traditional dance

alive up to the end of December. Villagers of Mrauk-U cultivate coconut palm, banana, mango, jackfruit, betel-palm, lemon, orange, lychees and many other useful trees. Besides, Mrauk-U is the rice bowl of Rakhine State. After the harvest time, most of the paddy-fields are replanted with vegetables such as tomato, radish, cauliflower, cucumber, cabbage, gourd, pine-apple, papaya, bean, chilly, egg fruits and others.

(d) Fauna

About one hundred species of mammals are found in Mrauk-U. Famous royal elephants were once found in the forests of northern hills. Now they migrate to Maru Ridge, northwest of Mrauk-U. Other common varieties of wild animals such as, pigs, stags, hogs, barking-deers, leopards, wild cats, jackals, monkeys, bears are found all over the countryside.

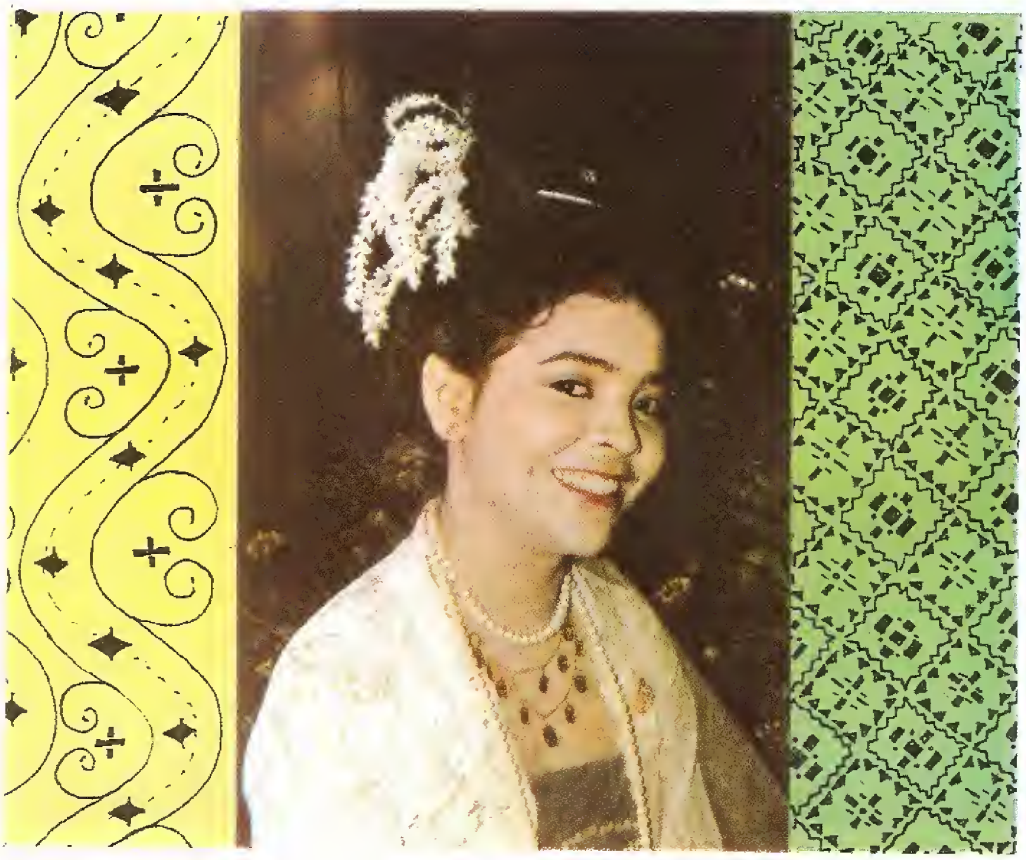
About 300 species of birds wander in the hills. Among them, jungle fowl, house crow, house sparrow, jungle sparrow, robin, hawks, owls, hornbills, woodpeckers, imperial pigeon, green pigeon, wild ducks are very well-known species. In winter one can see many geese in the rivers and lakes of Mrauk-U. They are Siberian faunas. Sometimes several kinds of snakes are commonly found somewhere in the forests and the great crocodile is also

Rakhine* thingyan *(water festival)

found in the tidal creeks of southern part of Mrauk-U.

(e) Clothing

As Mrauk-U lies mainly within the tropical zone and unless you are an official in Rakhine, it is not advisable for you to wear a tie or western suit, because of the weather condition. Long pants for men, long skirts for women or Myanmar dress style are quite good for visitors. You will need a suitcase containing light clothes, a hat or an umbrella, sunglasses, and some medicine you may need on your trip. Quick drying cloths are very suitable for rainy season. In winter you should wear a sweater or a jacket. Since Mrauk-U is full of pagodas, according to tradition one always removes one's shoes before entering the precincts of religious monuments or private homes or guesthouses. So it is better for you to bring a pair of comfortable walking shoes which you can slip in and out easily. Or you could buy a new pair of local-make slippers. In addition, antimalarial drugs, antibiotics, and other first-aid items should also be packed in your suitcase.



A Rakhine girl wearing national costume and flower - Rakhine thazin

The Land, the People and the Name

According to our tradition and historical annals, Buddhism was introduced into Rakhine during the lifetime of Buddha Himself.

On the request of the people and the king, the Buddha visited Rakhine with his five hundred disciples and rested on the top of Salagiri Hill (သေလာဂိရိ), situated on the right bank of Gacehabhanady (ကဆ္ဆပနဒီ) River. Before supervising the casting of His image, Mahamuni, the Buddha prophesied relating to the country. The arrival of the Buddha in Rakhine was during the reign of King Sandasuriya (စန္ဒသူရိယ) who ascended the throne in the sixth century B.C. An ancient palm-leaf manuscript called *Sabbadhanapakarana* (သဗ္ဗဒါနပကာရန) gives a detailed account of the casting of the Buddha's image, Mahamuni.

During an inspired moment, Buddha remarked that the country would, in ages to come, be renowned for its production of grains and for that reason it would be known to all the world as Dhanyawaddy. Since then the country has retained that name. The prophecy of Buddha has amply been fulfilled by the abundance of paddy grain which in years proved not only sufficient for the people of the country but also for exporting to neighbouring countries across the sea.

(This term applies very fittingly to Rakhine, whose wealth depended principally on the extensive regions of its rice-lands. With a rainfall of over two hundred inches a year, the crop has never failed. There are plenty of grains in the fields seasonally.)

Thus, prosperity has prevailed in Rakhine through the generations.

In addition to the ancient name Dhanyawaddy the country came to be known as Rakkhapura, Rakhine-pye, the present day Rakhine State. The explanations for this are offered in the following passage.

All Rakhine (Arakanese) designate themselves as Rakhine. The origin of the term 'Rakhine' is very ancient. The Rakhine chronicle mentions the settlement of savage people called *Bee-loo* (may be Negrito) which stands for the Pali *Rakkha* or *Raksusas*. Probably, the term originates from Sanskrit *Raksa* meaning *Bee-loo*.

The term 'Arakan' is generally used by foreigners. However, the native people usually called themselves 'Rakhine'. It is believed among those people that the term 'Rakhine' denotes those who safeguard the two essential qualities, namely, the nationality and morality-*Sila* (သီလ).

"အမျိုးသီလ၊ နှစ်ဌာနကို၊ ပြည့်ဝမဏ္ဍိုင်၊
စောင့်စွမ်းနိုင်၍။ ရက္ခိုင်နာမ
ဘွဲ့မည်လှဖြင့်၊ အနွယ်သညာ၊ ခေါ်အပ်ရာတည်း"
(နာဂိန္ဒမော်ကွန်း)။

In early times, the Buddhist missionaries used to call the country Rakkhapura (ရက္ခပုရ),the land of the Rakhines.

On the other hand, the Rakhine or Arakan people are popularly known as 'Magh'. Scholars hold different views about the etymology of the term'Magh'. Scholars think that,it is a Persian word denoting "fire-worshipper". This is unlikely. At the present all Rakhines are Buddhists and no worshippers have ever been known among them.

According to some other scholars, the word'Magh' is believed to derive from 'Magdu', a Sanskrit word for a sea-bird. Therefore, it can be said that the term 'Magh' denotes sea-traveller, or seafarer.

Sir Arthor Phayre pointed out that the name 'Maga' originated from the ruling race of Magadha in India. There had been cultural inter-relations between Magadha and Rakhine in ancient times. It is therefore claimed that Rakhine were descendants of Magadha.

However, the term 'Arakan' is generally used by foreigners instead of Rakhine.

In an interesting paper by Colonel Yule on the oldest records of the sea-route to China from Western Asia, the author identified the country, named 'Argyre' in Ptolemy, as Arakan. Ptolemy who sailed along the Rakhine coast in the second century A.D mentioned a number of ports in Argyre (silver country) which might be Rakhine. Because, his list begins with the port of Barakaura, which as we shall see later can be identified as situated at the mouth of the Naaf River the border between Bengal and Rakhine. The name Arakan is supposed to be derived from the silver mines existing there at that time. This name may be a corruption of the native name Rakhine, from which the modern European form, Arakan, is derived.

On the other hand, Gerini is convinced that the name Rakkha, Rakhine is derived from Plaksa, Balaksa, Palaksa, meaning 'white' or 'silver' from the fact that silver was found in the country, and that the name 'Arakan' is nothing but a Portuguese and Arab corruption of the original 'Rakhine'. In this connection it is interesting to note that Shahabudin Talish, a Mohamedan historian of the 16th century, mentioned that there were several mines of silver in Arakan. Later on, the Dutch traders of the 17th century stated that , among the other things , Arakan exported silver. It is also interesting to note that the old Tamil word for demon, *bee-loo*, derived from Sanskrit raksasa, is 'arrakan'. There appears to be some connection here with Tamil 'arrakan', 'shelac', which is said to be derived from the lexical Sanskrit raksa (ရက္ခ) "lac". It seems that Arakan, in the first centuries of the Christian era, was a major source of lac. Lac had been produced by its oldest hill tribes in Rakhine Yoma.

On the northern face of the Shitthaung (ရှစ်သောင်း) pillar, engraved in the mid-11th century, it was mentioned for the first time the word Arekadesa (အာရက္ခဒေ၌), meaning ' the land of Arakan'. It was probably the name for Rakhine at that time.

The term ' Rakhuin' was found in the Pagan (Bagan) inscription which was dated 1299 A.D.

Nicola Conti (1420-1430 A.D) wrote 'Rachani' as the name of the country. Sidi Ali Chelebi, a Turkish navigator belonging to the middle of the sixteenth century wrote as 'Rakanj'.

All these forms are closely related to the original term. The term Aracan was first used by Barbosa as quoted in *Ramusio* in 1516 A.D. The usage was taken up by the later Portuguese and other European travellers and chroniclers, and the term was variously described as Recon, Rakan, Arracam, Aracao, Orrakan, or Arrakan which is nearest to modern name Arakan.

The term 'Arakan' is generally used by foreigners. However, the native people usually called themselves 'Rakhine'. It is believed among these people that the term 'Rakhine' denotes those who safeguard the two essential qualities, namely, the nationality-heritage and morality-*Sila* (အမျိုးသီလ).

Kaladan River

The main river of Rakhine is known as Kaladan (ကုလားတန်).We can go to Mrauk-U, the last city of Rakhine, by the route of this river. It is suggested that this name is derived from *Kular-Tant* (ကုလားတန်). According to local chronicles, which can be summarized as follows:

At one time, when the upper Kaladan river was flooded by heavy rains, a prince who came from Kapilavastu (ကပိလဝတ်) and his wife, the daughter of local tribal chief, had been swept away in the river. They swam to save their lives and finally landed on the bank near Salagiri Hill (သလာဂိရိ). The river was therefore named Kulartant (*Kular* =swim), (*tant* =stop). Later on it changed to Kular-tan, Kulardan, and Kalardan etc. The ancient name of Kaladan River is Gacehabhanady.

The term originates from Pali word, meaning 'Tortoise-shell River'. Because there are many stones which look like tortoise-shell in the upper river.

The Kaladan River at dawn

The Old Capitals of Rakhine

The physical boundaries of Rakhine determines, on one hand, the extent of control by a central authority. On the other hand, it affords a good opportunity for the growth of religion and culture. From the viewpoint of historical development of Rakhine, it is interesting to note that it has been an independent kingdom throughout its history. It controlled large areas along the coasts to the east, west and the south for beyond the borders of the motherland.

The early chronicles of Rakhine usually began with the descriptions of the events of *Sakkya* migration into Rakhine. They were led by the princes of royal blood who left their country for political reasons. The first group was led by the eldest brother Vasudeva who ruled the Kingdom of Dwarawady (Thandway).

The second group under the leadership of a prince, named Ahzona, entered Rakhine from Kapilavastu, and moved along the route of the Kaladan River. On the way, the prince married the daughter of a powerful tribal chief. A son was born to them and was named Marayu (မာရယု). When the young prince came of age, he led the whole of his mother's tribe, as well as all of his father's followers from India and conquered the city of old Vesali. He founded a new city Dhanyawaddy, on the bank of Thari River.

The chronicles dated this event at some three thousand odd years before Christ (3000 B.C). Marayu was the first king and his descendants consisted of fifty-five kings.

Kanthonsint (16th Century B.C)

The fifty-five descendants of Marayu reigned this city; the last of them, King Min-ngay-pyaw-hla-sithu (မင်းငယ်ပျော်လှစည်သူ) left Dhanyawaddy and founded the city of Kanthonsint in 1508 B.C.

Nilarpandaung

Soon after the new city was built the King was assassinated by three nobles who collectively ruled for a year. The queen of the last King, Sawsit (စောစစ်), and her followers then marched on to the north, and founded a new city, Nilarpandaung.

Kyaukpandaung (1507-1483 B.C)

At about this time Kanrazagyi, who had been obliged to relinquish the Kingdom of Tagaung (တကောင်း) to his younger brother, came to Northern Rakhine and settled with his followers on a high mountain site called Kyaukpandaung. Kanrazagyi joined the queen of

the last Rakhine king and married her two daughters. The city was situated on the top ground of a plateau, eight miles long and five miles broad. It stood about four thousand and three hundred feet above sea-level, and is situated fourteen miles east of Paletwa, Chin State. An ancient map of Kyaukpandaung drawn by Captain G.C. Righy may be found in his ***History of Operations in Northern Arakan 1896- 97.*** He writes: *It is a very conspicuous flat topped hill and water is procurable on the top. Palm trees, which are not natural products of the surrounding forests, are found there.*

Second Dhanyawaddy (1483-580 B.C)

After twenty-four years Kanrazagyi left Kyaukpandaung and rebuilt Dhanyawaddy on the same site of the old city. The Rakhine chronicles relate that twenty -eight kings of Kanrazagyi's descendants had reigned the kingdom successively for nine hundred and twenty-seven years.

Third Dhanyawaddy (580 B.C to 326 A.D)

The dynasty founded by Kanrazagyi comprised twenty-eight kings. It was succeeded by the Suriya (သူရိယ) Dynasty, the first king of which being Sandasuriya (စန္ဒသူရိယ). (The King founded a new city and built a palace on the site of the Old Dhanyawaddy.) According to chronicles, it was during this time that Buddha is believed to have visited Rakhine with His five hundred disciples. It was said that the famous Mahamuni image was cast with His consent as a memento of His sojourn in the country. The Suriya Dynasty consisted of twenty-five kings and they ruled the country for nine hundred and six years. The Suriya dynasty was then succeeded by the dynasty of the Chandra.

Vesali (327 to 776 A.D)

The first king of the Chandra Dynasty was Mahataing Chandra. He ascended the throne in 327 A.D. The tumult which arose at that time was due to the mysterious decline of fortune and influence of the old capital. The two chief queens had died and the astrologers suggested that a change of site be necessary. The King, Mahataing Chandra, therefore left the old capital, and rebuilt the old city of Vesali which he made his new capital. In that city nine kings of this dynasty reigned in succession bearing the surname of Chandra. They developed the city to be rich and prosperous, and it was during this period that foreign trade was established for the first time. The city had a stone pier on the bank of Yanchaung, a portion of which had existed until quite recently, and it is said that a thousand vessels laden with rich merchandise from surrounding countries called at the place annually.

Beside the chronicles other evidences are also available now to help elucidate the early history of Rakhine. Epigraphic and numismatic materials are now available. They include prasastis, votive inscriptions, copper plate land grant, bell inscriptions and numerous early coins made for the purpose of currency.

Up to the time of the first Chandra, Buddhism prevailed in the country in its purest form. The Mahamuni image alone formed the centre of religious worship and no other image of any kind was permitted in the sacred shrine. The ruler, Chandra, probably introduced the tantric forms of worship for the first time. An old manu-

script reveals that two missionaries from abroad prevailed upon the King to accept a new religion. Henceforth, in addition to the Buddha images, those of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Bodhisattva are also found in the sacred shrines. These kings were great builders of temples in stone, and at present large stone images are to be found lying about the fields on the ruined site of Vesali.

Mrauk-U (776-792 A.D)

The last king of the Chandra Dynasty was Cula Chandra (စူဠစန္ဒာ) who was drowned in the sea. So the reign was succeeded, or rather temporarily taken over, by a chief of the Mro (မြို) tribes, Ahmyatu (အမြတ္တူ), and his nephew, Paiphyu (ပဲဖြူ). King Paiphyu built a new city called Mrauk-U in 776 A.D. The city was his birthplace and it was proclaimed as his capital but Vesali still existed as a city of the time. Then Shans from the northern *Yoma* invaded Rakhine and occupied it for years. According to records, Ko Lo Fend (749-779 A.D.) also had overrun the upper region of the Ayeyarwady, at about the same period. The country collapsed under the invasion of the Mongolian (Shans) although in unsettled conditions, Vesali continued to flourish till 1018 A.D.

This is a very important period for Rakhine history. It seemed that the Mongols had intermarried freely with the native people who were then most probably, Aryans (Indians). Because of this inter-marriage, Rakhine still retains some of the customs, manners, languages, cultures and practices of the Indo-Mongoloid.

Thabaiktaung (793 A.D.)

After the King Paiphyu had ruled for about seventeen years, a vigorous Tibeto-Myanmar tribe came down from the upper Anzananaddy (အဇနနဒီ) River and occupied the city, Mrauk-U. During this time the Mro King Paiphyu, being forced to abandon his capital, retired with his followers to the valley of the Yoechaung River and built a temporary city of Thabaiktaung.

Sambawet (794-818 A.D)

When Sula Chandra, the last king of Chandra Dynasty, died, he left an infant son. During the troubled days that child prince was carefully hidden away by the loyal followers and was brought up in an obscure hilly region in the northern part of the country. It was in the Saingdin water-fall region which was habitated by the Thet (သက်) tribes. When he grew to manhood he brought together a considerable force of the hill tribes (Thets) to which the people of Rakhine also joined in large numbers as he came down to the plains. When the prince was twenty-three years old he was enthroned as king. He built a new capital named Sambawet (စမ္ဗော်) in 794 A.D. The prince was called by the Thets as *Nga Ton Min*, meaning 'Our King.' Hence the Rakhine chronicles mentioned this king as Nga Ton Min. Sambawet city lies six miles southeast of the old Vesali. It was a small city situated on the bank of the Lemro River (လေးမြို့မြစ်).

Pyinsa (818-1103 A.D.)

The King Nga Ton Min was succeeded by Khittathin (ခေတ္တသင်). He was a descendant of a Chandra king. His father, was the nephew of Sula Chandra, the last king of Vesali. Previously, the King had been hidden for a long time in an obscure hilly region of upper Khrit River (ခြိတ်မြစ်). After the King Khet-ta-thin had driven out

all his enemies he abandoned Sambawet and built the new city of Pyinsa (ပဉ္စာ), situated on the Lemro River and was about a few miles due south of the old city. Fifteen kings ruled in that city for two hundred and eighty-five years, until 1103 A.D.

Some scholars consider that the cities Sambawet and Pyinsa were situated on the same site. Actually, this is because the cities were very small and the boundary lines seemed to be rather undistinctive and lay very closely to each other. It is believed that the original boundaries of the cities had disappeared and most parts of the cities had been eroded.

Parein (1103-1123 A.D)

In the Pyinsa Dynasty, the last three kings were usurpers. Minbeeloo (မင်းဘီလူး), the last king of the regular line, was assassinated by a noble who usurped the throne. His son Minraibaya (မင်းရဲဘယ) fled with his family to the court of Kyansittha at Bagan. For thirty-five years the Rakhine royal family remained there in exile. The queen of Minraibaya(မင်းရဲဘယ) bore a son, named Letyaminnan (လက်ဖျာမင်းနန်) . When his father passed away, the reigning king of Bagan promised to help the young prince to regain the throne of Rakhine.

According to popular tradition, an army of a hundred thousand Pyus and a hundred thousand Talaings was sent by sea and land to Rakhine. The people of Rakhine were jubilant over the return of their legitimate prince. Letyaminnan ascended the Rakhine throne in 1103 A.D with the help of Pyus. He is also known in history as *Pyutatheinmin* (ပျူတစ်သိန်းမင်း). A Myanmar inscription at Buddha Gaya recorded of the repair of the temple there by Letyaminnan, the lord of one hundred thousand Pyus.

On the advice of the astrologers who said that the city of Pyinsa had lost all its power and glory, and predicted that the country could not prosper if administered from that city, Letyaminnan left the old capital. He crossed the Lemro River and found a plain which was as flat as the surface of a big drum (စည်မျက်နှာပြင်ကဲ့သို့). There he built a temporary city named Launggret (လောင်းကြက်). Many people including a princess and animals died in that city. Letyaminnan then left Launggret and built the new city of Parein on the bank of Paungduk Chaung (ပေါင်းတုတ်ချောင်း).

The Paungduk Chaung is a boundary line between Launggret and Parein. Parein (Lat 20° 34' N, Long 93° 14' E) holds a much better position than other cities. It faces the Lemro River and has, at its back a ridge that runs parallel to the main ridge which is situated between the Kaladan and Lemro River.

It lies four miles southeast of Mrauk-U. The seventh king of Parein Dynasty Dhatharaza (ဒဿရာဇာ 1123-1139 A.D) reformed the city as Second Parein in 1123A.D. The reign of the eight Parein kings lasted for thirty years until 1142 A.D.

Khrit (1142-1154 A.D)

Minphoonsa (မင်းဘုန်းစား), who succeeded his brother Ananta Thiri (အနန္တသီရိ), the last king of Parein Dynasty then built another capital called Khrit (ခြိတ်) in 1142 A.D on the left bank of the Khrit Chaung, a substream of the Lemro River. It is now uninhabited. The King had to move up the river for security reasons when the dynasty was in decline. The area was just over 30 acres wide. It was surrounded by a narrow moat which is now occupied by paddy fields. Each wall of the city measures only about 1200 feet.

The city was a very unhealthy place for habitation and only three kings, including the last one Danuyupol, had managed to live there. They resided in the city for only twelve years.

Second Sambawet (1154-1163 A.D)

After the King Danuyupol (ခန္ဂရူပေါ်), had ascended the Khrit's throne and stayed there for three years, he left the Khrit city and reoccupied the old Sambawet city in 1154 A.D. The King was assassinated by a noble named Salangarbo (စလင်္ကာဗိုလ်) in 1160 A.D. The usurper-king occupied the throne of Second Sambawet for about one year.

He was succeeded by Myitzuthin (မဥ္ဇူသင်), son of Danuyupol. The King, Myitzuthin, ruled this city for only two years.

Myohaung Taungngu (1163-1251 A.D)

After the King Myitzuthin had stayed there for two years, he left the old city and built a new capital named Myohaung Taungngu. He built this city on the east bank of Lemro River in 1163 A.D. It lies four miles east of Launggret city. Most of the city ground had been eroded by the Lemro River.

Some ruins of a Buddha image, and palace site, a fort and a wall have recently been unearthed on the bank of the Lemro River.

Altogether seventeen kings had reigned in this capital for eighty-eight years. The capital is also called Nayyinzaya (နေရဉ္ဇရာ).

Second Launggret (1251-1406 A.D)

The last king of Myohaung Taungngu Dynastywas Alawmarphyu who ruled only one year in that city. He did not like the old city. On the advice of the astrologers who said that the city had lost all its power and glory and that the country could not prosper if administered from that city, the King Alawmarphyu set out to find a suitable place for a new city. He crossed the River Lemro and selected a site with the help of his ministers and astrologers and built the new city of Launggret in 1251 A.D. An old saying states that it was so named (*Launggret* = boat-fowl= လောင်းကြက်) because during the search for a site a jungle fowl flew out of its cover and alighted itself on the prow of the royal barge. Whereupon the King's advisers unanimously interpreted it as highly propitious. They advised the King to build the new city along the bank from which the fowl came. They said the city would have a long life and his successors would be great and powerful.

Today, Launggret is situated on an island in the River Lemro, being bounded by the Lemro on the east and the Paungduk Chaung on the west. There is a small ridge on the northeast corner against which the city was supposed to have been built. The eastern walls as well as two-thirds of the palace-site had been eroded by the river.

There is a resemblance in the layouts of Parein and Launggret. Both faced east on the Lemro. There is a considerable expanse of plains on the northern and southern side. Routes of access by land and water was convenient.

Launggret lay five miles southeast of the city of Mrauk-U and was close to Parein in the south.

Altogether eighteen kings, including four usurpers, had resided in this capital for one hundred and fifty-five years.

The Golden City Of Mrauk-U

Historical Background (1430-1784 A.D.)

Eighteen kings had reigned in the Launggret city.

The last king, Minsawmon (မင်းစောမွန်), ascended the throne with the Queen Sawsit (စောစစ်) in 1404 A.D. For many years since, the country had been in turmoil; usurpers, one after another, became the rulers in the last years of the Launggret dynasty. The governments of the Launggret were extremely weak and the rulers were hardly able to control the whole of the country. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction and unrest throughout the country. The military networks were also completely out of order.

In the midst of such general confusion Minkhaung, the King of Inwa, sent his son, Minraikyawzwa (မင်းရဲကျော်စွာ) to attack Launggret and occupied it in 1406 A.D. Minsawmon fled to Bengal. One year later, Minkhari (မင်းခရီ) a younger brother of Minsawmon, ruling in Thandway, sought the military aid of the King Razadirat (ရာဇဒိရာဇ) of Bago. Razadirat sent him an army of fifty thousand soldiers. Launggret was captured and Minkhari occupied the throne in 1407 A.D. Then the King of Inwa sent an army again to Launggret. Thus for a period of twenty-four years, Rakhine had become a battle-field in the struggle for power between the kings of the central Myanmar, Inwa and the lower Myanmar, Bago.

During this period the dethroned King Minsawmon had been taking shelter at the court of the King of Thuratan (သူရတန်) who himself having been engaged in wars could not give Minsawmon any help. The King of Delhi (ဒေဝဒီ) had come to attack Thuratan with a large army, composed of elephants, horses, chariots, infantry and "dogs as large as bullocks" trained for warfare. Minsawmon helped the King of Thuratan in fighting off the King of Delhi. By his advice, the large dogs were disabled by means of iron hooks baited with raw flesh. The elephants and horses were tricked to fall into pits covered with straws and earth. The bottom of these pits were planted with iron spikes. Ultimately, the Thuratan King won a complete victory. The exiled Rakhine King taught the Thuratan King's followers the technique of trapping a herd of wild elephants. The procedure consisted of driving them into a space enclosed by a stockade and a ditch. He also taught them the art of training elephants.

Then Minsawmon was sent back to Rakhine accompanied by a large army, and won back Launggret in 1429 A.D. In the year 791 B.E, on Thursday, the first waning day of *Kason* (ကဆုန်), Minsawmon was restored to the throne of Launggret, Rakhine. After the King Minsawmon had occupied

the throne for about two years, he decided to abandon Launggret and to build another city at a more suitable place. The reasons for the decision included the following.

The royal palace at Launggret was struck by thunderbolts, intruded by poisonous snakes (မိုးကြိုးခခြင်း၊ ငန်းမြွတက်ခြင်း) and perched by evil birds (ငှက်ဆိုးနားခြင်း). Besides, the city had been ruled and ruined by the invaders. This called for the abandonment of Launggret and a new city site was sought for. His sole ambition had been to make Rakhine prosperous and strong, and to this end in mind, he had sacrificed everything. He had acquired vast administrative experience during his stay with the King of Bengal.

Then King Minsawmon set out in golden boats and silver boats upstream of the Lemro River in the company of seers (ပုရောဟိတ်), astrologers (ဟူးရားတတ်), and ministers, and came to a tributory in the west. Then he saw a strange well - dressed old man on top of Golden Hill (ရွှေတောင်) who was playing a flute.

The strange man called out to the King and pointed at the *Galon Taung* (ဂဠုန်တောင်) which was situated on the western side of the Golden Hill. When the company reached a stream they witnessed the following scene:

A woman, carrying a basket (ပလိုင်းခြင်းကြား) and a mesh-snare (ယက်သဲ့၊ ငါးဖမ်းကိရိယာ) was catching fish out of water on the southern side was questioning another woman who was also fishing on the northern side.

" Here, my sister Mrauk-U (ယောက်မမြောက်ဦး), did you catch any fish?"

"Yes, I did", replied the other.

Then the woman of the northern side asked the woman of the south.

"Here, my sister Wathay (ဝသဲ), did you catch any fish?"

"Yes, I did," the southern woman replied.

Listening to these conversations they learnt that the northern side was called Mrauk-U, and that the other side was Wathay. Then from the foot of the *Galon Taung* they set forth towards the source of the Mrauk-U Creek (မြောက်ဦးချောင်း) in search of the new city site. On the way they witnessed a series of strange sights. In a place there lay a patch of land covered with a grove of reeds (သင်္ခန်းတော၊ ကျူတော) that shot up in a clockwise climb towards which a rat, chased by a cat, ran, but when they reached there, the rat turned around and chased out the cat; then a barking-deer chased by a tiger ran and then turned around and chased his enemy as the former reached the spot. Furthermore, a frog chased by a snake ran and turned around when it got there and bit it. As the snake was too big , the frog could eat only a part of it and the remaining portion was shown to Minsawmon.

Having witnessed these strange events, the seers and the astrologers unanimously agreed that the place could be the soil of divine choice. The matter was then reported to the King, recommending building of the royal palace.

There was a large *Khamaung* tree (ခမောင်းဝင်) nearby, and when it was cut off, five white lizards were found inside its hollow. The seers then foretold that the future kings would observe the five precepts (ငါးပါးသီလ) and that they would be honest and good. The King's advisers also interpreted the omen as being highly propitious and they predicted that many vessels laden with rich merchandise from neighbouring countries would call at this city annually.

When the spot which had been pointed out by the old man was cleared for building the palace, they found on the northern side

a pot filled with red earth, on the southern side another pot filled with white earth and four front teeth of a tiger.

The seers said that the omen of the pots foretold the prosperity of the city . The red earth meant that the future kings would reign long and that the city would be plentiful of goods. The white earth indicated that the future kings would ascend the throne of Mrauk-U beneath the shade of White Umbrellas (ထီးဖြူဆောင်း), riding on White Elephants (ဆင်ဖြူ). The four front teeth of a tiger signified that no enemy would ever be able to take this city of Mrauk-U.

When it came to selecting the opportune moment of building the palace, the seers read that as Minsawmon was a Thursday-born, the following two alternative fates waited for the City and foı the King.

If the building of the palace were carried out on time of *Mainlet Kansan* (မိန်လဂ်ကန်စန်း), the King would live long but the City would be doomed in three years; if built on time of *Kanlet Kansan* (ကန်လဂ်ကန်စန်း), the King would live for only three years but the City would flourish for many hundred years. The King chose the latter alternative, namely shorter life for himself and longer life his descendents.

The construction of the city was started in the year 792M.E, (1430 A.D) Sunday, on the first day of the waxing moon of *Tawthalin*(တော်သလင်း) at sunrise which was the time of *Kanlet Kansan.*

The Inner City of the Palace-Site

After many days of careful searches, Minsawmon selected in a hilly tract a strategic position for his new capital, Mrauk-U. According to the advice of his ministers and astrologers, he levelled three small hills, Taungnyo, Kukka, and Moonlay, on which he built his palace and another building for the royal family and then fortified the surrounding hills for defensive purposes. The palace-site was situated in the heart of the city. The moats had been made by damming the small streams. Surrounding this inner city of the palace-site and the lowlying ground was the first wall, made up of earthen works damming the Panzaymyaung (ပန်းဈေးမြောင်း) on the north, and hill streams on the south.

The inner city of the palace-site was made up of three terraces. The lowest terrace measured about 1740 feet from east to west and 1606 feet from north to south. Many parts of the first wall had since disappeared and stones had been used in the construction of the quay of the Sittway harbour called Mingyikyauktan (မင်းကြီးကျောက်တန်း). A new settlement had been put up at the clear space of the wall especially at the north-eastern corner. At present , a village, Nyaungbinzay (ညောင်ပင်ဈေး), flanks the north side of the city. The last remaining part is the south eastern wall near Warettaw (ဝရစ်တော) quarter and is twenty-five feet high.

The palace-site had been rebuilt and repaired many times during a period of over two hundred years. Major repairs were started by the King Minbin in the year of 893 B.E, on Saturday, the 2nd day of the waxing moon of *Thidingyut.*

The second terrace is about 1000 feet long from east to west and 800 feet from north to south. The upper terrace is about 600 feet each side. The area of the inner city is about 1.2 square miles. The highest terrace is about fifty feet high from the lowest ground level. The layout of the ground plan is somewhat similar to that of the Mahamuni Shrine; the lines from west to east dips considerably towards the

north, and these form the lines north to south and south to the east.

The detailed measurements surveyed by Dr.Forchhammer in 1870 are as follow:

No.1 terrace measurements from north to south west line 1606 feet, to east line 1200 feet; from west to east 1740 feet; entering the west gate, the distance from the wall of the first to that of the second enclosure is 140 feet, to that of the third 237 feet; across platform III 656 feet; from the opposite gate of the III platform to that the second 267 feet, to that of the first enclosure 440 feet. Entering the north gate of the first enclosure there are 233 feet to the second, 166 feet to the third, and 879 feet across to the topmost platform, 138 feet from the south gate of terrace III to that of the second and 450 feet to that of the first enclosure.

The walls were constructed with old sandstone blocks of various sizes, well-hewn and cemented with mortar which possesses great adhesiveness. The cement was prepared by mixing sand and clay of proper consistency and pieces of buffalo hide, tails, and hoofs boiled in water till it became viscous like gum in solution. The walls are 7 feet thick at the base, 4 feet at the top; in few places, especially on the III platform, the height of the stone walls had been raised by 2-3 feet of bricks, an addition made by the Myanmars after they had conquered Rakhine.

The north gate was called *Mathataga* (funeral gate); royal funeral processions left the palace through this gate to the cemetary.

The lowland space between the first and second enclosures on the west side was once filled with a clear mass of water, on which, in former times, the queen and princesses would enjoy themselves every evening on the water in their gilded royal boats to the accompaniment of music amid the laughters and cheers of the other inmates of the royal enclosure who probably lined the top of the fringing wall. This broad expanse of water is now no longer in existence; it was filled up in 1916 and 1917 to serve utilitarian needs of certain officials.

The gates were all completely demolished with the exception of the one at the south east corner, the entrance to the first enclosure. The entrance is 10 feet wide; on either side the wall protrudes 8 feet with a thickness of $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet and a height of 12 feet . On the inner side of the wall a thick stone slab was firmly inserted in the wall about one foot above the ground, and a second similar one above it at a height of 8 feet; in the centre of each stone is a hole of 5 inches diameter. This was apparently intended to receive the two ends of a beam to which a swinging door was attached. Close by is a low steep hill known as Ywantaung (ယွန်းတောင်). Tradition has it that the Royal Central Clock (Big Drum) was hung on top of this hill.

In the north east corner of the second enclosure is a large pool, laid out with bricks and stones surrounded by a wall with an entrance on each cardinal side and stairs leading to the water edge. It was originally dug by Minphalaung (1571-1593 A.D.) but was repaired during the Myanmar occupation of Mrauk-U. On the south side lies a well-polished stone slab, 4' 7" high from the socket, 2' 7" broad, 6" thick, bearing an inscription in Myanmar language.

According to this inscription, it is learnt that it was engraved by Maha Mingyi Kyawzwa who was appointed a governor of Dhanyawaddy by the King of Myanmar. He repaired this pool on Wednesday, the 9th of waning of *Pyatho* in 1183M.E. (Dec. 1821 A.D). The pool was also called *Nant-*

Tha Kan (နံ့သာကန်), by the Myanmar Governor. It means' scented- pool'. In fact, its original Rakhine name had been *Nunn-Tha -Kan* (နန်းသားကန်) meaning 'The Royal Family Pool'. Besides, according to tradition and Rakhine historical annals, the pool was used in the coronation ceremony of the kings of Mrauk-U Dynasty. It measures 135 feet in length, 135 feet in breadth, 24 feet in depth and 540 feet in perimeter.

The stone slab on which the inscription had been written has now been entirely broken and the writing is more or less defaced, as the people of the village wash their clothes on the stone fragments. Most of the surrounding walls of this pool are in disrepair; within the enclosure and close to water are four square stone pillars, one at each corner, standing erect; they are four feet high. Each side measures 1' 6", the two sides turned towards the pool exhibiting the rude figures of *Bilus* or *Rakkhas* or Giants; in each of whose hand carries a club. These pillars were erected by Minphalaung.

On the north side of the second wall is a large circular well with a circumference of 76 feet, and is built of stone. The well was also ascribed to Minphalaung and was reserved for use by the King only.

Besides, an old gate-way can be seen in the east wall of the second terrace. It is similar to the cave under the palace-site walling, but really is a secret door for the passage of the royal family. The door was reserved exclusively for emergency use and was very easy to go out even on fully equipped royal elephants.

On the south side of the lowest terrace there was a large Royal Garden. Now, the garden has been filled with weeds and grasses and is being used as a playground.

The second terrace was made only for the use of members of the royal family. In 1630 A.D, Father Manrique, the Portuguese ambassador, stayed with princes for two years at the second terrace with the permission of Thirithudhammaraza (သီရိသုဓမ္မရာဇာ) (1622-1638 A.D) the King of Mrauk-U.

The wall, which circumvallates the third and topmost terrace, rises to a height of 30 feet above the second terrace on the north and east side and 20 feet to 30 feet over the level of lowest platform. The walls at the south and west sides are lower and the space between them are narrower than those on the north and east sides. These walls had been made to protect the palace against the attacks of enemies.

The palace buildings were built of teak and were lacquered and gilded. Genuine gold and silver plates were used for decoration on the topmost terrace . The King and his queens resided in the palace. The palace was built security-tight. The Rakhine kings of Mrauk-U dynasty selected the Japanese *samurais* (swordsmen) as their bodyguards. Now, nothing of interest is known about these *samurais*. Of the old palace itself, only traces of the walls remain. The great palace had been destroyed.

An interesting thing can still be found at the centre of the old palace-site. It is a man-made hole. According to the tradition, the hole is said to be an entrance to an escape route which leads to the outside of the palace and is connected with a secret tunnel to the Shitthaung Pagoda about half a mile north of the palace. It may also be an entrance to the underground assembly hall. On the side of each stone wall is a small hole of 5 inches in diameter, apparently intended to receive the two ends of a beam, to which a swinging-door was attached. During the second world war, two Indian soldiers slipped down that hole and had disappeared.

The Golden Palace

The early 17th century was the Golden Age of Rakhine. In 1599, King Min Razagyi conquered Bago, the most powerful Kingdom possessing a white elephant, an animal regarded as one of the prestigious seven symbols of a 'universal monarch.' The possession of the white elephant passed to the conquerer who gained the title 'The Lord of White Elephant'. Mrauk-U had grown into an extremely rich city due mainly to its abundant rice production. With a rainfall of between 200 and 300 inches a year the crop never failed while her Indian neighbours suffered from severe droughts. Thus Mrauk-U had been prosperous from generation to generation. Moreover, the kings of Mrauk-U had stood up successfully against all foreign and domestic rivals for two hundred years. A few wars ever fought were short, and ended mostly in victory. No civil strife had ever ruined the peasantry. Little wonder, then, Mrauk-U had been a rich and prosperous dynasty.

Regretfully, all had been ruined. Nothing can be found on the old palace site except three-step walls. Historian D.G.E Hall had made a remark on the palace of Mrauk-U.

Within was the palace-city, built to the same traditional pattern as Bagan and Inwa and many other old capitals in Asia. The walls may still be traced today, but the palace building, built of teak, have long disappeared. The massive stone walls and fortifications were erected by King Minbin (1531-53) against the threat of attack in the days of Tabinshwehti.

According to *Rakhine Razawinthit* (the New Rakhine Chronicle), Thirithudhammaraza, King of Mrauk-U, in 1622 A.D, had repaired the palace and the old city. He repaired the city-wall, the palace-wall, the fort, the gate, the moat, the palace watchtower, the wooden spire (*pyathat*), and the throne room.

Another source of information is Manrique's description of Mrauk-U. By

The Royal Palace of Mrauk-U (17th Century depiction)

the detailed accounts of the Augustan Father Manrique who came to Mrauk-U as an ambassador from Portuguese Goa, we can have a glimpse of scene in the Mrauk-U palace of his time.

"From Daingripet (ဒိုင်းကျီဘက်) the palace was quite visible, for it was less than half a mile away and stood on a rise fifty feet above the creek. Its layout was similar to that of the Mahamuni. There were three enclosures which rose in tiers, each bounded by a thick stone wall. The circumference of the outermost square was 2,000 yards, the side varying from a quarter to one-third of a mile. Its greatest width did not exceed 620 yards. The main audience hall and the private apartments were situated in the innermost square, which measured 218 yards from west to east, and 293 yards from north to south. They were of teakwood, lacquered and gilded, the roofs carved with figures and rising in spires."

On this occasion his boat landed him near the steps which led up to the west gate, in the outermost wall of the palace-city. He passed through that gate with others who had permission to attend the royal leyee and passing in turn through the second and third walls and reached the topmost enclosure. There stood the palace proper in front of him, the hall of audience with it "great wooden pillar of such length and symmetry that one would be astonished that trees so lofty and straight could exist."

Manrique was conducted into a building, the room of which were panelled with scented timber, such as sandalwood and eagle-wood, the latter an aromatic wood with a sweet cloying fragrance, which clang always to it in a damp hot climate. Passing through these perfumed chambers he came to a pavilion known as the "House of Gold", the walls of which were plated with gold. Along the ceiling was a golden creeper, like a melon or a narrow plant, with many gourds or pumpkins moulded in the same metal, like the vine which at that date was in the Great Mughals audience hall, though that was more in the Chinese style, the leaves of emeralds and the grapes of garnets. In this chamber were seven idols of gold, each the size and shape of a

The coronation of the King Thirithudhammaraza of Mrauk-U (17th century)

man, the metal being thicker than two finger breadths. They were covered with precious stones of great size.

At the palace, Manrique was shown a golden casket standing on a golden table, carved with devices and studded with gems. This casket held some ear-rings. Made of ruby, these ear-rings were shaped like a pyramid. They were about the length of a little finger, the base being of the size of a hen's egg.

The above is Manrique's description of the palace at about the time of 1630 A.D.

Five years later Manrique was fortunate enough to find himself at the coronation of the King, Thirithudhammaraza. It was in January, 1635. All were ready for the celebration of the King's coronation. Manrique described part of what he had seen, as follows:

> *As they entered the triple-walled fortress the sun rose, its rays suddenly bringing to life the gilded roofs, which flashed as if they were made of gold, so brilliantly that travellers often thought the palace was plated with gold. The roof of the Hall of Audience, which was carved with much fancy, was supported by a forest of gilt and red lacquer pillars.*

Shwegutaung Pagoda was built on a hilllock close to the north-east corner of the palace-site. It could be seen from the upper palace. They were of the same family from the historical and archaeological view-point. This position in which the shrine sits at NE site of the palace is the characteristic position found in many other major shrines in urban Buddhist centres in South-East Asia and Sri Lanka, including Pyu cities in Myanmar. The ground plan of Mrauk-U's palace-site is very similar to the Mahamuni Shrine. It may be associated with the royal ancestors. Thus, Shwegutaung was intimately connected with the function of Rakhine Kingship.

The Fortresses, the Moats and the Walls of the City

Before giving a description of the city's formidable fortifications, we should, at least as a background, review the history of the previous Rakhine city, Launggret.

At the beginning of the 15th century, Rakhine had been a pawn in the power struggle between the Central Myanmar, Inwa and Lower Myanmar, Bago. The Rakhine King, Narameikhla who later acquired the name Minsawmon had to flee to Bengal and take shelter under the protection of the Sultan. When Minsawmon was restored to the throne of Rakhine, he reviewed the security position of his country. Then, he concluded that the geographical position of Launggret was unsatisfactory for defence against enemy's attacks. It was situated on a plain and was very easy for enemies to overrun the city.

Hence, the King Minsawmon selected and built his new city, Mrauk-U. It stood in a lovely valley of about three miles wide, wholly enclosed by high rocky

mountains which served as natural fortifications. The inner ranges of these mountains had been cut away to make roads from the summits to the plains. Forts were built on these mountains and were provided with artillery. The city walls did not run all the way in a continuous line but were built only in the gaps between the natural barriers: the mountains and the tidal rivers. Thus the city walling plan was set without any definite limit. The city was not built on the pattern of other old Rakhine capitals such as Vesali, Dhanyawaddy nor like any other old cities of Asia. The plan was irregular and its conformation was dependent on the topography of the site. Northern Mrauk-U was a tangle of hills and creeks, considerably higher and rougher than the hilllocks within the city and the west was a lowland intersected with innumerable deep creeks which were subjected to the violence of hightides. The southern part of the city was filled with stony hills. But on the east side, there stretched the plain of Parein (Paungdok) extending up to the Lemro River. According to the Rakhine history, most of the invaders came naturally out of these directions, as there were serveral roads leading to the city over the high mountains. Accordingly, eastern side of Mrauk-U was fortified more heavily.

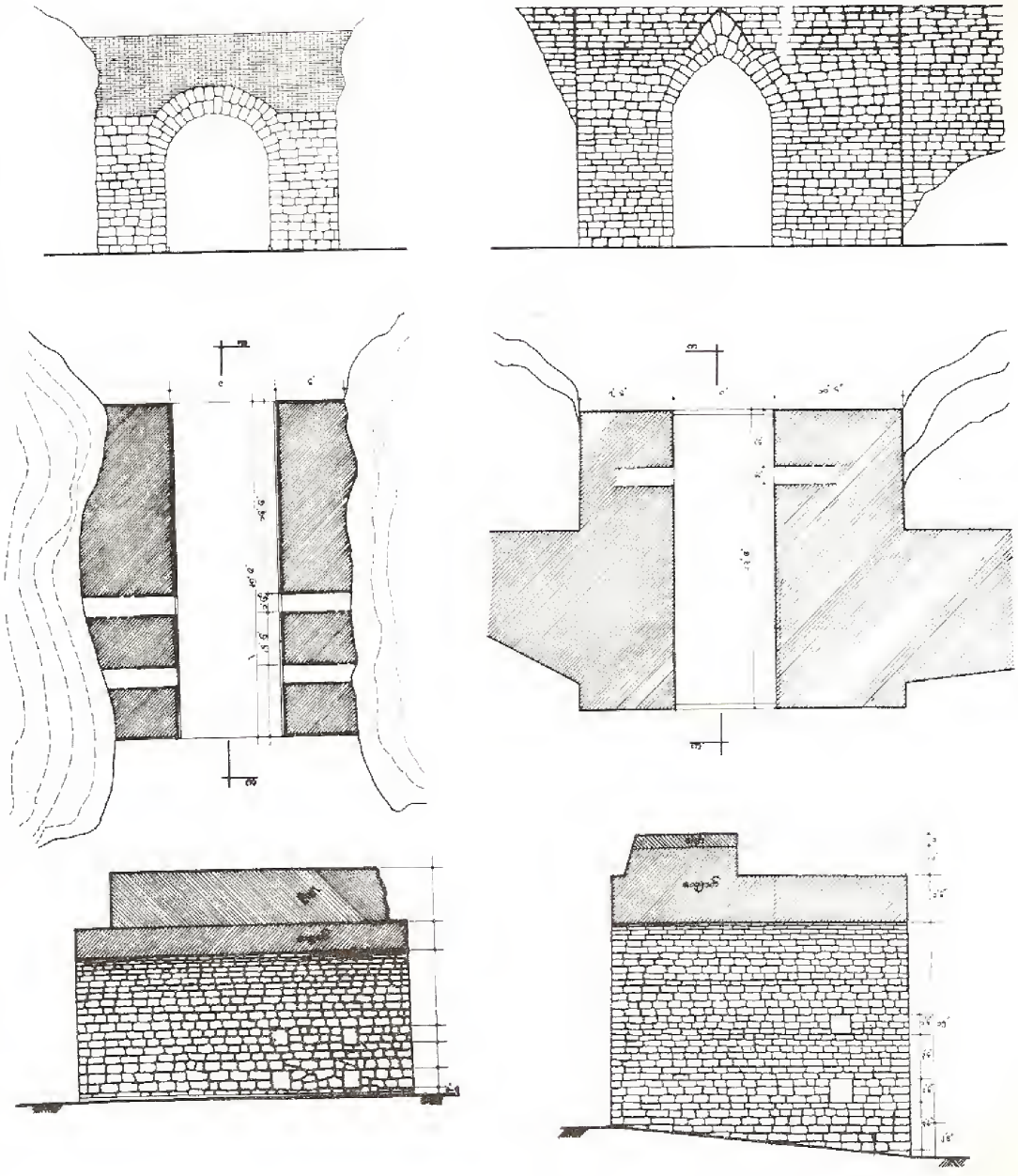
The parallel lines of artificial walls and moats were constructed on the eastern side between Mukayo Hills and Kassapa Mraung. These walls were one mile long. They were built of sandstone and earth. Most of the walls and moats still remain standing to this day and are called Pasoephat Moat, Kyarkhalaung Moat and Kyakitethama Moat. And several forts surrounded them. These forts were built on the side of the nearby ridges which lay north to south along the Parein plain. Among them Myataung Fortress and Laythartaung Fortress were more well-known.

Besides this system of defence, the kings had also built a line of artificial lakes on the eastern side of the city boundary. The lakes had been made by simply damming the small streams running between the ridges. Among them Letsekan and Anomakan on the south are considerable in size.

Letsekan measures three miles in length, half mile in breadth and about thirty feet deep. These lakes supply fresh water for the population of the city, and the water is also used for the irrigation of crops in dry seasons. On the other hand, these lakes were so built with dams and sluices that if enemies had succeeded in breaking through the eastern moats and penetrated into the city, the waters would be released, flooding the town and drowning the invaders.

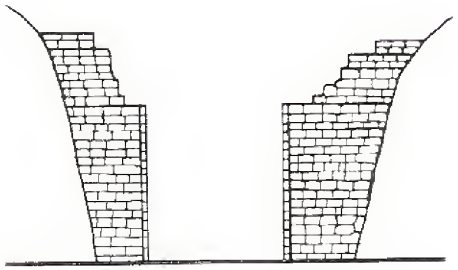
In such an emergency people of the city could take refuge in the citadels and on the inner hilllocks. Most of the pagodas like Shitthaung and Dukkhanthein stood on hilllocks at least fifty feet above the mean level of the city and so were out of danger of floods.

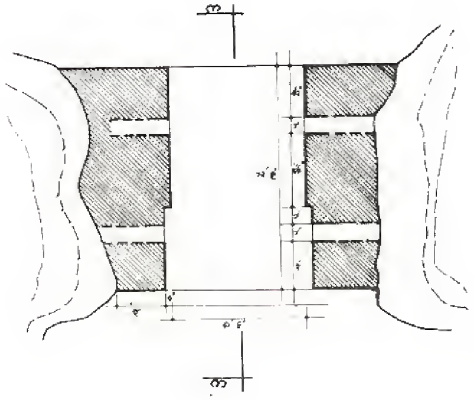
According to the Rakhine history, Min-

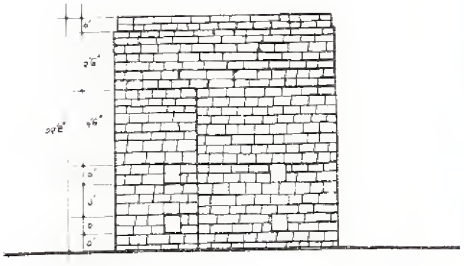


Kyakhat Gate

Letsekan Gate







Mauktaw Gate

The City Wall-gates of Mrauk-U

bin (1531-53 A.D), the most powerful King of Mrauk-U Dynasty, had strengthened the massive stone walls of the city of Mrauk-U with the help of the Portuguese. He also dug a deep moat filled with tidal water; and when the Bago invaders had penetrated the eastern outskirts of the city, he opened the sluices of his great reservoirs and flooded them out.

The city became bigger in size, as the defence systems were modified again and again whenever deemed threatened by Bago in the east and Bengal in the west.

On the west side, there had been no man-made moats because there were ditches which received the water from the natural small streams flowing down the ridges. This side was a plain but was full of tidal deep creeks. No invading army could cross them easily.

A single stream, Alezi Chaung, traverses the lowest part of this valley. Draining from the hills on the eastern side of the main ridge, it winds its way south and then westwards, seeking its way southwards and then westwards again to enter the Aungdat Chaung. The Rakhines had very cleverly dug these canals connecting this main stream with the Lemro River. In this way, it controlled both the Kaladan and the Lemro Valleys and had access to the two main rivers by water and by land.

Aungdat, the western side of the Mrauk-U City, became the main port for the foreign ships coming by way of the Kaladan River and Paungdok, the port for the ships plying the Lemro River as well as those coming from the southern provinces (Rammawady, Dwarawady, Maygawady provinces) and Myanmar. This gave the advantages of the port, without the attendant risk of a surprise attack by an enemy fleet. In Mrauk-U's heyday there was a naval base near Urittaung (present Ponnagyun). The fleet often assembled there for its campaigns to the east and the west coasts.

Finally, the north-south distance covered by the outermost walls of the Mrauk-U City was 1.4 miles and the east-west distance at its narrowest was about a mile and at its widest about a mile and a quarter. However, a double wall existed on the north about 700 feet apart, the inner one on this side forming a dam and a small lake which now has silted up. On the south side a double wall had also existed. About half a mile further south, two lakes were formed by connecting the ridge tops. The perimeter of the outer city was some twelve miles long.

Due to the threat of Bago, another wall was also built about 3,700 feet further south, making this city almost impregnable. Futhermore, a whole series of reservoirs had been built by connecting the ridges on the east. Mrauk-U was thus made even more impregnable than before. The area of the city, without taking into account the outermost defence line, was nearly 25 miles square, a very big city as one can see.

Manrique's Description of the Golden Mrauk-U City (1629-1635 A.D)

(*Translated from Spanish*)

Sebastien Manrique was a Portugese missionary of the Augustinian Order, who went to Arakan (Rakhine) from India in 1630 and stayed there for about five years. Arakan (Rakhine) at that time was virtually an independent Kingdom, with King Thirithudhammaraza on the throne. Manrique has left a long and detailed account of his travels apart of which is reprinted below.

Before proceeding with my story, I think it good to give a special account of that Royal City, which gives to the Kingdom the name of Arracan, the Metropolis of the other kingdoms subject to its crown, as we shall say in its own place. This great city is built in a beautiful valley, about fifteen leagues in circuit, and entirely surrounded by high rough mountains, walls of nature's make, and dispensing with artificial ones. On the inside, these mountains have been levelled in necessary parts with rammers, and where they have been cut through from top to bottom, gates have been erected for going in and out, whilst above them are some bulwarks provided with artillery, so that the city would naturally be impregnable, as if it belonged to another more warlike nation.

Through the middle of the city runs a large and copious river, which branching off through various parts, makes the greater number of its streets navigable for different kinds of craft, big and small, the vehicular service, public and private, depending mostly on these. These boats bring for sale along the aquatic streets all kinds of foodstuffs and provisions, rice country-wine, meat, fish (fresh, salted and dried), butter, vegetables, fruit, and other comestibles; also, sundry commodities and household utensils; and all these things, the eatables chiefly, are very cheap. Besides this convenience for traffic, there also many squares (places), called Basars, where the same articles are on sale.

The river enters the sea in two places first, at harbour of Oriatan; and secondly, on the side of the Dobazi, where live merchants of different nations, the greater number Maumetans, their captain also belonging to that sect. At the high tide the sea enters the town with great violence by seven gates and at the low tide runs off with equal force. The violence of the sea is greater or smaller according to the rise of the water at the full moons; and then it is very interesting to watch the small boats, balons (Balones), going in and

out of the gates, for the water is so violent that the least carelessness of the part of the pilots makes the boats heel over, but the only damage to those inside is that they get a ducking, and lose those of their goods that are badly covered and secured.

The greater number of the houses in the city is made of bamboos, which, as I have said, are strong canes, some of them being very thick. These houses of reed are covered with plaited palm-leaves, called Olas. These houses are made according to the means and position of those who get them made, for much labour and ingenuity is spent on the curious designs of fine variegated mats, very neat and beautiful things. And they manage all that without any kind of nailing, for, instead of nails, they use strong better ligatures, or Bengala canes, as we call them in Portugal; while they are still tender and thin, they work them with some iron instruments, called Daos, and make them as thin and slender as they live. With these ligaments of reed they bind the pieces of the structure in such a way that, if the supports and pillars are of wood, it lasts twelve or fifteen years. Some princes and lords have also in their palaces some rooms (estancias) made of wood, the different sculptures and mouldings of the wood-work being gilt and painted (comaltadas) in various colours.

The Royal palaces are also constructed with the same arundinaecous materials; and they have massive wooden columns of such extraordinary length and straightness that one wonders there are trees so tall and so straight. The inside columns are entirely gilt, without any admixture of other materials. These places contain also some rooms made of odoriferous woods, such as white and red sandal-wood, wild or forest eagle-wood, so that in those apartments the sense of smell has its special delight, in the natural fragrance of those scented woods.

In the same palace there is a hall gilt from top to bottom, which they call the "Golden House", because it has a vine of the purest gold which occupies the whole roof of the hall, with a hundred and odd combalengas of the same pure gold. These combalengas are in breadth and shaped like big pumpkins (calabagas) of the kind we call Guinea pumpkins, and they say that each one of them weights ten bissas (viss), or forty pounds Spanish. There are also in that very rich house seven idols of gold, each of the size and proportions of an average man; they are hollow within, but two inches (dados) thick. I could not ascertain the weight of each of these idols, on account of the various estimates given by those whom I questioned. Those idols are adorned on the forehead, breast, arms and waist with many fine precious stones, rubies, emeralds and sapphires, as also with some brilliant old Rock diamonds, of more than ordinary size. In the same golden hall stood eight pitchers (cantaros) of gold each four palms high, seven-inch circumference, and one inch thick. There were also nine dishes of the same metal, each three palms high thirteen inches in circumference, and one inch thick.

This grand and very rich hall contain still those equally ancient and most celebrated precious Chanequas of the Tangu, the prime cause, past, and

present, of so many wars and so much bloodshed on the part of various nations, such as the Siammes, the Pegus, Tangus, Bramas, Avvas, Sions, (Siones), and now at present the Mogos and Mogars. This unique treasure is contained in a casket of gold, two palms long and proportionately broad, the whole of it is covered with very artistic and boughs, flowers and birds, and within this tracery are encased very fine diamonds, rubies and pearls of extraordinary greatness. This admirable casket stands in the centre of the hall on a square table of gold, three palms long; this table too is elaborately engraved, and set with many rich gems. To stimulate the more human cupidity, it is covered with a cloth of white satin, entirely embroidered with gold and pearls of ordinary size. I freely confess that, albeit I had seen in other parts of the East many things of great price and value, yet, when they opened the casket for me, and I beheld the chanequas, I stood amazed, especially on seeing that I could scarcely fix my eyes on them, due to the rutilant splendour they cast. These Chanequas are two rubies shaped like an obelisk and pyramid, of the length (altura) of the small finger, and the bottom of each has the circumference of a small hen's egg. These most precious jewels are used only at the coronation of the Mogo Kings, or in their greatest solemnities. The word chanequa means the same as a pendant, or ear-ring, an article worn at the ears both by the Mogos, and the Pegus and Bramas; for this purpose, they pierce their ears when young, and put in them something heavy, which keeps stretching and enlarging them until they reach almost the shoulders.

In one of the inner courts of that palace there is also a statue of the King Braka, Tyrant of the Empire of Pegu, who was slain by a Pegu lord called Xemi' Decatam, whom he had ordered to be killed. While quartering at a small country-house (villa town), in some houses belonging to a Verela, or Ido temple, with four thousand Bramas, this Brama King was waiting for the rest of his army, which he had ordered to collect, with the intention of marching against a prince who had revolted in Martavan. Now, one night, Xemi Decatam with six hundred Pegus fell unexpectedly on him at the houses of the Vaakto. Luck would have it that they found the Tyrant busy in a closet, for he was suffering at the time from a flux of the belly, and they killed him. The Burmas hold him for a Saint, and as such they dedicated a temple to him, because he had so greatly aggrandised and exalted their nation, and, to perpetuate his memory forever, they resolved to make an image of him. So, they made a bronze figure and seated on a table, also of metal and around him are sundry monsters in bronze of surprising size. The most wonderful are four giants of both sexs, each sixteen palms high and holding maces in their hands: a monstrous brood. With them there is another monster of the same material, half elephant, half bull, eleven palms high, another horrid-looking object. Still other animals, also of bronze from port of that cortage; but as they are one of ordinary shape and size.

The statues of the four Giants were, they say, adorned with many precious stones, and in the places where they were encased there are still the traces of them. That statue is venerated by many of those Gentiles, who come to see it, and out of devotion anoint it with sandal and fragrant oils. And when

people are afflicted with diarrhoea, they came to him as to their advocate against that infirmity, bringing vases full of water, they bathe him, and the water which flows out, after passing through his body, is collected and given to drink to those who suffer from the illness.✞

At a small distance from that Royal Palace, there is a lake, the water of which is dammed off, and they say it is more than thirty leagues long. The lake is divided into several arms, containing many islets, quite cool, and planted with fruit-bearing trees. The greater number of these islets (island) are inhabited by Raulins. Some of these live in Varelas, some of their Varlas being built like our Convents. Others live in private houses. I shall give a special account of them all, when I describe the warship of those nations. On that big lake there are many boats, but they do not communicate with the interrior of the city, as the pasage is dammed up.

Their ancient histories say that this lake was opened and begun when that Kingdom seperated and made itself independent from the Empire of Pegu, the purpose of it being this. In case they should be besieged, they would retire to the suburbs contiguous to the Lake, and, as a last resource, let the waters escape, and the violence of the onrush would be such that they would inundate the city and at the same time destroy the enemy. It is for this reason that they still keep these waters.

To go back to the thread of our history, I say that the city of Arracan must have, according to the common estimate, one hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants, exclusive of the foreign marchants, who are very numerous, as the place is a very important roadstead for vessels coming there from Bengala, Mussulapantan, Tanaussarim, Martavan, Achem, and Jacatara: there are, besides, other foreigners, both merchants and soldiers who are fixed there and in the King's pay, as I have said: these are Portuguese, Pegus, Bramas, and Mogos. In addition to these there are also many Christians, Japons, Bengalas, and of other nations.

The Kingdom of Arracan is limited on the south by the Kingdom of Pegu from which it is divided by the high mountains of the Pre: on the other side, it borders on the Kingdom of Bengals through the Kingdom of Chatigan, whence the coast-line runs up to the Kingdom of Chudube, and Cape Negrais. The whole of that coast is very wild; and, though it has some harbours and islets, yet these are very unsafe, owing to certain winds blowing there, which are dangerous to some vessels.

✞ The statues originally stood as guardians at Cambodia's Ankor Wat. They were among 30 statues taken by Thai in 1431 A.D. In 1564, the Myanmar King Bayin Naung won Ayutthia and carried the statues away to Bago. According to the Rakhine history, King Minrazagyi of Mrauk-U conquered Bago in 1599 A.D. and carried away to his capital of Mrauk-U not only the treasures including these statues from Ayutthia, but also his rival King's daughter and a white elephant. In 1784 Bodawpara's forces took back the surviving statues to Amrapura.

Notes

Arracan = The city of Mrauk-U was founded in 1430 A.D.But generally the term is used for the whole state of Rakhine.

Maumetans = Muslims, a form of Mahometans or Mahammedans

Basars = Bazaar

Balons = a small Rakhine boat

Chanequas = Kyauk-nagats Minrazagyi (1593-1612 A.D.) of Rakhine attacked Nandabayin of Bago in 1599 in alliance with the Prince of Taungngu. Manrique says the Rakhine and Portugese sacked Taungngu after the fall of Bago, and brought away the Kyauk-nagats from Taungngu. But history disagrees with him about the raid of Taungngu.

Siammes = The Siamese, the people of Thailand

Pegus = The Peguans, the people of Pegu (Bago).

Tangus = The people of the Kingdom of Taungngu.

Bramas = The Burmen, Myanmars

Avas = The people of the Kingdom of Inwa.

Siones = The Shans

Maghs = The Rakhine people, (Arakanese)

Mogors = The subjects of the Moghul Emperor.

The Brama King = Tabinshwehti(1531-50 A.D.) of the Taungngu Dynasty, seized Bago in 1539, and made it his capital.

Xemi Decatam = Shmin Sawhtut, a Bago nobleman

Raulins = Phongyis, a Mohammedan term.

Jacatara = Batavia

Mogors = Muslim, Indians.

The Historical Sites in Mrauk-U

NORTHERN SIDE

The Shitthaung Pillar

The pillar is very well-known and is situated at the left hand side (northern) entrance of the Shitthaung Pagoda. It is said to have been brought from Vesali to Mrauk-U, and placed at this site by King Minbin, in 1535 A.D who reigned over Rakhine from 1513 to 1553 A.D. It had fallen during the bombardment in the second world war and has been re-erected in a cage near the same entrance. The pillar is square, rising to a height of 10 feet; each side is 2' 4" broad. Three sides are covered with inscriptions in Sanskrit; that facing the east is almost entirely defaced; the inscription on the north side is also badly damaged; the western face inscription is best preserved. The south side has not been inscribed. Dr. Johnston was the first to read the western face inscription fully. It was dated on palaeographic grounds as the beginning of the 8th century A.D. His readings reveal a list of kings who ruled in ancient Rakhine. Although the eastern side of pillar is now completely illegible it can be dated between 3rd century and 6th century A.D. It is considered to be the inscription of early Rakhine kingdoms, mostly Dhanyawaddy.

An Evidence of Early Buddhism

The inscription nearby is an octagonal red sandstone column, 8' 10" high above the ground. The circumference around the base measures 72" (9" to each side); towards the apex there is a band decoration consisting of an enclosed row of dots and a double lotus petal motif, with a major petal at each of the eight corners.

Close to the pillar lies a large stone slab, 12' long, 4' 2" broad and 10-12" thick. At the lower end, depicted in relief, is a wavy line suggestive of water, from which rises a right-voluted winged conch shell with a lotus growing from the aperture, the tip of the petals touching the outer edge of an ornately carved wheel symbolising dhammacakka (ဓမ္မစက္ကာ), (the Wheel of the Law) its outer rim enclosing a circle of dots, and the inner rim comprising a double lotus petal motif.

The design appears to be emblematic of Brahmanism (the conch), which produced Buddhism (the lotus flower), the *dhammacakka*.

On the other hand, the design suggests the fertility and prosperity (lotus) which arises from the waters (wave and conch) when the Cakravartin (စက္ကဝတေး:) Monarch (wheel) holds sway. The motif constantly appears in ancient Rakhine's art.

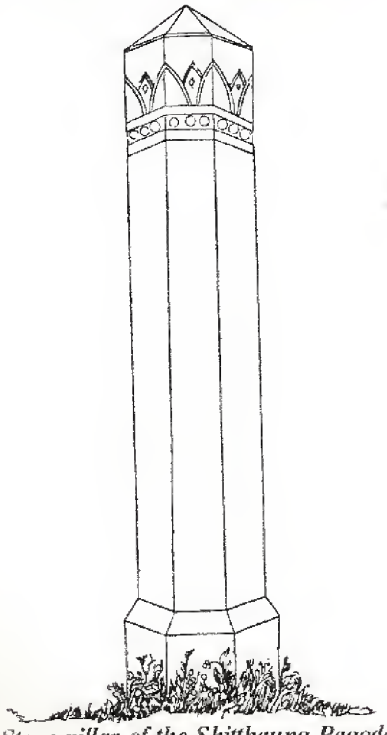
At the upper end of the wheel is a square hole sunk into the stone, 5" deep, 2' 4" long, and 2' 8" broad; next follows a circular, cup-like hole, 4" deep and 6" across the opening; the reverse

of the stone is only a rough-hewn surface. As the sides of the inscribed pillar also measure 2' 4", Dr.Forchhammer suggested that the stone slab, which must have been from 18-20' long, but is broken off above the cup-like hollow, was originally a lintal or architrave, the square hole capped the inscribed pillar forming the left-hand post of the entrance gate; the circular hollow received the revolving axis of a swinging door; that portion of the lintal which exhibits the *dhammacakka*, the lotus and conch, protruded over the north-side of the inscribed pillar to counterbalance the weight of the opposite part of the slab (now broken) which formed the actual lintal over the entrance, the octagonal pillar constituted the right-hand post of the entrance.

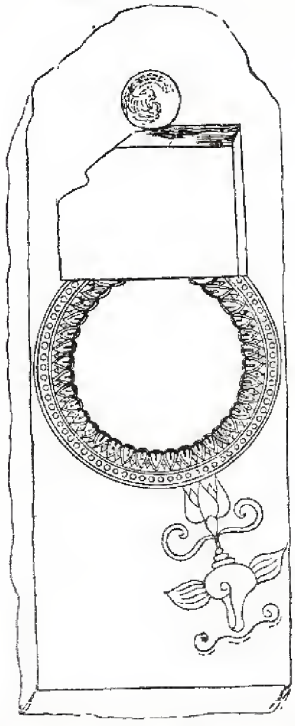
The construction of the gate forcibly calls to mind the "turning of the Wheel of the Law", the essential function of the Buddhist Cakravartin King, to whom was given the power to regulate the celestial and terrestrial forces in order to control the coming of the rains which would ensure the continuing prosperity of the Kingdom.

Hence, the cakra (စက္ကာ) of the lintal was depicted as merging into pillar, on which, as we shall see, the continuity of the *dhamma* of the Rakhine Cakravartin Kings was recorded.

The form of the pillar on the opposite side is also not without significance. In common with other pillars associated with Cakravartin Kingship, it is eight-sided, symbolising the eight directions of the macrocosmic country and the macrocosmic universe (see. "Asokan" pillars). The decoration around the upper portion is identical with that of the *dakkra* on the lintal, the lotus petal in each corner suggesting that the effect of the royal *dhamma* was to be felt in each of the eight corners. Its significance was still remembered in the 16th century, when King Minbin had it erected and built at his remarkable royal shrine, the Shitthaung Pagoda. But all were ruined during the second world war.



Stone pillar of the Shitthaung Pagoda



Stone Sculpture of the Shitthaung Pagoda

The Shitthaung Pagoda

About half a mile north of the palace-site is the Shitthaung Pagoda or the Shrine of 80,000 images. It stands on a promontory half way up to the west side of a hillock named Phokhaung Taung (ဖုံးခေါင်တောင်). The donor of the Shitthaung was Minbargyi, the most powerful king of the Mrauk-U Dynasty. According to the stone script-inscription he was also called as Minbin and reigned Rakhine from 1531 to 1553 A.D. The King built this remarkable Pagoda in 1535 A.D after the successful defence against the Portuguese attack on the City of Mrauk-U.

The pagoda had been built by one thousand architects and workmen for a year. The skill and art displayed in its construction and ornamentation are remarkable. Besides, we may observe here about the maze-like layout of this pagoda. In the accounts of this curious plan, some foreigners remarked that the Shitthaung

Views of the Shitthaung Pagoda

Pagoda was built alike a fortress. The real purpose of the pagoda was for prayer, some rituals of innitiation, and some of the King's ceremonies which were usually held secretly.

It was constructed six feet thick of solid sandstone and like "rock cave tunnel" (ဓာတုဂူဓင်). No mortar was used in the construction and stones were connected with stone brackets.

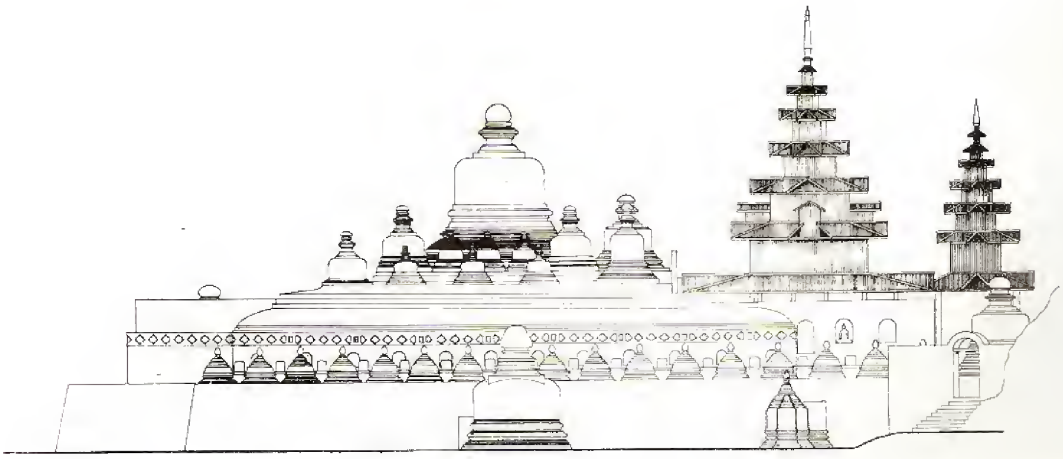
The first platform appears to contain two small pagodas all built of sandstone. They were said by tradition to have been built by the donor of the Shitthaung Pagoda, King Minbin. They were called *Nay Htwet Para* (Sun Arise Pagoda) and *Nay Win Para* (Sun Set Pagoda).

Nay-Htwet Para is octagonal; the sides are concave and the entrance faces the east. Another small pagoda is *Nay Win Para*, a stupa shape with a circular base. The King Minbin built these pagodas to show his dominion and autocracy.

The inner temple court east of the main shrine is occupied by a wooden pray r-hall which houses innumberable Buddha images. Before entering the main hall is a stone pillar with inscriptions in Rakhine characters. This pillar was brought from Mintayapyin(ဓင်းတရုပ်ပြင်). According to the inscription, the pillar was engraved by order of King Minrazargyi in 1593 A.D. In the upper pillar there is a sculpture of the King and his four ministers. Close to the inscribed pillar lies an image of King Minbin, the donor of this Shitthaung Pagoda.

Opposite the entrance is a main image of Buddha, seated on a throne with [*bumiphasa mudra*]. The image is 9 feet in height.

The central pagoda measures 160 feet long, 124 feet broad, and 86 feet high. On the north and south walls stand at regular intervals circular, turret-like pagodas. There are one bigger and fourteen smaller ones on the north and a bigger one and seventeen smaller ones on the south and were built of brick; between each turret a stone slab is erected into the wall. Both sides of the slab contain sculptures in bold relief; the side facing the inner temple usually represents an image of Buddha, the outer side an ogre, *naga* or mythical birds or beasts. One depicts a cobra with spreading hood



The Shitthaung Pagoda (southern side)

holding a lotus flower in its mouth. The shrine itself has a gallery all-round the structure and a dark passage which leads to the inner chambers. The outer wall contains at regular intervals arched passages; each holds two sitting life-size images of Buddha; they are placed back to back.

The inner wall consists of well-hewn blocks of stone cut over its whole length (312') into six tiers of figures. The corner was placed with large four central figures (မဏ္ဍိုင်လေးရုပ်), such as King Brahmans (ဗြဟ္မာ) of SE corner, Thaagur-min (သိကြားမင်း) surrounded by his four queens of NE corner, *Satu-Lokapala* (စတုလောကပါလ) of NW corner, the donor, King Minbin surrounded by ministers and queens of SW corner.

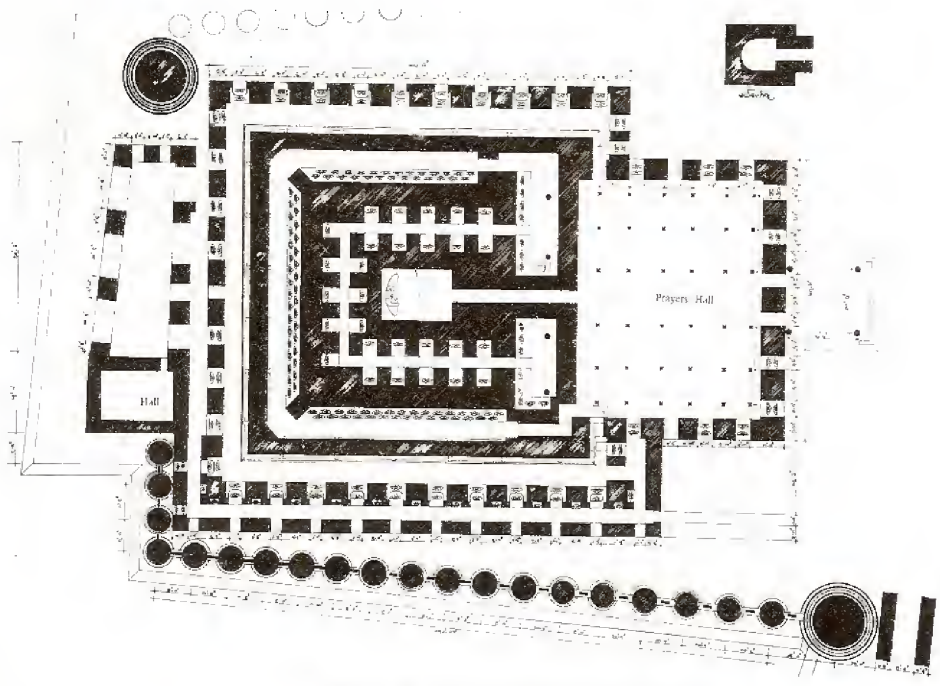
The lowest belt of the pagoda represents men in native (Rakhine) costume, manner and tradition, in the manners of wrestling, boxing, dancing, playing, and general merry-making.

The first, second, third, fourth, and fifth belts depict the 550 earlier lives of Buddha. There are over a thousand sculptures.

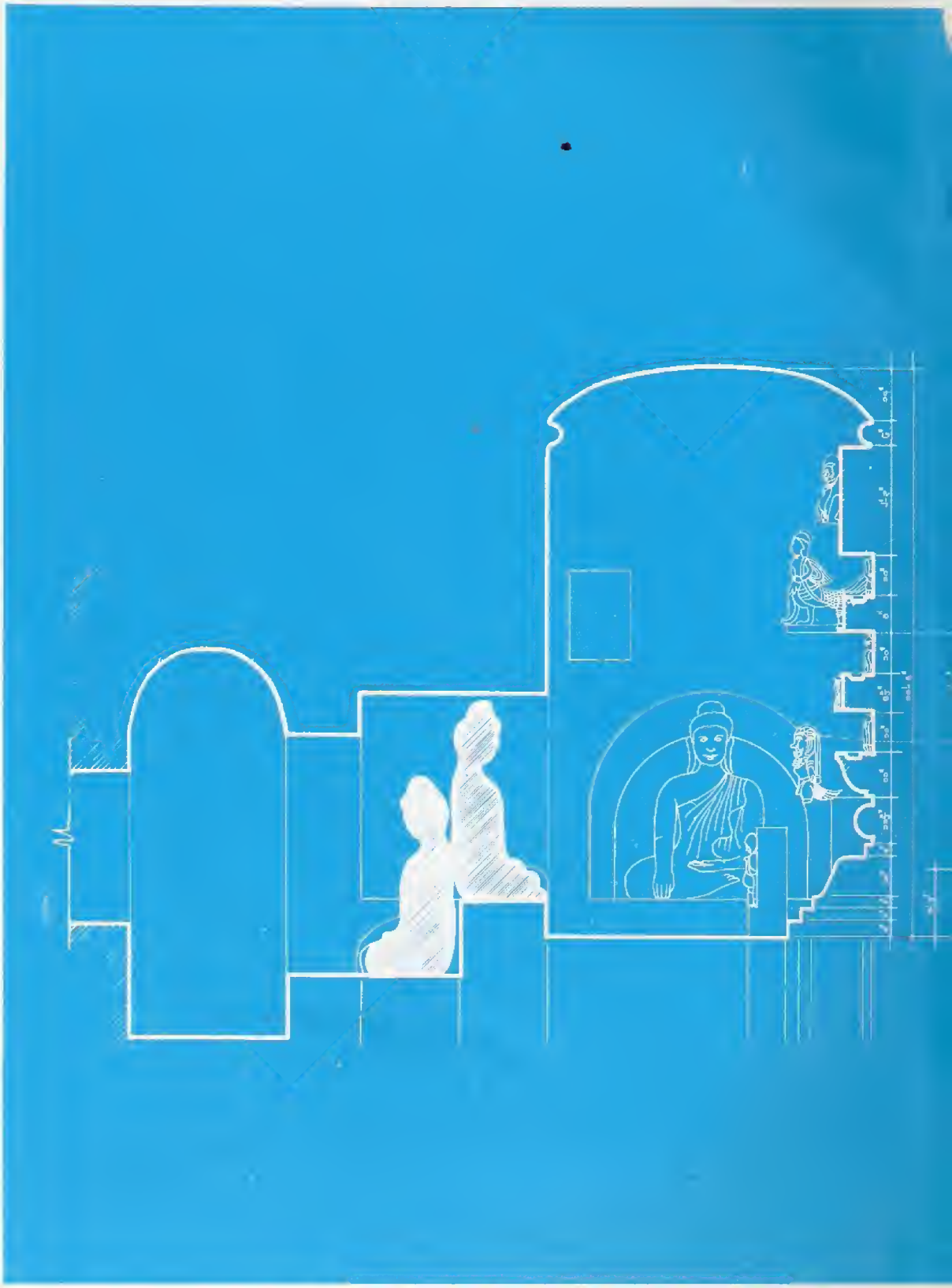
The topmost girdle shows human figures, male and female in praying attitude. From these inscribed sculptures one can learn something about old Rakhine musical instruments and traditional dances.

Along the gallery, each corner and each side was provided with both female and male figures of *Vasundhra* (ဝသုန္ဓရာတ်) like a *sima* slab(သိမ်တိုင်). Therefore, Shitthaung was also regarded as a *sima* (ordination hall).

Along the other two inner galleries are deposited hundreds of Buddha images of varying sizes. A sculpted Buddha's footprint is placed in the last passage. It is plain; there are no figure-prints on the sole of an upturned foot.



Plan of the Shitthaung Pagoda



Cross-section of the Shinthaung Pagoda

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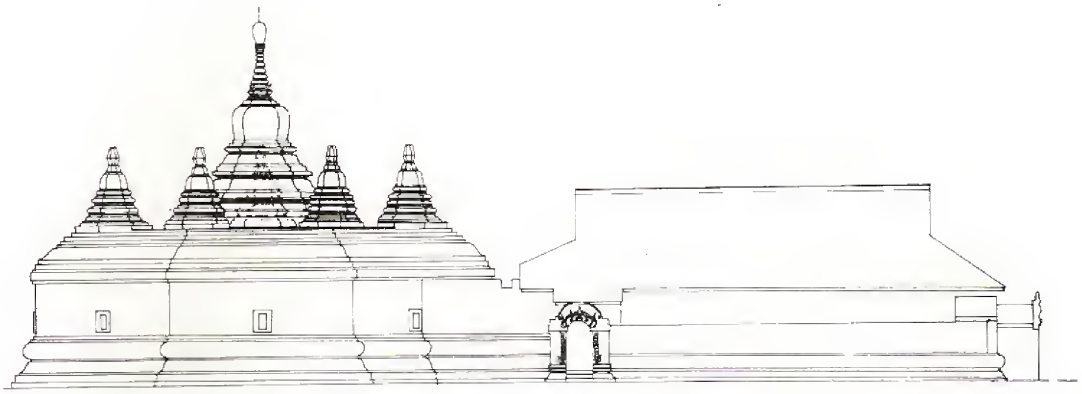
Views of the Shitthaung Pagoda

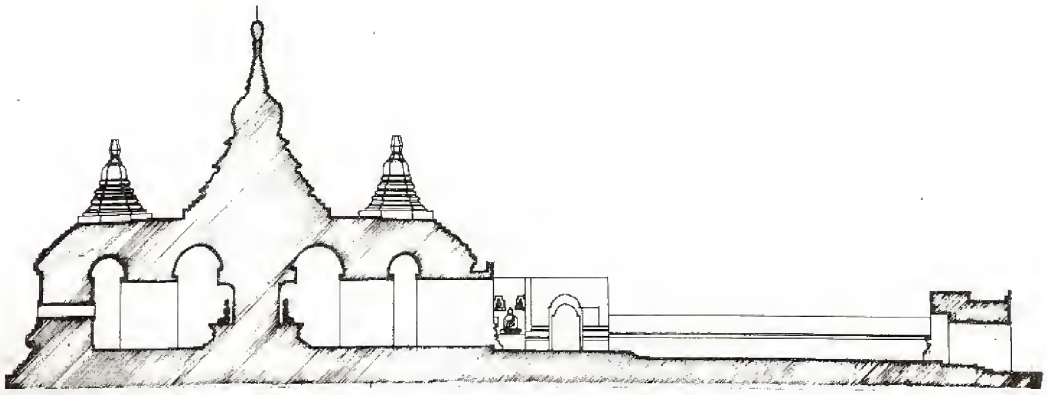
The Andaw Shrine



The Andaw Shrine (Southern Side)

The Andaw Shrine, in which is enshrined a tooth-relic of Buddha, stands at a distance of 86 feet to the north-east of the Shitthaung Pagoda. This shrine was originally built by Min Hla Raza in 1521 A.D. The King of Mrauk-U, Minrazagyi, rebuilt it in 1596 A.D. The central tower of the shrine contains the tooth-relic of Buddha, which is said to have been obtained from Sri Lanka by King Minbin (1534 - 1542 AD).

The shrine is an octagonal structure of pure sandstone, with two internal octangular concentric passages. Fifteen small circular pagodas, built of bricks stand on the platforms of south, north and west of the shrine. On the east, there is a prayer hall, which has an entrance each on the east, north, and south sides; a stone wall divides it from the outer court, which is also circumpassed by a wall. The east facade of the shrine measures



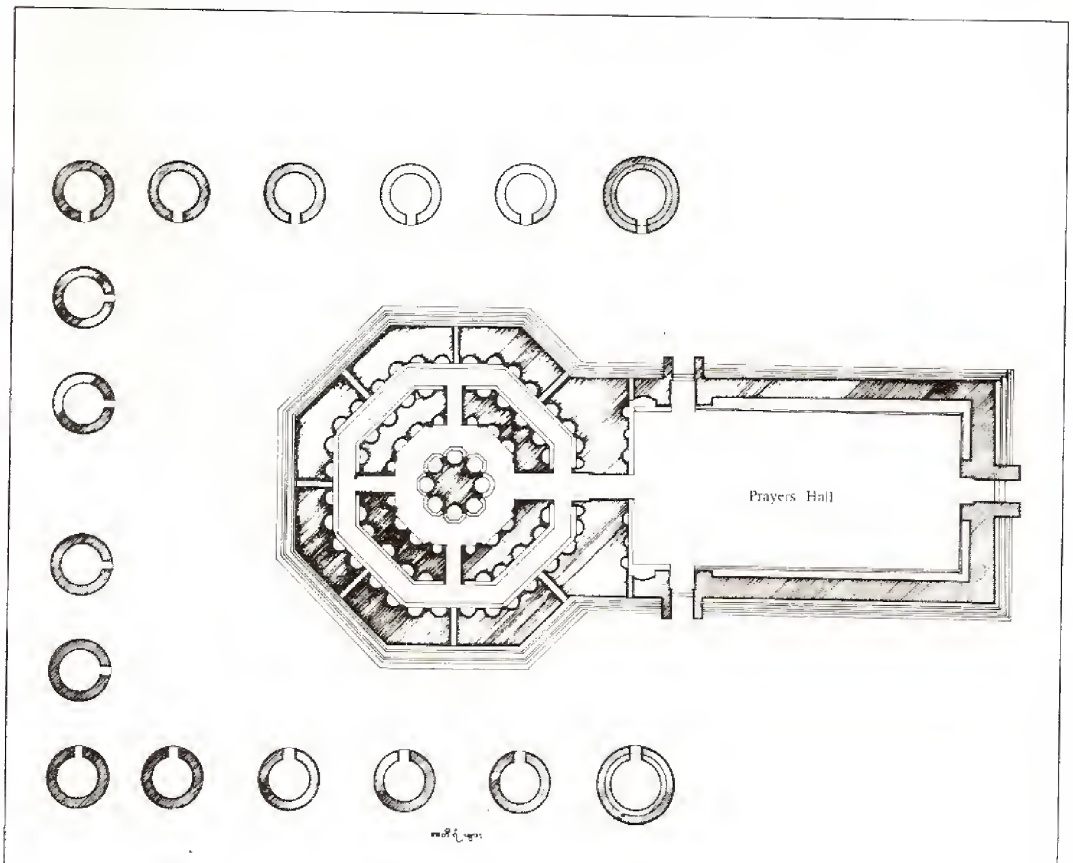
cross-section of the Andaw Shrine (from west east)

Views of the Andaw Shrine

31 feet from north to south and is only 14 feet high from the ground to the roof. On each side of the entrace are three niches which get into the wall, 6' high, 1' 2" deep, and 2' wide, and these contain stone images of Buddha. Passing through the vaulted passage a gallery opens on either side. Each is 3' 7" wide and 9' high. The gallery runs in an octagonal shape around the central chamber; each of the outer sides of the passage measures 20' and each contains a row of four niches with a semicircular arch 2' above the ground, and a second row of smaller nishes at the height of 7', four to each side, and the niches hold stone images of Buddha.

From the inner side of the gallery a vaulted passage leads from north, south, east, and west to the inner chamber, which is also octagonal in shape. At the centre stands an eight-cornered stone pillar 40' in circumference. It supports the roof. Like the Shitthaung Pagoda, the Andaw is constructed throughout with stone blocks. No light nor air can penetrate into the shrine except through the front entrance. The roof is about ten feet thick. Over each of the eight corners of the shrine stands a smaller pagoda. At the centre, there stands a large pagoda.

Andaw Shrine stands on a small square-shaped hillock. The hillock, including shrine and pagoda, measures 228 feet from east to west and 145 feet from north to south and 42 feet in height from ground to top.



Plan of the Andaw Shrine

The Ratanabon Pagoda

Forty feet to the north of the outer wall of the Andaw Shrine stands the enclosure of the Ratanabon Pagoda. The pagoda was built by Minkhamaung and his chief queen Shin Htway in BE. 974 (A.D. 1612). The main edifice is circular at the base, measures 365 in circumference, and is constructed of huge blocks of sandstone; it rises in a number of concentric tiers, of which the upper portion recedes from the one lying beneath it, to a height of about 200 feet. The uppermost portion has fallen down. During the second world war, the Ratanabon Pagoda was hit by a bomb, and a half of the main structure was damaged.

There are no entrances, niches, arches, nor ornamentation of any kind, not even an image could be found. At a distance of eight feet from the central stupa rises a brick wall 4' high and 2' thick, which encompasses the pagoda in circle; then follows a row of 24 small circular pagodas built of brick. They are now all in ruin. This pagoda resembles a huge bell. The whole structure is enclosed by an octagonal wall 8-10' thick, with an entrance at the south. Each of the four corners of the outer pagoda walls is protected by a lion made of sandstone.

The temple court is in ruin. The building is impressive by its massiveness. Its architecture pattern resembles an ordinary pagoda, like Kaung-Mu-Daw (Sagaing in Myanmar) and Sanchi in India. But the barreness of decorative designs and the absence of structural ornamentations characterizes it as peculiarly Rakhine.

Traditionally it is believed that the pagoda was built for the purpose of acquiring or securing treasures, both mundane and spiritual. (*Ratana* means "treasure", "*bon*" means to gather, to accumulate.)

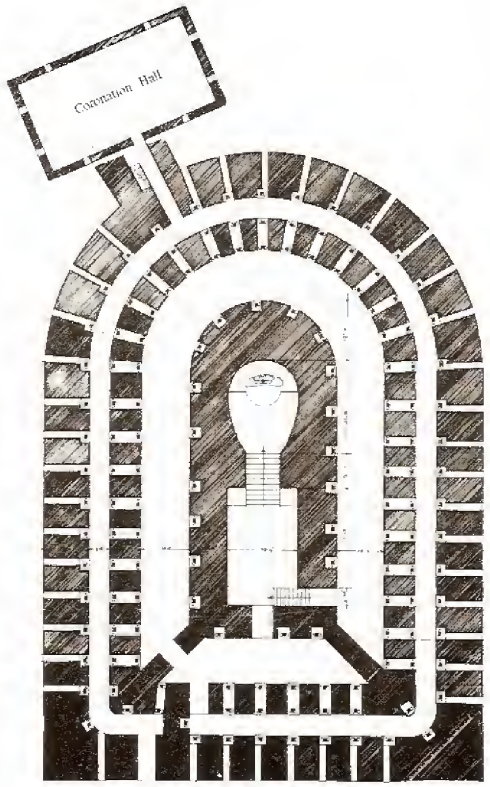
The Dukkhanthein Pagoda

About 350 feet to the west of Ratanabon Pagoda, 300 feet to the north-west of the entrance to the Shitthaung Pagoda is the Dukkhanthein Pagoda. The temple stands on a hill, 30 feet high, having a flat surface like that of a drum. The pagoda was built by King Minphalaung in 1571 A.D.

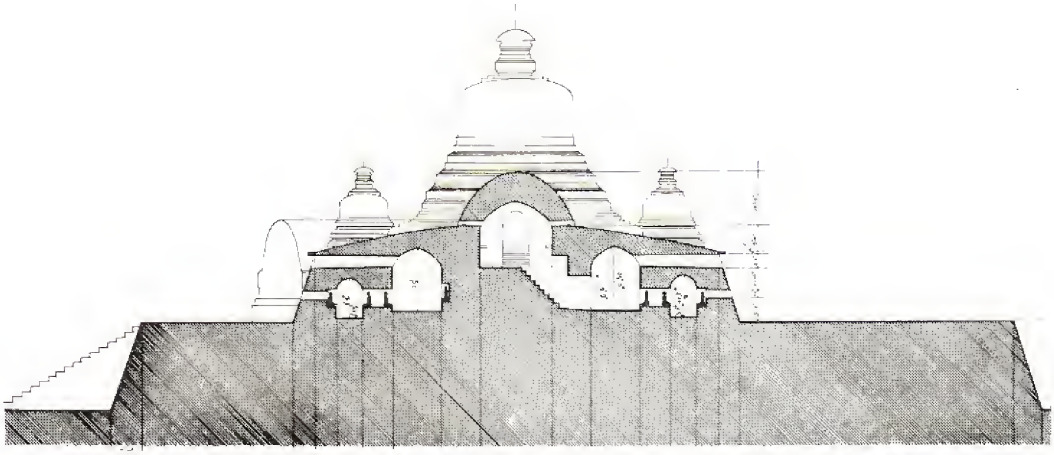
Like the Shitthaung and the Andaw shrines, Dukkhanthein was built of hewn sandstones and layers of bricks over the roof. It measures 190 feet from north to south and 200 feet from east to west. It is reached by stone stairways, 8' broad, situated on the east and south. These stairways measuring 106 feet are built of massive stone walls on the north, east and south. The west one which is slightly convex, is connected to an oblong chamber.

The pagoda entrance on the east side, closer to the south-east corner, leads to a long vaulted passage which spirals up in two tiers till it reaches the central chamber. The superstructure, a bell-shaped dome on receding terraces, is similar to

the one on Shitthaung, but here a tall square arch is provided on the east side to admit light into the central chamber. At each corner of the basement stands a small stupa. The inner chambers and passages of the temple are constructed with wellfitting and cemented stones. The pagoda is well-known for the stone sculptures in the vaulted passages, especially the figures of seated ladies, with different styles of coiffure, in the manner of offering lotus buds to the Buddha. Traditionaly it is said that there are sixty-four kinds of hair-style and all the figures are of the wives of noblemen. Besides, on both sides of the entire passage, niches of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet broad, 1 foot deep, and 2 feet high are dug at regular intervals of 20 feet in the wall and each contains a stone image of the Buddha in sitting posture. There are one hundred and forty-six niches along the passage.



Plan of the Dukkhanthein Pagoda



Cross-section of the Dukkhanthein Pagoda

The Ratanabon Pagoda

The Dukkhanthein Pagoda

The Laymyetnha Pagoda

About a distance of 150 feet to the north-west of the Dukkhanthein Pagoda is the Laymyetnha Pagoda or "the four-facaded pagoda". It was built by King Minsawmon, the first king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, in 1430 A.D. It is one of the five pagodas built at the beginning of the establishment of the city (မြို့တည်စေတီငါးဆူ). It is a square structure, with a long protruding portal towards each cardinal point. The interior room is octagonal. In the centre of the latter there is an octahedral column intended to support the circular tower erected over the centre of the roof. Over each of the four corners of the terrace a smaller circular stupa was built, the whole structure is enclosed by a wall, thereby leaving a spacious platform. Each side of the square of the shrine measures 55'; the portals are 13' broad and protrude 17' into the platform.

The central tower is circular and has the shape of a dome, with a circumference of 80 feet at the base and is 70 feet high.

It is constructed of sandstone and appears to be massive. The small stupa is built of brick, 8' high and 30' circumference at the base. This is bell-shaped.

Each side of the chamber contains twenty-eight niches, each holding an image of Buddha in sitting posture.

The Myatanzaung Pagodas

To the north of Laymyetnha Pagoda at a distance of 500 feet are Myatanzaung Pagodas. There are two pagodas named Eastern Myatanzaung and Western Myatanzaung. These pagodas are situated on a hillock, 40 feet high. The main structures of these pagodas are constructed of blocks of pure sandstone. But turrets, staircases and walls were built of bricks.

Minsawmon, the King of Mrauk-U Dynasty, erected these pagodas in 1430 A.D. These two are of the same type, measuring 120 feet in circumference, and 50 feet high.

The Mokseiktaw Pagoda

To the north of Myatanzaung and at a distance of 300 feet is the Mokseiktaw Pagoda. It stands on a hillock which rises to 100 feet. The pagoda was erected by King Minsawmon in 1430 A.D.

According to the chronicles, Mokseiktaw is also one of the five city-settlement pagodas in the new city of Mrauk-U.

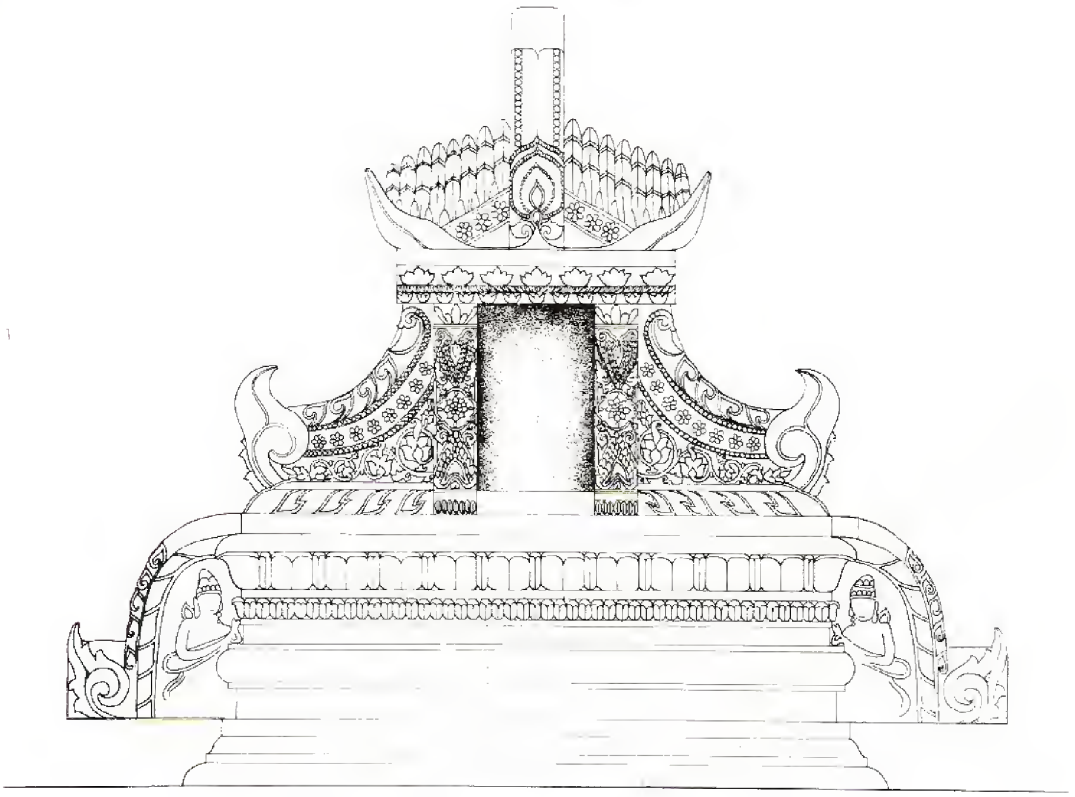
There are two terraces on this hillock. A Pitakataik (Library) is situated on the lower terrace. The library is built of pure sandstone. Most of the monasteries and pagodas of Mrauk-U especially the large teaching monasteries and the pagodas donated by the kings, usually had a library attached to them. The height of the main pagoda is 50 feet above ground and 100 feet in circumference at the base. The central pagoda is circular and has a bell-shape. A small turret stands on each of the four corners. On the eastern side of the pagoda there is an image of a foot-print of the Buddha, 34 inches long, on a large stone. The foot-print is plain and the sole of foot-print shows no marks nor any lineaments by which chiromancy could interpret.

The Laungbanpyauk Pagoda

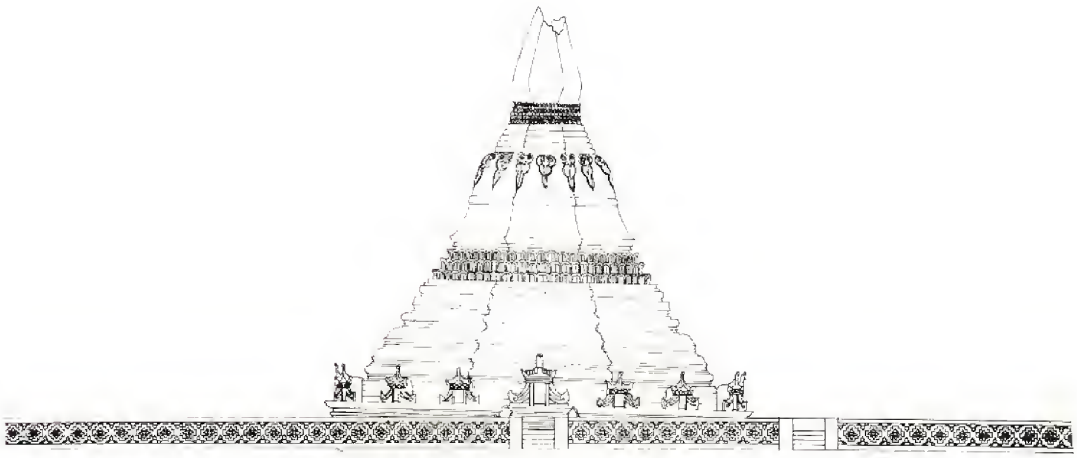
The Laungbanpyauk Pagoda stands at a distance of 500 feet to the Mokseiktaw. The pagoda was built by Minkhaungraza in 1525 A.D. It is surrounded by two walls. The outer surface of the inner wall is decorated with fine designs and is formed by stones projecting an inch out of the wall; at the centre of each is a rosette, containing eight coloured clay tablets of red, yellow, blue, and green alternately, with a white centre. The diameter of the ornament is 1' 8".

An opening in the east and one from the west lead to a platform raised about 6 feet above the level of surrounding ground. The massive stone pagoda at the centre is an octagonal pyramid; each side meassures at the base 33 feet and rises in ever-receding tiers to a height of about 120 feet (at present only 75 feet remains.). There is no *hti* at the top.

On the first tier, at the middle of each of the eight sides, originally stood a porch consisting of two square pillars forming the sides of the porch. Each niche contains an image of the Buddha. The outer surface of the appendage displays an exquisite pattern of carving in stone. The design is so fine and outstanding that it has been recorded in detail by well-known architects.



Facade of the Laungbanpyauk Pagoda



The Laungbanpyauk Pagoda

The Htuparyon Pagoda

About 300 feet to the north of Laungbanpyauk Pagoda stands the Htuparyon Pagoda. According to the local records, Htuparyon was erected by King Minranaung, the sixth king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, in 1494 A.D. In the year of 1613 A.D the King Minkhamaung and his chief queen, Shin Htway rebuilt this pagoda. The pagoda is built of stone blocks and the base is octagonal. The spacious temple court is surrounded by a wall which is in disrepair. Each of the four corners of the pagoda walls is guarded by the figure of a lion having two bodies and a head. Among the natives it is called man-lion or *manotethiha*. The walls are thought to be the walls of a square *sima* or of the ordination hall for Buddhist monks.

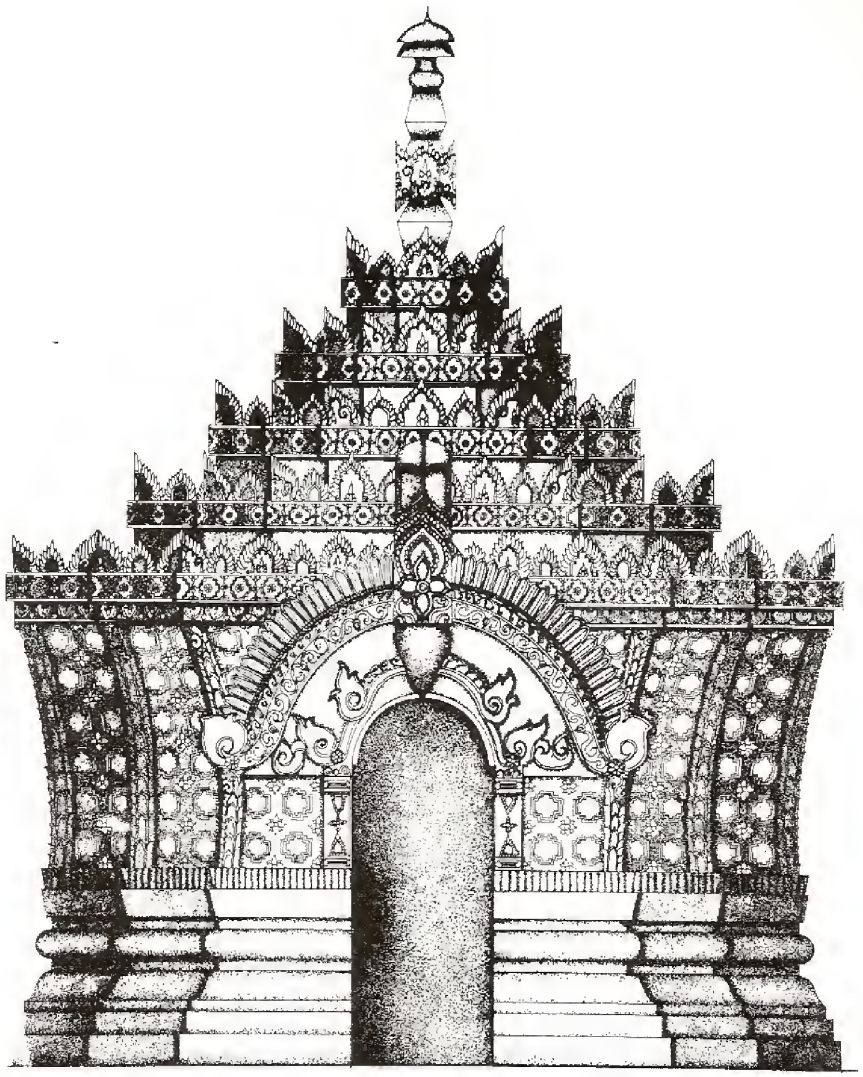
At present, the pagoda is in ruin, and neglected. But, in the golden days of Mrauk-U the Htuparyon Pagoda was a wellknown site for pilgramage. Most of the kings in Mrauk-U Dynasty came to pay respects to this pagoda soon after their coronations. Traditionally, it was believed by the kings that the site was "The Land of Victory and Prosperity", and was very highly venerated.

The Tharapavata Pagoda

One hundred and fifty feet from the south-west of Htuparyon Pagoda, and very close to the north of Mokseiktaw Pagoda, is Tharapavata hillock, 150 feet high. The pagoda stands on this hill. A wall surrounds the pagoda, 134 feet long and 84 feet broad. The pagoda is built of massive stones. It is about 21 feet high, 54 feet broad at each of the four-sides of the base. The first tier contains the sculptures of lions, elephants and deer.

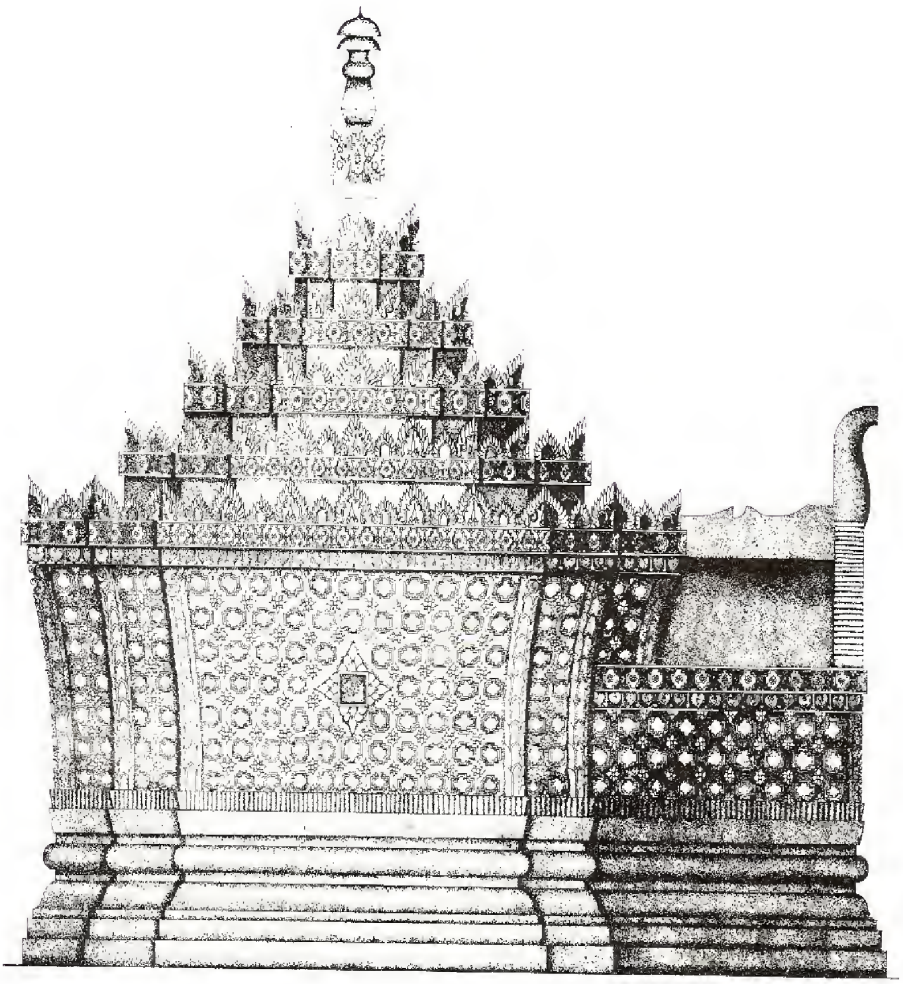
The ruins of *sima* are found on the east side of the pagoda. A small standing Buddha made of stone, 5 feet high, is found on the ruined square *sima*.

The platform is scattered here and there with the ruins of pagodas, images, damaged pedestals, pillars and many other pieces. A few years ago, a standing image was found unexpectedly on the platform of the pagoda. An inscription in Sanskrit was found on the pedestal of the image. The script was dated, on palaeographic grounds, to be between 4th and 8th centuries, A.D.



The Pitakataik

About one hundred yards to the north-east of Htuparyon Pagoda is the Pitakataik or the Library. It was donated by the King Minphalaung in 1591 A.D. The building had been used as a depository for the Buddhist scriptures and it measures 14 feet from the east to west, and 10 feet from north to south and 9 feet high. It is built entirely of stone. This Pitakataik is also known as Shinkite Pitakataik, (*Shinkite* means mosquito-bite) and is one of the forty-eight libraries in Mrauk-U capital. The entrance is an arched passage which opens on the east. According to the Rakhine history, the Buddhist scriptures, the thirty sets of *Tipitaka*, which Narapatigyi (1638-1645 A.D) had received from Sri Lanka were deposited in this library.



One other interesting thing is the city wall which is situated at fifty feet to the north of Pitakataik. It is a brick wall about 4 feet high and 2 feet thick. It runs from south-east to north-west across the bottom of the valley between the base of the eastern and western hill ranges. A few feet to the north of this wall is the Panzemraung moat which runs parallel the wall. This site, the wall and the moat, had been used as the last defence during the times of wars and at one time was the camping-ground of Rakhine main army.

The facade of the Pitakataik (left)

Southern side of the Pitakataik (above)

The Pyisoegyi Pagoda

About 200 yards to the north of Pitakataik is Shinkite-wall. Close to the north stands another city-wall named Tharikonboung. Beyond it is the Panzemraung, a moat which stretches in a bowline from the north-west of the town to the north-east. On the opposite side, it is lined by two ranges of the hills, leaving a flat valley half a mile broad, filled with water throughout the year.

Further east, along the ridge about a few hundred yards away is the Pyisoegyi Pagoda. An old Pitakataik stands near the pagoda. This Pitakataik is similar to the Shinkite Pitakataik. It is also decorated with fine sculptures. The pagoda and the pitakataik were donated by a *Pyisoegyi*. The Rakhine royal term *Pyisoegyi* is equivalent in rank to a prime minister of the present time.

A few hundred yards towards the end of the eastern range is Minthamitaga (or) Princess watergate. The Watergate was made of solid stone. It measures 9 feet high, 30 feet long and 10 feet broad.

Close to the south side of Minthami gate was once a swimming pool in which, in former times, the princesses spent the evenings gaily in their gilded royal boats.

The pool was also used as a moat. In war time, if it was necessary, the water gate could be opened quickly and filled the dry moat of the Tharikonboung with water.

To the north of the Pyisoegyi Pagoda and the Minthami water-gate is Minthagyikon. It is a little hillock, measuring 70 feet high, 200 feet wide and 170 feet long. In former times this site was used as a special ground for the crown prince. Nearby, to the south are Yehla moat and Yehla fortress which is said to be an ancient type of security arrangement.

The Anoma Pagoda

The Anoma Pagoda stands at a distance of 100 yards to the south of Pitakataik. Princess Anowzaw, daughter of King Salingathu (1494-1501 A.D), built this pagoda in the lovely valley in 1501 A.D. Today, the pagoda is badly ruined. According to the records, the base and the first four tiers are octagonal; the next four are square and the topmost is circular. The circumference of the pagoda at the base measures 160 feet, and it is devoid of any ornamentation.

Only a Buddhist image, made of stone, and 9 feet high, remains. It is seated on a pedestal which is ornamented with numerous sculptures depicting scenes from the *Jatakas* (mostly animals figures), each scene for each *Jataka*.

A few yards to the south-west of Anoma Pagoda stands the Shwekyathein Pagoda. This pagoda is built of sandstone. On its upper terrace there are some very fine ornamentations consisting of lotus-flowers.

The Minpaung Pagoda

The Minpaung Pagoda is situated on a small ridge fifty feet to the south of Anoma Pagoda. It is also called *Alai-seti* (central pagoda). It was built by Min-khamaung and his chief queen Shin Htway in 1640 A.D. The pagoda is enclosed in walls decorated with figures of dragons. At present, the pagoda has a height of 40 feet and 290 feet in circumference at the base. A passage leading to the central chamber is vaulted and curved, 7 feet long and 6 feet wide.

The Mahabodhi Shwegu

To the south of the Alaiseti Pagoda at a distance of 300 feet and to the south east of the Laungbanpyauk at a distance of 400 feet, is the Mahabodhi Shwegu Pagoda. It is, like the Ratanabōn Pagoda, bell-shaped and octagonal from the base to the top. Each side measures at the base $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet, (106 feet in circumference)

and rises in ever-receding tiers to a height of about 30 feet. It is constructed with blocks of sandstone. An arched passage opens towards the east. Along the walls of inner side of the passages are decorated with stone sculptures depicting the 550 *Jatakas* of Buddha's life. These sculptures are like the mirrors of Rakhine's culture. The chamber contains an image of Buddha made of stone 6 feet high. Numerous stone sculptures (figures) around the pedestal are modelled in pure Rahkhine style.

The Ratanasanraway Pagoda

This pagoda is situated on the second range of Nattaung Hill. A few yards to the south of Mahabodhi Shwegu is the wall of the precinct of Ratanasanraway Pagoda. The pagoda was donated and built by King Basawphyu, the third king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, in 1459 A.D. The wall measures 112 feet long, 88 feet broad and has a staircase and an entrance in the west. The pagoda is now in ruin. The upper portion of the main pagoda is circular, measuring 130 feet in circumference and 28 feet in height today. There is an entrance, an arched passage, on the east-side of the pagoda. The chamber contains a seated Buddha image, 7 feet high. The pedestal is an octagonal structure of sandstone and was built of eight stages. Each stage is ornamented with numerous designs.

The Ratanamhankin Pagoda

The Ratanamhankin Pagoda stands on the third range of the same hill, Nattaung, about one hundred yards away to the south of the Ratanasanraway.

The Ratanamhankin was also erected by the King Basawphyu in 1468 A.D, a year after the donation and erection of the Ratanasanraway.

The pagoda is walled on three sides, north, south and west, with pure stones. The wall measures 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. Each side, except the eastern side, has a staircase. In the eastern side Nattaung itself stands as a natural walling.

The pagoda was built entirely of sandstone. The dome was ruined. Today only 20 feet of it remains standing and it has a base of 80 feet in circumference. To enter the chamber there is a cave passage on the eastern side. The cave is decorated with very fine sculptures, such as birds, ogre, lotus and griffin.

But most of the sculptures are now broken and the platform is covered here and there with the ruins of broken images, sculptures, damaged pedestals, pillars, etc. In the middle of all these ruins, in the central sectum there lies a large image of seated Buddha in stone, 9 feet high.

The Ratanathinkha Pagoda

The Ratanathinkha Pagoda is situated on top of a small hillock named Galontaung (*Galon*-bird Mountain) at a distance of one hundred yards to the south of the Ratanamhankin. Hence, the pagoda is also called Galontaung Pagoda. The pagoda was erected together with a stone pillar in 1581 A.D by Prince Mingyinyo.

He was a grandson of King Minbin, one of the most powerful kings in the Mrauk-U Dynasty. According to the inscription on the stone pillar of this pagoda, Mingyinyo's father was King Mintikha who reigned in Rakhine residing in the Mrauk-U Palace, from 1553 to 1555 A.D. The pagoda was constructed with sandstone. Eight turrets and small pagodas in bricks surround the central pagoda.

The Ratanamanaung Pagoda

The Ratanamanaung Pagoda stands about a few yards away to the east of Ratanathinkha. The pagoda was donated by the King Candathudhammaraza in 1652 A.D. It is a solid stone structure, octagonal from the base to the top, and measures 344 feet in circumference at the base and

180 feet high. There are no niches, porches, opening, nor decorative designs on the main body of the structure. In the north-west corner of the enclosure is a *sima*, 54 feet long, 13 feet broad, and 10 feet high. The roof is vaulted and made of stone, but partly in ruins. There are a few other small shrines on the platform, but they are completely ruined.

The field to the east of the Ratanamanaung was called *Laykhinpyin* (လေးခင်းပြင်), meaning the archery ground. It had once been a training ground for the Rakhine soldier-archers. Along the southern boundary of the Laykhinpyin is the Ahiwankan moat (အိုင်ဝန်းကန်ကျုံး) or lake. The lake was man-made and built with earthern embankments. The fresh water in this moat had been used in the coronations of the kings of Mrauk-U Dynasty.

A few distance to the south of Ratanamanaung, facing the Ahiwankan moat, is the Zonedat Hill (ဇုန္ဒတ်တောင်). The hill is about 150 feet high. It was so important a closed fortress for the palace that the king had appointed a chief commander to guard it.

The Mingalamanaung Pagoda

A mile to the north of the palace-site, half a mile to the north-west of the Pitakataik is the Mingalamanaung Pagoda. The pagoda was erected by Narapatigyi in the years between 1638 and 1645 A.D. Other sources ascribe the pagoda as being built by the King Oakkabala (ဥက္ကာဗလ) in 1685 A.D before he died. The pagoda is an octagonal solid stone spire, without porches, niches, or ornamental works. The pagoda is very similar in shape to the Tezarama Pagoda. The ground of the pagoda is scattered with ruins of pagodas. On the south side of the stupa are four stone slabs one side of which is covered with Rakhine inscriptions. One of them is completely damaged, scripts on the other three are legible. According to the inscriptions, these were set up by King Candavizaya, the 34th king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, in the years between 1720 and 1722 A.D. In the inscription, the King described himeself as" the great-great-grandson of Narapatigyi who erected the Mingalamanaung Pagoda."

The Nan-Oo Image

The Nan-Oo image stands at a distance of 100 yards to the south-east of the Mingalamanaung Pagoda. It is 7 feet and 7 inches high and is a stone image. There are numerous stone sculptures around the pedestal. The image was donated by Natshinmai the chief queen of Thirithudhammaraza (1622-1638 A.D). The platform is scattered with ruined sculptures. Some of the broken sculptures are collected at the north of the entrance.

About 150 yards to the south-west of the Nan-Oo image is an interesting city-walling which is said to be an ancient type of security arrangement. It stretches about one thousand feet in length from east to west. The wall was built with blocks of sandstone and was connected to two small ranges. The wall also served as a protective barrier for the area between the two small ranges and was provided with artillery. This guarded the city against possible attacks from the northern side. An old stone-tower and a stone-gate are still in good condition in this walling.

The Tapantaing Palace-site

On a small hillock, about 400 yards to the south-east of the Nan-Oo image, is the Tapantaing Palace site. It stands in the plain of the eastern hill range which levels off into a broad platform. The court is paved with fine coloured clay tablets.

In former times this site was used as a special recreational ground for princesses and ladies. Along the eastern base of the hill are numerous broken bricks and traces of buildings and other vestiges indicating that the site had been an important area at one time.

The Laymyetnha Pagoda

The Laungbanpyauk Pagoda

The Shinkite Pitakataik

The Ratanamanaung Pagoda

EASTERN SIDE

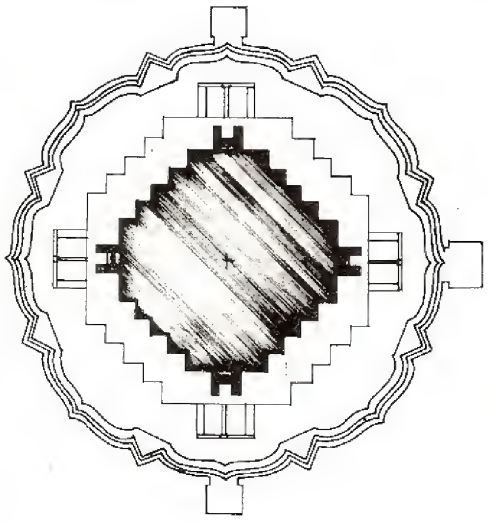
The Sakyamanaung Pagoda

The Sakyamanaung is situated a half mile north-east of the palace-site, some distance away to the south of the Ratanamanaung Pagoda.

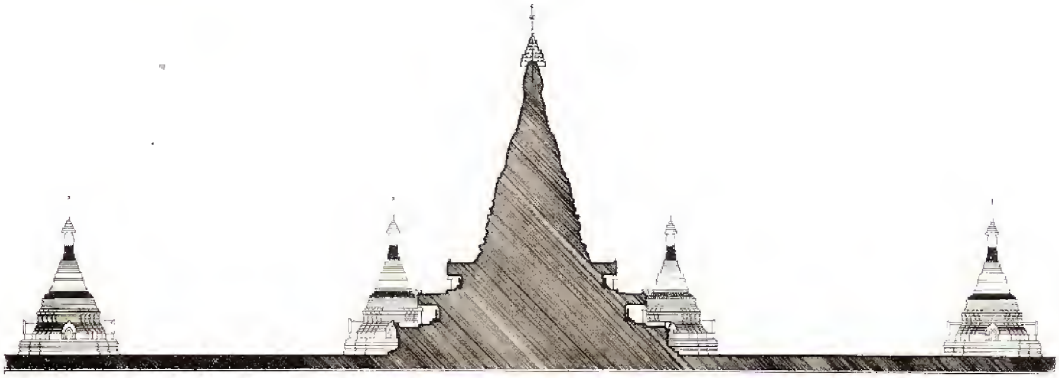
The pagoda was built in 1629 A.D by the King Thirithudhammaraza who reigned in Mrauk-U in the years between 1622 and 1638 A.D.

The plan of the base of the pagoda is peculiar. The base consists of eight braces joined to form an irregular octagon, and the braces forming the side on the four cardinal points are wider than the intermediate ones.

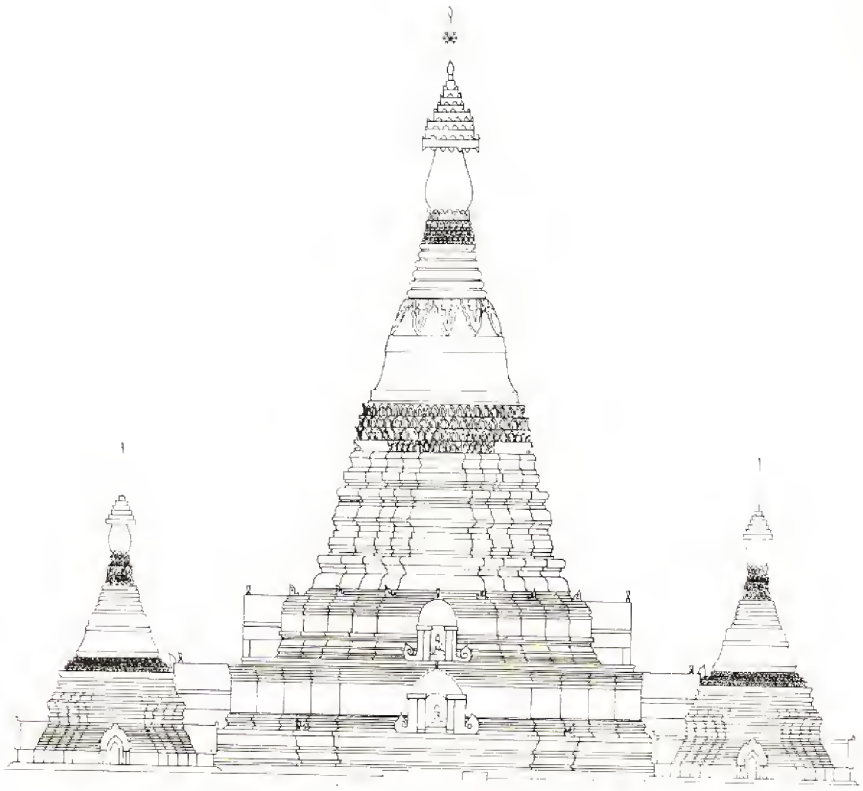
From the first tier upward the structure is octagonal; the sides over the four main braces form a straight line, and those over



Plan of the Sakyamanaung Pagoda



Cross-section of the Sakyamanaung Pagoda



The Sakyamanaung Pagoda (northern side)

the intermediate braces assume a zigzag design.

After the ninth tier the shape of the spire becomes circular and continues to be so up to the top.

On each side of the second and third tier stands a niche, (or rather a porch) containing a sitting image of Buddha.

The facade of the porch contains ornamental designs similar to those found at the Laungbanpyauk Pagoda.

The circumference of the pagoda at the base is 280 feet and the whole structure is a solid stone work throughout.

The pagoda is still in a fairly good state of preservation. It is 114 feet high.

The enclosing stone wall is of simple construction and it has an opening in the east and west side.

The western gate is guarded by two huge giants in kneeling posture. Twelve turrets were built in the platform which surrounded the pagoda.

The giant in kneeling posture

The Wuntinattaung

This is the oldest historical site in Mrauk-U. It is situated on a hill to the south of the Sakyamanaung Pagoda, at a distance of 400 yards to the east of the palace site. This hill is called Wuntinattaung by the natives. There are sculptures which are all ruined. The platform is strewn with damaged stones which at one time formed the parts of an ancient *Nat* shrine.

According to the local records the shrine is related to the King Paiphyu, the son of Candadevi, who was chief queen in the era of Vesali (4th to 8th century A.D). He had built a palace on Gyettharetaung in Mrauk-U in 776 A.D. A few stone images and two inscriptions were found on the palace ground and these are exhibited in the Mrauk-U Museum. An inscription which was partly defaced and a record were found there. The script describes the repairing of the shrine. According to the script, the shrine was repaired by the King Minraza in the year Sakkaraj 883 M.E. (1521 A.D). This inscription is one of the stone-scripts written in old Rakhine language. Another inscription is more interesting. It was found on Wuntinattaung Hill. The script and the general character of the inscription are remarkable in that it resembles the Pali inscriptions found at Sriksetra and which belonged to the 6th or 7th century A.D.

The Wuntinattaung inscription, therefore, serves as an important cultural link between Sriksetra and northern Rakhine, Mrauk-U.

Then, there are some stone images; they are almost entirely damaged and most are defaced. One image shows Buddha sitting cross-legged, with the right hand on the right knee, the left resting on the lap, wearing long earings. Behind the head is a circular nimbus, backed by rings of aureole. This pattern stretches to the side of the body, in the manner of some Mahamuni sculptures of the 5th century A.D. Thus, it is considered quite possible that the Wuntinattaung in Mrauk-U had flourished in the eras between the 5th and the 9th century A.D like other ancient Rakhine cities such as Vesali and Dhanyawaddy .

The Winmana Paddy-store-house

About 400 yards to the east of Wuntinattaung is the Winmana paddy-store-house. It was one of the forty paddy-houses in Mrauk-U inner-city and had been the strongest and biggest among them. This paddy-house was built with blocks of stone and was surrounded by walls and moats. A water-gate was constructed in the north.

The Neikbuzar Pagodas

Close to the east of the Winmana paddy-house is a small range named the Neikbuzar Hill. There are three pagodas on the hill. The southern pagoda is called the Auk-Neikbuzar (lowerNeikbuzar). It is bell-shaped. The prayer court contains a seated image of Buddha, 10 feet high. Two other images of *nats* belonging to the Vesali period, 4th to 8th century A.D, were situated in this court. It is possible that the Wuntinattaung and the Neikbuzar were simultaneously influenced by Vesali civilization. Climbing towards the range one can reach another pagoda called Ahlai Neikbuza (middle Neikbuzar Pagoda) (အလယ်တုရုး)which is in ruins.

The another one called PanmaNeikbuza (main Neikbuzar Pagoda) is situated on

the top of the same hill. All Neikbuza Pagodas were built in 1527 A.D by the King Min Saw Oo. A few steps to east of the main Neikbuzar Pagoda lies another group of the pagodas called Paranyinaung (brother pagodas) (ဘုရားညီနောင်). There are altogether eight pagodas which are of different types.

Close to the east of these pagodas is Miparagyigu (cave of chief queen), on top of a small hillock. In the main chamber of this cave, there is a sitting stone image of Buddha, about 10 feet high. The image was donated by the Queen Sawthandar, a chief queen of the King Mintaikkha, in 1553 A.D.

The Paraoke Pagoda

About half a mile to the east of palace-site, 200 yards to the south-east of the lower Neikbuzar Pagoda, is the Paraoke Pagoda. It stands on a small hillock about 50 feet high.

The Paraoke Pagoda was erected by the King Minphalaung in 1571 A.D. The King was troubled by a disturbance in the whole of the country after he had built the Dukkhanthein Pagoda. Thus, on the advice of his seers and astrologers he donated this pagoda in order to prevent the disintegration of the union. He named this pagoda, "Paraoke", (*Oke* means to hold or control the whole country).

The uppermost portion of the pagoda has fallen down now. There remains only the lowest tire. The main pagoda is circular at the base, and is constructed of stone. Around the outer side, there are twenty-nine niches each holding a sitting image of Buddha. The entrance, an arched passage, opens towards the east and connects the chamber which contains a seated stone image of Buddha, 12 feet and 5 inches high on a lotus throne.

There were a few old iron melting factories in the vicinity of the Paraoke Pagoda Hill.

The Minkhaungshwetu Pagoda

Close to the southern base of the Paraoak Pagoda Hill about two hundred yards away is the Minkhaungshwetu Pagoda. The pagoda is decorated with various fine sculptures. The erection of this pagoda is ascribed to Natshinmae, a chief queen of King Thirithudhammaraza, in 1629 A.D. According to the local records, the pagoda was built at the same time when Sakyamanaung was built by the King Thirithudhammaraza.

The Pisei Pagoda

Half a mile to the north-east of Minkaungshwetu is the four sided Pisei Pagoda. It is situated on a small hillock of about 150 feet high. The pagoda has four porches in the west, east, north and the south sides. Each porch contains an image of Buddha made of sandstone, Mrauk-U style. The entrance of each side leads to an inner vaulted passage. In the centre stands a stone pillar which supports the roof and an image of Buddha above it. The style of the image belongs to the early Laymro period. Traditionally the shrine is said to have been built in 1123 A.D by the King Kawliya (ကော်လိယ), a king of Parein Dynasty. The pagoda contains a relic of Buddha. The pagoda was repaired by the kings of Mrauk-U Dynasty. The pagoda was constructed entirely of stones and has been greatly revered by Buddhists.

The Mingalamanaung Pagoda

The Sakyamanaung Pagoda

The Koethaung Pagoda

To the north of the Pisei Hill at a distance of 400 yards is the Koethaung Pagoda. The pagoda stands on a plain and is surrounded by paddy-fields. The upper tiers of the pagoda had disappeared. The remaining lowest tier is about 30 feet high including earth foundation.

The Koethaung Pagoda was built in 1553 A.D by the King Mintaikkha who was the son of the King Minbin, the donor of the great Shitthaung Pagoda. The word *Koethaung* means ninety-thousand and thus the temple is supposed to contain ninety-thousand Buddhas that is the pagoda of 90,000 Buddhas.

The pagoda is the biggest in size among the pagodas in Mrauk-U. It measures 230 feet from east to west and 250 feet from north to south. The Koethaung Pagoda is very similar to Shitthaung Pagoda, which his father had donated. They are of the same type from the historical and archaeological view points. This tradition of donation of religious buildings by royal families came down from the royal ancestores.

The pagoda was constructed of massive stone walls and terraces. The small one hundred and eight pagodas, all made of sandstone, were built on the terraces. The entrance to the pagoda on the east side leads to a long vaulted passage which spirals round the tiers until it reaches the central chamber. The construction of the Koethaung Pagoda resembles a rock cave tunnel" . The main tower above the pagoda is octagonal in shape. But the old sculptures are thought to have been buried under the ruins in almost impenetrable thicket. It is believed that there

Stone sculptures of Buddha, Koethaung Pagoda

may be treasures of sculptures, artworks and even valuable jewelleries buried underneath the ruins. The platform is scattered here and there with vestiges of pagodas, images and many other such paraphernalia.

There was a current prophecy (အတိတ်တဘောင်) for the donor of this pagoda which foretold that he would die six months after his coronation. Thus, on the advice of his advisers and so as to fulfill a part of *yattara* (ယတြာ) the King moved his palace to a new site and built a temporary palace (ယာယီနန်း) near the eastern side of the pagoda-hill.

The legend says that the pagoda was demolished and hit by a thunderbolt because the King Mintaikkha, built the Koethaung Pagoda (ninety thousand images) which exceeded in number to the images of his father (King Minbin's) Shitthaung Pagoda (eighty thousand images).It was unlikely. Really, the Pagoda, Koethaung was built in six months time by the advice of his astrologers. In building this pagoda, the workmen used both bricks and stones. Other pagodas were mostly built of pure sandstone which had been carried from the Rakhine-coasts. The six month's time was not long enough to collect the required number of blocks of stone. As a consequence, Koethaung was inferior in quality in materials as well as in workmanship compared to Shitthaung Pagoda.

The Udawsaykan

Four hundred yards to the north-east of the Koethaung Pagoda is Udawsaykan (royal head-washing tank). It is a large tank, 200 yards from north to south, 100 yards from east to west. Traditionally, the kings of Mrauk-U Dynasty celebrated their head-washing *mingala* in this reservoir. Before the ceremony, the King usually stayed in a small temporary palace which was erected in the western bank of the Udawsaykan tank. The tank, the natives say, supplies fresh water and always maintains the same level of water throughout the year.

An old Keddah (ဆင်ကျူး) is situated on the west side of the Udawsaykan. It was an elephant training camp and also was the camping-ground for the main Rakhine elephant-army (ဆင်တပ်).

The Myinmoenan

Close to the eastern side of the tank about two hundred yards away is the Mrauk Myinmoenan (မြောက်မြင်းမိုရ်နန်း) northern high palace. The ground is level and on it were constructed embankments, tanks, moats and buildings. Previously, an ordination·hall stood on the eastern side of the building, all had now been destroyed. Numerous broken bricks and other vestiges remains indicating that the side had once been an important religious ground.

The ground seems to have been a temple at one time, probably an assembly hall for the priests. There were forty heads of the priests in Mrauk-U. They had the temporal powers over the monks and the citizens. They held a meeting yearly and gave decisions on all the religious affairs. Besides, they taught and advised the king how to rule his country.

Kyaunglaidon Fortress

About two miles to the east, and north-east of palace-site, a half mile to the

east of the Mrauk Myinmoenan, is a fortress named Kyaunglaidon. It was built of stone on the eastern slope of the tiger-ridge (ကျားတောင်တန်း).

The tiger-ridge was used as one of the outer city walling and is situated on the east of the Mrauk-U City. The ridge runs from north to south. The tiger-ridge runs parallel to the Lemro River and its valley. Thus, the Kyaunglaidon is a very important fortress for the city. Close by to the south of the fort are a stream, Thinganadi, a paddy storage house and a water-gate all of which bearing the same name, Kyaunglaidon. Forts were built on these terrains and were provided with artillery. Now, six artillery firing holes, about 30 feet in length, remain in the fortress. These artillery could easily defend any enemy attacks from the eastern side of the Mrauk-U Capital.

The Taung Myinmoenan

To the south of the Mrauk Myinmoenan about a half mile away, and one and half mile to the east of the palace-site is the Taung Myinmoenan (တောင်မြင်းမိုရ်နန်း), southern high palace. It measures 600 feet from north to south and 550 feet from east to west. The ground plan is very similar to the Mrauk Myinmoenan. It can be seen on the aerial photo map and still is in a fairly good state of preservation. There are five islands, made of earthworks and bricks, within the wall. Each island is surrounded by a small moat about 100 feet wide. This tradition of the Myinmoenan is related to the Buddhist *Jatakas* and religion. In the Buddhist *Jatakas*, the Myinmoetaung is very wellknown and is mentioned as an extraordinarily high mountain which is surrounded by four great islands inhibited by human beings.

In the Rakhine tradition, Myinmoenan is associated with the royal ancestral-worship. In the Taung Myinmoenan, there is a small square shaped island, which stands in the centre of these four islands. A palace was built on the central island. The palace is called the "Golden House" because the whole of the hall was once gilded. The king and his chief queen stayed in this palace in times of ceremony.

All of the governors from provinces stayed on the islands alloted to them. They came here with the purpose of paying homage to the king. They came to the "Golden House" in a small gilt golden boat. They drunk sacred water in the presence of the king to show their loyalty and bowed and touched the feet of the king one by one.

This is a very interesting and lovely tradition. It was closely connected to the Rakhine monarchy and had served as an important function.

In fact, the kings in the Mrauk-U Dynasty especially those kings reigning in the period between 15th and 16th century, were powerful emperors whose authorities extended to the whole western strip from Chittagone to Martaban. There were several provinces which fell under the Rakhine rules and these included the lands beyond the seas. As a demostration to his people of his power it was a part of the ceremony that the governors of all the important provinces should come to pay him respect, as if they were tributary kings, for the King of Mrark-U styled himself as the Emperor (ဧကရဇ်).

The Hlaingsaya Training Camp

South to the Taung Myinmoenan there is not any pagoda at all. There are only plains, walls and moats and several pools and tanks. Beyond the tripled walled, fortress there is a very wellknown tank, named *Hlaingsaya* (လှိုင်းစရာ). The term *Hlaingsaya* implies some relationship with the military affair. At the base of the eastern hill range and around the tank there was once a camping-ground of training camp of the Rakhine auxiliary army.

The Santikan Mosque

A few hundred yards to the west of the Hlaingsaya tank, two and a half miles east-south-east of the palace-site, in the outer city, is a non-Buddhistic building. It is a Mohammedan mosque, called Santikan, built by the muslim followers of the King Minsawmon who had returned from the country of Sultan in 1429 A.D. The mosque court measures 65 feet from north to south and 82 feet from east to west; the shrine is a rectangular structure measuring 33 feet by 47 feet.

The Mintayapyin

Close by to the west of the Santikan mosque is the Mintayapyin (the field of the king). It is a paddy-field which was used by the kings for the ceremony of *ploughing mingala* (လယ်ထွန်မင်္ဂလာ). This practice came down from the reign of Minhti, (1283-1389 A.D) who was a king of the Launggret Dynasty. This tradition was an important function for the kings of Mrauk-U Dynasty. It was a royal custom which had derived from the royal fore-fathers.

The Theingyishwegu

The Theingyishwegu is a well-known cave of the great nine-cave-temple in Mrauk-U. It is situated in a small hillock, 30 feet high, about one mile away to the south-east of the palace. At that site the King Minbin erected the Theingyishwegu *sima* (ordination hall) in 1532 A.D.

The whole hillock was made a *sima'*, and huge stone pillars were erected around it to mark the boundary of the *sima*. It is considered the most attractive *sima* in Mrauk-U. At present, the huge *sima* pillars and other vestiges remain standing, indicating that the site had once been a land of religious sanctuary. The upper portion of the cave is damaged; only a 12 feet high stone image of Buddha remains.

The Nyimadaw Pagoda

A few yards south of the Theingyishwegu up a small hill stands the Nyimadaw Pagoda. It was built by a princess Sawthuba (စောသုဘ), a daughter of the King Sinpyushin (ဆင်ဖြူရှင်) (1482-1492 A.D). The sculptures around the *palin* (throne) are decorated with very attractive designs. Among them a familiar design is a man playing a harp. The donor, the Princess Sawthuba was the younger sister of Sawnanminpyu. The pagoda, donated by Sawthuba, was therefore, *Sawthubapara* or the Nyimadaw Pagoda. Just across the road to the west of the Sawthuba Pagoda stand the Ponnataung fortress and the Sinpyudaw water-gate.

SOUTHERN SIDE

The Shwetaung Pagoda

The Shwetaung Pagoda (Golden Hill Pagoda) stands on top of a small hill, 250 feet high. The hill is the highest one in the Mruak-U area. It can be seen even from a distance of 20 miles if viewed from out of the Kaladan River. The pagoda stands a half mile away to the south-east-east of the palace-site. The pagoda is a circular one from base to the top and is of common design. The building of the Shwetaung Pagoda was ascribed to King Minbin. It was built between the years 1531 A.D and 1553 A.D. It was repaired by later donors including kings and present inhabitants. During the first Anglo-Myanmar War, the Myanmar had built some earthern-fortifications, mounted guns on them and inflicted some losses upon the British forces. A few portions of these earthworks can be seen there still standing.

About four hundred yards to the south-west of the Shwetaung Pagoda is the Kalamyo Pagoda. It was built on a small ridge of Shwetaung by order of King Minbin. Close to the west of the Kalamyo Pagoda is the Sakkathila (တက္ကသီလာ) image, which is 7 feet high.

It was built in 1460 A.D by the King Basawpyu. A few steps to the south of the Sakkathila is the Minkhamaung temple. The donor of this pagoda was actually the King Minphalaung who reigned in the period 1571-1593 A.D . But the pagoda was repaired by the King Minkhamaung (1612-1622 A.D), the grandson of Minphalaung. The pagoda was decorated with arch-pediments and porches finely carved in high relief. Over each corner of the first tier stands a fine porch with some fine sculptures.

A few yards to the south of Minkhamaung temple is a city wall made of earth. It measures 20 feet high, 1250 feet long from east to west. The eastern part of the wall has a stone gate constructed with hewn stone blocks. It is 9 feet broad, 13 feet high and 28 feet long. The stone-gate was built by the Kyatkhat *Myosa*, the governor of the Kyatkhat province. So the gate was also called the Kyatkhat-takar. Beyond the wall is a large man-made lake, 75 acres wide, named Anomakan.

The lake stretches from north to south about a mile and a half. It was used as a moat at one time. Now, it supplies fresh water to the inhabitants of Mrauk-U.

A few hundred yards towards the eastern range and to the south-east of the stone-gate, are the Myataung fortress, and the Laythataung fortress. They are the biggest and the strongest among the fortresses in Mrauk-U.

Close by to the west of Anomakan is the another man-made lake, Letsekan, which is over one hundred acres wide. It has two stone gates, Shwepaukpin on the east, and Letsekan on the west.

The Wathaie Image

At the same distance about five hundred yards to the south of the palace site, to the north of the Letsekan Lake is the great image, Wathaie Para. It was made of a large single stone and is the largest image in Mrauk-U. It measures 13 feet in height, excluding the throne and 8 feet from knee to knee. The whole of the body was gilded by the donations of the villagers. This image was erected by the King Tazarta in 1515 A.D.

In 1531 A.D Minbin became the King of Mrauk-U. Before the King set out on a military operation to Bengal, because of the prophecy, he had taken good care of this image. The shrine which shelters the image was constructed entirely of stone and was mounted by a new *hti*. Today, the shrine is in ruin. The image is fairly well preserved by the donors.

The Pankonthein

The Pankonthein stands at the foot of the eastern Sandantaung hillock and four hundred yards away to the west of the Wathaie Shrine. A huge seated Buddha image, 11 feet high faces the entrance. There is a two-line inscription on the front of the seat of the image. This script is the oldest one found in Mrauk-U. The script is extremely important for the dating of the image and it belonged to the Laymyo period which extended to the period from 10th to 14th century A.D. At one time the image was situated on the top of the Sandantaung hillock and carried over to the present site from the old city of Launggret by Minhlaraza. It was originally called "Sutawpan Image" (ဆုတော်ပန်ဘုရား).

The Jinamanaung Pagoda

This pagoda stands on a low steep hillock named Panhteintaung (ပန်းထိန်တောင်), half a mile to the south of the palace, a few yards to the north-west of the Sakkathila Pagoda. It was donated by the King Candathudhammaraza in 1658 A.D. He was the 22nd king of the Mrauk-U Dynasty and reigned for twenty-two years from 1652 to 1674 A.D. He was one of the longest reigning kings in the Mrauk-U Dynasty. Another small pagoda was built close to the north of this pagoda on the same hill when he was crowned in 1652 A.D. But it was a very small pagoda. The King heard a current prophecy that the donation of the great King was not worth proclaiming "well done!" (ဘုရင်ကြီး၏ ကောင်းမှုဟာ သာဒု ဓနော်လောက်).

Therefore, on advice of his noblemen, the King built another great pagoda with stones and named it Jinamanaung. *Jina* stands for Buddha, *man* for devil, the King of Mara and *aung* for to overcome. Hence the name means the Buddha who overcame the devil.

The pagoda is a solid stone structure, octagonal from base to top, and measures 320 feet around the base and 120 feet in height. In the east is a porch, which leads to a chamber occupying the centre of the pagoda. There is seated a bronze image of Buddha in the chamber. The image made of bronze, was taken away by someone during the first Anglo-Myanmar War. There is another seated image in the chamber. The ceiling is vaulted. The facade of the porch exhibits some good carving in stone. Each of the eight corners of the pagoda is guarded by a double-bodied, single-headed lion. The lion is called by the natives ***manotethiha*** or man-lion. In the upper tier, each of the corners is guarded by a guinea pig (ပူးကောင်). This tradition was intimately related to some religious functions and was observed in several pagodas.

WESTERN SIDE

The Shwekyathein

To the west of the palace-site are also numerous pagodas, most of them in ruin; the terrain is intersceted by many small creeks. An old monastery named Lakkaukzi Kyaung is situated 400 yards away to the west of the palace-site. There are some ancient images and historical documents in this monastery.

To the west of this monastery is a stone gate named Mauktawtaga (မောက်တော်တံခါး), still in good condition. It measures 15 feet high, 9 feet broad and 15 feet long. Nearby, to the west of the gate was an old palace-site. It was situated on a platform, 4 feet high. The palace was built by the King Minsawmon (1430-32 A.D) in honour of a queen, named Mauktaw. So this gate was also called Mauktawtaga.

About 40 years later, a daughter was born to the King Basawphyu (1459-1482 A.D) on this palace - site and she was named Princess Sawshwekya. The princess donated in 1471 A.D a pagoda containing images and a *sima*. The *sima* deserves mention for its stone carvings on the facade of the pagoda. It is a small square structure of stone, measuring 18 feet from east to west and 15 feet from north to south. As the roof had fallen down, only 16 feet of the wall remains today. To the east there protrudes a porch, 15 feet long, 14 feet high, with an arched passage (14' long, 4' 2" wide, and 10' high) which leads to an image room, 13' by 10' 8". On the west side of the chamber is a large stone image of the Buddha, 8 feet and 8 inches, sitting cross-legged on a roughly-hewn stone altar. The facade of the porch is cut into ornamental designs; a pillar, so rare in Rakhine, was found here. On each side of the entrance there is a pillaster which stands out in bas-relief an inch high; the nature of the ornamental design above the ground structure is unfortunately no longer discernible.

The Lokamanaung Pagoda

About two hundred yards to the north-west of the Shwekyathein, one mile to the west of the palace-site is the Lokamanaung Pagoda. This pagoda was also built by Candathudhammaraza (1652-1674 A.D) in 1658 A.D. It stands on a flat ground. The shrine was constructed with stone blocks, well hewn and cemented. It is square at the base, each side measuring 74 feet; the first four tiers are also square; in the centre of each side of the tiers stands a porch containing an image of the Buddha. The sides of the porch are made of stone slabs; the architectural design is similar to that of the Laungbanpyauk Pagoda. There are

traces of ornamental designs on the face of the porches. Each corner of the lowest tier is guarded by a guinea pig.

On each corner of the first four tiers stands a small circular pagoda, solid and without niches. From the garbha upward the central spire is circular; the apex is crowned with an iron *hti* (umbrella) once gilded and still in good order. The east facade of the pagoda has a portal 20' high, protruding 2' from the main wall, a vaulted passage 4' 8" wide, 16' high, and 29' long leads to a chamber in the centre of the pagoda. It contains a stone image of the Buddha 12 feet high, sitting cross-legged on a stone alter. The ceiling is a hemispherical dome and the apex is 16 feet above ground.

In front of the entrance, a large prayer court has lately been donated by the present inhabitants of the Warzay quarter (ဝါးဈေးရပ်ကွက်).

The pagoda has a wall measuring 300 feet around the base and 100 feet high.

The pagoda court is spacious and shaded by trees. The pilgrims who came to visit the distant Vesali and Mahamuni Shrine used to stop and rest here. The old roads to Vesali and Mahamuni begins here. These roads are still known as the gold road and the silver road.

The Parabaw Pagoda

Across the Parabaw creek, there is a large and very interesting pagoda named Parabaw. It stands on the bank of a small tidal creek. The pagoda is situated 400 yards to the west of Lokamanaung, one mile to the west of the palace.

The pagoda was built in 1603 A.D by the King Minrazagyi, the most powerful king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, for the occasion of the birth of his new daughter, who was born at the same time in the same year. The princess was named Panthanda (coral flower) and she was declared the donor of this Parabaw Pagoda.

The pagoda was later repaired by the first Myanmar *myowon*, the mayor, of Mrauk-U in 1786 A.D. It was constructed with bricks; the base is square; the walls stand perpendicular to a height of 20 feet. There are four tiers one above the other. A circular dome-shaped garba and then a succession of twelve concentric bell-shaped rings gradually taper off until they reach to a point. A rusty iron *hti* (umbrella) rests on top of the pagoda which is 120 feet high. Each corner of the lowest tier is guarded by a lion.

At the north, east and south sides, there are protruding portals and there is also a passage with a pointed arch which leads to a central room. There is a throne built in the west wall of the chamber and on it is seated a large stone image of the Buddha, 12 feet and 3 inches high. This image of the Buddha is very similar in type to the Mahamuni. According to the native records the image was said to be salvaged from water, and hence the name "Parabaw", an image which was discovered out of water.

A number of small stone and wooden images are found around the central figure. In the pagoda court there stand a few small pagodas of modern design which had lately been built by the people of the nearby villages.

In front of the east entrance there is a cone, 15 feet high and 9 feet wide around the base. It was cut of a single block of stone. The ground is made up of a series of belts which girdle the cone-shaped stone. Each band is subdivided into a number of smaller fields containing bas-relief images of the Buddha in various

The Jinamanung Pagoda

F11 A

The Lokamanaung Pagoda

standing and sitting postures. The number 103, of these images, is considered to represent the Rakhine's traditional characteristics which amount to one hundred and three.

The Daingripet

The Daingripet, a former European settlement is situated on the other bank of the Aungdat creek. It is situated half a mile west of the palace-site and outside the city walls. This European quarter, Daingripet, had flourished in the period from the regime of King Minbin (1531-53 A.D) to King Thirithudhammaraza (1622-1638 A.D). The King Thirithudhammaraza had allowed Father Manrique to build a Christian church in Mrauk-U. The church stands on a land a few yards to the east side of the Daingri tank. The tank is rectangular and was built by the King Basawphyu (1459-1482 A.D). On the west side of the tank sits the remains of a huge image made of grey sandstone and is 10 feet high.

A smiling beauty at **Point** *beach, the mouth of the Kaladan River*

A Visit to the South-West of the City

To the south-west of the palace-site is the Myinwantaung about one hundred feet high. It runs from north to south and served as the natural fortification for about two miles up to the bank of Launggret creek. It is a very steep and narrow ridge. In many places especially the western side of the ridge, triple ramparts (သုရဲစခြေး) were built along the slope. This side of the city is a plain and is full of deep tidal creeks. No invading armies could have crossed them easily. A strong fortress called the Aungmingala was built on top of a hillock. The fort was made of huge sandstones and was provided with artillery.

There are also some several pagodas on top of the hillock along the ridge. Most of the pagodas had been ruined by the weather. Some of the pagodas are now being repaired by the townspeople.

The Laytankhar Pagoda

Close to the south of Aungmingala fortress is the Laytankhar Pagoda. It has a square-shaped chamber connected with a long vaulted passage. There are four seated images of the Buddha, each four feet high, facing the four directions, sitting back to back, at the centre of the chamber. There is an air hole in each direction except at the entrance on the east side.

The Mingalashwegu

A few yards to the south of the Laytankhar Pagoda is the Mingalashwegu Pagoda. It is situated on a small hillock. The pagoda is a bell-shaped soild stone structure, octagonal from the base to the garbha and is very similar in style to the Mahabodhishwegu. The pagoda was built in 818 A.D by the King Khittathin. The central tower contained a relic of the Buddha and a relic of the *Thitsa Bandawa Rahandar* (သစ္စာဗန္ဓဝရဟန္တာ).

There is an entrance on the east side and a vaulted passage which leads to the inner chamber. The chamber contains an image of seated Buddha placed on a pedestal. The image is 5 feet high and is made of stone. The main pagoda measures 80 feet in circumference and 60 feet in height.

The Koenawin Pagoda

To the east of Mingalashwegu is anothersmall hillock. The Koenawin Pagoda stands on this hill. It is a solid stone structure and has an octagonal shape. Each side of the eight directions has a porch containing an image of the Buddha. They are of different *mudras* (မုဒြာ). The pagoda was built by the King Khittathin in 818 A.D.

The Mahavizayayanthi Pagoda

Farther south along the ridge about half a mile away is the Thongyaiktasu Shrine (သုံးကျိပ်တစ်ဆူ) (thirty-one images). The shrine contains thirty-one stone images. It is situated on the eastern slope of a small ridge. This site is the only place with a good view over the green valley of Letsekan. The shrine was built in 1482 A.D.

Just across the road about five-minute walk to the south-east of the Thongyaiktasu Shrine is a pagoda named Mahavizaya-yanthi. The pagoda was erected in 1430 A.D by the King Minsawmon, the first king of the Mrauk-U Dynasty and the one who founded the city. His younger brother, Minkhaw repaired and worshipped this pagoda. Close by to the south of this pagoda is a monastery, which was donated by the King Minsawmon to a monk named Mahavizayayanthi who was the head of the priests at that time. The pagoda was also called by that name.

The pagoda is being repaired by the inhabitants of the town at the present time. It measures 80 feet around the base and 60 feet high. It is constructed with stone blocks, well-hewn and cemented. It is octagonal at the base. In the centre of each side of the tires stands a porch containing an image of the Buddha. These porches around the pagoda are decorated with fine archpediments. To the west of this pagoda is an old *sima (Thein)*. Its pillars remain standing about 4 feet high from the ground level. The upper portions of this *sima* are now in ruins.

Traditional records tell us that the two well-known Myanmar poets, Shin Maharahtathara (ရှင်မဟာရဋ္ဌသာရ) and Shin Tayzawthara, (ရှင်တေဇောသာရ) had stayed in this monastery for two years in 1486 to 1488A.D.

The Naretsa Pagoda (or) Rakhinetansaung Pagoda

On the right side of the entrance to Myothit village stands the Naretsa Pagoda. It is half a mile away to the south-west of the Royal Palace. Today, the original structure of the pagoda has fallen into ruins and can hardly be traced. The pagoda was built in 1471 A.D by Naretsa, a nobleman who governed the Naret prov-ince. Today an image of the Buddha, 7 feet 6 inches high and made of brown-stone stands in the shrine.

On one fine evening, a princess named Sawnanminphyu (စောနန်းမင်းဖြူ) or Thurakhine (သူရခိုင်) holding a bunch of flowers passed by and came to pay homage to this image. The Myanmar poet, Shin Tayzawthara (ရှင်တေဇောသာရ) suddenly found himself face to face with her. The poet was so stricken with her beauty that he began to write a *ratu* (ရတု) known as *Rakhinetazaung* in praises of the exquisite beauty of the Rakhine princess.

The Historical Sites in Launggret

Launggret and Parein once had been the capitals of the powerful Rakhine kingdoms but now most of the area had been eroded by the river. The sites of these capitals are at a distance some 30 minutes drive from Mrauk-U. Farther south on the left side along the road is Launggret. The last remaining part of the capital which had escaped from erosion is the Taungmawtaung Hill about 200 feet high. On top of this hill is a huge stone slab with some inscriptions on it. It inscribed the donations of the King Kawliya (1118-1123 A.D). It is the largest Myanmar inscription. It measures 30 feet wide and 25 feet high. Three-inches long script of it had fallen off.

The best time to visit the Taungmaw Hill is the early morning, before breakfast, thus avoiding the heat of the day. The view from the top is spectacular. The Lemro River sparkles like diamonds under the early sun. If the sky is clear, one can see distant lands in all directions. To the east one can see the vast rice-growing plains extending to the great Rakhine mountain range. The two images Laymyo type Parapaung and Taksa, stand near the Nangya Village to the south of Taungmaw Hill. Taksa image is 8 feet high and bears a one-line inscription which says that the image was donated by the King Minhti in 1330 A.D.

To the south of the hill is the Nandawgon (palace-site), a square enclosure once containing the royal residence and the city of Launggret. It had been a small town; the walls are 20 feet high, constructed of earth mixed with stone, half a mile long from north to south and nearly a thousand feet from east to west. Here and there are heaps of bricks and stones, probably indicating the site of ruined pagodas; the whole place is overgrown with dense, shrubby jungle. To the south of the enclosure are paddy-fields. There was an old site of the large image of the Buddha, 8' high and 6' from knee to knee. This image was donated by the King Nankyagyi (1273-1277 A.D). The image was also called Nankyapara. The King Narapatigyi repaired it again in 1640 A.D. Now the image was placed near the Mrauk-U-Minbya road to save it from the river erosion.

The Kadothein Shrine

The gem of the art of stone sculpture in Rakhine can be seen in the Kadothein, in the Launggret circle, ten miles due south of Launggret. Until about the year 1890 this shrine remained buried in the jungle. The shrine was discovered and repaired by the villagers of Kamaungdat.

Kadothein was built by the Candavizaya (1710-1731 A.D) in the year Sakkaraj 1085; two well excavated stone inscriptions

The Parabaw Pagoda

The Koenawin Pagoda

Facade of the Kadothein

in the pagoda court record the meritorious deed and the grant of land which he settled upon the adjoing monasteries for the support of the monks residing in them.

The inscriptions describe the boundaries of the paddy-lands so granted, and detail of the supernatural punishment called down upon those who might destroy the shrine, monasteries, and other property.

The Kadothein is constructed entirely with stone. It is square with corners, and a vaulted passage opens towards the east and leads to a chamber. The roof is a hemispherical cupola, the stone being laid in concentric courses as in the Shitthaung Pagoda.

The entire outer surface of the shrine is covered with ornamental designs. It was constructed on the same plan as the Shinkite Pitakataik in Mrauk-U.

The Pataw Pagoda

On the west bank of the Launggret creek, where the Mraungbway joins the latter, is the Pataw Village; two miles inland is a low hill range about 5 miles long running from north to south. In ancient times it was known as the Gandhapabbata. On the highest peak in the centre of the hill range stands a small pagoda named Ukundaw. A shrine said to contain the skull of a snake, in which form the would-be Buddha passed one of his former existences at this place. The pagoda is built of stone, square at the base and circular from the garbha upward. A small porch protrudes to the east.

Along the eastern base of the hill are numerous tanks, embankments, traces of building and other vestiges, indicating the site of a once important city known in Rakhine as Sigunmyo. It was built by King Gazapati, the ninth monarch of the Mrauk-U Dynasty, who ruled in the era between the years 1513-1515 A.D. At the foot of that portion of the hill range called Udukinzain, is a rock 11' long and 4' 2" high; the side facing the east is covered with Rakhine letters; the inscription is dated Sakkaraj 886 (1524 A.D).

The Art on the Rock

Two miles farther south of the base of the hill is lined with huge boulders of ferroginous sandstone. Ages ago, a river, or an ocean probably, had washed the foot of the hill. The boulders are, however, of great interest to the antiquarians; rugged figures were engraved on the surfaces of eight of them; the position of the rocks had evidently been selected with the object of giving proper sequences to the story which the figures cut upon them represented in a language which cannot be misinterpreted.

The plate shows the relative position of the stones and the rock-cut figures, the only ones of the kind as yet found in Rakhine.

This story is interpreted by the learned author of *The Antiquities of Arakan* as follows;

First stone: *on the side facing the north are rough outlines of a ship sailing due west towards the mountain.*

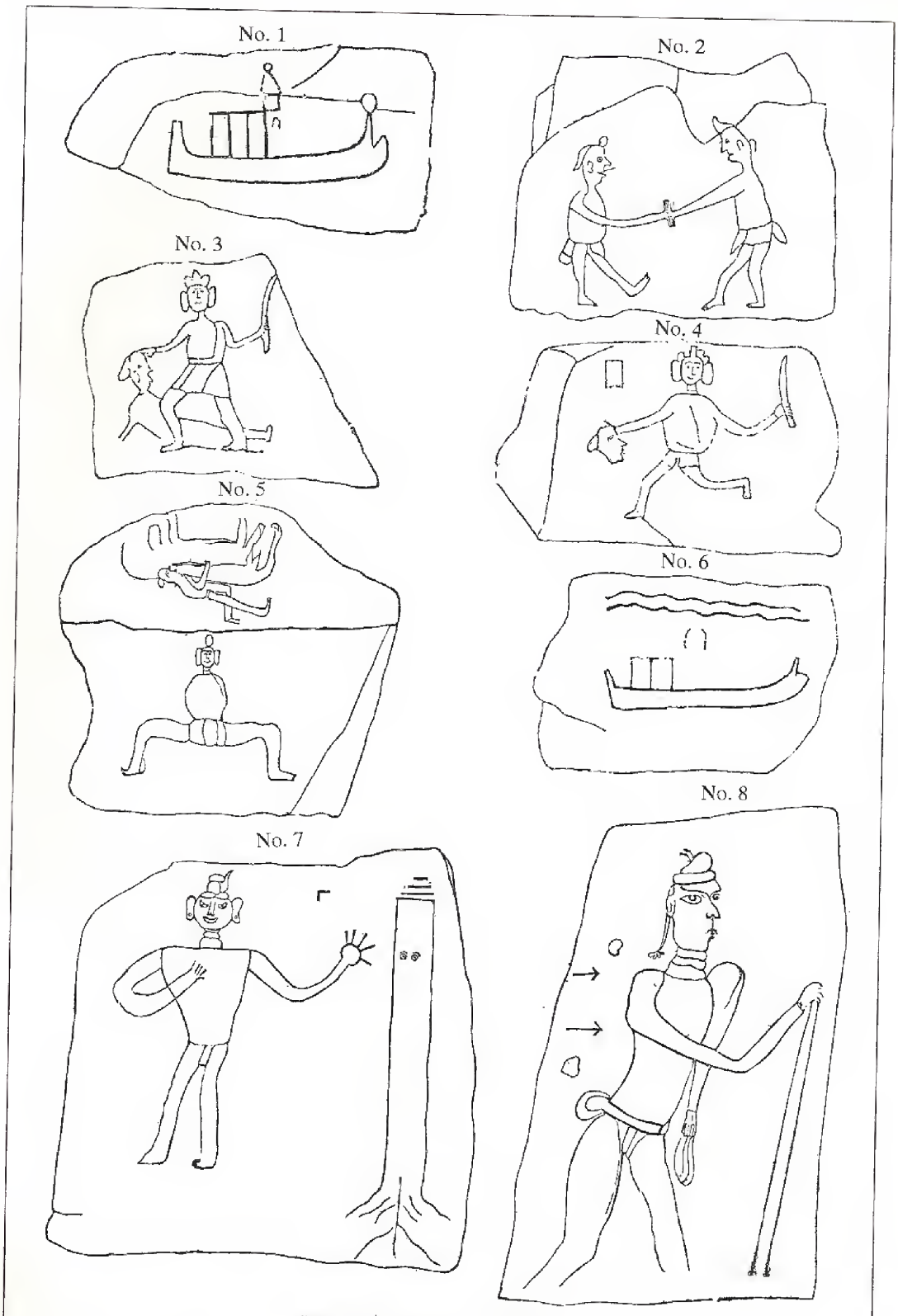
Second stone: *strangers step on shore; the natives oppose them, they come, however, to an agreement, which is expressed by the two parties stretching out their arms towards one another, pressing thumb against thumb, the little finger against finger, the knuckles of the three other fingers meeting each other.*

Third stone: *the stranger becomes violent and oppressive; with his knee on the chest of the prostrate native he has taken hold of the latter by his throat with one hand and swings a sword or Da (ဓား) in the other.*

Fourth stone: *the stranger has cut off the head of his victim and is dancing in exultation.*

Fifth stone: *this stone has a slope to the west and another to the east; it is intended to represent the hill range; the images are defaced in some places. The stranger is in exclusive possession of the eastern side of the hill and makes himself at home; the native is driven across the hill and alights on tigers and elephants, with whom he has to share his new home; he is represented as having fallen full upon the back of what appears to be an elephant, with his head towards the tail of the animal.*

Sixth stone: *here the figures are very indistinct; one represents the ship of the intruder; above it are two waving lines,*



Rock-cut figures at Pataw

which probably indicates that the vessel of the enemy has been sunk to the bottom of the river or the sea; the natives recover courage.

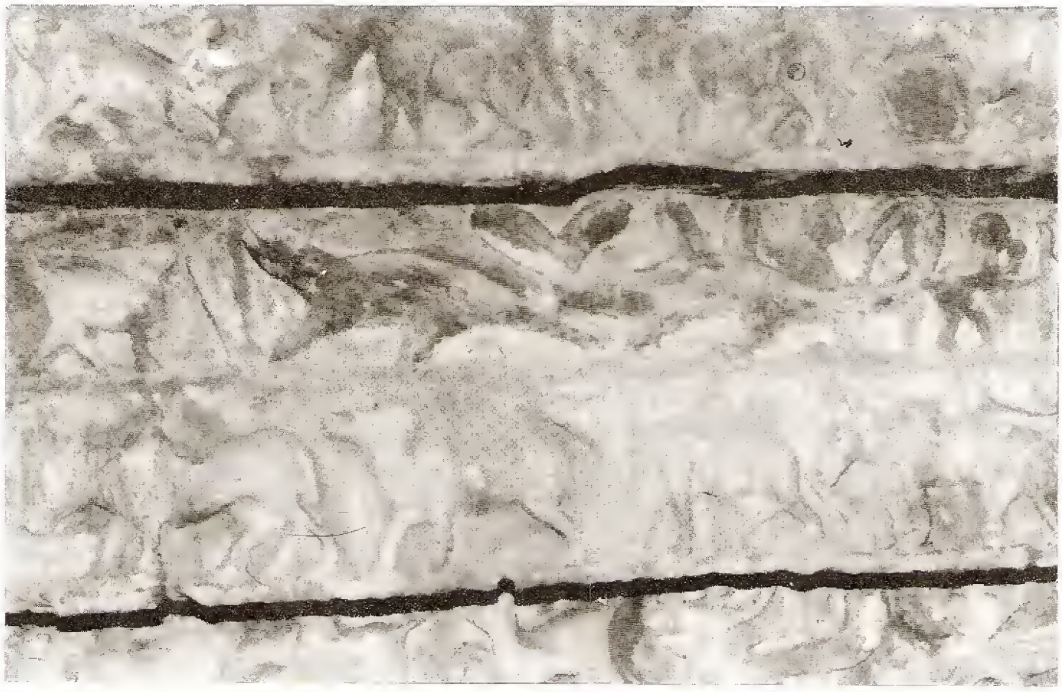
***Seventh stone**: the naked emaciated figure of the ejected native is shown standing by a tree in an actitude of making an oath (most of the primitive tribes in Myanmar swear to this day by a particular tree); the trunk has two eyes and the three additional lines above it may indicate the number of the kindred tribes who enter into a solemn pact to attack and eject the intruder, whose main strength lay in his ship, of which, however, he is now deprived.*

***The eighth rock** depicts the stranger in the act of departing in undignified hurry; his right hand holds a stout walking - stick, the left hand a tiny bundle of free luggage," which will not impede his swift journey to the south; he is scantily dressed, a strip of cloth round the loins being his only vestment; the hair hangs down over the back of the head and the shoulder in a single plait, tied at the end with a string; flying arrows and stones bless his departure. The outlines of this figure are cut half-an-inch deep into the surface of the orck.*

Absolutely nothing is known as to the date and authorship of these rock - carvings; not even a legend is heard concerning them. It may here be pointed out that at the very dawn of Rakhine history certain appellations were given to mountains according to images or figures found engraved on rocks or stones about them.

The Mahahti Pagoda

The Mahahti Pagoda stands on a low hill of about 50 feet high, at the junction of the Launggret creek, 7 miles south of Mrauk-U, 3 miles west of Launggret. The pagoda was built by the King Kawliya (1118-1124 A.D). The pagoda is mentioned



Stone sculptures, Shitthaung Pagoda

in a popular and well-known cradle-song, *Rakhine Minthami Ayegyin* (ရခိုင်မင်းသမီး ဧချင်း) written in the 15th century. This hillock is known in the Rakhine history as the *Sandapabbata* (စန္ဒပဗ္ဗတ) . According to a native saying, the image had once been sheltered under a huge stone "*hti*" (umbrella). So the pagoda was also called Mahahti (*Maha* = huge, *hti* = umbrella). The other source pointed out that the statue had probably meant to represent Ananda, the *Mahathera,* who, according to the Salagiri tradition, visited Rakhine with the Buddha. The Rakhine people shortened the term *thera* to and pronounced it *hti,* and the image probably was originally called *Mahahti* which is the short form of *Mahathera* (မဟာထေရ်).

The pagoda is a square structure with a portal protruding towards the east, and a central chamber; each side of the square measuring 25 feet; the walls rising vertically to a height of 12 feet; then follow the three tiers of bricks, also square with indented corners, gradually narrowing in as they rise, one above the other. The structure finished off in a circular garbha and a gilded iron .

The entire sfupa is 50 feet high and 60 feet around the base. A vaulted passage leads to a central chamber, each side of which measures 15 feet, and 12 feet high walls begin to converge and meet in an ape 18 feet above the floor of the chamber. On the west side of the chamber is a pedestal, 2 feet high, 14 feet broad and 8 feet thick, apparently cut out of a solid stone block. A stone image seated on the pedestal is of the common Mahamuni type. It measures 7 feet 9 inches from knee to knee, and 8 feet in height. It is gilded all over.

The platform spreads over the whole of the levelled surface of the hill; it appears that at one time it had been paved with stone-slabs and bricks. Now, some new buildings and pagodas were built on the platform by public donation.

An old road paved with stones and bricks leads from the river bank to the shrine. At the base of the hill are large tanks walled in with stones or bricks. A staircase of 52 steps, 8 feet broad with lateral walls 7 feet high, connects the road with the platform of the pagoda. The old roads were used for the king and his royal family. These roads serve an archeological interest at the present time.

The Paungdawdat

At the northernmost part, a mile to the morth of the Mahahti Shrine, is the Paungdawdat, a pagoda of ancient origin. The hill is known in old Raknine history as Culapabbata (စူဠပဗ္ဗတ). The pagoda on the hill was built by Mahataing Candra (မဟာတိုင်းစန္ဒြး), the first king of the Vesali Dynasty during the years of 327 to 384 A.D. According to traditional belief, the famous Anandathera (အနန္ဒာထေရ်) passed one of his former existences on this hill as a hermit and his thigh-bone was found there and a shrine was erected over it.

In the year 953M.E (1591 A.D) the pagoda was repaired by Minphalaung, the 17th ruler of the Mrauk-U Dynasty. The pagoda itself is completely in ruins, nothing has been left except a formless heap of stones and a few broken images of the Buddha. An inscription dated 953 M.E mentions the meritorious deed and the grants of paddy-fields and other beneficences of the King in support of the monasteries attached to the pagoda.

The Kyauknyo Image

The Kyauknyo image (dusky stone) is situated on the top of the southernmost

hill, to the south of Mahahti Village. The shrine which contained the image was totally destroyed during the first Anglo-Myanmar War in 1824 A.D and the head of the image had been knocked-off. Since then the image stood there unprotected on the hill. Lately a bamboo shed was erected on it and the head being reset on the body while the stones forming the throne were replaced, the image gilded, and the jungle cleared around the platform.

The statue is seated cross-legged; the right hand rests over the right knee, and the left lies open on the lap, the palm turned upward; contrary to the common custom, the robe covers both shoulders and close tightly round the neck; the lobes of the ears touch the shoulders; the expression of the face is unique, the eyelids and eye-brows are raised; the eyes make a fixed stare; the nose is broad at the end, the nostrils largely developed, the bridge rather flat; the mouth has a complacent, self-contained expression; the chin is broad and doubled, the cheeks well rounded, the neck short and thick-set; the hair curly and gathered in a knot on top of the head; the head is gilded all over. The image measures 5 feet 4 inches from knee to knee and is 6 feet 6 inches high.

The stone throne is 5 feet 4 inches high; the circumference around the top is 27 feet, and measures 38 feet 5 inches at the base. It consists of nine tiers of stone blocks, the outer surface of which is cut into flower designs and of figures of human beings and animals. These designs are on the third and fourth rows from the base. There are, in all, 44 figures arranged so that a block with a floral design and a block with a figure appears alternately. The figures include an ogre, a man in a dancing mode, a tittiro or partridge, a male human figure, a parrot, a doe, a crow, a lion with two heads, a pigeon, a woman breast-feeding an infant, a manussiha, having a human head on a lion's body, a horse, an ogre, a jungle goat, a male and a female, both nude, an elephant, a woman kneeling with the hands folded over the breast, holding between them is her hair twisted into a plait, and a *keinnara*, (a fabulous creature having the body of a bird with a human face).

The pedestal appears to have been demolished, the stones subsequently collected and losely set together in that order which appeared proper to the repairer, but can hardly be the same as that of the original *palin* (throne). The figures are in bold relief 4 to 5 feet high. There are still traces of a temple-court and of enclosing walls, around which are now over grown with jungle.

The Mahahti Village was once the site of a considerably large town. During the reign of Minphalaung, a king of Mrauk-U Dynasty, roads were constructed along the river and were paved with bricks and stone slabs; some remaining pieces can still be found. Numerous tanks along the base of the hill are also ascribed to the King; he reigned during the period from 1571 to 1593 A.D.

The following well-known legend is related to the Kyauknyo image and Mahahti image; King Kawliya, the most powerful king, the 6th of the Parein Dynasty, who ruled from 1118 to 1128 A.D, at one time dreamed that in the bed of the Launggret River was a massive stone, from which he was to get an image of the Buddha carved. He then organized a search with divers, and a stone of dusky hue was found as he had dreamed. This was raised with red silk çords and an image was carved out of it. Thus, this image (or) the stone had been called *Ngakaukya* (ငါးကောင်ရ) as the Rakhines pronounce it.

The Historical Sites in Vesali

The Old Vesali

Although Mrauk-U is 560 years old, it is the "youngest" of all cities in Raknine. The most interesting of the old cities is Vesali which lies 6 miles to the north of Mrauk-U. According to the Rakhine history, Vesali was founded by the King Mahataing Candra in 327 A.D. The archaeological department reports that Vesali was a city belonging to the main period from 4th to 8th century A.D which was confirmed by the findings of excavation at Vesali.

According to local records, the city's full name is *Vesali Kyaukhlayga* (The city with stone stairs). These stone stairs led to the pier where sailing ships must have docked in those days. Remains of these stone stairs can still be seen at ebb-tide, on the north-west of the city. An old palm-leaf script mentions that Vesali (pronounced *Waithali*) is named in the hope of rich trading. Thus the city, Vesali, became a noted trading port to which as many as a thousand ships came anually.

The city is flanked by the Ranchaung creek, a tributary of Kaladan to the west, and a ridge between the Kaladan and Lemro Valleys in the east. It is somewhat oval in shape with straight-line-like walls on the north and east and curved walls on the south and west. A tributary of the Ranchaung now traverses the city. Parts of the wide moat are still filled with water. The north-south diameter of the outer walls at the widest part is nearly 10,000 feet, while the east-to-west diameter is only about 6,500 feet at its widest. The area of the city is about 2.7 square miles.

The Palace-site

The palace-site is a rectangular area, 1,500 feet long and 1,000 feet wide, aligned slightly to north-west. It is surrounded by a small moat. The main gate of the palace was on the east, marked by the colossal Nan-Oo image which is there today. The palace-site itself remains unexcavated as the Vesali Village presently occupies the site.

The Vesali Paragyi

A few hundred yards to the north of the palace-site is the great Vesali image of the Buddha. It stands on a small mound, 50 feet high. The image is 17 feet high and is made of solid single stone. According to local chronicles, this image was donated by Chief Queen, Thupabadevi, in 327 A.D. But some of the original, ancient shape and sculpture had disappeared from the old because of the recent repairments by public donations.

An inscription, in four lines, on a stone slab measuring 27 x 10.5 cm, was found at this site, in the vicinity of the Vesali image. The script is unusual, in

that while many older forms are retained, the 6th century Eastern Indian form of *ha* was introduced for the first time. Now, most parts of the Vesali Paragyi hillock is covered with damaged sculptures save the great image of the Buddha, and the hillock is scattered with broken bricks which are much bigger than any other brick of the ancient sites of Rakhine.

The Letkettaung

Close to the east of the palace-site, which is now Vesali Village, a small hillock, is Letkettaung on which is a monastery, popularly named after the huge stone slab which has the shape of a *Letkhat* (weaver's shuttle).

Traditionally, it is said that the Shitthaung inscription pillar was erected on this hillock by King Anadacandra in the 8th century A.D. Besides, a 6th century votive inscription may have been found in a cave at the base of the hillock. The slabs, almost completely buried, are said to be the steps from which the ancient kings threw the powerful Areindama spear (အရိန္ဒမာလံ့), and the ruined sculptures scattered around are likewise said to represent the ancient kings. These images of near life-size, appear to have been *torana* (gateway of a shrine) figures placed at the entrance of a large shrine. Natives say that there is probably an underground chamber under this Letkettaung hillock.

The Shwedaunggyi

A few hundred feet to the north of the Vesali image is the Shwedaunggyi (the great golden hillock), which lies north-north-east of the palace-site, in the same relationship as the Mahamuni is to Dhanyawaddy. The hillock is now covered with mounds of earth and trees, scattered with bricks and huge stone slabs, damaged life-size images and remains of many small images of the Buddha. The sides of the hillock are also covered with the fragments of images, stone inscriptions, and debris of an old shrine. The main structure at the top of the hillock is now completely ruined. Towards the base is a hole, leading to a tunnel partially blocked with debris. Natives believe that there are a number of enormous rooms inside, containing bronze lamps and huge sculptures. Because of these, Shwedaunggyi attracted attention of the treasure-hunters.

The hillock's reputation has been enhanced by a local legend. It is said that in the middle of the 10th century, after King Culacandra died in the sea, his Queen, Candadevi married a Mro tribesman. The Pyu of Sriksetra, incensed at the tribesman's audacity, attempted to attack Vesali but were enticed away by his brother and massacred. The spot where the property, gold, jewels, etc of the Pyu King and his army were buried is still known to this day as Shwedaung.

A number of interesting sculptures and architectural fragments from the site has been collected, most of which are now stored in the Letkhattaung monastery. The sculptures found on the Shwedaunggyi hillock include an interesting figure of a woman in standing position; the sculpture considered to belong to the first half of the 7th century. Standing on a plain pedestal and with an unornamented backslab, the figure stands erect, feet pointing forward. The architectural fragments in Shwedaunggyi suggest a possible relationship with the early Calukyan and Pallava styles of the middle of the 7th century A.D.

The Sanghayana Hill

Half a mile to the north-east of the palace-site, a few hundred feet to the east of Vesali image is Sanghayana Hill. This site is so called because of the reputation of being the site of the fourth Buddhist

synod. The hill is 70 feet high. One side of the hill has been cut into a series of wide terraces, and the top is paved with bricks under which are large, dressed stone blocks.

According to the Rakhine chronicles, the King Thiridhammavizaya convened a Buddhist assembly in 638 A.D, inviting 1000 monks from different parts of Rakhine and 1000 monks from Sri Lanka. Culavethera was elected chairman and the assembly which devoted themselves to an examination of Buddhist literature for three years. It is probable that the tradition of a 4th synod is associated in Rakhine Buddhist hagiography with the joint decision of the Pyu and Rakhine kings to begin a new era in 638 A.D.

An image of *dwarapala* (ဒွါရပါလ) and other architectural fragments, belonging to the late 6th century A.D, were found at this site. This figure is five feet high. The size and shape of this slab suggests that it had been a structural part and from the nature of the image we may infer that it formed the base of a jamb, part of the gateway of the temple.

The Thingyaingtaung

Thingyaingtaung "Cemetery Hill" is a large mound thickly covered with ruins and debris. It is situated SW of the Vesali palace-site and is thus called because human bones were found there from time to time. Natives have no recollection of the place being used as a burial site, and the supposition is that it might have been the resting place of the kings of Vesali. The tradition may be related to Sriksetra.

About thirty five yards to the south of the main building on the top of the hill, now completely in ruins, are the remains of a circular structure built of stone, 18.97m in circumference. Access to it is gained by a covered stairway on the eastern side. In 1920, it was still partially covered by a vaulted roof which has now fallen to ruin.

Inside, an apsidal chamber, 3.3m wide and 4.5m deep was covered by a dome. The roof had fallen in, thus filling the base of the chamber; facing the entrance is a sitting Buddha image, head and arms now broken, measuring 1.25m from the thigh to the shoulder (1975 April). Traces of carved mouldings are visible around the outer dome, recently repaired in places with bricks.

The average size of the stone used was 0.42 x 0.26 x 0.13 m. A carved stone fragment, constituting a right angle, the upper arm measuring 2.60 m and the lower arm 0.30 m, was found near the entrance to the stairway; this must have originally formed part of the balustrade. Similar rectilinear moulded balustrades are found on stairways in Sri Lanka architectural style of 5th-7th centuries. The carved voluted on the longer arm of the Thingyaingtaung stone is similar in conception to the volute veingstones which was evolved in Sri Lanka during that period.

Apart from this, however, the stupa-shaped image shrine did not gain wide acceptance in India. The only intact stupa-shaped image shrines are found in the Thalawar District of Rajasthan, and they belong to the 6th and 7th centuries.

Like the Rakhine votive stupas, these have a square platform with mouldings, and a moulded, high cylindrical anda. It is possible that excavation of the lower portion of the Thingyaintaung Shrine may also reveal a square base.

The main structure at the top of the hill is now completely ruined, but various carved fragments give some idea of the original form. Among them were probably a pillar and a pillaster, now being displayed in Mrauk-U Museum.

The Historical Sites in Dhanyawaddy

The Dhanyawaddy

Some twentyone miles north of Mrauk-U and about sixteen miles north of Vesali is an old city of Dhanyawaddy. The earliest city in Rakhine, Dhanyawaddy is situated west of the ridge lying between the Kaladan and Lemro Rivers, occupying the well-drained foothill area and backed by the ridge. Remains of the walls and moats of this city can still be seen on many sites. The remains of brick fortifications are still seen along the ridge which protrudes into the city itself.

The old city was of fairly large size, almost circular in shape with the eastern wall, made of brick at the base of the ridge. On the western side only a small portion of the outer wall remains because of the ravages of the Thare creek, a tributary of the Kaladan. The creek might once have formed the moat on the west side, while on the other three sides the moats had existed although they are now silted over and occupied by paddy fields.

Dhanyawaddy was made up of an outer and inner cities. Looking at the outer city, we find that the east-west diameter is 1.3 miles and north-south diameter is 1.55 miles, so that the shape is that of an irregular circle. It has a perimeter of about 6 miles and encloses and area of about 1.7 square miles.

Within the city, a similar wall and moat enclose the palace-site, which has an area of 64 acres. This inner city, palace-site, is rectangular in shape. The east-west length is about 2,000 feet while the north-south length is about 1,700 feet. The moat, about 200 feet wide, circling the inner city is now covered with paddy fields.

The inner city was a special site for the royal family. People lived within the outer city which also enclosed the fields they cultivated. The area of the inner city was only 64 acres. In those days of insecurity, when the country was often subjected to raids by various hill tribes, the people felt safer within the walls. By enclosing the paddy fields, the people would have an assured food supply, even under siege, thus permitting them to withstand the siege. Normally, the city, Dhanyawaddy, would have controlled the valley and the lower ridges supporting a mixed wet rice and *taungya* cultivation, with local chiefs paying allegiance to the king.

At the north-eastern corner of the palace-site is the Mahamuni Shrine, on a small hillock, Sirigupta, once the centre of the royal cult, which had played a central role throughout the history of Rakhine. This position, in which the shrine sits at NE site of the palace, is the characteristic position found in many other major shrines of urban Buddhist centres

in South-East Asia, such as Thailand and Sri Lanka. This tradition may be related to the early royal ancestors. It can be seen in the aerial photographs that this system has been closely followed by the present shrines.

Now, although Dhanyawaddy is located about 60 miles from the sea, the city must have been a sea port at one time. Small sailing ships could come right up the Thare creek to the city. In any case Indian culture and influence had penetrated the city by sea as well as by land. Perhaps it was the earliest city built in Indian style, a civilized urban type.

According to Rakhine chronicles, this Dhanyawaddy is the third Dhanyawaddy (B.C. 580 to 326 A.D). The city was founded by the King Sandasuriya. However, after deciphering Anandacandra inscription of Shitthaung Pegoda, Dr. E.H Johnston dated the founding of Vesali as 350 A.D. Dr. Sircar of Indian Archaeological Survey also agrees with him. He is not in agreement with the local chronicles, but he has suggested the date of the founding of Vesali to be about 370 A.D.

If Johnston and Sircar's dates about the founding of Vesali are accepted, Dhanyawaddy must have been the capital of Rakhine only up to 350 or 370 A.D.

Traditionally, the city is called Dhanyawaddy. The term applies very fittingly to Dhanyawaddy, which depended principally on the extensive regions of riceland surrounding it. With a rainfall of over 200 inches a year, the crop never failed. Moreover, there were other things that helped maintain itself successfully.

The problem of fresh water supply was acute on the Kaladan plain by the tidal creek. For water supply, Dhanyawaddy had many tanks that stored rain water.

The palace-site, at the centre of the city, was the focal point of an irrigation system which can be discerned in aerial photographs. Water collected in the wet season had been stored in four main tanks in city proper, alligned north, south, east and west of the palace. The tanks on north, east and west are still in use today, the southern tank has recently been silted over. The larger tank on the east, situated along the inner moat, also appeared to have supplied water to the palace complex.

The introduction of wet-rice agriculture and subsequent urbanization is reflected in the chronicled traditions regarding the naming of the city. During Gautama Buddha's stay in Rakhine He was said to have declared to his disciples:

"In Jambudipa (ဇမ္ဗူဒီပ), among the sixteen countries of Majjhimadesa (မဇ္ဈိမဒေသ) the food offered to the monks consists of a mixture of maize, beans, corn, and millet(ကောက်၊ ပဲ၊ သလဲ၊ မုယော၊ စပါး). But in this country, the food offered consists of various kinds of barley and rice; such food is eaten by monks with relish; my preceding elder brother Buddhas (Kakusan, Gonagamana and Kassapa) had called this country (or this city) Dhanyawaddy and as the inhabitants have never suffered from famine, this region shall in all times continue to be called Dhanyawaddy (i.e. *grain-blessed*).

The Mahamuni Shrine

Location

The Mahamuni Shrine one of the most renowned of all Buddhist sites not only in Rakhine State but also in the whole of Myanmar, is situated 6 miles east of Kyauktaw town and 60 miles up the river from the mouth of the Kaladan where Sittway, the capital of Rakhine State, lies.

The shrine was built on a small hillock at the north-eastern corner of the palace-site of Dhanyawaddy, an ancient city founded by the King Sandasuriya (စန္ဒသူရိယ) in 580 B.C.

Traditionalists believed that, the shrine was built to house the image of the Buddha cast during His sojourn on the Salagiri Hill near Kyauktaw in 554 B.C. It was believed that the Mahamuni image, the actual likenesses of Gautama Buddha, was cast by a heavenly sculptor, the Lord of celestialrealm. Thus, the Mahamuni Shrine which houses the Mahamuni image has been the focus of attention throughout the centuries since its inception. Moreover, this magical image was sought as a prize by neighbouring kings, and it has also been the goal of Buddhist worshippers from all over the world to pay homage to this image. Pilgrims have, for centuries, come from various Buddhist countries to pay their devotions at the foot of this great image.

Sight around the Shrine

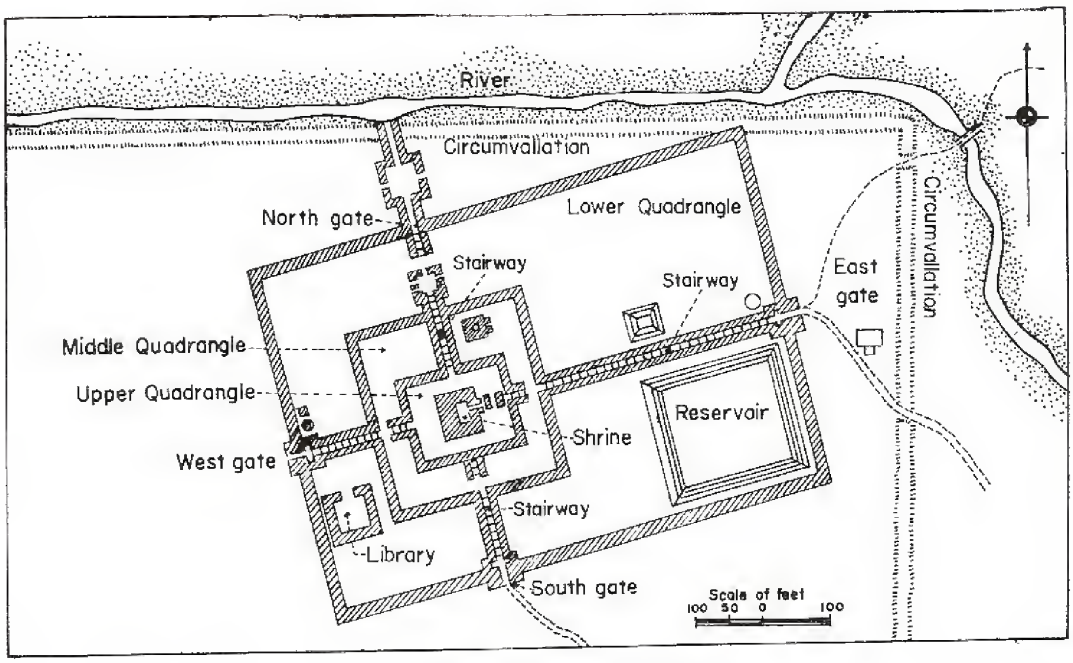
The hillock, on which the Mahamuni Shrine was built is called Sirigutta (သီရိဂုတ္တ) Hill. It has three levels of flat surfaces. The shrine was built at the top level. The whole structure represents three enclosures, one within the other; the second platform is 30 feet above the first and the third is 30 feet above the second. The lowest platform measures 580 feet from east to west and 500 feet from north to south. On each side is an entrance leading towards the topmost chamber in a straight ascent 10 feet wide, walled in on both sides. On the first platform there still is an old library built by King Minkhari in 1439 A.D. A large tank dug by King Sandasuriya, a small tank walled in with stone, and an *upasampada* hall where monks received ordination, can still be seen today.

The second platform is thirty feet above the first and has an area of 240' x 220'. The north-east corner of the platform is in good preservation. At the corner there is a huge banyan tree containing a tree altar consisting of a layer of square stone blocks surrounding the tree. Tradition has it that the Buddha rested under this tree while His image was being cast. It is believed that the original image of Mahamuni remains buried in the ruined cave under this tree.

The topmost platform is 30 feet above the second. It measures 155' x 115'. The shrine stands on this platform. At the four cardinal points of the lowest enclosure are gates from which covered step-ways lead to the shrine.

In the central chamber of this shrine lies the pedestal on which the Mahamuni image was once placed. Now instead of the original image, three stone images of the Buddha are seated on a stone pedestals. The central image, known as Mahamuni's "brother", is 4' 2" high exclusive of the seat. The images sit with the legs crossed, the left hand resting on the lap with the palm turned upward, the right hand over the right knee with the back of the hand turned upward. All images are known as crowned-Buddha type or Mahamuni type by the natives. The Mahamuni images are usually placed facing east. The entire religious history of Buddhistic Rakhine had centred around the Mahamuni Shrine, which is called "younger brother" of Gautama Buddha. The image was believed by the people to be the original resemblance of Gautama taken from life and was very highly venerated.

In the north-east corner there was once the mysterious *Yataya* bell. No one ever



Plan of the Mahamuni Shrine

The Mahamuni Shrine

touched it. It was donated by the King Sandathuriyaraza in 1733 A.D. After the first Anglo-Myanmar War, the bell was removed to Sittway and was placed in the court-house. The donor, Mg Shwe Hmon brought the bell back to the Mahamuni Shrine in 1905. On the mysterious bell are inscribed magical ciphers used to put invaders to flight by deranging their astrological chart and so placing them in jeopardy. Now the attractive magical bell has mysteriously disappeared from the Shrine.

Venerations of Buddhist World

According to a palm-leaf manuscript called *Sabbadharnapakarana* (သဗ္ဗဒါနုပကာရနကျမ်း), after the conversion of inhabitants of Dhanyawaddy to Buddhism by Lord Buddha, the King Sandasuriya bowed to the Buddha and requested;

"O Lord, who is the crown, the light and glory of three kinds of beings; if You wander about from place to place in distant countries, we shall have no opportunity to pay homage to You. Therefore for my benefit and the benefit of others, I pray to You to leave for us an image of You."

Thus the Mahamuni, "The Great Image" seems, to reflect the unity of the three kinds of beings: celestial *devas* (ဧဒဝါ), human being and the creatures of the other world.

In 81 A.D Supannanagara Seinda, (သုပန္နနဂရစိန္ဒ) the King of Srikhittaya, invaded Rakhine and saw the Mahamuni image, which captured his mind and he could not go home for three years.

Captain Forbes remarks (*Legendary History of Burma and Arakan*, p. 13):

Supanna invaded and subdued Arakan, and attempted to convey to Burma the famous image of Gotama from the temple of Mahamuni. This highly venerated object of worship has been thus described. The image of Gotama is made of brass and highly burnished. The figure is about 10 feet high, in the customary sitting posture, with the legs crossed and inverted, the left hand resting on the lap and the right pendent over the right knee."

In the year 327 A.D the King Mahataingcandra founded the new city of Vesali. The King and his son, Crown Prince Suriyacandra, rebuilt a new image shrine and placed the image on a new altar made of finely carved marble; the spires of the shrine were coated with brass plates. Monks from Bagan and Sri Lanka came to worship the shrine. In 1885 a possible piece of marble 1' 6" long and 9" thick with fine design, was discovered at the eastern gate of the shrine by Dr.Forchhammer, the founder of the Archaeological Survey of Myanmar.*

About 980 A.D, the Thets came from northern Rakhine and occupied the shrine. They tried to carry away the image to their country. The image was missing for three years and five months. A king of Sri Lanka then sent to Rakhine an artisan with a mound of gold and a number of monks accompanied by a thousand followers. With the permission of the then King of Rakhine, the image was restored to it former form and a new image shrine was built over it.**

During the period of 935-951 A.D the King of Bagan sent two ministers named Lasaka and Mazalon to the Mahamuni Pagoda with the instruction to replace the stone figures of *nats* (devas) with the image of the Buddha; but the

* *The Mahamuni Pagoda*, p.6,12.
**"The Mahamuni Shrine in Arakan," p.263.

King of Vesali opposed this change and only two of the *nat* figures were allowed to be chiselled into the images of Buddha.*

This slab containing the above mentioned figures is now on the first terrace of the east side, south of the stairway. The slab is found greatly damaged. Two small figures traceable in sitting posture represent the Buddha in their ordinary robes and attitude, and had been chiselled out of the original *nat* figures by the emissaries of Bagan King.**

In the 11th century the great King Anawrahta sojourned from Bagan to superintend in person the rebuilding of the Mahamuni temple: he also built a hall in front of the shrine, surmounted by a richly carved graduated turret. ***

In the 11th century A.D, the Bagan King Alaungsithu sent a minister, 500 noble men, and 50,000 soldiers to Rakhine. They erected a camp on the west side of the Mahamuni Shrine. Employing good architects to erect a four-sided building over the image, they planted champac trees around it, and repaired the approaches to the temple.+

In 1103 A.D. Alaungsithu sent an army to restore the Kingdom of Rakhine to Letyaminan. The followers set the image on fire and took away a leg of the image. From this event the great image was lost till the reign of King Kawliya who ascended the throne of Rakhine in 1118 A.D. The King Kawliya cast another image of Buddha as a copy of Mahamuni image on the Nandapabbata Hill. The image was cast of gold, silver, copper and other metals collected from the public donations.++

In 1123 A.D, Dhatharaza became King. The King was powerful and the country enjoyed general peace and prosperity. Under his orders the Mahamuni image was searched for and was found burried up to its neck. The right leg and the greater part of the back were missing. The image was venerated by the hill tribes as *Moekaung Nat* (rain devas) (မိုးကောင်းနတ်ကြီး). The King Dhatharaza built a new Mahamuni Shrine on the Sirigutta Hill north-east of palace-site of old Dhanyawaddy. He restored the Mahamuni image to its former form and placed it on the pedestal within the new shrine.*

It is said that the remaining stone walls and northern stairway made of huge sandstones may have represented the great historic event.

Evidence of Architecture and Sculpture

As mentioned above, the Buddhists had highly venerated and repaired the shrine. According to Rakhine chronicles, the shrine was destroyed by fire or by pilferage on many occasions throughout the centuries and had to be rebuilt time and again by pious kings during these centuries. Magic was used to guard the image. It was being held that its destruction or removal would heraled the fall of the Kingdom. According to the Mahamuni tradition, the stone figures placed at the cardinal points kept away persons who approached the image house with evil intentions. These figures remained as good evidence at present. There are some interesting points regarding the Mahamuni Shrine.

Firstly, the shrine was built on a hillock at the north-eastern corner of the palace-

* *Akyab District Gazetteer,* vol.A, p.44.
** *Ancient Arakan,* p.205.
****Mahamuni Pagoda,* p.6.
\+ *ibid.*
++(a)"The Mahamuni Shrine in Arakan,"p.265.
(b)*Rakhineminthami Ayegyin* verse 17.

* (a) Mahamuni Introduction, p.42.
(b) *The Story of Mahamuni,* p.227.

site. This position, in which the shrine sits at NE site of the palace, is the characteristic position found in many other major shrines in urban Buddhist centres in South-East Asia, and Sri Lanka. This tradition may be related to early royal ancestors. It is said that all the excavated Pyu cities have the main temple in the northeast of the palace.

Secondly, the shrine is situated within a rectangular wall, with openings at the four cardinal points, the most important one being that of the east. The temple proper is square in shape, setting towards the west, and is raised over two broad, almost square terraces. The square plan is typical of early architecture of Funan and slightly later at Dvaravati (The ancient Khmer Empire and Thailand).

The original structural fragments were found in the main temple. The first one, a *catiya* (ဆေတီယ) arch on a lintel fragment, is now lying at the south-western corner. The figurine in the centre belongs to the late Gupta tradition. The wig-type hair, large cakra earing, roundface and downcast eyes and rather sensitive expression are all typical found among the gana figures at Bhumara. The *catiya* motif is well-known in the art of Funan and Dvaravati, but Mahamuni fragment may well be earliest example in South-East Asia.*

Fortunately one ancient inscription is found at the Mahamuni Shrine, consisting of three lines on the plinth of an image. It is now placed in a small shrine at the south-eastern corner of the second platform of Mahamuni. The script is the oldest one found in Rakhine or probably in the whole of Myanmar. It is extremely important for the dating of the early phase of the shrine. **

* (a) *Ancient Arakan*, p.190.
(b) "Mahamuni Introduction," p.2.

** *The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan*, p.114.

The other sculptures found in Mahamuni are also the earliest in Rakhine. They consist of single images, diads and triads. They are made of fine-grained red sandstones. The sculptures are rather similar in design and dresses.

The Salagiri Hill

Salagiri Hill is one of the most famous archaeological site in Rakhine. It is situated on the east bank of the Kaladan River 5 miles to the west of Mahamuni Shrine. It is about 250 feet high. This rocky range of hills is known as the Salagiri (The *Pali, Sala* = rock, *giri* = hill, rocky hill) in the Rakhine history. The local chronicles assert that during the reign of Sandasuriya, King of Dhanyawaddy, the Buddha visited Rakhine with His five hundred disciples and rested on the summit of this hill.

At this site the Buddha held a prophetic discourse on previous existences during which He dwelled in Rakhine. At present there is a standing Buddha image on the top of the hill pointing to his disciples towards the various places in which his former lives had been passed.

Close to the top are one Buddha image in a reclining posture and two small pagodas. From the top there is a good view over the central plain of Kaladan Valley.

After the Buddha had departed from Dhanyawaddy, King Sandasuriya built a small pagoda on the top of the hill. In 1624 A.D King Siridhammaraza repaired this pagoda.

On account of the Mahamuni tradition, the Salagiri Hill has become the focus of attention for the pilgrims from various Buddhist countries. Moreover, a few archaeological remains were found on this hill.

In 1885 Dr. Forchhammer discovered the two-line inscription among the ruins of Salagiri Pagoda, traditionally built by King Sandasuriya, on a block of sandstone about 1' long. He noted that it once might have formed a part of the throne of an image.* The inscription may paleographilly be assigned to around the beginning of the 6th century A.D.**

A miniature stone stupa, total height (without the missing umbrella) 3' 8", was found at the corner of a mound south of this hill. Fortunately, the wellknown Buddha's preceding *yedhamma* verse (ယေဓမ္မာဂါထာ) was inscribed on it. The paleography roughly suggests a date in the first half of the 6th century A.D.***

In 1923 a stone slab 2' high and 1' 4" broad was found from the base of this hill. This is a surviving example of relief sculpture from the early period. On the slab it can be seen the sitting Buddha, hands in *dhammacakka mudra* (ဓမ္မစက္ကမုဒြာ), his right knee slightly raised on an undecorated square throne. At his feet sits a man, richly ornamented, perhaps a king. This scene respresents the Mahamuni tradition. In this tradition Buddha came to Rakhine and rested at the Salagiri Hill. King Sandasuriya came on foot five miles from the east of the hill to Salagiri to pay homage to the Buddha who preached to him and the inhabitants the *dhammacakka* sermon. Based on the style of hand posture and headdress, it should be dated earlier than 5th century A.D.+

In 1986 another five stone slabs were found buried in a mound, which was near Shinmakyat situated at the foot of the southern Salagiri Hill. Each slab measures 2' high and 1' 6" broad and very similar to the previous *Dhammacakra mudra* slabs. Each slab contains a bas-relief representing one particular incident of a previous life of the Buddha. The following four scenes depicted by artists are (1) the enlightenment (2) the first sermon (3) the *mahaparinivana* (4) the donor King figure and (5) the *bumiphasa mudra*. It is possible that these stone slabs once formed parts of a huge temple or pagoda built as a Buddhist museum exhibiting Great Events of the Buddha's Life.

Salagiri Hill

* *Archaeological Survey*, 1958-59,p.40, p.70.

** *Ancient Arakan* p.80.

****The Buddhist Art,* p.17.

+(a) Mrauk-UMuseum,ref:A SB1924 PLV and pp.44-45. (b)*The Buddhist Art.* p.79.

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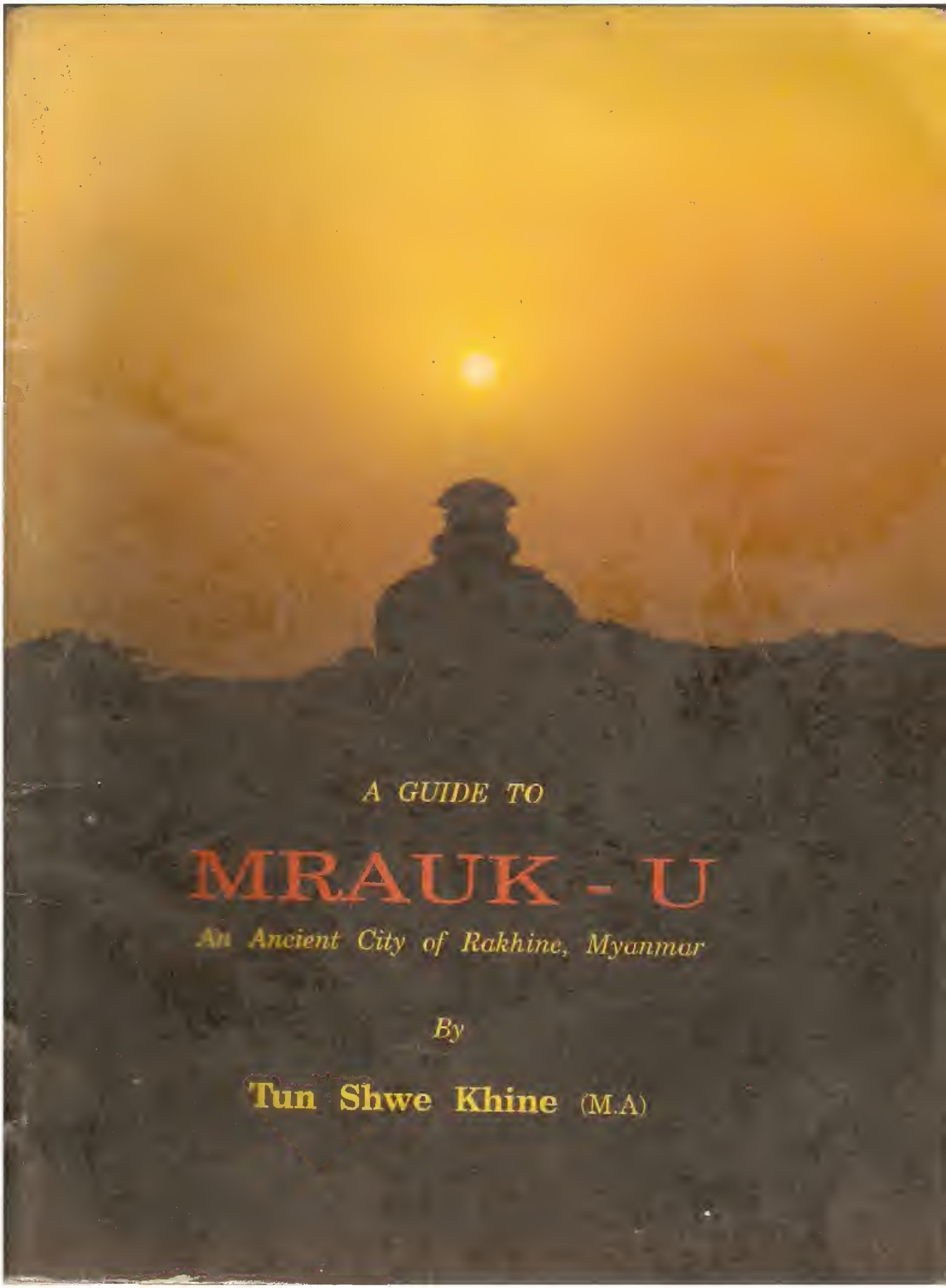
Aerial view of Vesali

Aerial view of Dhanyawaddy



A GUIDE TO

MRAUK - U

An Ancient City of Rakhine, Myanmar

By

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