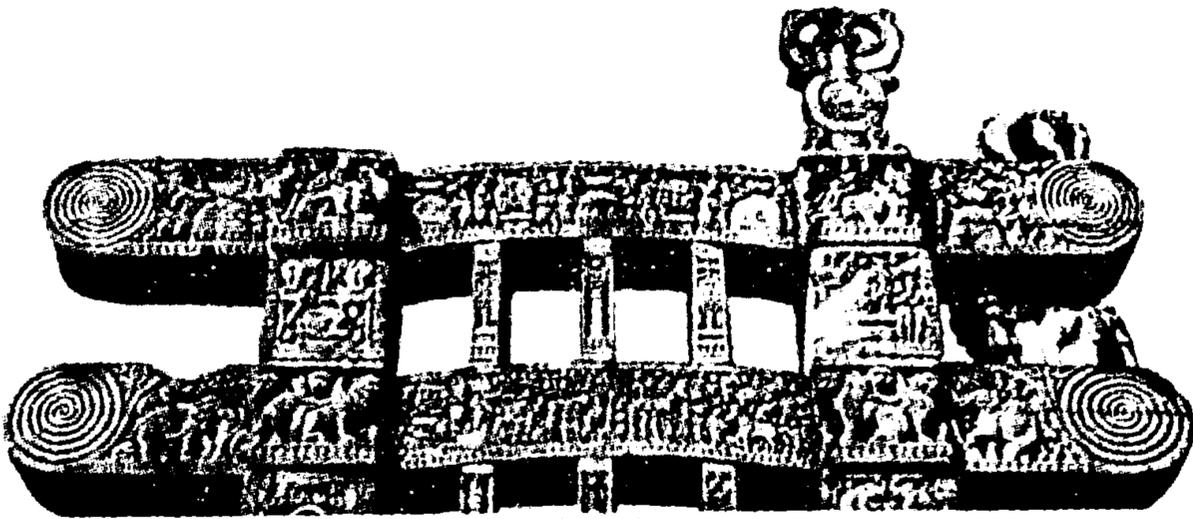


# The Hindu-Buddhist Impact ON Myanmar Culture

U Than Htun (Shwebo)

**This book is dedicated to  
my benefactor Sayagyi U Sein Tin (Shri Ram Prakash Dhir)  
S.D.S.Sangh, Myanmar Naing-Ngan**



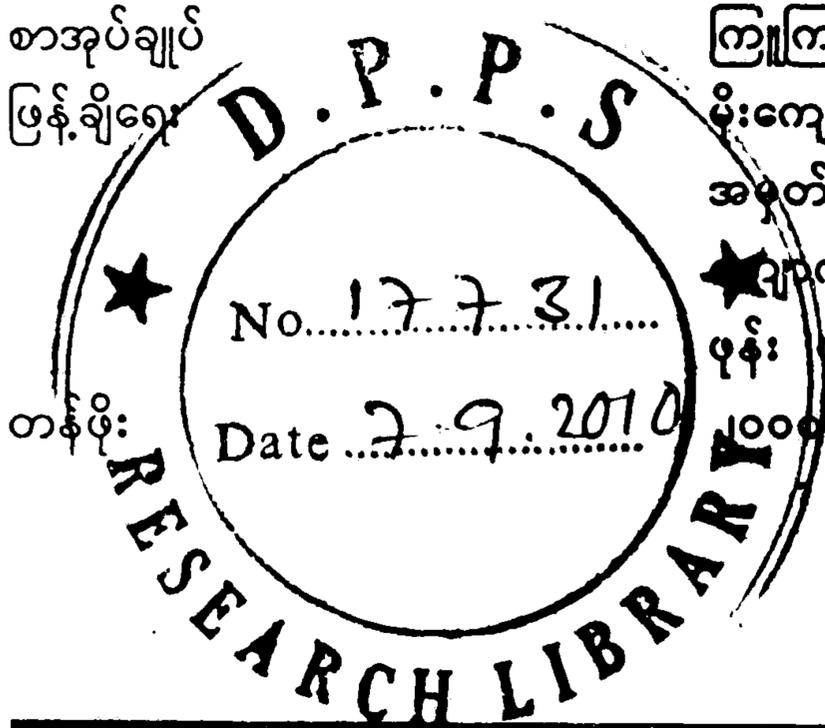
The Hindu-Buddhist Impact on  
**Myanmar Culture**  
**U Than Htun (Shwebo)**

ပုံနှိပ်မှတ်တမ်း

စာမူခွင့်ပြုချက်အမှတ် ၃၂၀၅၅၄၀၉၀၉  
 မျက်နှာဖုံးခွင့်ပြုချက်အမှတ် ၃၂၀၂၂၃၁၁၀၉  
 ပုံနှိပ်ခြင်း ပထမအကြိမ်၊ နိုဝင်ဘာလ၊ ၂၀၀၉၊  
 အုပ်ရေ ၁၀၀၀  
 မျက်နှာဖုံးရေးဆွဲသူ ကျော်စေ  
 ထုတ်ဝေသူ ဦးအောင်မြတ်သူ၊ ပြည်မြန်မာစာပေတိုက်၊

ပုံနှိပ်သူ ဦးအောင်မြတ်သူ၊ အမှတ် ၁၈၈၊ ၃၈ လမ်း၊  
 ကျောက်တံတားမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။  
 ဦးမျိုးမြင့်၊ ပွင့်သစ်အေ့ဖ်ဆက်၊  
 ၁၀၉၊ ၄၉ လမ်း၊ ၁-ရပ်ကွက်၊  
 ပုဇွန်တောင်မြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။  
 ကြူကြူမွေးစာအုပ်ချုပ်လုပ်ငန်း။

စာအုပ်ချုပ် မိုးကျော်သူစာပေ  
 ဖြန့်ချိရေး အမှတ် ၁၈၈၊ ၃၈-လမ်း၊  
 တန်ဖိုး: ★ကျောက်တံတားမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။  
 ဖုန်း: ၀၁-၃၈၄၂၁၉။  
 ၂၀၀၀-ကျပ်



၂၉၁.၃၅

U Than Htun (Shwebo)  
 The Hindu-Buddhist Impact On Myanmar Culture/  
 U Than Htun (Shwebo)။ ရန်ကုန်။  
 ပြည်မြန်မာစာပေ၊ ၂၀၀၉။  
 ၁၅၀ - စာ၊ ၁၃ x ၂၅ စင်တီမီတာ။  
 (၁) The Hindu-Buddhist Impact On Myanmar Culture

# **CONTENTS**

		<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter I</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter II</b>	<b>Civilization and Culture</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter III</b>	<b>Writings</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Chapter IV</b>	<b>Religion, Cults and Beliefs</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter V</b>	<b>Iconography and Architecture</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Chapter VI</b>	<b>Myanmar Dhammathats</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Chapter VII</b>	<b>The Universal Monarch</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Chapter VIII</b>	<b>The Myanmar Super naturalism</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Chapter IX</b>	<b>Myanmar Language</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Chapter X</b>	<b>The Pāli Literature of Myanmar</b>	<b>122</b>

# Chapter I

## History

The Myanmar people take pride in historical relationships with Lord Buddha and India. The Buddha was a Sākiyan prince and so the Myanmars claim that they are of Sākiyan descent. The ancient Myanmar legends assert that the Lord had visited their country during His lifetime and imparted His powers to the famous Mahāmuni image of Rakhine, now in Mandalay, as the tradition goes.

The country of Myanmar was formerly called Burma. This is the corruption of Brahmā-Desh, the land of Brahmā. This shows Hindu influence in ancient times.

Many similar examples can be given. In Myanmar—Kings are called rājas – Queens are devīs.

The town of Prome is Shrikshetra, the sacred name of Hindus.

Taundwingyi is Vishnūmyo. Thaton is Sudhamma wādī etc.

The legends state that Vishnūmyo was founded by Vishnū, Indrā, Nagā, Garuda, Chandī, Parameshwarā and Govampati. This is Hindu tradition, pure and simple.

The town of Taungdwin is also called Rāmāvati, in reference to the Hindu god Rāma.

This points to the fact that early Myanmar towns were established by Indian immigrants.

The first kingdom of Tagaung was said to have been founded by a Sākiyan prince from India called Abhirājā. It was founded the second time by Dajarājā, also from India. Myanmar people have the habit of saying “မြန်မာအစ  
တကောင်းက” meaning “Myanmar starts from Tagaung”. Recent excavations in this area have shown the existence of Pyu civilization, which flourished from pre-Christian Centuries.

The old name of Bago, which is still a big city, was Ussa, which is but the corrupted form of Orissa. This shows that the city was once inhabited by Orissans.

The chief river in the country is Ayeyarwady. It is Iravati (the modern Ravi river in India).

The towns of Tharawady, Tharawaw and Thawutthi are named after the ancient Indian name of Srāvasti.

The Indians gave their names to the places in Myanmar. Maurya was Mweyin on the upper Ayeyarwady. Like-

wise, Hansāvati (Bago), Aparanta, Avanti, Vārānasī, Dvarāvati, Campanagera, Ghandara, Kailasa, Samkasya (Tagaung), Utkala (Yangon), Vesalī etc. were Indian names given to places in Myanmar.

Hindu settlements were established in Myanmar before the first century A.D. But some scholars maintain that Tapussa and Bhallika, the two merchants who became the first disciples of the Buddha, came from Myanmar. It was known as Suvarnabhūmi at that time. According to the Buddhist records it was converted by Sona and Uttara, the two monks sent on missionary work by King Āsoka.

**Dr. R.L Soni** in his “**A Cultural Study of the Burmese Era**” writes –

*“References to this region are met with under the name of ‘Suvannabhūmi’ meaning ‘The Land of Gold’.”(p.28)*

**Dr. Malalasekera** in his “**Pāli proper Names**” identified Suvarnabhūmi as Thaton in Myanmar, which was called Sudharmawadī at that time. **Bimala Churn Law** also in “**Geography of Early Buddhism**” maintains that lower Myanmar was Suvannabhūmi(1).

In the Jātaka stories of Buddhism Suvannabhūmi is often mentioned. These contain stories about the merchants going overseas for trading. Greek geographer **Pliny** has written that Indian ships of that time weighed 78-tons. The Chinese monk **Fa-hien** also wrote that the ship which carried him to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) had 200-passengers on

board.(2) These references show that Indians of that time were clever in sea going.

Perhaps the earliest inhabitants of Myanmar were Indonesians. They were replaced by Mongolian tribes. These were the Mons and the Tibetos. Myanmar tribes who came from western China and eastern Tibet. Their traditional names are Pyu, Kanyan and Thet. Perhaps the Thet are Chins and the Kanyan are Rakhines. The Pyus, now extinct, were later absorbed into Myanmar.(3)

The Mons established their kingdoms in Thailand and Myanmar from **the sixth to eleventh century A.D.** They called their kingdoms Suvannabhūmi.

The Mons got Hinduism from Indian travellers. Saivism prevailed in Annam, Champa, Borneo, Cambodia and Java. In Myanmar Hinduism and Buddhism converged. Idols of Vishnū, Saiva and Buddha were found in Kawgun cave about 30 miles from Maulamyine.(4)

The Mons knew the art of writing at a very early period. Their alphabet was based on the Pallava alphabet of India. Some of their places possessed Pāli or Sanskrit names. Their kingdom of **the sixth century A.D** was known as Dvāravati and their country was called Ramanna-desa.

According to Pagan stone inscriptions the names of “Pyu” and “Bamar” were found in **second century B.C.** (5-A). The Pyu writings show traces of Sanskrit and Pali. (5-B).

In the Chinese chronicle **Hwa Yan Kaw Chi** it was

mentioned that in the west of Yunchan were Piao and Shantu countries. Piao means Pyu and Shantu means Hindu.

The Pyu country at that time was about 1000-miles from east to west and about 1200 to 1700 miles from north to South. In the Chinese chronicle nine Pyu garrison towns were mentioned. Yi Sein of Myanmar Historical Commission has identified five of them as follow –

- (1) Bauklinwan (now Taungdwingyi)
- (2) Yaukliyi (now Thibaw)
- (3) Sanhtauk (now Hanlin)
- (4) Minotaukti (now Wadi)
- (5) Lumin (now Maingmaw)

The Pyus had relations with Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and India, but they owed much to India with respect to religion, culture, administration, writing, coinage etc.(6)

The three Pyu cities so far excavated were Vishnū, Shrikshetra and Hanlin. Foundations of buildings have shown their skill in town planning. Pottery, artifacts, inscriptions, gold and jewellery, coins, funeral urns, city wall remains iron and copper implements, musical instruments, agriculture and handicrafts etc., were found in these cities.

Contemporary Chinese records also mention about Pyu dancers, musical instruments, songs, Pyu clothes, faith and traditions etc. The Pyu town planning and man-made landscape are wonderful.(7)

The Pyu seals and inscriptions have also been found.

The Pyu alphabet was based on the Brāhmī alphabet of southern India.

In matters of faith the Pyus had imbibed both Hinduism and Buddhism. A small lingam has been found in Hanlin. An old figure of Ganesh has been unearthed in Pegu area. The Pyu coins had Swastika and the sun on them. They also practised fortune telling and magic.

In the Pyu inscriptions are found extracts from the Buddhist scriptures. Twenty gold plates of the Pyus were found in 1926 in Mhawza (Maung Khin Ba's farm) in Pyay District (Prome). They are writings of the fifth A.D. They are extracts from the Buddhist scriptures. They are very valuable in the study about the relation between Brāhmī, Pyu and Myanmar alphabets.(8)(9)

The tomb stone inscriptions at Hanlin have Sanskrit names. Also the names of Pyu kings appeared in urns. They are Surya Vikrama, Hari Vikrama and Simha Vikrama. They are clearly Hindu (Sanskrit) names and this shows that the Pyus were fond of taking Indian names.

According to Blagden they were of the (7) and (8) Centuriest A.D.(10) The kings throughout Myanmar history did the same; for example the title of Anawrahta was Shri Aniruddhadeva, that of Kyansittha was Shri Tribhūvanāditya bala Chkravar, that of his Queen was Trilokavataṃsakar, and their son was Raj Kumar.

Rasearchers agree that the Mon inscriptions of Prapathon and Loburi (Thailand), Thaton, Pagan and the Pyu (Myanmar)

were the earliest so far discovered.(11)

A silver Pyu ceti found in Shrikshetra also has Pāli and Pyu records of a king named Shri Prabhu Varman. He was thought to be a contemporary of Vikrama kings.(12)

The Pyus are now extinct, being merged with the Myanmars. But they retained their language until the thirteenth Century. The Chinese records describe Myanmar (800 A.D) as containing eighteen states and nine walled towns. Their capital was Pyay (=Prome). Their area stretched to Shwebo and the Chindwin up to the Kabaw valley.

**In the third century A.D.** Indo-China was ruled by the Kingdom of Funan. They were Khmers and they professed Hinduism. In the extreme north was the Kingdom of Nanchao of the Chinese-Shans.

They received Buddhism from Tibet. They carried away the Pyus as slaves.

When their cities disintegrated, the Pyus dispersed in many areas but they retained their identity and language. Their name can be found in the Pagan, Pinya and Innwa inscriptions.

## **The Mons**

The Mons from Thailand crossed to Myanmar and established the Kingdom of Dvāravati, It was contemporaneous with the Gupta period in India, that was **the fifth Century A.D.** The Dvāravati kingdom was much influenced

by Indian culture. The Buddha statues of that period were like those of the Gupta period and the Mon writing at that time was similar to the fifth century Indian alphabets of Kadamba and Pallava.

The pictures of dharmachakra and golden deer found at Prapathon were very old and preceeded the making of Buddha images. It dated from Āsokan age (B.C 3 to 1 Centuries) and Ammaravati age (A.D 2 to 3 centuries).(13)

The Mons established kingdoms in Thailand as well as in Myanmar. According to **Professor Schmidt** the name “Mon” derives from “Manto” in Pāli and “Mantrā” in Sanskrit. “Childer’s Dictionary” explains that these words means “Vedic hymns.” The cultural connection with India is evident.(14)

**Professor Naing Pan Hla** has, in his book, shown interesting relationship between ancient Mon, Pāli and Sanskrit worlds.(15)

**Dr. Soni** writes –

*“the dominant cultural influence was Indian; Burma and all her neighbours, whether in the Far East or North or South, were under the sphere of influence of the Greater India cultural expansion”.*(16).

This fact is evident when we make a comparative study of languages. A Mon scholar has compared the Pallava alphabets (consonants) of 4/5 century A.D. with those of Prapathon and Loburi (Thailand) and Thaton (Myanmar).(17) The Mon, Rakhine, Pyu and Myanmar letters have derived

from those of India. This fact has been accepted by linguistic experts.

The Mons claim that the famous commentator Buddhaghosha was a native of Thaton and he brought Buddhist scriptures from Sri Lankā. Some scholars (i.e. **Professor Heckmann, Dr. Godakambura**) support this view. If this is true, it was possible that the Mons might have got the Pallava alphabets through him. The Pallava was derived from the Brāhmī alphabet which was first used by King Āsoka in India (third century B.C.).

## **The Rakhines**

The Rakhine region was first inhabited by Manipuris from the north in pre-historic era. They were followed by Mro, Khmi, Dainet and Chaungtha races. There are references to them in the Myanmar chronicles.

The Greeks mentioned islands named “Chryse” (= golden land) and “Argyre” (=silver land) on the other side of the Ganges river. Ptolemy (1500 A.D) also wrote about them. In fact they refer to the Rakhine region.

The Rakhine chronicles give dynastic lists of kings who were dated from 2000 B.C. The first king was Marayu, who came from Kapilavastu, India. He founded the city of Dinnyawady. He was followed by 54 kings.

Then came Kanyarzarji from Tagaung. He founded Dinnyawady the second time. Twenty-eight kings ruled there.

It was followed by Sūrya kings. The first was Chandra Sūrya. The Rakhine chronicles said that it was during his reign that Lord Buddha visited Rakhine and the famous Mahāmuni image, now in Mandalay, was cast with the Lord's consent. He began a line of 48 kings.

**Dr. Johnson** and **Dr. Sircar** of Indian Archaeological survey read the Ānanda-chandra inscription of Shitthaung Pagoda. It was mentioned that the Rakhine kings descended from Siva. They also found a list of kings from the beginning of Chandra dynasty. The names of the kings were in Sanskrit, i.e.,

**Mahāvira,**

**Vrayajap,**

**Dharma sūra,**

**Vajra sakti,**

**Dharma vijaya,**

**Narendra vijaya,**

**Dharma chandra,**

**Ānandachandra etc.**

Archaeologists have found silver coins struck by nine of these kings. They are –

(1) Devachandra,

(2) Yajnachandra,

(3) Chandra bandu,

(4) Bhumichandra,

(5) Nītichandha,

- (6) Virachandra,
- (7) Pritichandra,
- (8) Prithvichandra and
- (9) Dharmachandra.

The coins have Hindu symbols on them. The trident of Siva on the reverse and the humped bull on the obverse. Moreover a tablet of auspicious symbols and a bronze pot were also unearthed in 1965 near Mrauk-Oo Vesali road. The twelve auspicious symbols are –

- (1) a s̄rīvatsa diagram,
- (2) a deer,
- (3) a peacock king (Maurya rājā),
- (4) a pair of fly-whisks (Camara)
- (5) a brahmani duck (Hansa rājā),
- (6) a right-voluted conch (Sankha),
- (7) a dhvaja stambha,
- (8) a bull king (Usahharājā),
- (9) a goad (Ankusa),
- (10) a white umbrella (Chattra),
- (11) a vase with a plant (Purna kalasā) and
- (12) a pair of fish (Suvannamacchayugalam)(18)

These symbols are used by Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions. They are also the signs of a Chakravartin (=universal monarch), also believed by all these religions. So this tablet clearly shows the inter-relationship of Indian and Myanmar cultures.

Researchers also found dedicatory inscriptions of

Nītiçhandra (520-575 A.D) and Virachandra (575-578 A.D.). The alphabets they used resembled eastern Indian inscriptions of 5 and 6 Centuriest A.D.

The first inscription contains “Ye dharmā” gāthā of Theravādins. It also mentions that it was the pious gift of the queen of Sri Nītiçhandra named Savitam Chandrasriya.

The second inscription contains information about king Virachandra that he constructed one hundred stupas. The use of Sanskrit literature by royal families of that time should also be noted.

The Rakhines were contemporary with the Pyus and the Mons, and had relations with them. They had a high level of civilization.

## **The Myanmars**

The two words “Myanmar” and “Bamar” should be clarified here. “Myanmar” refers to the country formerly known as “Burma”. “Bamar” is the race.

“Burma” comes from the word “Brahmā”, the God of creation of the Hindu trinity. It shows the name was first used by the Hindus. They called it Brahmādesh.

Myanmar has a very long history. Researchers, historians and scholars have found evidences of pre-historic men and those of stone age, copper age, iron age etc. They can be summed up as follows –

- (1) Fossil remains of early primates were found at Pondaung and Mogaung. Carbon dating reveals they are about **40-million years old**.
- (2) Stone age men's skeletons and implements at Taungthaman near Mandalay dated **125,000 years**.
- (3) Pyin-nyaung remains were contemporary with the Peking Man (**cir. 400,000 years**).
- (4) Heho, Shan State fossils were from about **4000 B.C.**

Palaeolithic Stone Age tools were found on the river terraces of Tagaung, Magway, Yenangyaung, Chauk, Salay, Kyaukpadaung and Nyaung-Oo in upper Myanmar. These tools (mostly choppers and chopping tools) were called Anyathian and their culture was named as Anyathian culture. It was assigned at **500,000 years** before the present by international archaeologists.

Contemporary Mesolithic culture site (**cir. 13,000 to 10,000 years**) was discovered at Padalin cave, in Ywa-ngan township in southern Shan State.

The Neolithic sites also have been found near Ayeyarwady, Chindwin and Dut-htawady rivers.

The Bronze Age culture sites were found at Budalin, Mahlaing, Pyaw-bwe and Yamethin townships.

Scholars call them "Myanmar men". They were the first Myanmar. Then came waves of immigration from China and India. They later became indigenous races of the country such as Pyu, Kanyan, Thet, Chin, Kachin, Kayin,

Shan etc. The Pyus merged with Bamars. The other races remain distinct. They were of Mongolian stock.

Vietnam, Khmer, Mon, Palaung, Wa etc-were Mon-Khmer races. The Mons entered Myanmar via Thailand. The Pyu, Kanyan, Thet came through river valleys in the north.

The Kayins may have been earliest of all. The latest immigration was that of the Tai (= Shans) who came in **the twelfth Century A.D.**

The Indians came in two streams, one overland through Assam to upper Myanmar, the other by sea from south India to lower Myanmar.

Although Myanmars are of Mogoloid stock, their culture, religion, literature, law, tradition, folkore, etc. were largely Indian. Religion and culture could not last long without writing. The Mongoloids had no writing. They got the art of writing from the Indians. It was also the Indian traders who introduced Buddhism to the country.

When Srikshetra was destroyed in **832 A.D** there were three racial groups, according to Myanmar chronicles. They were Pyu, Kanyan and Myanmar. The Pyus had to fight wars against Thets, Kyabins and Mons. They also fought each other. Then after thirteen years in **849 A.D.** King Samudrit organised nineteen Pyu villages near Yonehlut =kyun and started the Pagan Dynasty.

The name "Pagan" derives from "Pyu gāma" (= Pyu village). From "Pyu gāma" it has changed to "Pyugam"

to “Pugam” to “Pagan”. Its official name was “Arimaddanapūra” in Sanskrit which means “crushing of enemies?”

The Myanmars and the Pyus jointly founded Pagan. Some scholars have the opinion that the two races were one and the same.(20)(21) But they are two separate races. The Pyus merged with the Myanmars afterwards and disappeared. The Myanmars got their culture from the Pyus and the Mons.

Pagan has been shifted to four places. In the original place, Yone-hlut-kyun, six kings held sway. During the reign of king Thilikyaung in the **second century A.D.** it was transferred to the place named Thiripyitsaya. Five kings ruled there till the sixth century. Then King Thaik-taing moved to Tampawady. Twenty-two kings resided there. Finally King Pyinbya moved to the present site.

There were altogether 55 kings who ruled in Pagan and the 42<sup>nd</sup> king, Anawrahta, founded the First Myanmar Nation. Kings Kyansittha, Alaungsithu, Narapatisithu etc were also very famous.

In conclusion of this chapter we can observe the following points.

- (1) Myanmar Naing-Ngan has a long history beginning with the anthropoids of 40-million years ago.
- (2) At the dawn of history there were many races in the country, but the four races (Pyu, Mon, Rakhine and Myanmar) established kingdoms and left cultural and literary evidences.

- (3) The Myanmars (Bamars) became most numerous and they organised and established the Myanmar Nation.
- (4) The civilization and culture of these early races were much indebted to India.

## Chapter I References

1. လှသောင်း၊ ဦး၊ - သုဝဏ္ဏဘူမိရှာပုံတော်၊ ၂၀၀၉ ၊ (P.33-37)
2. Basham, A.L. - The Wonder That Was India - (P. 226-227)
3. Harvey, G.E. - Outline of Burmese History, 1947, (P.1)
4. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဦး၊ (ရွှေဘို) - ပုဂံအကြိုသမိုင်းခြေရာများ(ဒုတိယနှိပ်ခြင်း)။ ၂၀၀၄ ၊ (P. 53-57)
- 5(A). ဘုန်းတင့်ကျော် - ပျူစစ်လျှင်မြန်မာ ၊ ၂၀၀၇။ (P.9)
- 5(B). Ibid, (P-9)
6. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဦး၊ (ရွှေဘို) - Ibid
7. Stargardt, Janice - The Ancient Pyu of Burma (Vol.A)
8. သန်းဆွေ၊ ဒေါ်၊ - ပျူစာခင်ဘရွှေပေချပ် လေ့လာချက် ၊ ၁၉၉၂။
9. သန်းဆွေ၊ ဒေါ်၊ ပျူစာခင်ဘရွှေပေ ဓာတ်ပုံများ၊ ၁၉၉၁။
10. နိုင်ပန်းလှ၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ - သုတေသနစာပေများ၊ ၁၉၉၈။ (P.87)
11. Ibid - (P.12)
12. Ibid - (P.88)
13. Ibid - (P.22)
14. Ibid -
15. Ibid
16. Soni Dr.RL.-A Cultural study of the Burmese Era- 1955, (P.37)
17. နိုင်ထွန်းသိန်း - မွန်အကြောင်းသိကောင်းစရာနှင့် အခြားဆောင်းပါးများ၊ (P.22-23)
18. San Tha Aung - The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan, 1979, (P.20)
19. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဦး၊ (ရွှေဘို) - ရာဇဝင်ကိုဆင်ခြင်ခြင်း ၊ ၂၀၀၅ ၊ (P-52)
20. ဘုန်းတင့်ကျော် - Ibid.
21. လှသိန်းထွန်း၊ ဦး၊ ဗုဒ္ဓနှင့် မြန်မာလူမျိုး၊

## **Chapter II**

### **Civilization and Culture**

The Hmanan Yazawin of Myanmar gives the account of Tagaung being founded by Indian princes. **Professor Luce** rejects this account. But **Professor Htin Aung** writes in this connection.

*"What Professor Luce fails to realize is this: the Chronicle does not claim that the Burmese came from India; it claims only that the first Burmese kings came from India. .... first the overland route between India and north Burma existed in prehistoric times, and second most dynasties in Southeast Asia were first founded by Indian merchant-princes."(1)*

When **Professor Luce** wrote, Tagaung was only folklore, but now new discoveries have been made by archaeologists, and the age of Tagaung was assigned to B.C.(2)(3) Many Pyu household articles are found there. It has been confirmed that Tagaung was one of the oldest cities of Myanmar. There are other towns in upper Myanmar also with the tradition of being founded by Indian princes or princesses. The link between the two countries in pre-Christian era is undeniable.

Tagaung was inhabited by Kadus and Myanmars. They did not know the art of writing yet. When Indian princes and princesses came, they brought with them the art of government and all other forms of civilization. The Myanmars learnt from them. That was why Myanmar culture was largely Indian although they were of Mongolian stock. Tagaung was the first Myanmar city.

The Tagaung King Kanyarzarji went to Rakhine and founded the second dynasty there. Starting from him up to 720-A.D., the Rakhines used Injana Era from India. This is an indication that Tagaung was founded by Sākiyans from India.

The age of the city-states of ancient Myanmar, based on archaeological and other grounds, can be –

(1) Tagaung (Myanmar) = B.C.

(2) Dinnyawady (Rakhine) = B.C.

(3) Vishnū (Pyu) = 1 to 8 A.D.

(4) Shrikshetra (Pyu) = 4 to 10 A.D.

(5) Hanlin (Pyu) = 4 to 9 A.D.

The social classes of those cities were roughly as follows –

(1) Rājās and ruling classes

(2) Ministers, officials of court, generals, military personnel etc.,

(3) traders and merchants,

(4) artisans and craftsmen,

(5) artists, dancers, musicians, writers etc.,

(6) Peasants and agriculturalists and

(7) slaves and manual labourers.

But these classifications are not unchangeably rigid, for, as **Dr. Htin Aung** writes –

*"In Burmese society although the king and his officials were at the top of the social structure, every one could hope to be king one day ..... even the humblest peasant, if he had the ability, could hope to become an official of the highest rank."*(4)

Even slaves were not treated cruelly as in Europe. The owners took them as their family members and fed and clothed and treated them kindly. This was due to the influence of the Buddhist teachings.

At that time the country was bounded by –

(1) Cambodia (Khmer) in the east,

- (2) Dvāravati (Thai) in the south-east
- (3) Nanchao (Shan) in the north and
- (4) the sea in the west.

Ancient sites were situated near river valleys, such as Ayeyarwady, Chindwin, Mu, Zawgyi, Panlaung, Samone, Myittha, Mone, Man river valleys. They dated back to B.C. periods. The ancient sites so far found are – Nga-saungchan, Kaungsin, Kanthidar, Maimo, Kyan-nhyat, Male, Mekhadarit, Wadi, Beinaka, Salin, Phaung-lin, Kyabin, Pagan, Pakhangyi, Kyaukpadaung, Pandaung, Zeyawutthana, Thegone, Pathein, Bago (Hantharwady), Kyaik-kathar etc.

Moreover, sixteen ancient cities are identified up till now. They are – (1) Tagaung, (2) Hanlin, (3) Allakappa, (4) Tampadipa, (5) Maimo, (6) Legaing, (7) Vishnūmyo, (8) Taungdwingyi, (9) Dinnyawady, (10) Vesālī, (11) Srikshetra, (12) Dvāravaty, (13) Okkalapa (Dagon), (14) Padanaypyi, (15) Thaton and (16) Thagara. Objects found at these places include large-sized bricks with finger marks on them, earthenware pottery, bronze implements, iron tools, terracotta beads, stone beads, gold and jewellery pieces, burial urns, walls, building remains, moats etc.

The sizes of the bricks used were –

- (a) 20" × 10½" × 3½"
- (b) 17½" × 8½" × 2½"
- (c) 20" × 9" × 2"
- (d) 17" × 8½" × 1¼" ( inches )

Similar coins have been found in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia etc. This shows the trade and travel with neighbouring countries. The road to India from Khmer (Cambodia) passed through Myanmar. Indians reached Myanmar through that road as well as by sea in lower Myanmar. Bago, Thaton etc were sea-ports at that time. The culture at that time was similar to that of Nāgajunakunda in southern India.

Apart from the sea routes there was a regular trade route from China to India through Myanmar. This was called the "Silk Road". There was a direct route from eastern India to Rakhine also. The early Indian settlers reached through these roads carrying their religion, culture, arts etc.

Vishnūmyo was square in form about two and a half miles on each side. On the eastern side were cultivations and on the western side were the palace and residential areas as well as religious buildings. (all inside the city).

Hanlin also was a square city, 9600 feet from north to south and 5800 feet from east to west. There were walls and moats outside. In the middle was the palace.

Srikshetra was circular in shape; about two and a half mile from north to south and about one mile from east to west. It was also bounded by walls and moats, with the palace in the middle.

Manky brick building remains were found in those cities. In Vishnūmyo foundations of a brick building 100-feet in length was found. Circular double buildings were

similar to those in Nāgajunakunda. In Hanlin 80-burnt posts of a big building (150×105 feet) were excavated. Religious (i.e Buddhist) buildings and stupas were found only in Sriksheṭra. Some scholars are of the opinion that Buddhism of Vishnū and Hanlin at that time was that of Nāgajunakunda, which did not practise idol worship.

Burial urns were found in or out of these cities, with over 100-designs on them. Most were urns of ashes, but some buried their dead in Vishnū and Hanlin.

The habit of wearing necklaces of all kinds was widespread. Some were of gold and some were of semi precious stones.

Seals were also discovered. The words on them were "Sanghāsri" (Vishnū), Rupavadi" (Sriksheṭra) and "Dayā dānam" (Hanlin). From these, some scholars guess that there were "Sanghā" (= Buddhist monks) at that time.

Chinese records say that the Pyu palaces were very grand. They were built of bricks. Houses of people were of wood and bamboo. Tin sheets were used for roofing.

The Pyu and Myanmar people at that time knew stone sculpture; iron smiths, gold smiths, tin smiths, masons, potters etc., were also there. Silk was imported from China. The Chinese records say the Pyu men wore white clothes and hats; women wore blue clothes and knotted their hair. They carried fans when walking outside.

The Pyus were fond of music. They could play many kinds of musical instruments. The Chinese records mention 38-kinds used by them at the Chinese court in 802 A.D.,

when a Pyu delegation headed by the king's son, Sunanda, visited there.(5)

Five small figures of musicians and a dancer have been found in Srikshestra.

The Chinese have also recorded that the Pyus were very kind and good-natured, that they loathed killing, that they refrained from disputes and that they were very pious Buddhists. Cruel punishments were not used. Disputes were resolved through negotiation and examination of conscience in front of a big Buddha statue.

According to a research paper by U Yi Sein, the Pyus at that time had communications with the Mons, Rakhines, Khmers (Cambodia) southern Vietnam, Nanchao, China and India by land routes, as well as Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines by sea.(6)

The Pyus knew the art of irrigation and agriculture. Janice Stargarrrt has made a detailed study about the town-building, irrigation, agriculture, land-scaping etc., in "The Ancient Pyu of Burma". The Pyus grew paddy, maize, corn, beans and sugar cane. Myanmar was the original place of paddy, grown since 10,000 years ago.

When the Pyu cities disintegrated they joined hands with the Myanmars and founded the first city of Pagan in 849 A.D. King Anawrahta organised and expanded his domain. So he was called the founder of the First Myanmar Nation. It reached the nation state during his reign. The Pagan Dynasty had 55-kings and lasted over 1200-years.

It was overthrown by Chinese invasion in 1287 A.D.

The country in Anawrahta's time was very wide, reaching India in the west, China in the north, and Cambodia in the east.

Shin Araham from Thaton reached Pagan and converted the king and people to Theravāda Buddhism. Anawrahta conquered Thaton and brought back thirty sets of Tripitaka to Pagan. He even marched to China to demand the Buddha's tooth. He sent his troops to Ussa-(Bago) to defend it against the Khmer invaders from Cambodia. He founded 43-garrison towns to defend his country.

For the benefit of the people he constructed many dams and reservoirs; such as Kindar, Nganaingthin, Pyaung-Pyar, Gume-, Nwatet, Kwansay and Gutaw, that irrigated 800,000 pes of agricultural land. (a pe is equal to 1.75 acres).

He also had many monasteries, rest houses, caves, stupas (cetis) to his credit, the most famous of them being the Shwezigon in Pagan. King Anawrahta's palace site was excavated in 2003 by the Archaeological Department and is now being reconstructed.

In 1071 the Sri Lankan King Vijaya Bāhu asked Anawrahta for scriptures and monks from Myanmar. Anawrahta gladly sent them, but in return he requested for the Buddha's tooth, but Sri Lankā sent him only a duplicate tooth. He enshrined it, together with the Buddha's collar bone and frontlet bone which he got from Prome, in the

Shwezigon. In this pagoda were also the shrines of the 37-nat spirits whom the people worshipped before the advent of Buddhism.

When Anawrahta died in 1077 A.D his son Sawlu ascended the throne. He also took a title in Sanskrit. He was a weak king and the Mons tried to revolt. Sawlu was killed by the Mons in 1084.

Sawlu was succeeded by Kyansittha. He took the Sanskrit title of Sri Tribhuvanāditya dharmarājā. His son was Rāja Kumar, whom he appointed governor of Rakhine.

Anawrahta's conquest of Thaton in 1059 was of great importance for the country as

- (1) Theravāda Buddhism succeeded Mahāyāna as the principal religion.
- (2) Pāli superseded Sanskrit as the language of the scriptures.
- (3) The Myanmars adopted the Mon alphabet to write their own language.
- (4) There was a great influx of craftsmen from Thaton to Pagan, and Anawrahta started the great era of temple-building which lasted for more than two centuries.(7)

Kyansittha used Pāli and Mon languages, but his Mya

Kan (Emerald lake) inscription contains four ancient Myanmar words. This shows the existence of Myanmar language before that time.

Kyansittha built a new palace under the guidance of Shin Araham the Primate. four thousand Buddhist monks recited paritta hymns. But the foundation-laying ceremony was mainly conducted by the Brāhmins of the court. They were purohit (= wise men). The King sought their advice before making important decisions. This tradition was followed by kings throughout history.

Kyansittha left at Prome Mon stone inscriptions. In the Shwesandaw inscription he stated that he was Vishnū in one of his previous lives. That is why he revered Vishnū very much. In his palace construction inscription can be found the important role played by Brāhmins. The foundation was laid after paying homage to Vishnū and goddess Sri. (108) (=1+0+8=9) is thought to be an auspicious number by Myanmar. So Kyansittha used 108-monks, 108-Kalāsā pots, 108-conches, 108-pasoes (= garments) and 108-spades, in his ceremony. He paid homage to 108-nat spirits also. The ceremony was accompanied by Mon, Pyu, Myanmar and Min songs. One hundred and twenty six Mons took part in it, that is, 1+2+6 = 9. Nine is the lucky number.

Eight Buddhist monks from India came to Pagan. Kyansittha entertained them for three months. They told him about the cave temple of Ānantā in the Udayagiri hills of Orissa. So he built the Ānandā temple in Pagan in imitation.

It was one of the wonders of Pagan. Two life-size statues of the king and Shin Araham the Primate were also erected there. He dedicated six villages to this temple. He also completed Anawrahta, unfinished pagodas the Shwezigon.

He converted a Chola King (India) to Buddhism, and he was the first Myanmar King to restore the shrine at Bodh Gaya in Bengal.

When he was ill, his son Rāza Kumāra dedicated a pagoda for him and set up an inscribed stone, with writings in four languages, i.e., Pāli, Myanmar, Mon and Pyu. This helps the scholars to decipher the Pyu alphabets.

The society at that time can be roughly divided into three categories. They were – (1) the ruling class, (2) countrymen and (3) slaves. The ruling class comprised of kings, queens, court ladies, ministers, military personnel, judges, royal servants etc. They had power, pomp and wealth.

The country men were all kinds except the slaves, such as wealthy men, traders, merchants, landowners, peasants, artisans, handicraftsmen, shopkeepers, musicians, dancers, carpenters, masons etc.

The slaves were of different kinds – those dedicated to (a) temples and pagodas, (b) monasteries, (c) libraries, (d) monks, and (e) ordination halls. Some were assigned to prepare food for monks. Kings, princes, princesses, ministers, officials, wealthy persons had slaves as private property.

Some owned about 30 to 40 slaves. They were either given by the king, or bought, or hereditary slaves. The slave-owner had the duty to look after their well being. If the owners became poor, they set them free. Some were donated to pagodas etc. Some slaves were not hereditary; they became slaves due to poverty.

Women of that time had many rights. They were on equal footing with men. Due to monastery education they had a high level of literacy. Some became queens, princesses, ladies-in-waiting, officials, judges and village chiefs. Some became outstanding writers, poets, musicians, dancers and songsters. Women were very important in a family. They had control over family finances and management. They were also protected by law. They could inherit the husband's property.

Their clothing was simple and Indian in style. They used cotton mostly. In the pictures of that period we saw some women wearing tight "aingyis" (= jackets) and some wearing long "thindaings" (= gowns) covering the whole body. Women knotted their hair. They used bracelets, bangles, rings etc. as ornaments.

The majority of the population lived in rural areas. They were farmers. There was abundant agricultural land for people. In the stone inscriptions one can find that they donated many pès of land. A pè is equal to 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres and some donated as many as ten thousand pès. The main agricultural areas were Kyaukse, Taze, Saku and Salin.

There were carpenters, masons, painters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, sculptors etc. They got good wages for their work. The cost of one pè of good land was 15 to 20-kyats, one ox was 4-kyats, one elephant was 100-kyats, one basket of rice was 1½-kyats, one viss of copper was 2-kyats, 10-viss of milk was 1-kyat, one viss of gold was 1000-kyats, respectively.

The building cost of Dhamma-rājika pagoda of King Narapatisithu was 44027-kyats as recorded in his inscription. This shows the good wages received by craftsmen of that time.

Next to growing paddy the planting of toddy-palm trees was important. We find in the inscriptions a very interesting custom of that time. After making a big feast, people collectively planted 500 or 1000 toddy-palm trees. The toddy juice was a favourite drink, toddy-palm leaves were made into fans etc. The whole tree was useful. As completion of an “ahlhu pwe-” (donation ceremony) people drank a lot of toddy with curries of fish, chicken, pork and beef.(8)

The political system at that time was absolute monarchy. Kings had power over life and death of subjects. Some kings were kind-hearted, some were cruel. But the standard of kingly behaviour was set forth in Buddhist scriptures. Moreover the kings were given advice and guidance by monks. They had also to observe the ten “rāzadharmā” which were, (1) charity, (2) morality, (3) giving food to

servants, (4) simplicity, (5) speaking softly and pleasantly, (6) self-control, (7) non hatred, (8) non cruelty, (9) forbearance and (10) not going against the wishes of the people.

In the Lawkanandā inscription King Anawrahta was called “Chakravartin” (= universal moarch). This shows the wide-spread belief in this concept. It was a Hindu and Buddhist concept.

Some think that the early Pagan was devoid of civilization and that only after Anawrahta's conquest of Thaton that they became civilized. That was not the case. The Pyus and Mons had civilization before Pagan, and it was they who founded Pagan together with the Myanmars. The Myanmars inherited arts and crafts as well as the art of writing from them. Moreover there were Indian crafts-men. Anawrahta brought Manuhā the captive king of Thaton, to Pagan and treated him well. Manuha sold his great jewelled ring for eight cartloads of silver and built the Maunha pagoda. At Myinkaba also he built the Nanphayā. It contains interesting bas-reliefs in which Hindu deities were prominent.

Kyansittha had to suppress a Mon rebellion. But he took a Mon princess as Queen and appointed Mon ministers. He used the Mon language. He married his daughter Shwe Einthi to the great-grandson of Manuha. These acts contributed to national unity.

## Chapter II References

1. Htin Aung, Maung – Burmese History Before 1287, 1970, p.4
2. The Myanma Ahlin Daily, 19-8-2004 and 7-12-05  
The Kyemon Daily -13-9-2004
3. ချစ်စံဝင်း၊ တကောင်းမှပျူအရိုးအိုးများ။ ၂၀၀၅။
4. Htin Aung, Maung – Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism, p.120
5. ရည်စိန်၊ ဦး၊ ခရစ်နှစ် ၈၀၂ ခုနှစ်၊ တရုတ်နိုင်ငံရောက်ပျူသံအဖွဲ့၊ နိုင်ငံသမိုင်းသုတေသနစာစောင်-၃၊ ၁၉၇၉။ p.1 to 65
6. ရည်စိန်၊ ဦး၊ ပျူခေတ်မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ နိုင်ငံခြားဆက်ဆံရေး ၊ နိုင်ငံသမိုင်း သုတေသနစာစောင်-၁၊ ၁၉၇၉။ p. 1 to 39
7. ဖိုးလတ်၊ ဦး၊ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာရာဇဝင်နှင့် ယဉ်ကျေးမှုသုတေသန၊ ၁၉၆၂။ p 34.

## **Chapter III**

### **Writings**

Every race has to pass through three stages to get writing of its own. These stages are (1) language, (2) alphabet and (3) literature.

Language is the spoken word. Every race has it, but some have no alphabets of their own. By inventing alphabets they can write their language with their own alphabets. Before that they had to use other alphabets. The Pyu, Mon and Rakhine used Indian alphabets. Anawrahta used Pāli in Deva Nāgarī script. Sawlu did the same. Kyansittha used Mon alphabets for his inscriptions. But his son Rāza Kumāra used Pāli, Myanmar, Mon and Pyu. (1112.A.D)

A language is not invented instantly. It has evolved

through many hundreds of years. So we can safely assume that Myanmar alphabet and language existed long before Rāza Kumāra, though not committed to writing, or those writings were lost.

The earliest Mon inscription found so far was Prapathon inscription of Thailand (7 A.D). In Myanmar the Manuhā inscription of Thaton and Kyansittha inscription of Pagan. (Cir. 1000 A.D) were the earliest.

King Āsoka sent Buddhist missionaries to Myanmar in about 241 B.C. They reached Suvārnabhūmi which was the Mon Kingdom. The Mon people might have got Indian alphabets from them. They inscribed their records on Gavam stones using Kadambha letters. King Kyansittha's inscriptions at Shwezigon (Pagan) and Shwesandaw (Prome) and those of Ānandā, Pathothamyā, Apēyatanā, Nagayone, Nan and Pyatthat Shwegu pagodas were also the earliest Mon writings. According to Dr. C O Blagden the Mon Language was the oldest in the whole of Indo-China.(1)

The votive tablet discovered in the ruins of the Botataung pagoda was similar to that of Prapathon (Thailand) (7 A.D.). The Mons received civilization from Kalinga, Telegana and Conjeevaram in southern India.

When King Anawrahta ascended the throne in 1044 A.D. the Pyu writing was in general use in upper Myanmar, but he adopted the Mon alphabet being used in lower Myanmar. It might have been because the Mon alphabet was easier to write than the Pyu.

Shin Arahan, who was a Mon, and other learned Mon monks were very respected and influential at that time. It was a custom of the people of Pagan to record their meritorious deeds and make a prayer or wish. They requested the learned Mon monks for that purpose. In this way the Mon alphabet became widely used.

At that time, the making and use of votive tablets were very popular. They were the moulded Buddha images on clay. The moulds might have been got from India first.(2) Then the people became clever in making them. Even King Anuruddha made votive tablets with his own hands. An example of his writing – “Eso Bhagavā mahārāja sri anuruddha devena Kato vimuttatham sahate nevāti”

(This Buddha image is made by the great King Sri Aniruddhadeva with his own hands to attain liberation)

Anawrahta's votive tablets were widely found. In some he substituted “Lokanātho” for “bhāgavā”. Lokanātha was not Buddha, but Bodhisattva. This indicates that Mahāyāna, northern school, was also prevalent there at Pagan at that time. This was the earliest in the history of Myanmar alphabets.(3)

Anawrahta's son, Sawlu, also donated votive tablets. His writing was the same except that he substituted Anawrahta's name with his titles. His titles were

(1) Mahārāja Sri Vajrābharana deva

(2) Mahārāja Srimad Vajyā bharana deva

(3) Mahārāja Sri Vajrābharana Supandita.(4)

King Kyansittha and his Queen did the same. His title was Sri Tribhuvanāditya Dharmarājā. His Queen was Trilokavatamsakar Devī. These titles were used in their tablets. One of his tablets was written –

“Sri Tribhuvanāditya  
Dharmarājena attano  
attena Buddha bhāvāya  
aggita patimā emā.”

(King Sri Tribhuvanaditya Dharma-rājā, wishing to become Buddha, made and baked and donated this tablet.)

It should be noted that his prayer was not for liberation from saṃsārā but for Buddha-hood. This shows that he had Mahāyānist inclinations.

Not only kings and queens but the common people also made and donated votive tablets. They included ministers, officials, wealthy men and women and ordinary people.

King Kyansittha had many Mon inscriptions to his credit. In the Shwesandaw inscription at Pyay (Prome) he said that he was Vishnū in one of his previous lives. In the palace inscription at Pagan we can find detailed description of the building of his palace. He erected his stone inscriptions in Pagan, Pyay, Thaton and Kelasa mountain. All were in Mon.

King Tissa, who ascended the Bago throne in 1041 A.D., was a non-believer, but he was converted to Buddhism

through his Queen Bhadradevī. They built 7 pagodas. These pagodas were renovated by Queen Shinsawpu and King Dharmaceti. They had a stone inscription written in Mon to record this. In this they prayed for enlightenment. This was a Mahāyāna prayer.

In Myanmar, people like the 550 (really 547) Jātaka stories very much. The earliest terracotta plaques of Jātaka stories were found in Thaton. This practice was carried on in Pagan under the supervision of Mon monks and Mon artists. They can be found at two Phetleik pagodas in Pagan prior to King Anuruddha. Around the terraces of Ānandā pagoda built by Kyansittha, glazed terracotta plaques of Jātaka stories with Mon legends at the bottom were embedded. In the inner walls of Lokahteikpan pagoda were mural paintings of Jātaka stories. The writings under them were old Mon and archaic Myanmar.

Many evidences of the Pyus were found from Hanlin in the north to Pyay in the south. The Ayeyarwady river valley in the third century A.D. was the Pyu country. The cemetery inscription found in Hanlin was in Indian alphabet of fourth century A.D. The Pyus knew the art of writing even before that time.

The Pyu inscription discovered at Mhawza was in Sanskrit. It records about the kings Jayachandra Varman and Hari Vikrama and their guru Gūhadīpa. The four burial urn writings also mention about the Vikrama dynasty of fourth century. They were - Suriya Vikrama, Hari Vikrama

and Simha Vikrama. The script was in Gupta alphabet.

The Pyus have left thousands of terracotta votive tablets containing “ye dharmāgāthā”, in south Indian script.

In 1926 twenty gold manuscripts were discovered at Maung Khin Ba's farm in Mhawza (Pyay district). They were very similar to palm leaf manuscripts. They contain extracts from Abhidharmā and Vinaya Pitakas. Also at Maunggan near Mhawza two gold leaves with writings were found in 1894. They were in Pāli in south Indian characters.

After the death of King Kyansittha the writing in Myanmar language gained momentum. The earliest specimens were the Pawdawmu, the Nabadaw and the Rāja Kumara inscriptions. The last one contains four languages, i.e., Pāli, Myanmar, Mon and Pyu. This inscription helps the scholars to read the Pyu language. King Narapatisithu was the first king to use Myanmar as the official language. The Myanmars, although akin to the Pyus racially, chose the Mon alphabets to write Myanmar.

Scholars assume that the Pyus in the fourth, the Mons in the fifth and the Myanmars in the eleventh centuries A.D. respectively got the art of writing. U Tha Myat explained the evolution of Myanmar language as Brāhmī, to Kadamba, to Mon to Myanmar.(5)

From Anawrahta's conquest of Thaton 1057 to the death of Kyansittha (1112), the Myanmars used the Mon language. From (1113) to (1174) when Narapatisithu ascended the throne, they started using their own language. U Ko of the

Pāli Department, Mandalay University, calls Pagan era “Thrice blessed” because Myanmar alphabet, Myanmar language and Pāli literature began to flourish then.(6)

Starting from the time of Kyansittha, Pāli education began to flourish. Monasteries were education centres. Monks taught Pāli there. There were donors of writing materials, palm leaf manuscripts and also copyists of scriptures. Pāli writings in the Myazedi inscription of Rāja Kumara (1112 A.D) and the Shwegugyi inscription of Alaungsithu (1112-1107) were praised by scholars for their high standard.

Apart from stone inscriptions, books in Pāli were also written by the monks. The earliest were Kārikā" and "Karika tika" by "Shin Dharma Senapati during Kyansitha's reign.

During King Kyaswa's rule, Thanbyin (minister) wrote the "Thanbyin tīkā". Moreover "Sadda Nīti" by Shin Aggavamsa also appeared at that time (1154 A.D). They were treatises on Pāli grammar. The king himself wrote "Sadda Bindu" and "Pramattha Bindu". They were all in Pāli. "Sadda Nīti" won praise and admiration even from Sri Lankan monks.

Now we will trace the development of Myanmar language writings. In (1926) a large number of terracotta votive tablets were unearthed in Maung Chit Sa's field in Pagan. On the reverse side of them the earliest specimens of archaic Myanmar language writings were found. They were records of meritorious deeds and prayers. They were in the experimental stage and showed Mon influence.

In the Lokahteikpan temple, writings in old Mon and

archaic Myanmar are found. One can find here traces of transition from Mon to Myanmar.

Although Pāli and Myanmar came into prominence, Sanskrit also continued to be studied by monks and scholars. Sanskrit was used even before Pagan by Rakhine and Pyu. Monks from Nālanda university arrived at Pagan bringing with them manuscripts of medicine, astrology, alchemy etc. in Sanskrit. This made people to study Sanskrit. Moreover it was those monks from Nālanda who introduced a new form of Buddhism, which was a synthesis of Mahāyānism and Tantrism. That is why Pagan was called "the Myanmar Nālanda".(7)

The court astrologers were Brāhmins, called Ponas in Myanmar. They conducted royal ceremonies and social events such as weddings. They drew horoscopes and invoked good luck for people. A Pagan inscription mentioned about the gift of 295 books to the Sanghā among which many were in Sanskrit.

The Rāja Kumāra inscription is generally regarded as the earliest Myanmar inscription. But **Professor E Maung** pointed out that the Pawdawmu and the Taung-Kha Cythabin were earlier than that.(8)

Inscriptions in Myanmar were first collected by **Dr. E. Forchhammer** in (1881) and published by **Taw Sein Kho**, Director General of the Archaeological Department, in six volumes. "Epigraphia Birmanica" in 7 volumes were also published in (1936). The Mon inscriptions were

read and interpreted by **Dr. C.O. Blagden**. Director General **Charles Duroiselle** also published "A List of Inscriptions found in Burma" in (1921). **U Pe Maung Tin** and **G. H. Luce** published 54 important Pagan inscriptions in (1928). **U Nyein Maung** of Archaeological Department also contributed a great deal by publishing "Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions" in 3 volumes.

In the Pagan inscriptions one can find facts about administration, law, religion, culture, customs, education, social relations, works, professions, business, trade, festivals etc., They are of great help in the study of history also. We get definite dates from them. They are also the source materials of Myanmar orthography and phonetics.

Myanmar poetry began in Pagan era. There were some poems in Pinya era (post-Pagan). Myanmar poetry flourished in Innwa era. Many forms of poetry were written then.

This ceti was identified as Shwedagon by U Kala's Mahāyāzawin (1744) and it was believed so by the people. Dr. E. Forchammer holds that Ukkālā, the site of Yangon, was a settlement of Utkalas from Orissa. According to this tradition Buddhism was first introduced by Tapussa and Bhallika during Lord Buddha's lifetime.

The second story relates how Thera Gavampati of Mitthilā (India) requested the Buddha to preach to the people of Suddhamapura (= Thaton). The Buddha visited Thaton and preached to the people. He also gave some of His hairs to the six hermits. It is very likely that it was this Gavampati who was mentioned in the palace inscription of Kyansittha (1101-02).(1)

Still another tradition speaks of the Buddha's second visit to a place called Vānijagāma in the country.

There the Buddha preached for seven days, and left two footprints, one at the request of a hermit named Saccabandha and the other at the place of Nagārāzā of the river Nammadā.

The fourth tradition was that of Mahāvamsa and Dipavamsa which tells us that after the Third Council in 241 .B.C. King Āsoka sent missionary monks to nine places. This included Suvarnābhumi which was in lower Myanmar.

These are all traditions. The Myanmar chronicles attributed Anawratha for introducing Theravāda Buddhism to the country. But, as shown in the previous chapters,

Indian merchants and missionaries came over to Myanmar even before the Christian era. They came by sea to lower Myanmar and by land to upper Myanmar.

They brought with them Hindu, Theravāda as well as Mahāyāna Buddhism with them.

Rich archaeological finds have been unearthed at Hmawza, a small village five miles south of Prome. They include two gold plates at Maunggan seven miles south of Hmawza and twenty gold-leaf manuscripts at Hmawza.

Both of the two plates begin with the well-known "ye dharmā gāthā" of Assaji given to Upatissa who later became Sariputrā, one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha. The first plate contains enumerations of the Buddha's qualities. The second one contains the nine attributes of the Buddha.

On the gold leaves are recorded the Paticcasamuppāda in forward and back-ward order, certain stages of insight, Bodhipakkhaya-dhamma etc. These are clearly extracts from Pāli Pitaka of Theravādins. Their source was south India.(2)

Famous sites in south India such as Amaravatī, Nagajunakunda and Kancipura were centres of Theravādins, and famous Buddhist Commentators Dharmapāla, Buddhadatta and Kassapa hailed from these places.

These finds show the advent of Theravāda Buddhism at Sriksheṭra (Pyu city) in about **fifth century A.D.** They used in their writing the Kadamba script of north Camara

which, according to Professor Luce, was a Saivite centre of western India. Professor Ray said that the Hmawza script was the Deccanese variety of the Brāhmī script.(3)

The two stone inscriptions at the gates of Srikshetra have verses from Mangala sutra, Mora sutra and Ratana sutra, which are often recited by Theravādins to ward off evils.

No Pāli writings or Buddha images were found at other Pyu cities of Vishmū and Hanlin, but some Hindu objects of worship were discovered there. This shows that Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Hinduism existed side by side in the Pyu cities.

Rakhine is close to India geographically and so Hindu influence was strong there. (See previous chapters). The Rakhine inscriptions were in Sanskrit in Gupta characters dating from the middle of the eighth century A.D. But two inscriptions in Pāli were found near Phayagyikone and Thinkhyattaw Taung respectively. They were of the sixth century A.D. This is an indication that the three faiths existed there at the same time.

The Mon civilization was contemporary of the Pyu. They had close affinities. No Pāli inscription was found, but Hindu influence was strong. Images of Vishnū and Ganesh were unearthed there.

Systematic excavations were made from (1974) to (1979) at Ayetthema and Wingka at the foot of Mount Kelasa under the supervision of U Myint Aung of the Archaeological

Department. Thirteen votive tablets with Buddha images on them were unearthed. His conclusion—

*"In short the recent field work may be assessed to have achieved the revelation of the early Mon culture at Ayetthema and Wingka and its association with the culture of Pyu, their brethren in central and Upper Myanmar"(4)*

All these evidences show that Hinduism, Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhism had reached Myanmar long before Anawrahta. Moreover a number of primitive religious cults were also in existence at that time. They were – (1) alchemy, (2) astrology and (3) worship of "nat" spirits.



(1) **Alchemy** came from India but Myanmar alchemy did not only seek to transmute base metals into gold but to evolve an eternally youthful body. It became a religious cult. Stories about the two famous persons are often told. One was Shin Ajjagona of Pagan era. He succeeded in making a philosopher's stone by alchemy and made king and people rich so that they could build pagodas. The other was Bo Bo Aung. He was the master of runes and got supernatural powers. He was a contemporary of King Bodawphaya of Konebaung era (A.D 1782-1819). Both of them are believed to be living still because they have the power of eternal life. They have many devotees, who believe that they will be

helped by Shin Ajjagona and Bo Bo Aung giving them riches, health and success.

(1) **Astrology** to the Myanmar meant not only tracing the courses of the planets and their influence on men, but also a worship of the planets. It involved worship of some of the Hindu gods. The ceremony of worshipping nine gods is still in vogue but the nine planets have been replaced with the Buddha and His eight chief disciples, namely Sāriputrā, Modgalan Kondanna, Upāli, Ānandā, Gavampati, Rāhulā and Revata.

(3) **The worship of nat spirits** was native in origin. The nats are spirits of dead persons. A nat is supposed to have power over the people of his domain. His area may be a country, a town, a village or even a tree. People under his domain make offerings to appease him.

The worship of 37 nats is very popular with the people. Of them the chief is Sakka (or Indrā of Hindus) and four devās of Buddhism. The remaining 32 are local nats.

The local nats are those who died violent or unpleasant deaths. After death they were supposed to have become nats.

## Classification of nats

### (A) era

pre-Pagan and Pagan era	=	22
Pinya era	=	1
Innwa era	=	9
Taungngu era	=	5
Total	=	37

### (B) gender

male	=	27
female	=	10
Total	=	37

### (C) race

Myanmar	=	28
Mon	=	2
Shan	=	1
Indian	=	3
Thai	=	1
Manipuri	=	2
Total	=	37

### (D) class

kings / Sakka	=	11
princes, royal blood	=	6
queens	=	6
minister, royal servants	=	8
trader, poor men	=	6
Total	=	37

### (E) deaths

violent deaths	=	23
fever	=	11
opium / liquor	=	2
leprosy	=	1
Total	=	37

(5)

The nats worshipped in various parts of the country are over one hundred, but the thirty-seven nats have been officially recognised by the kings. Some are Pyu nats transferred to Pagan. The most popular was Mahagiri and his sister who are still worshipped in many homes. During the reign of King Thaylin Kyaung of Pagan an annual feast to worship them was held by the king and subjects where animals were killed in sacrifice. The Shwephyin Brothers were also popular. A festival is held every year at Taungpyone to honour them.

The worship of Nagā (serpent) was also in vogue in early Pagan era. It had been prevalent even before that, in Tagaung.

King Nyaung-U Saw Rahan of Pagan was a worshipper of nats and nagās. But there is epigraphic record that he donated an ordination hall for monks. So he must have been a devout Buddhist also.

In many stone inscriptions and votive tablets of Mons and Myanmars the donors prayed for Buddhahood or to meet the future Buddha Arimitreya. That was the Mahāyāna prayer. Theravādins pray for Nirvana. The worship of Lokanātha (= future Buddha) was found in Anawrahta's votive tablets. In the writings of Anawrahta and Kyansittha can be found—

- (1) the concept of future Buddha,
- (2) the concept of universal monarch,
- (3) the worship of Vishnū, goddess Sri and nagās, and

(4) the concept of the incarnation of Vishnū.

These are Mahayanist and Hindu concepts.

A cult of Tantric Buddhism also reached Pagan. It's source was Nālanda University. It was the combination of Hinduism and Mahāyanism. Tantric monks practised incantations, magic, spells, alchemy, mantras etc.

Before the advent of Anawrahta, kings and people worshipped the "Arī" monks. The word "Arī" comes from the Pāli word "Ariyā" which means "noble". They were thought to have supernatural powers.

The Myanmar chronicles were prejudiced against them. But they might not have been as bad as the Chronicles said they were. They were in fact Mahāyānist or Tantric monks.(6)

According to the Chronicles the Arīs were guilty of two great heresies. They were –

(1) interpreting the Buddhist scriptures in their own way, and

(2) they held that any sin could be condoned by the recitation of a particular religious formula of prayer.(7)

Anawratha in his zeal for new-found Theravada, expelled and banished the Arīs. Many were made to serve as scavengers of the King's elephants and horses. He also forbid the worship of nats, but people were not willing to give up this. So Anawrahta had to make some compromise.

The people, in spite of the king's edicts, went on

worshipping the nats, and Anawratha had to comply. The figures of the nats were taken from their shrines and placed in the king's pagoda in an attitude of worship, showing that even nats worshipped the Buddha. But the cult of nat worship is very widespread up till now.

Another cult which is Mahāyānist but prevalent among people is the worship of Arahāt Shin Thiwali and Arahāt Shin Upagote. Shin Thiwali was the son of a king's daughter. Because of a past sin he had to remain in his mother's womb for seven years. His mother had to suffer labour pains for seven days. But he became an arahāt on the day he was born. Shin Upagote was believed to have tamed the arch enemy of Buddhism, God Māra, and converted him to Buddhism. He is said to live in a bronze "pyatthat" in the seas. The worship of these two arahats is still popular in Myanmar.

Lord Buddha preached 38 kinds of blessings in Mangala Sutra. These blessings must be observed by good Buddhists, and Mangala sutra has been taught to pupils in monasteries and schools. Apart from these, there are another 12 kinds of mangala blessings. They show strong Brāhmanic influence. They are called lokimangalā.

- (1) gabbhasāvaka mangalā = observed during pregnancy,
- (2) vijāta mangalā = at the birth of a child,
- (3) ahāraparibhoga mangalā = feeding rice to the child,
- (4) tambulabhata mangalā = feeding betel to the child,

- (5) dolakarana mangalā = rocking the cradle,
- (6) kesicchedana mangalā = shaving of the child's hair,
- (7) gehākarana mangalā = inaugurating a new home,
- (8) samanrapabbijja mangalā = initiation,
- (9) kannavijjhana mangalā = ear - boring,
- (10) dussagahana mangalā = wearing of clothes,
- (11) Culagahana mangalā = Knotting the hair
- (12) āvāhavivāha mangalā = wedding.(8)

Of these (12) mangalās some are still observed, especially new home inauguration (7), initiation (8), ear. boring (9) and wedding (12). People consult astrologers and "bedin-sayas" (fortune tellers and brāhmin ponas) to choose an auspicious date and time to celebrate these occasions. There are famous ponas in Mandalay. People consult them for buying cars and houses, building new houses, opening new shops and companies, bus lines, air lines etc. They also consult nat spirits through their mediums.

"Bedin-sayas" are consulted before undertaking important works. They choose days of good luck. They know which is "yet yāzā" (good) and which is "pyatthadā" (bad). Palmists are also getting good income in Myanmar.

Brāhmanic influence is prominent in some of the beliefs of Myanmar. Myanmars worship gods and goddesses who are of Hindu religion. They are the Five Great Gods, namely,

- (1) Thurathati (Sāraswatī, the consort of Brāhma)
- (2) Sandī (Chandī, the consort of Siva)

- (3) Paramaythwa (Siva)
- (4) Maha Peinne (Ganesh) and
- (5) Peikthano (Vishnū)

Thurathati's images or pictures can be found in many Myanmar homes. She is thought to be the guardian of the Tripitaka of the Buddha.

Just as the Hindu gods ride on particular animals as their vehicles the nine planets of Myamars also have their own animal vehicles.

- (1) Sunday - Galone (Garuda)
- (2) Monday - Tiger
- (3) Tuesday - Lion
- (4) Wednesday - Elephant with tusks
- (5) Thursday - Rat
- (6) Friday - Ginea pig (or ox according to Shans)
- (7) Saturday - Nagā (serpent)
- (8) Rāhu - Tuskless elephant and
- (9) Kate - Pancharūpa (mythical animal)

The basic belief of Myanmar astrology is that the planets, except Kate, mould a man's fate. If a man is under Saturn ill-fortune will befall him and if he is under Venus good fortune will result. Thus a man's fate depends on the paths of the planets in the sky. Bedin-sayas and astrologers check a man's horoscope and say under which planet he is and advise him which planet he is to appease. That is why in many Myanmar pagodas eight cardinal

points are named after the planets.

- (1) north-east is the Sunday corner,
- (2) east is Monday corner
- (3) south-east is Tuesday corner
- (4) south is Wednesday corner
- (5) south-west is Saturday corner
- (6) west is Thursday corner
- (7) north-west is Rahu corner
- (8) north is Friday corner.

Each of the eight corners of a pagoda has a figure of the respective animal and people pray before it as advised by the saya.

The alphabets of Myanmar language are assigned to the eight planets as follows –

- (1) ka, kha, ga, gha, nga – Monday
- (2) sa, hsa, za, zha, nya – Tuesday
- (3) ta, hta, da, dha, na – Saturday
- (4) a – Sunday
- (5) la, wa – Wednesday
- (6) Ya, ra – Rahu
- (7) tha, ha – Friday
- (8) pa, pha, ba, bha, ma – Thursday

In choosing a child's name the first word is to begin with the word of his day of birth. For example a child born on Monday is given a name which starts with Ka, Kha, ga, gha or nga, as Khin Maung, Ko Ko etc.

Another instance of Brāhmanic influence is the evolution of Myanmar Thekkarit (Era). Lord Buddha was born in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of Mahā Thekkarit also called Injana Era and passed away in the 148<sup>th</sup> year. King Ajātastru decided to cancel the existing era 148 years and start the first year of Buddha Sāsanā Thekkarit from 1.

When the Buddha Sāsanā Thekkarit was 624 years King Sumondari ruled in Sriksheṭra. According to the Chronicles Sakka the Lord of celestials came down to Sriksheṭra in the guise of a brāhmin named Mahanlaka pona and wrote on the stone at Lawkananda Kyauksagar the number  $624 - 622 = 2$ . So King Sumondari substracted 622 from 624-years and the remainder 2 was the beginning of the Pyu Thekkarit.

When the Pyu Thekkarit reached 562 years King Popa Saw Rahan deducted 560 from it. The remainder 2 was the start of the present Myanmar Era, which is 1370 at the time of this writing 9. In short –

Injana (Mahā) Thekkrit	=	148
King Ajatastru obliterated	=	148
	=	0
Buddha Sāsanā Thekkarit	=	624
King Sumondari substracted	=	622
The Pyu Thakkirit	=	2
		562

King PoPa Saw Rahan subtracted	=	560
		2
The present Myanmar Thekkarit		1370 (9)

The Myanmars are still using this era, but the Rakkhines used Injana Thakkarit since the time of Kanyarzargyi up to 720 A.D.

As the Hindus believe that God Vishnū crushed evil forces and saved the world from ruin so the Myanmars believe that Thagyarmin, or Sakka or Indrā, who is the lord of the gods, came down to the earth and saved the good people from the harm of bad people. Stories abound in the Buddhist scriptures about the gods coming to the help of good people.

For the Myanmars the new year which always falls in April is a time of rejoicing. Elderly people keep eight precepts and young people have fun in the water throwing festival of Thingyan.

People believe that Thagyarmin comes down from heaven on the Day of Descent which always falls on the thirteenth of April. Thagyarmin will stay for two or three days and go back on the Day of Ascent.

Children are warned by parents to have good behaviour because Thagyarmin always brings with him two books, one of dog skin and another of gold. He will record bad deeds in the former and the good deeds in the latter.

Another story runs thus.

Once Sakka and Red Brahmā had a dispute over an astrological problem. The Brahmā lost and so Sakka cut his head with a thunderbolt and fixed an elephant's head instead. Since that day he has helped human beings to overcome difficulties and dangers and achieve success. So he was called Mahā-Peinnē which means "the Great Delight." Kings and people worshipped him in the month of Nattaw (November). This is the Myanmar version of a Hindu original.

The Shwesandaw Pagoda is half a mile south of Pagan. It enshrined the sacred hair relic of the Buddha presented by the king of Ussā (Bago). It is also known as Mahā Peinnē pagoda. It is a cultural mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. Images of Hindu deities including those of Ganesh are there. Myanmar name for Ganesh is Mahā Peinnē. At Pagan small images of Ganesh are fairly common, found in relic chambers together with Buddhist images.

King Nyaung U Saw Rahan of Pagan was called by the Chronicles "nattaw kyaung daga" which means "donor of the residence for holy devas". This kyaung is generally taken to be the Vishnū temple called "N̄at H̄laung K̄yaung". In this respect **Professor Luce** writes –

*"Personally, I regard it, on the one hand as the last link in the old Vaishnava chain joining Sriksheṭra and Ramannadesa with Pagan; on the other as the Pagan prototype of the later Mon temples, from Pathothamyā*

*onwards. Its ultimate connections with north-east India, whether Bengal or Bihar, are also certain. The intimate association in Burma, from early times, of Vishnavism and Buddhism, cannot be doubted."*(10)

A stone image of the Sun God Sūryā also was found at this temple. It was also found in Myohaung, Rakhine.

King Kyansittha claimed himself as an avatar of Vishnū. Two temples at least in Pagan are dedicated to Vishnū. In Rakhine Vaishnavism, Saivism, Mahāyāna and Theravāda were intermixed. Saiva rarely appeared in Myanmar but he was supreme in north Rakhine for centuries.

So many images of the "fat monk" have been discovered in the plains of Myanmar, but no one can say for certain who he is. There are so far five versions which say he is –

- (1) the chief disciple of the Buddha, Moggalāna,
- (2) Gavāmpati, the patron saint of the Mons,
- (3) Mahākaccana, famous for his golden skin,
- (4) Kaccāyana, monk-scholar who was the author of the first Pāli grammar, or
- (5) Kuvera, Lord of the Yakkhas.

Images of Brahmā were also found, one in Sriksheetra two in Thaton, one in Kawgun cave, eight in Nanphaya in Pagan, and one in Nāt Hlaung Kyaung. Some have four hands and some have two.

The images of the ten avatars of Vishnū were there at Nāt Hlaung Kyaung, but some are lost now.

In the Apeyadana temple in Pagan one can find Vedic or post-Vedic gods, such as, Brahmā, Vishnū, Saiva, Sāraswati, Devī, Yamunā, Indrā, Airāvata etc., altogether 18 in number.

(11)

## Chapter IV References

1. Tint Lwin – Legends and History, The Working People's Daily, 24-2-1986.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Naing Pan Hla – Oldest Mon Inscriptions on Votive Tablets, The Working People's Daily, 1-3-1986.
5. Temple, Sir R.C.– The Thirty–Seven Nats, 1981, P.108 (Translation)
6. ဖိုးလတ်၊ ဦး၊ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာရာဇဝင်နှင့်ယဉ်ကျေးမှု သုတေသန ၁၉၆၂၊ p.25-26.
7. Htin Aung, Maung – Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism, P.128
8. သုခ၊ ဦး - သုခမှတ်စု ၊ ၁၉၉၇ P.228.
9. မှန်နန်းမဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ P.184 and 216
10. Luce, G.H.–Old Burma, Early Pagan, 1969, P.9
11. Ibid, P.225-227

## **Chapter V**

### **Iconography and Architecture**

#### **Stupās**

The worshipping of stupās and making of images originated in India. The history of stupās was that of funeral mounds. According to Vedic tradition the disposal of the dead in ancient India was divided in four separate acts. They were –

- (1) cremation,
- (2) collecting the bones of the cremated person and depositing them in an urn,
- (3) expiation and
- (4) erection of the funeral monument.(1)

Buddhist Jatakas also mention about the erection of earth mounds on the places of cremation of Bodhisattas. Moreover in the Mahāparinirvana sutra Ānanda explains how to dispose of the Buddha's body, like that of a Chakravartin (universal monarch).

"The body of a great king should be wrapped in muslin. Then it should be wrapped in five hundred pairs of garments. Then it should be placed in an iron coffer. When this has been filled with vegetable oil, it should be closed with a double iron lid. Then heaping up all kinds of scented wood and having burned it, one extinguishes the fire with milk, and having placed the bones in a golden vase, one constructs a tumulus (stupā) for the bones at a cross-roads, and honours it with parasols, banners of victory, flags, scents and garlands, perfumes, powder and music." (Mahāparinirvāna sutra)

The Buddha was cremated in this way and His remains were distributed to eight clans who demanded them. The vase was taken by the Brāhman who arranged the sharing, and a Brāhmin youth took the ashes. Thus ten original stupās or reliquary mounds are said to have been constructed in honour of the Buddha.

The relics of Shin Sāriputrā and Shin Mogalan, the chief disciples of the Buddha who died during His lifetime, were enshrined in stupās on His instruction.

This was the origin of building stupās. Stupās are objects of veneration and worship. According to the Buddhist

scriptures there are four persons worthy of such stupā worship i.e., (1) the Buddha, (2) Pacceka Buddha (= small Buddha), (3) Sangha (= monks) and (4) Chakravartin. Stupā worship was the ancient Vedic and Buddhist practice. It has passed through three stages of evolution. They are –

- (1) Stupā as a funeral monument since the pre-Buddhist days going back to the Vedic age,
- (2) Stupā as a monument commemorating the memory of the Buddha and as such a vital centre for the Buddhist community as a whole, and
- (3) Stupā as a place of worship.(2)

The sites associated with the main events in the Buddha's life gradually became places of pilgrimage. The Buddha Himself told Ānandā that the four "samvejaniya thāna" should be visited by His followers. They are –

- (1) Lumbini, the place of His birth.
- (2) Buddha gāyā, the place of His enlightenment,
- (3) Migadāvana, the place of His preaching the first sermon, and
- (4) Kusinagara, the place of His passing away.  
(Mahāvagga)

The inscriptions of King Āsoka also mention such sites. Stupās were erected there containing the relics of the Buddha. A stupā has become a necessary object for worship. In the rock-cut monasteries of West India dating

from the second century B.C. onwards, a specially large shrine or temple is an essential feature.

## **Early Buddha Symbols**

The earliest Buddhists, between the lifetime of the Buddha and the first century A.D., did not try to represent the central personalities of their religion in human form. Instead they used symbols for the main events in the Buddha's life, such as,

- (1) a white elephant for His entry into His mother's womb (conception),
- (2) footsteps for His birth,
- (3) a horse for His renunciation
- (4) a throne or a tree for His enlightenment
- (5) a wheel for His preaching the first sermon, and
- (6) a stupā for His passing away.

In Āsokā's time (third century B.C.) it was believed that the Buddha had six predecessors in former aeons. They were represented by symbols, not in human form. So the Buddha also was not portrayed in human form. In the Asokan pillar these seven Buddhas were represented by trees and stupās. Such symbols can also be seen on the railings and gateways of the stupās at Buddhagāyā, Bharut, and Sanchī (2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C onwards) and those

of Amaravati and Nagajuna Konda (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D)

King Āsokā's empire broke up within about fifty years of his death in 232 B.C. It became subject to the Sunga dynasty. During that time magnificent Buddhist settlements grew up at Bharut and Sanchī.

Gandhāra (now east Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan) was taken over by a Greek Dynasty from Bactria. It was again ejected by Scythians called the Sakas. The Sakas were at war with the Parthians. All of them, Greeks, Sakas and Parthians were overtaken by the Kusanas in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. The vast empire of the Kusanas included many religions, i.e., Greek, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain.

## **The Buddha in Human Form**

The greatest king of the Kusanas was Kanishka I who ruled in the first half of the second century A.D. It was within these wide domain of the Kusanas that the first images of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain were produced. They were made mainly in three areas.

- (1) Ganga-Yamuna valley,
- (2) Gandhara, and
- (3) Andhra.

Mathurā, an eastern province of the Kusana empire, was one of the first creative centres of the Buddha images in human form. The greatest number of very early Buddha

images were found in and around Mathurā.

In this area the stone-workers drew upon two main traditional sources; (1) their own experience in making the super-human figures and (2) literary evidences of the Buddha's special characteristics (uttama purisa lakkhanā). They already had experience in making the figures of water spirits, tree spirits, local divinities, yakshas, yakshinis as well as those of kings and emperors.(3)

Ancient Gandhara had been open to Persian and Greek influences for several centuries. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy is of the opinion that "the Buddha image must have been produced simultaneously, probably in the middle or near the beginning of the first century A.D., in Gandhara and Mathurā, in response to a demand created by the internal development of Buddhism; in each case by local craftsmen, working in the local tradition."(4)

In this connection **Dr. Than Tun** writes –

*"It is not true that the Indian people knew the art of making images of gods only when they were taught by the Greeks. There had been many kinds of images before that time. But they did not make the image of the Buddha because the Buddha was thought to be incomparable. Instead, they worshipped the symbols."(5)*

Only in A.D. 75, i.e, 600 years after the passing away of the Buddha that the Buddha images were made in Mathurā, Gandhara and Amaravati.

## Myanmar Iconography

In the ancient Pyu kingdom, excavations conducted at Vishnūmyo, have brought to light vestiges of monasteries and stupās, like those of Andhrā, but no image of the Buddha had been found.

On the other hand in Sriksheṭra some statuettes and carved paving-stones were discovered at the Bebe, Laymyethna, Yahanda-gu, East zay-gu temples. All of them are in south Indian tradition.(6)

The Buddha is seated in the "virāsana" attitude and the garments are draped in a manner typical of the schools derived from Andhrā art. Moreover inscriptions bear witness to the simultaneous use of Pāli and Sanskrit. (See figure 1).

A bronze image was found in Thaton, which was of the sixth to eighth century A.D. It was of Gupta style. This shows that the newly introduced Gupta style seems at first existed side by side with the original school of Andhra tradition and then gradually ousted it.(7) (See figure 2)

On the reliquary found at Khin Ba's mound, which was of the fifth to sixth century A.D., is an inscription in Pāli and Pyu. It reveals the three previous Buddhas and the present Buddha. While it is in the tradition of South India, the robes of the standing disciples are in the Amaravati and Anurādhapura fashion. On the lid of the reliquary there was originally a tree, recalling the site of the bodhi tree, of which only the trunk remains.(8) (See figure 3)

Dr. Than Tun observes two unusual iconography of the Pyus.

(1) In "Bhumiphassa mudrā" (touching the earth) most images touch with the right hand but in some Pyu images it is the left hand.

(2) In Pyu images the fingers of the Buddha are like those of an ordinary man.(9)

The Pyus made many Mahāyāna images, among them, are – Avalokiteshwara, Lokanātha, Mittreya and Tārā Devī, Sāraswatī and also a hermit and about one hundred images of Sambuddha. They are of the fifth century A.D.

The Brāhmin ponas used to say that their ancestors came over to Myanmar at the request of the Pyu kings. They arranged ceremonies of the kings. They brought with them the images of gods and goddesses they worshipped. These images were found in Thaton, Bago, Vesalī, Sriksheṭra, Pagan and Kawgun. Among these finds are –

(1) Standing Vishnū and consort (8th A.D.)

(2) Stone image of Vishnū riding on Garuda (8th A.D)  
at Hmawza,

(3) Vishnū sleeping on Ananta Naga, at Hmawza,  
Thaton and Kawgun cave,

(4) Brahmā, Vishnū and Saiva sitting on the lotus,

(5) Saiva and Pārvātī at Thaton (9th A.D.)

(6) Stone image of Devī killing Mahisāsura (9th A.D.)  
in Rakhine,

(7) Sūriya the Sun God driving his chariot drawn by seven horses (6th to 7th A.D.) in Vesalī, Rakhine.(10)

At the Shwesandaw pagoda images of Hindu gods were seen, but they were all broken. A fat monk image was found in the relic chamber of Botataung pagoda. It was also found in Rakhine. It has been identified as Saccakaparivajaka by U San Tha Aung. (See also chapter IV) The Sisu (now called Cetanagyi) was originally a Hindu temple. So was N̄at H̄laung K̄yaung where images of the ten avatars can be seen including that of the Buddha

Many Brahmā images are found at Myepontha Payahla, a bronze Vishnū image at Pagan Myinkaba, a stone image of Sūriya at Myauk-U. Images and pictures of Hindu gods, Mahāyāna divinities, bodhisattvas and consorts are found at Apeyadana and Phayathonesu . Dr Than Tun has given a list of them.(11)

On the votive tablets made by Anuruddha (1044-1077) the Buddha was flanked by two Bodhisattvas. In the Anandachandra inscription at Rakhine it was recorded that the king donated a monastery for the Buddha as well as one for the Bodhisattva. These show that Theravāda and Mahāyāna co-existed then.

On the votive tablet donated by Sri Mahāsālīni, eight scenes from the Buddha's life were found. This is called "Shit Khan Buddhavin" in Myanmar.

The eight scences are –

- (1) Birth,
- (2) enlightenment,
- (3) preaching the first sermon,
- (4) showing of supernatural powers,
- (5) staying in Parileya forest,
- (6) ascending from Tavatimsā,
- (7) taming the Nāstāgīri elephant and
- (8) passing away of the Buddha (see figure 4)

Likewise votive tablets with 4 scenes, 8 scenes, 9 scenes, and even 16 scenes from the Buddha's life were also made in the Pyu era.

In the images of the Pyus the robes of the Buddha are stylized, but in Pagan era they became realistic. The Buddha's features also transformed from Indian to Myanmar appearances. But Pagan iconography derived from India rather from Pyu.(12)

**Profersor Luce** remarks, "*Indian influence and example were to be seen everywhere almost always beneficent. It is one of the chief glories of Indian culture that invariably it gave life, not death, to other cultures.*"(13)

"Terracotta tablets which, with the vaulted chapels, form a 'bridge' between the cultures of Srikssetra and Pagan, are often inscribed, and are indeed among Burma's oldest epigraphic monuments. The art of making votive tablets came to Burma in the **7th century** from early Pāla Bengal.(14)

Though Sanskrit and Pāli were used, the local languages (Pyu, Mon, Myanmar) and local scripts (Pyu or Mon) began

to appear on the tablets. This transformation from Sanskrit and Nāgarī to Pāli and Mon was earliest seen in Kyansittha's 50 Buddha plaques. Half a line at the base is Sanskrit/Nāgarī, the other half in Pāli in Mon script.

Anuruddha's prayers on the tablets are –

- Thus said Sri Anuruddha deva
- Om. This is the work of the monarch,  
Sri Anuruddha deva
- Om. This is the pious gift of the donor of truth,  
the great king Sri Anuruddhadeva
- By me, Anuruddhadeva, has been made this mould  
of the Blessed One. By this may I obtain the path  
to Nirvāna when Maitreya is fully enlightened.
- This Lokanātha is made by the great King Sri  
Anuruddhadeva.

This formula of prayer was taken by his son, queen and others. King Kyansittha prayed for Buddhahood. People donated a hundred or a thousand such tablets. The simplest and most widespread Pāli tablet found at Pagan, Taungdwingyi, Alanmyo and Phowintaung has merely "namo Buddhāya" engraved on the back.

Monks also donated votive tablets. They left many tablets. An "andagu" slab of the Eight Scenes is a notable contribution to Pagan religious art. Duroiselle thinks they are imported from India. They are widespread in Myanmar. The monk Sumedhā Pandita was a co-pioneer with

Kyansittha's son RājāKumar in writing old Myanmar.

Civil officials (samben) also, like Samben Jasalya and Samben Yasa, made plaques and wrote in Pāli or Mon. They prayed for Buddhahood.

Two kinds of Pyu tablets and a bronze plaque were found in Pagan. They had images of the Buddha and Bodisattvas on them. Votive tablets in Mon writings on them were also found. Some names of the donors were in archaic Myanmar. The names of Mon officials (trap) such as Nawur, Vrahmasin, Yasa, Lady Sisin, Sri Bisanarac etc., Samben "Asak rhem" is archaic Myanmar meaning "Long Life"

Unusual and interesting are about (1000) votive tablets found at Maung Chit Sa's farm in 1926. They are the oldest specimen of Myanmar language so far. They record the names of fruits, flowers, trees, wood etc, Many of them were not native. They came from India, Iran, Far south and far north. Some are medicinal plants. Some are edible fruits such as pomengrenate, fig, bael-fruit, apple, mango, banana etc. Professor Luce remarks,

*"I suspect that the Chitsagon donation is a scholar's laborious collection made in the course of intensive work on Indian texts."*(15)

## **Symbols and Postures**

Meaningful symbols are used by the Pyus and Myanmars. For example the lotus symbol can be found in many places. The lotus, although grown in mud, from the bottom of water can struggle to reach the surface and its flower is clean, fragrant and beautiful. It has many qualities. It can live long, It exhorts people to overcome difficulties and achieve success.

Other symbols are also meaningful. The three daughters of Mārā, namely, Tanhā, Rāgā, Āratī who persuaded the potential Buddha to forsake his meditation are symbolic of a man's loba (greed), dosa (anger) and moha (delusion).

The earth-touching posture of the Buddha (bhuni phassa mudrā) signifies the testimony of His fulfilling of pāramīs (perfections).

The chakra is the symbol of the Buddha's first sermon (dhammacakka pavuttana sutta). It also embodies the rising sun;

The image of the Buddha was made about in the fourth century A.D. Before that He was worshipped by means of symbols.

These symbols are –

(1) the white elephant for his entry into his mother's womb,

(2) the bull for his birth, because he was born in Missarāsī,

(3) the horse for his renunciation, and

(4) the lion for his enlightenment. This is called the four scene Buddhology. Some variations are footsteps for renunciation, and throne or tree for enlightenment. The stupā stands for His passing away.

The Kalasā pot is a symbol of fertility goddess. Srī is Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnū, who embodies success and auspiciousness. Srivatsa is auspicious house. Kirti mukha is guardian against dangers. Sakti is female energy. These are Hindu symbols borrowed by Buddhists to use in their pagodas.

In pictures and plaques in Pagan temples Indian influence is prominent because art, architecture, sculpture, all are based on Indian origin. Near Phayama north-east of Sriksheetra are found small figures of five musicians and dancers, two dancing, one playing the flute, one clapping hands and one is a jester. **Dr. Than Tun** thinks that they are Indian figures imported from India.(16)

There were at that time roads linking India, Myanmar and China as well as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia. Along these roads gold and silver coins were found. These coins had symbols on them. They have meanings –

(1) Srivatsa is auspicious home,

(2) Samkha is auspicious time, (conch)

(3) Vajarā is crushing of enemies, (thunderbolt)

- (4) Swastikā is wealth and success,
- (5) Aruna is crushing the enemies, (dawn)
- (6) Caitya is devotion, (stupā)
- (7) Bhaddha pitha is stability (throne)

King Anuruddha always shows earth-touching posture of the Buddha in his tablets. He never shows other postures. Since then this posture has gained pre-eminence in Myanmar.

The stupā represents the passing away. The earth-touching symbol stands for enlightenment. In some Sriksheṭra 'triads' these two symbols were shown side by side, the earth touching Buddha between two stupās, meaning victory and death.

King Anuruddha got the models for the earth-touching Buddha from North India, East Bengal and the Mons. The Pyus often followed the Gupta type. There are over 30 types of Pagan tablets showing earth-touching Buddhas. Tagaung, Sriksheṭra, Twantay, Yangon, Bago, Thaton etc. were also independent artistic centres-producing votive tablets.

The image of the Buddha preaching the first sermon (dharmachakra mudrā) was first made in the 2nd century A.D. Mathurā and Amaravati, and 5th century A.D. Sarnath. These became the general model for Myanmar in Sriksheṭra as well as in Pagan. Images of "dyanamudrā" were also found in both. Kyansittha filled the corridor of

his Nagayone pagoda with 26 stone reliefs of Dhyānā Buddhas. But in his Ananda temple there are 180 Earth-touching Buddhas, 10 Preaching Buddhas and only 34 Dhyānā Buddhas.

There is only one standing Buddha in Sriksheṭra but many in the Mon area. They are in stone relief. Most of the old bronze images in Myanmar follow the Gupta model. The lower Myanmar bronze images were pre-Anuruddha.

Four Buddha images in "vitarka mudrā" (argument posture) are also found in Sriksheṭra, three sitting, one standing, 3 in bronze, 1 in gold. One such image was found in Twantay also.

At Sriksheṭra and Pagan images in "abhaya mudrā" (harmless posture) are also discovered.

Buddha's footprints (Buddhapāda) appeared in the 2nd century A.D on the pillar of Bharhut. They are always associated with the Wheel. It has had an independent life since Aniruddha's time to the present in Myanmar. Shway-Set-taw (Buddha's Footprints) in Minbu is a famous pilgrimage centre. This is the place where the Buddha is said to have given His Footprints of the 108 signs.

A stone slab bearing an impression of the Buddha's left foot was found in the Lokananda pagoda built by Anuruddha. Four others are also found in Kyansittha's Shwezigon.

In the centre of the dolomite (andhagu) slabs of the Eight Scenes, found near Pagan Shwezigon and at Tabayin

(Shwebo district) appears the crowned Buddha known in Myanmar as Jambupati image. Jambupati is not found in the Theravāda pitaka It is Mahāyānist. The crown also appears on at least six bronzes of old Myanmar, the oldest of which is at Srikshetra. A votive tablet from Srikshetra shows three crowned Buddhas. The Jambupati images are found not only in Myanmar but also in Laos, Thailand, India etc.

## Paintings

Decorating the Buddhist temples with wall paintings of the Jākata stories and the scenes from the Buddha's life spread from India in about the 6th century A.D. Its origin is the Gupta art of Ājanfā caves. The wonderful rock-cut caitya halls with their remarkable sculpture and frescoes at Ājanfā are largely the creation of the Gupta period.

The caves were built in two phases. The first from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. The second began in the 5th or 6th century A.D. In these cloisters the frescoes speak of the life of the Buddha and Jātaka tales.(17)

No Pyu paintings have been found so far. In Pagan the oldest wall painting is found in Pathothamya. It is the most beautiful of all the early temples in Pagan. It was built by Sawlu, Aniruddha's son in 1080 A.D. The eight

scenes are depicted in pictures.

The Nagayone built by Kyansittha has pictures of dancers, male and female, drummers, cymbalists, players on percussion instruments etc. as well as stories from Jataka.

In the Apeyadana temple also by Kyansittha in 1090 A.D. one can find Hindu, Tantric and Mahāyāna deities. The paintings of this temple are perhaps the best in Pagan. They are "largely Tantric–Mahāyānist of the Bengal school admitting also Vedic and later Hindu deities, notably Saiva" (Luce)(18)

All Jātaka stories were depicted on the walls, with legends in Pāli. The Hindu deities with their "vāhanas" are eighteen in number. There are also 100 or more bodhisattvas. They carry various weapons, such as conch, dagger, discus, hook, lotus-stalk, spear, trident, sword, thunderbolt, etc. There are 10 kinds of Mudrā (attitude of hand), 2 kinds of Āsana (attitude of foot) and 2 kinds of thrones. The dharmacakra mudrā is the most frequently used.

The temples and pagodas where paintings or plaques of Jātaka stories are found are –

- (1) The Ananda (cir. 1100 A.D.),
- (2) East and West Phetleik (about 1060 A.D),
- (3) The Myinkaba Gupyaugyi (1113 A.D),
- (4) The Nagayone,
- (5) The Apeyadana,

- (6) The Phyatsa Shway-gu and
- (7) The Mingalazedi.

Actually there are only 547 stories in the Jātaka but in the Phetleik they added another 3 to make it full 550. They are –

- (1) Velāma Jātaka,
- (2) Mahāgovinda Jātaka and
- (3) Sumedha Pandita Jātaka.

At the Hlaing Shay Gu we find the eight scenes depicted in pictures. The eight scenes are –

- (1) the Nativity,
- (2) the Enlightenment,
- (3) preaching the First Sermon,
- (4) the Twin Miracles (yamaka),
- (5) taming the Nālāgri elephant,
- (6) descent from Tavatimsā,
- (7) the Parileyaka retreat and
- (8) the Parinirvāna

The paintings in the Ananda and the Minanthu Lay Mhyetnha were unfortunately lost because of white wash.

In the Myinkaba Gupyaukgyi stands the big ten-armed Bodhisattva attended by two Saktis. Two other bodhisattvas stand beside the entrance. Two smaller seven-armed figures are painted in the archway.

The Loka Hteik Pan built between 1100 and 1125 contains rows upon rows of Jātaka paintings, with glosses of Mon at the top, Mon and Myanmar in the middle and Myanmar at the bottom. There are also beautiful floral designs. One Buddha Footprint is painted on the ceiling.

The Alopyi (dated 1150 A.D) has full picture-descriptions in Mon of Vimāna Vutthu. Kyazin and Wetkyi-inn Gupyaukgyi have the lists of 28 Buddhas in Mon.

The Culāmani and the Htilominlo also have wall paintings. Those of the Nandamanya (13th century A.D) are Tantric. The Thanbula was built by Kyansittha's Queen Trilokavatamskardevi in 1255 A.D. The wall paintings are in good preservation.

The danger to the pagoda paintings is white washing by pious but ignorant people and pagoda trustees. In this respect the remark by **Dr. Than Tun** is noteworthy.

*"The wall paintings at many temples all over Myanmar will soon be completely lost if the pious Buddhists, encouraged by "Pagoda Trustees" continue the white-washing the temple walls or covering them by glass mosaic."(19)*

Another danger is vandalism. They have stolen lots of valuable works of art from Pagan. The most notorious was **Dr. Fritz von Noetling**. He robbed the Mingalazedi, Dhammarazika, Somingyi, Nat-hlaung-kyaung and other pagodas over 200 of their best glazed tiles and Jātaka carvings and not a few stone and bronze images, reliefs

and clay ex--votos. They are now in the Berlin Museum.

In 1899 a pseudo-doctor Thomann and six assistants stole the frescoes from Wetkyi-inn Kupyaukgyi and four smaller pagodas. They sawed them off and took them away.

Stolen art treasures of Pagan included over 300 Jātaka and other wall-paintings, plaster casts of some of the bas-reliefs from Ananda temple, casts of several inscriptions, hand painted Myanmar court scenes on silk, some illustrated scrolls, lacquerware boxes, puppets etc.(20)

## **The Evolution of Pagodas**

The stupā is the basic structure of a solid pagoda. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter the stupā originally was a burial mound since the Vedic age. In due course umbralla came to be used on top of the stupā for royalty or religious teachers. The Sanche Stupā (150 B.C) was the prototype of the Pyu stupās.

A very important find was that of two carved stone slabs on relic-chambers at Srikshetra (Mhawza) in 1926-7, from what is known as Khinbakone. This shows the original shape of the Pyu pagodas. (See figures) The earliest of them is the Bawbawgyi phaya. It is a cylinder of plastered brick, over 150 feet high. Hman-nan Yazawin said it was built by Duttabaung. The remains of Phayagyi and Phayamar

in Sriksatra show coincidental designs. They are of the 5th century A.D. The Khinbakone slabs show both the stupas are with raised dome with a "hamika" (a square box) on the dome with "hti" (parasol) above it. There are five niches at the base of the dome with a Buddha's image in each in a "dhyana mudrā" attitude. It is the design of the oldest stupā so far known in Myanmar. It should be noted that their design accords with the designs found at Mathurā and Amaravati (3rd century A.D).

From Sriksatra onwards the solid pagodas at Pagan made evolutionary changes. Examples of these are –

- Lokananda Thiripyitsaya
- Shway Santaw, Pagan,
- Shway Sikhone, Nyaung-U and
- Shway Dagon, Yangon.

(See figures)

The Sattavali in Sriksatra became a tapering spire in Pagan. (See figure) And steps leading to the upper terraces were added in the above mentioned pagodas (excepting Buphaya). (See figures)

The Bhu, Ngakywenataung, Myinkabar and Lokananda cetis are vital links in the transformation of Pyu architecture to that of Pagan.

Sujatā Sonī has shown the three kinds of Pagan pagodas in three periods.

**Early Period (relic casket type)**

1. Ngakywenataung

**Middle Period (mixed type)**

1. Bhu
2. Lokananda
3. Myinkaba

**Later Period (bell-shaped type)**

1. Shway Santaw
2. Shway Sikhone
3. Mingalazedi.(21)

The architectural types of Pagan can be classified as –

- (1) Stupā whose dome is modelled on a reliquary, e.g. Bhuphaya,
- (2) Stupā whose dome is modelled on a tumulus, e.g. Lawkananda, Shway Sikhone, Shway Santaw, Mingalazedi.,
- (3) Stupā of Sri Lanka type e.g. Sappada, Paybingyaung,
- (4) Temple based on North Indian model, e.g. Ānandā,
- (5) Temple of Central Indian type, e.g. Mahābodhi,
- (6) Temple based on South Indian model, e.g. Gawdawapalin, Cūlamani
- (7) Cave temples based on Indian model e.g. Kyauk-ku Umin, Kyansittha Umin,
- (8) Ordination hall, e.g., Upali Thein,
- (9) Library–Pitakataik.(22)

The Indian impact is prominent in Myanmar culture in the early Pyu, Mon, Rakhine and early Pagan times. In later developments the Myanmar people have succeeded in establishing Myanmar style and standard.

## Chapter V References

1. Gokhale – Buddhism and Asoka, p.243
2. Soni, Sujata–Evolution of Stupas, p.24
3. The Image of the Buddha, David L. Snellgrove, General Editor, UNESCO, 1978, p.48
4. Coomaraswamy, A.K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art, 1972, p.60.
5. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ ပျူ-မြန်မာ-မွန်-ရခိုင်တွေရဲ့ ဗြာဟ္မဏနဲ့ ဗုဒ္ဓကိုယ်စားတော်၊ သန်းထွန်းရှစ်ဆယ်ပြည့်၊ ၂၀၀၃။ p.23
6. The Image of the Buddha, p.145
7. Ibid, p.146
8. Ibid, p.147
9. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ Ibid, p.26
10. Ibid, p.29
11. Ibid, p.31-32
12. အေးလှ၊ ဒေါ်၊ ပျူနှင့် ပုဂံခေတ် ဗုဒ္ဓရုပ်ပွားတော်များ၊ မြန်မာသမိုင်း သုတေသနစာဆောင်၊ အမှတ်(၁)၊ ၁၉၉၅။ p.17
13. Luce G.H.–Old Burma, Early Pagan, Vol. I, 1969, p.97
14. Ibid, p.97.
15. Ibid, p.103
16. သန်းထွန်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ၊ ပျူတွေ ဘယ်ပျောက်သွားသလဲ၊ ၂၀၀၆။ p.217
17. Come to the Buddha - Government of India
18. Than Tun, Dr. – Buddhist Art and Architecture, 2002, p.36
19. Ibid, p.52
20. Nai Pan Hla–Devastation of Priceless Cultural Treasure, The working People's Daily, 11-6-1984.
21. Soni, Sujata – op. cit. p.35.
22. Pictorial Guide to Pagan,  
The Director of Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1971,  
Introduction.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Myanmar Dhammathats**

No law books of the Pyus are heard of. But the Chinese records say that the Pyus were good-natured and civilized, they loathed violence and they solved their disputes by self-examination. They did not give harsh punishments. This evidence shows that the Pyus had some system of law and justice.

But in the Hman-nan Yazawin hints of the Pyu legal treatises are found. For example King Duttabaung, in consultation with 3000 arahats, wrote a "dhammathat kyan" (dharmashastra). This is called "Pyu dhammathat."

In the 424 year of the Buddha Sāsana Era King Thiririz and his 6 wise teachers wrote "yazawin" (history) and "bedin" (vedas).

In the 583 years of that Era Bereinda the king's brother went to Taxila university and became well-versed in medicine, bedin and mantras.

The great Buddhist commentator Shin Buddhaghosha was advised by Sakka (Indrā) to go to Srikshetra, Pagan and Rammanadesa (Mon). So he came over to Myanmar bringing with him scriptures and commentories. He was warmly received by the people of Sudhammavati or Thaton **Dr. Forchammer** is of the opinion that he also brought with him Hindu law books from Ceylon (Sri Lankā) and India.(1)

Again King Pyu-saw-hti (meaning-king of the Pyus), in consultation with Gavampati, Rishi(?) and Sakka, compiled a "dhammathat kyan".(2)

These are the references of the Pyu legal treatises found in the Myanmar chronicles. We may assume that they existed though not found today. In this respect **Professor Hla Aung** remarks.

*"In view of these facts, it would not be quite safe to dismiss as improbable that as early as the second half of the 5th century B.C. a Dhammathat had existed during the reign of King Duttabaung. That Dhammathat is said to be followed by the Atitya Dhammathat around the last quarter of the second century A.D. and by Pyumindi, about the second half of the 3rd century A.D."*(3)

The Indian immigrants entered Myanmar along two routes—the sea-route to the coast and the land route to the

north. In about the 3rd century B.C. Indian traders had established trading settlements in the coast towns of Thaton, Pyay, Bago and Yangon. They brought with them their scriptures on religion and law. Certainly the "Manu Smriti" was with them **J.S. Furnivell** writes –

*"When the Pilgrim Fathers left the shore of Europe to found a new world in the West, they took with them their supreme code of law, the Bible. In like manner a thousand or more years earlier, the emigrants from India, Hindu or Buddhist, who laid the foundations of a new world in the Tropical Far East, took with them their law book, the code of Manu. Everywhere throughout the region Manu has left his mark"(4)*

**Dr. Maung Maung** also writes *"Hindu learning, more than Hindu jurisprudence, influenced the growth of Burmese legal thought and literature. The Hindu Code of Manu was used more as a model for legal treatises; the name of Manu was impressive and inspiring, and it was frequently invoked in the treatises that were written after the Code had been received."*(5)

**Justice E.Maung** has remarked that "our debt" to Hindu law is not inconsiderable.(6) **Jardine** even declared that "the courts of British Burma have for 50 years administered Hindu law without knowing it."(7)

**Professor Dr. Ba Han** has also observed *"that the Hindu influence is clearly discernible in the Wagaru Dhammathat."*

He points out that the very term Dhammathat betrays its Indian origin. It is transparently the adaptation of the Hindu "Dharma Shastra". Manu is relied on as the final authority.(8)

It is now clear that the words "Manu" and "Dhammathat" are of Hindu origin borrowed by Myanmar jurists to call their treatises.

The Mon kingdom of Thaton (before Pagan) had a strong Hindu element in its culture, and it became familiar with the Code of Manu. By about the 5th century A.D. there came into being a Mon-Buddhist version of Manu later to be referred to by Myanmar jurists as "Mon Manu Dhammathat".

King Anawrahta (Anuruddha) unified the whole country in 1044 A.D His grandson Alaungsithu left his judgements called the "Alaungsithu Pyat-htone".

In the year 1173 A.D. Narapatisithu became king of Pagan. During his reign a learned Mon monk by the name of Sariputrā wrote a dhammathat called "Dhammavilasa Dhammathat." It was based on the "Mon Buddhist Manu". It is the oldest surviving Myanmar law book. In Hindu mythology, Manu was not only the first law-giver but also the father of mankind like Noah he escaped from a great flood. In the "Dhammavilasa Dhammathat" Manu was a simple cow-herd whose brilliant decisions in disputes won him fame. He was appointed as a judge by Mahā Thamada, the first king of mankind.(9)

**Dr. Htin Aung** compares the eighteen divisions of

law according to Manu and those according to Dhammavilasa(10) and also various kinds of sons by Manu's classification and those of Dhammavilasa.(11)

The veneration with which the Manu Dhammathats were treated by the Myanmar kings is well-known. Thalunmin in his royal proclamation of 1637 and 1639 A.D. instructed the judges –

*"to decide the matter with the Manu Dhammathat in his hands, if it is not to be found let him take the four volumes of Manosara Shwaymyin; and if he cannot find the point there, let him follow in his decisions the precedents of the decisions of Kaingza Manurājā."*(12)

**Kinwun Mingyi U Kaung** in his "A Digest of the **Burmese Buddhist Law**" (Vol.I) explains how the Dhammathats are said to have come into existence as follows.

- (1) Manu, Mano and Manussika Dhammathats, which first came into existence, were written by Rishis of supernatural attainments, who gave them to the first King of the world, Mahā Sammata.
- (2) After these, the Dhammavilasa, the Shwe Myin, and the amplified Manus were during successive reigns of kings compiled by wise monks and laymen on the foundation of Dhammathats mentioned above.

(3) Such Dhammathats were during reigns of successive Burmese kings looked upon as excellent works and treated as guides for the decision of cases.

The Advantages of Dhammathats, according to U Kaung, are –

- (1) The Dhammathat is like a line straightening what is crooked.
- (2) It is like a Sindhu horse, which quickly reaches its destination.
- (3) It is like Sakra's thunderbolt, which can suppress all quarrels.
- (4) It is like the moon, which lightens darkness.
- (5) It is like the sun, which dispels darkness.
- (6) It is like the tusks of an elephant, with which he destroys his enemies.
- (7) It is like the lamplight by which a man in a room can choose what gem he pleases from among others.
- (8) It is like the ear, which can hear what is good and bad.
- (9) It is like the eye, which can see what is good and bad.
- (10) It is like king Sakkavati's precious jewel, which can gratify all desires.
- (11) It is like a mother who seeks the welfare of her children.

### List of Myanmar Dhammathats

No.	Name	Date (Myanmar Era)
1	Manosara	?
2	Manussika	?
3	Pyu Min	89
4	Dhammavilasa	455
5	Waru	643
6	Dhammathat Kuncha	783
7	Kaingza Shwe Myin	991
8	Myin Kun	1012
9	Dhammathat Kyaw	1095
10	Dhamma Vinichaya	1114
11	Manukye	1114
12	Kandaw Pakinnaka	1120
13	Shin Tejosara Shwe Myin	1122
14	Wunna Dhamma Shwe Myin	1123
15	Manu Vannana	1126
16	Manu Yin	1129
17	Vinichaya Rasi	1129
18	Vinichaya Pakasani (Pali)	1133

No.	Name	Date (Myanmar Era)
19	Manu Vannana	1134
20	Vinichaya Pakasani (Myanmar)	1138
21	Mahavichedani	1139
22	Raja Bala	1142
23	Sonda Manu	1143
24	Manu	1143
25	Panam Pakinnaka	1143
26	Ameindawtangyi	1148
27	Vinicchaya Kuncha	1165
28	Dayazza Dipani	1173
29	Waru	1184
30	Dhamma Sara Manju	1207
31	Amwepon	
32	Manu Cittara	
33	Shinthba	
34	Kyetyoe	
35	Kyan-net	
36	Maharajathat	991

The Manu Smriti is based on caste system. In Buddhism there is no such system. So the Myanmar jurists based their works on the law of Karma. It is the principle that every action has its effects. The Myanmar Dhammathats advocate equality of men. All men are equal before law.

There are differences between Hindu law and Myanmar law. However it is to be noted that Myanmar Dhammathats are inspired by Hindu Manu Smriti.

## Chapter VI References

1. Hla Aung – Law and Justice in Myanmar, 2008,p.6.
2. Hman – nan Maha Yazawindawgyi, vol. I
3. Hla Aung – op. cit., p.6
4. Furnivall, J.S. – Manu in Burma, J.B.R.S.
5. Maung Maung – Law and Custom in Burma and the Burmese Family, 1963, p.6
6. Hla Aung – op.cit. p.9
7. Hla Aung – op. cit. p.9
8. Hla Aung – op. cit. p.10
9. Maung Htin Aung – Burmese Law Tales, 1962, p.11
10. Ibid, p. 11-12
11. Ibid, p. 13-15
12. Hla Aung – op. cit, p.15

## **Chapter VII**

### **The Universal Monarch**

The concept of Universal Monarch (Chakravartin) first originated in India. This concept is as follows.

Just as the Buddhas appear in this world from time to time, so do Universal Monarchs appear to conquer the world and rule it righteously and prosperously. This was a Vedic concept and later incorporated into the Epics, Buddhist as well as Jaina traditions.

This concept of Universal Monarch was an inspiration for the Myanmar kings throughout history. It was an ancient political theory of the Myanmars. In the classical Myanmar songs of the past praising the kings this idea of "Chakravartin" is frequently mentioned. The kings are likened to them.(1)

In the Epics and the lawbook of Manu, this idea is prominent. In Manu we find

"When the world was without a king and dispersed in fear in all directions the Lord created a king for the protection of all.

He made him of eternal particles  
Of Indra and the Wind,  
Yama, the Sun and Fire,  
Varuna, the Moon and the Lord of Wealth"(2) .

Between the Maurya and Gupta periods in Indian history anarchy and lawlessness prevailed. In such a time thinkers longed for a "dharmarājā" who would bring peace, prosperity and justice. Such a king was the "Chakravartin".

In the Buddhist scriptures also, this concept was expounded at length. For example in the "Mahā Sudassana Sutta" in "Mahā Vagga Pāli" Chakravartin had seven precious things (ratanā). They were –

- (1) the chakra,
- (2) the elephant,
- (3) the horse,
- (4) the ruby,
- (5) the queen,
- (6) the rich man, and,
- (7) the eldest son.

All these seven had supernatural powers.

The Chakravartin preached to his subordinate kings–

- (1) not to kill,
- (2) not to steal,
- (3) not to indulge in wrongful sex,
- (4) not to say falsehood, and,
- (5) not to drink intoxicants.

The Chakravartin was –

- (1) very pretty and good-looking,
- (2) had a very long life,
- (3) very healthy, and,
- (4) very much loved by  
brahmins and rich men.

Because of his past merits of dāna (charity), dama (self control) and sīla sanyama (self discipline) he attained supernatural powers. He had innumerable riches, queens, subordinates, wealthy men, rubies, chariots, clothes etc. When he died he reached Brahma-loka.(3)

In Myanmar history monks and wise men preached about "Sakkyā-min" The Myanmar kings aspired to be like him. This is an example of Hindu-Buddhist influence on political thought of Myanmar.

## Chapter VII References

1. မဟာဂီတပေါင်းချုပ်
2. Basham, A.L. – The Wonder  
That was India, 1954, p.84-85
3. မဟာဝဂ္ဂပါဠိတော်၊ မြန်မာပြန်

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Myanmar Supernaturalism**

Supernaturalism is a phenomenon found in every country or race. Since the earliest times men have believed that there are unseen forces with powers to do good or evil to men. They also believe that there are persons who are well versed in occultism and they have the power and means to control these forces.

In Myanmar language they are called "sayas", for example –

- (1) say saya (medical man),
- (2) nat saya (spirit medium),
- (3) hmaw saya (wizard)
- (4) payawga saya (occultist)

- (5) bedin saya (soothsayer)
- (6) outlan saya (lower path practitioner)
- (7) ahtetlan saya (upper path practitioner)
- (8) soan saya (witch doctor)
- (9) lekhana saya (palmist)
- (10) aggyat saya (alchemist)

Some Myanmars still believe in nats (spirits), demons, ghosts, witches, bedin and hmaw (wizardry). With the advance in science and medicine, however, their number is becoming smaller.

Nats are spirits of dead men. People believe there are many kinds of nats, such as tree nat, house nat, river nat, rain nat, wind nat, guardian nat etc., They are believed to have some power over men. They can help men to achieve success, wealth, health etc. So the believers make offerings to them and "Ask" them about the future through their mediums. Buddhist scriptures confirm the existenc of supernatural beings. In the Buddhist cosmology there are thirty-one planes of existence. They are –

(1) devas	6
(2) brāhmās	20
(3) humans	1
(4) animals	1
(5) hell	1
(6) ghosts	1
(7) demons	1
total	<u>31</u>

With the exception of (1) humans and (2) animals the remaining 29 are supernaturals.

A "nat pwe" is a noisy affair. People play music, sing songs, drink wine and dance wildly. They make offerings to nats. The nats are supposed to be pleased in this way and they help people. The most popular in Myanmar are the 37 nats.

Witches are feared by people. In some villages some persons are said to practise witchcraft. They can make people sick or ill. People fear and shun them.

Ghosts are believed to come out in darkness. So people are afraid to go out at night alone. The places of ghosts are said to be cemeteries, big trees, old pagodas etc.

Nat sayas are persons in communion with spirits. Hmaw sayas or payawga sayas are believed to have the power to control the spirits. If a person becomes ill the relatives approach the saya to cure the disease. The saya either chants some mantras or gives some medicines to

the patient to ward off the evil spirit or ghost that has taken possession of him.

The hmaw sayas or payawga sayas are of two kinds, ahtet-lan and out-lan. The outlan is lower path. Outlan sayas are evil persons. They use dirty and unclean things to prepare medicines, such as parts of dead bodies, dirty clothes, earth from cemeteries etc. They chant mantras, use runes, lighting medicinal candles etc.

The "ahtetlan" sayas are supposed to be noble persons. They avoid eating meat and drinking wine. They keep sabbath regularly. They tell beads. They wear white clothes. They pray in front of Buddha images.

A bedin saya tells a man's future by checking his horoscope while a lakhana saya does so by reading the lines on a person's palm. People approach them when they are in trouble or when they want power, position or riches. When an "ahlu pwe" (novitiation ceremony) or a marriage ceremony is to be held they ask the sayas to choose an auspicious date for that.

An aggyiat saya is an alchemist. They are two kinds. One aims to turn base metals into gold, the other is for longevity of life. An aggyiat saya who achieves his aim becomes a "weizza" (vidya) or "zawgyi" (yogi). He has got supernatural powers. People believe that "weizzas" and "zawgyis" live in forests. They never come into villages and towns.

As Myanmar is an agricultural country farmers make offerings to Pom-ma-kyi nat (goddess) who is supposed to give good crops if she is pleased. People offer her home-made red or white cakes on the full moon day of the month of Tabaung.(1)

Although the worship of Nagā (serpent) is no more, some people avoid going into the direction of a Nagā's head. This direction is prescribed by bedin sayas and astrologers.

Astrologers study the movements of the stars and predict the future (especially of a king or government or country).

The day before the novitiation ceremony a boy is "shown" to the nats". This is called "nat pya" in Myanmar. The "Shin-laung" (would-be-novice) is dressed like a prince and brought with ceremony in front of the nat shrine where he makes obeisance to the nats.

Buddhist Myanmars believe that the evil spirit (Māra) used to obstruct a novitiation ceremony by means of storm and rain. So they pray to Shin Upagote who could prevent this.

Ghosts, witches and nats are especially feared as agents of illness and death. They are said to cause disease such as –

**(1) Babies and children**

crying

intestinal disorder

fever

body sore

**(2) Adults**

eye complaints

choking feeling

appetite loss

intestinal disorder

madness

wandering

unconsciousness

verbal violence

physical violence

obscenity

fit

fright

death

Other beliefs in supernaturalism are –

(1) Amulets are called "letphwe" in Myanmar.

They are believed to offer protection against all kinds of harm.

(2) The dead man's soul (leikpya), if not properly escorted from their human habitat, remains in the house to haunt people. Monks are requested to recite "paritta" to prevent this.

The souls of deceased government officials are believed especially attached to their offices. To prevent

this a special document is prepared, signed and recited at the funeral by the superior officer. This is called "Ameindaw pyan" in Myanmar.

- (3) A "dat lone" is a philosopher's stone. If an alchemist is successful he gets a "datlone" which gives him riches, power and long life.
- (4) An "inn" is a cabbalistic square with symbols, usually but not always, alphabetic. The symbols or alphabets or numbers are inscribed on a piece of paper or metal. Sometimes it is inserted underneath the flesh. Sometimes the "inn" is tattoed on the flesh. They are believed to provide protection against natural or supernatural harm.
- (5) The practice of "Thaye htoke" (driving away the ghosts) is still observed in some places. In this, fires are lit, loud sounds are made by beating gongs, tin roofs, wooden doors or anything at hand and by shouting of human voices. All these are intended to frighten away the ghosts.
- (6) When people return from outside they say "phwat phwat" to ward off the evil spirits from entering the village or home. Some people still have this habit.
- (7) Although the "nats" are feared the "devas" or "devatas" are thought to be benevolent spirits. They protect the Buddha Sāsana. They help people. In some pagodas the statues of devas can be seen. People make offerings of coconut, bananas, rice etc.  
(vegetarian food) This offering is called "kadaw pwe".

This is made on all occasions such as novitiation, wedding, pagoda festival etc.

Since the very early times supernaturalism existed in the country. Later Hinduism, Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism, Tantrāyāna, Mantrāyāna, Nagā worship etc., are all interconnected. Although Theravāda Buddhism does not encourage supernaturalism it still prevails among the people of Myanmar in various forms.

## Chapter VIII

### References

1. Maung Htin Aung – Folk  
Elements in Burmese Buddhism, p.122
2. Spiro, Melford E.–Burmese Supernaturalism, 1967  
p.146

## **Chapter IX**

### **Myanmar Language**

In ancient Pyu, Mon, Rakhine and Pagan eras some Sanskrit words were prevalent in votive tablets and inscriptions. But with the advent of Theravāda Buddhism Pāli became more prominent. In monasteries in present-day Myanmar Pāli is the main subject taught to monks.

Many Pāli and Sanskrit words have crept into the day-to-day Myanmar language used even by men on the street. These words have become familiar and understood as if they are Myanmar words.

**Dr. Hla Pe** in his "Burma" has divided the Sanskrit and Pāli derivatives into three major periods:

(1) The monarchic period (1044-1886)

(2) The first post-monarchic period (1886-1962)

(3) the second post-monarchic period (1962 to the present) (1)

Dr Hla Pe gives a list of such derivatives in his book.

(ဧကရာဇ်) = ekaraj = sole ruler, universal monarch

(ပဒေသရာဇ်) = padesaraj = feudal lord

(ဇေယျသုရ) = jeyya sura = victor (စည်သူ)

(သီရိ) = Siri = splendour

(သုဓမ္မာ) = sudhammā = righteous

(အဓိပတိ) = adipati = ruler

(နယက) = nāyaka = leader, guide, lord

(သမ္မတ) = sammata = elected leader, king, president

(ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ) = ukkaṭṭha = chairman

(အမတ်) = amat(Sans.amatya) = minister

(အာဏာ) = ānā = power, authority

(ဌာန) = thāna = department

(ဓမ္မသတ်) = dhammathat = law book

(ရာဇသတ်) = rājasat = royal edict, penal code

(ဥပဒေ) = upade = law, statute

(ဆန္ဒ) = chanda = wish

(ဂိုဏ်း) = gaing = gang, party, faction

(ဂန) = ghana = gang, party, faction

(သဘာပတိ) = sabhāpati = chairman of a meeting

(သမ္မဂ္ဂ) = sammagga = union

(ဝါဒ) = vāda = doctrine, policy

(ဝံသာနု) = vamsānu = nationalist, patriot(2)

Saya Hla Thamein also wrote a book in Myanmar on "The Relation of Pāli-Sanskrit-Myanmar"

Many Pāli words are used by Myanmar every day, for example –

- (လောဘ) = lobha = greed
- (ဒေါသ) = dosa = anger
- (မာန) = māna = pride
- (မောဟ) = moha = delusion
- (စေတနာ) = cetanā = well wish
- (မေတ္တာ) = mettā = loving kindness
- (သောက) = soka = anxiety
- (ကရုဏာ) = karunā = compassion
- (အာယာတ) = āghāta = hatred
- (တဏှာ) = tanhā = craving etc.

Saya Hla Thamein has divided the Pāli words being used in Myanmar under these categories.

**(1) Pāli**

- (အနိစ္စ) = anicca = impermanence
- (သီလ) = sīla = morality
- (နာယက) = nāyaka = leader
- (သုခ) = sukha = bliss, happiness

**(2) Pāli derivative**

- (စိတ်) = cit = citta
- (နိဗ္ဗာန်) = nibban = nibbāna
- (သံယောဇဉ်) = samyozin = samyojanna
- (နိပါတ်) = nipat = nipatta

**(3) Pāli + Myanmar**

- (ရုက္ခ+စို) = rukkha+soe
- (ကြယ်+တယာ) = kyai+fāya
- (လာဘ်+လာဘ) = lab+fābha
- (ဆင်းရဲ+ဒုက္ခ) = sinye+dukkha
- (တပည့်+သာဝက) = tapyi+sāvaka

**(5) Pāli + Pāli**

- (ရုက္ခ+ဗေဒ) = rukkha+veda
- (ဗုဒ္ဓ+ဘာသာ) = Buddha+bhāsā
- (လောက+ဓာတ်) = Loka+dhat (= dhātu)

The Pāli words frequently used are

- (ရဟန်း) rahan = arahat = arahanta
- (ဘုရား) phaya = pujāraha
- (ကထိန်) kathein = kathina
- (ထေရ်) ther = thera
- (နိကာယ်) nikai = nikāya
- (ပရိယာယ်) pariye = pariyāya
- (မေထုန်) methone = methuna
- (သန္တာန်) santhan = santhāna
- (ဧကရာဇ်) ekaraj = ekarājā
- (ဝိညှဉ်) vinyin = vinnāna
- (ပစ္စည်း) picce = piccaya
- (ဝိနည်း) vine = vinaya
- (သာမန်) saman = samana
- (ယာဉ်) yin = yāna

(ဟင်္သာ) hintha = hamsā

(ကုသိုလ်) kutho = kusala

(နတ်) nat = nātha

(ပုဒ်) pote = pada

(ကိုယ်) ko = kāya

(အာဂုံ) argon = āgama

(စက်) cet = cekka

(နိမိတ်) nimit = nimitta

(ဝင်္ဂ) vut = vutta

(ဇောနိ) zogi = yogī

(ဗိမာန်) viman = vimāna

(ဗေဒ) bedin = veda(3)

Many more examples can be given. It is noteworthy that many Sanskrit and Pāli words are "Myanmarised". People use them daily even not knowing that they are Sanskrit or Pāli. This is an example of their influence on Myanmar language and culture.

## Chapter IX References

1. Hla Pe – Burma, 1985, p.130
2. Ibid, p.135-138
3. လှသမိန် - ပါဠိ-သက္ကတ-မြန်မာ နှီးနှောဆက်သွယ်မှုစာတမ်း၊ ၁၉၉၇။

## **Chapter X**

### **The Pāli Literature of Myanmar**

The people of Myanmar are very much indebted to India for the introduction of Buddhism to their country. With the advent of Buddhism Pāli came to be used in religious scriptures. Therefore Buddhist monks have to study Pāli.

According to the Myanmar chronicles King Anawrahta (Anuruddha) conquered the Mon country (Thaton) in 1057 A.D. and brought back the Tipitaka (the Buddhist scriptures) to Pagan. These thirty sets of Tipitaka were kept in a splendid pavillion for the monks to study.(1)

Not content with this the king sent to Sri Lankā for more copies of the Tipitaka, which Shin Araham the Primate examined and compared with the Thaton Tripataka.(2)

In fact Buddhism of both northern and southern schools had reached Myanmar long before Anawrahta. (See previous chapters). With them the use of Sanskrit and Pāli were in vogue among the Rakhine, Mon, Pyu and early Pagan periods.

In Hmawza Pyokhingyi Kone a stone inscription containing a line from Abhidhammā

"kusaḷā dhammā  
a-kusaḷā dhammā  
avyakaḷā dhammā"

in south Indian script was found.

This is a clue to the history of the origin of Pāli literature in Myanmar.(3)

### **Maunggan gold leaves**

In 1897 Dr. Forchammer discovered two gold leaves at Maunggan village. The first leaf contains – "ye dhammā" gāthā in Brāhmi derivative script. In the second leaf is written the nine attributes of the Buddha. These show that the Pyus were well versed in the Pāli Pitaka.

### **Bawbawgyi Stone Slab**

It was found in 1911 by Mr. Taw Sein Kho of the Archaeological Department and read by the French Professor Finot. They are from Vibhanga Pāli of the Tipitaka.

### **Khinba Kone gold leaves**

They were found at Maung Khinba's farm in 1926.

They contain extracts from

- (1) paticca samuppāda desanā
- (2) visuddhi magga and abhidhamma samgaha Pāli,
- (3) dīgha nikāya, majjima nikāya, anguttara nikāya and udāna Pāli,
- (4) mula pannāsa and anguttara Pāli,
- (5) khuddaka nikāya
- (6) dhammapada Pāli,
- (7) vinaya mahāvagga Pāli,
- (8) -do-
- (9) the nine attributes of the Buddha from mahā parinibbāna sutta in digha nikāya (also found in the second Maunggan gold leaf)

Seeing these Pyu inscriptions we can conclude that –

- (a) Theravāda Buddhism flourished in the Pyu country in the 7th century A.D.
- (b) The Pyu people could extract passages from the Tipitaka and inscribe them on stone or gold leaf.
- (c) They had laid the foundation of Buddha Sāsana and Pali literature in Myanmar.(4)

### **Early Pagan Period**

The "yedhammā gāthā" shows the basis of Buddhism. It was found widely, in Maunggan and Khinba Kone (Pyu), Kyauktaw ywa (Rakhine), Vesāli (Rakhine) and Prapathon (Thailand).

King Anawrahta in some of his votive tablets substituted the original Pāli words "evam vādi mahā samano" with his name thus – "evam vādi Sri Aniruddha deva".

Moreover Anawrahta made the image of "loka nātha" (bodhisattva) in one of his tablets. So some scholars are of the opinion that he was a worshipper of both Theravada and Mahāyāna.(5)

### **Raja Kumara Inscription**

The son of King Kyansittha set up a stone inscription in Pāli, Myanmar, Mon and Pyu. Scholars decide that it was the first Myanmar and last Pyu inscription. It is of great help to the scholars. It shows how well the Myanmars of Early Pagan Period could write Pāli.

### **Shwekugyi Inscription**

King Alaungsithu set up a Pāli inscription in the Shwekugyi Pagoda in Pagan. Professors Pe Maung Tin and Luce praised the Pāli composition of this inscription.(6)

It is noteworthy that Alaungsithu prayed not for Nibbāna but for Buddhahood in this inscription.

### Pagan Pāli Treatises

The first treatise by a Myanmar author was the "**Kārika**" a grammatical work in Pāli. It was written by Shin Dhammasenāpati at the Anandā monastery in 1084 during the reign of king Kyansittha. Dhammasenapati composed two other works also, the **Etimasamidīpanī** and the **Manohara**.

In the year 1154 the monk Aggavamsa completed the "**Saddanīti**", a grammar of the Tipitaka. It established the reputation of Myanmar scholarship in that age and the fame of the author to this day.

A few years after its composition the Thera Uttarajiva carried a copy of it to Sri Lankā where it was received with admiration, and decided superior to any work of this kind written by Sri Lankan scholars.(7)

The pupil of Thera Uttarajiva was Chapata, who accompanied his master to Sri Lankā. On his return he wrote the "**Suttaniddesa**", which explains the "Sutras" of the Indian grammarian Kaccāyana. He also wrote **Sankhepa vannanā** and other works in Pāli.

Another grammatical work of repute is "**Nyāsa**" written by a monk named Vimalabuddhi. The famous "**Thanben Tika**" was written by an ex-monk during the reign of Narapatisithu. The grandson of Narapatisithu, King Kyaswa, also wrote the "**Sadda Bindhu**" and the "**Paramattha Bindhu**" His daughter also wrote the "**Vibhattyattha**", a little work on Pāli cases.

The other works in Pāli written during the Pagan Era are –

- (1) Lokuppatti by Aggapandita
- (2) Lingatthavivāraṇa by Subhutaṇḍana
- (3) Lingatthavivāraṇappakasaka by Nanaśāgara
- (4) Lingatthavivaraṇatika by Uttama
- (5) Vacāvācaka by Dhammadassī
- (6) a commentary on (5) by Saddhammanandī
- (7) Saddattha bedacintā by Saddhammasiri
- (8) Mahātikā by Thera Abhaya
- (9) Mukhamattasāra by Sagara
- (10) Chandosaratthavikāsini by Saddhammanāna
- (11) Gandhatthi by Mangala etc. etc.

The Pagan Era came to an end in 1287 A.D. due to the invasion of the Tartar army. In the following Kingdom of Pinya some works in Pāli were written by both monks and laymen.

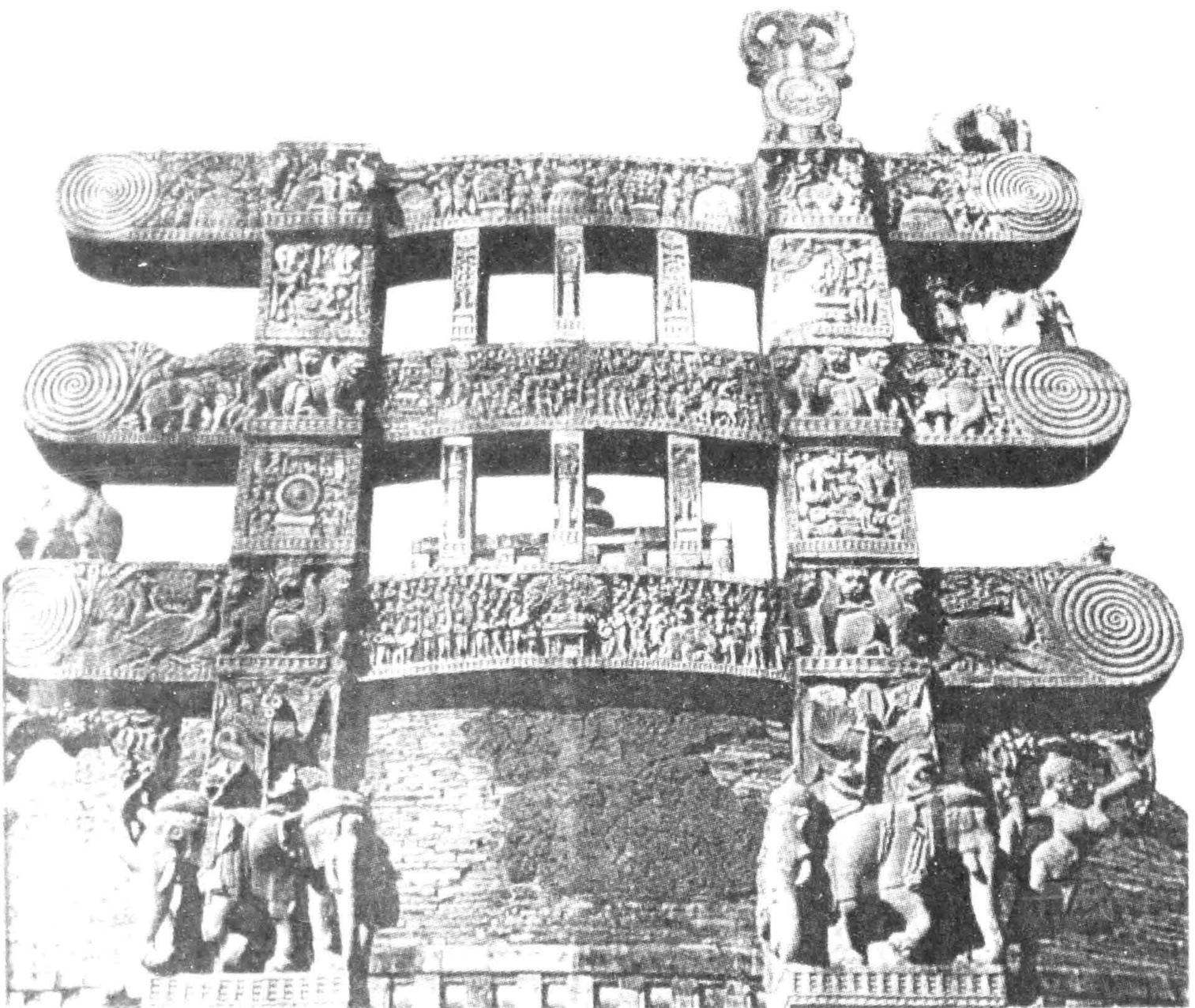
In the Ava (Innwa), Taung-ngu and Konebaung periods, although there were wars and disturbances, learned monks and laymen continued writing in Pāli as well as Myanmar. Myanmar poetry flourished in Ava and Konebaung periods. Their writings were chiefly religious subjects, based on the Jātaka stories. But there were some works on secular subjects such as law, medicine, astrology, nīti, language, bedin, administration, royal usage, poetry, plays, novels, yazawin (history of kings) etc.

The study of Pāli language is the main subject in monastic education still at present in Myanmar monasteries. There are Pāli departments also at the universities.

## Chapter X References

1. မှန်နန်းမဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ ၁၉၉၂၊ p.249
2. Bode, Mabel Haynes– The Pāli Literature of Burma, 1965, P.15
3. ဦးကို - မြန်မာပြည် ပါဠိစာပေခေတ်ဦး (ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံစာပေနှင့် လူမှုရေးသိပ္ပံဂျာနယ်၊ အတွဲ-၁၊ အမှတ်-၁) ၁၉၆၈။ p.23
4. Ibid, p.25
5. ဦးမြ - ရှေးဟောင်းအုတ်ခွက်ရုပ်ပွားဆင်းတုတော်များ၊ ဒုတိယတွဲ ၁၉၆၁။ p.6-7
6. ပါမောက္ခ ဦးဖေမောင်တင်နှင့် ပါမောက္ခ လှစ် - သမိုင်းတံခွန် အတွဲ-၁၊ စာစောင်-၁။
7. Bode op.cit, p.17

five of the seven Buddhas



from - "The Image of the Buddha"

Veneration of a stupa



from - "The Image of the Buddha"

Stupa venerated by elephants



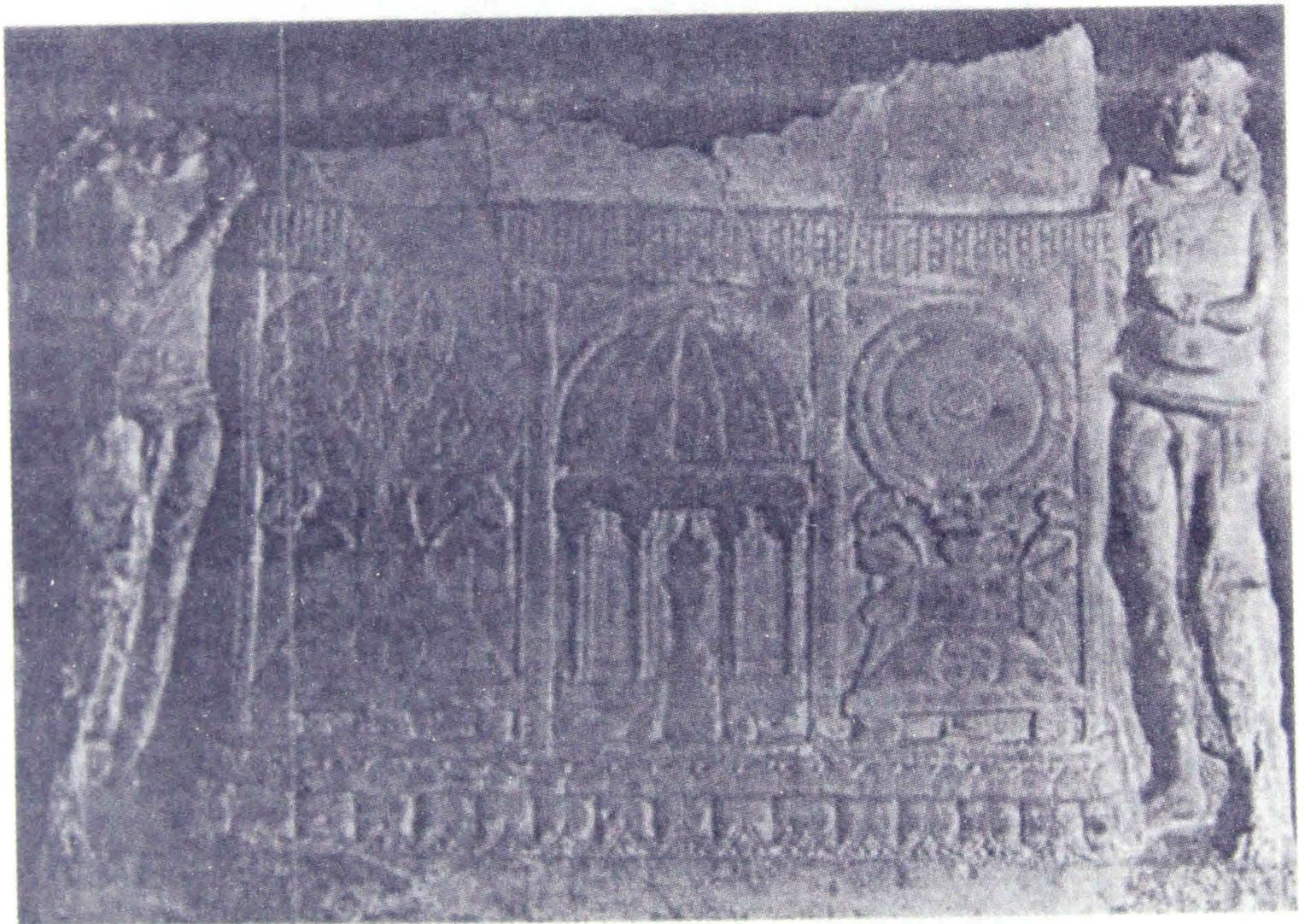
from - "The Image of the Buddha"

**The Enlightenment, first Sermon and Entry into Nirvana**



from - **“The Image of the Buddha”**

**The Enlightenment, first Sermon and Entry into Nirvana**



**from - "The Image of the Buddha"**

**Figure-1**



**from - "The Image of the Buddha"**

**Figure-2**



**from - "The Image of the Buddha"**

**Figure-3**



from - **“The Image of the Buddha”**

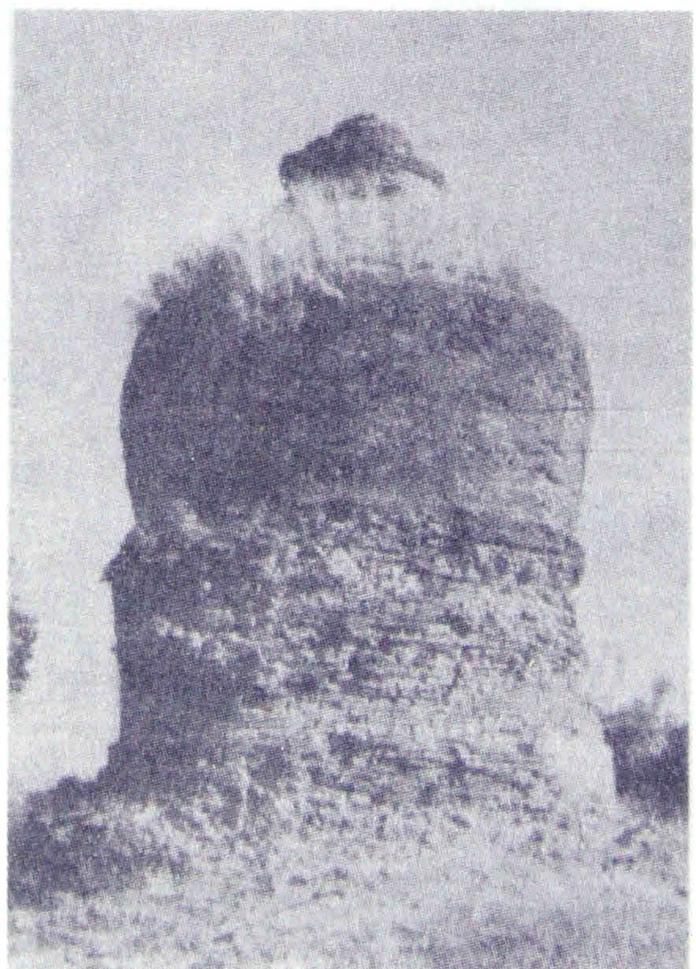
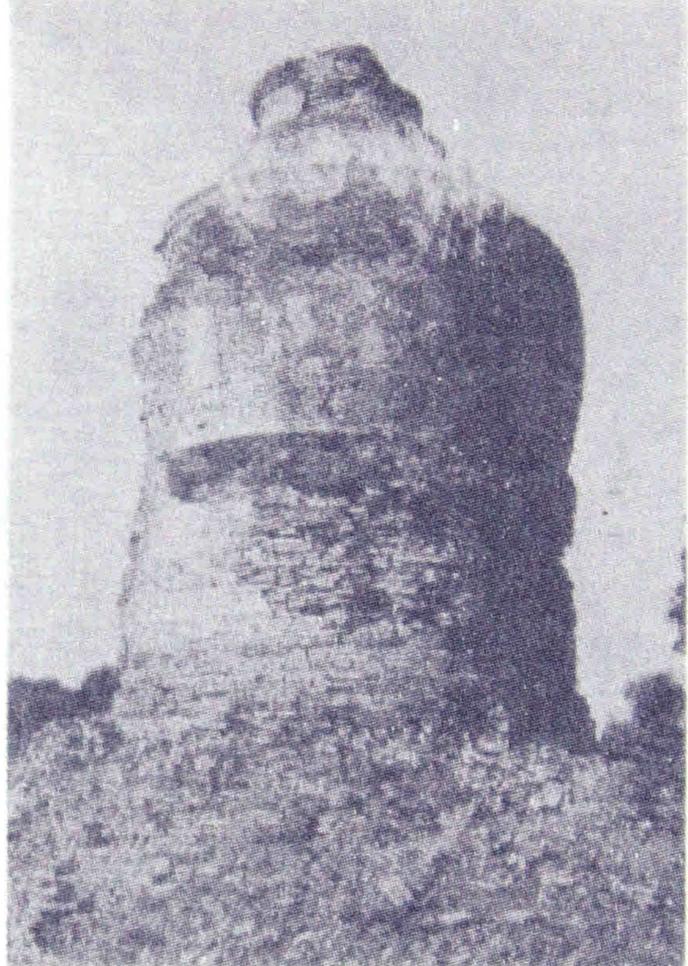
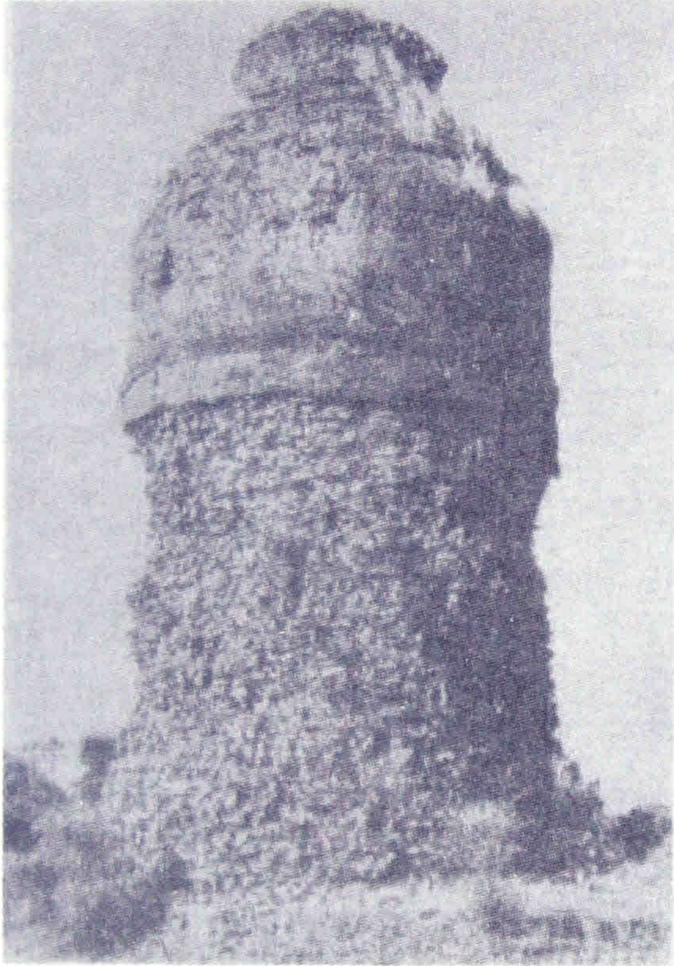
**Figure-4**  
**The Eight scenes**



from - "Old Burma, Early Pagan" by G.H.Luce



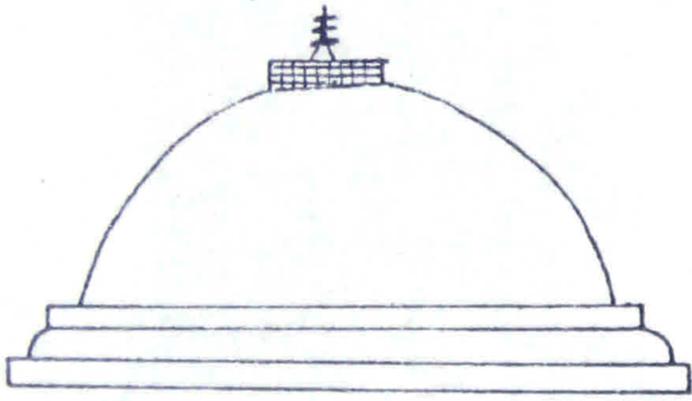
**from - "Old Burma, Early Pagan" by G.H.Luce**



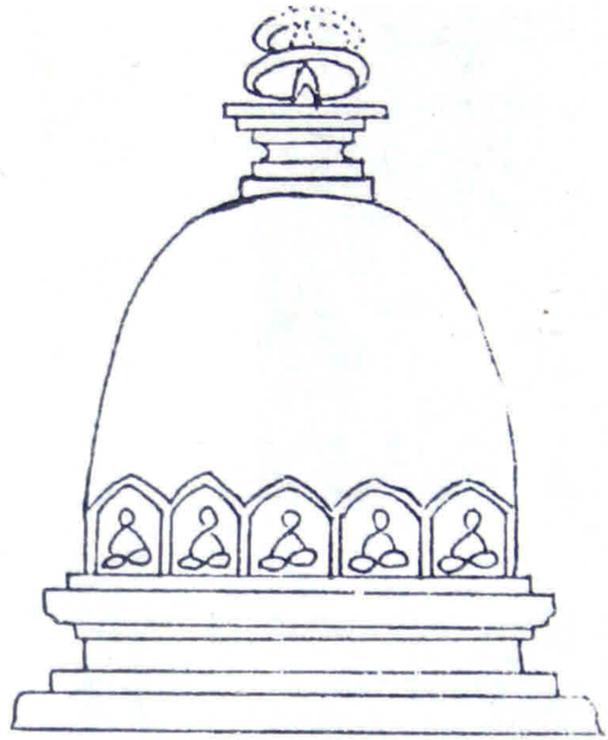
from - "Old Burma, Early Pagan" by G.H.Luce



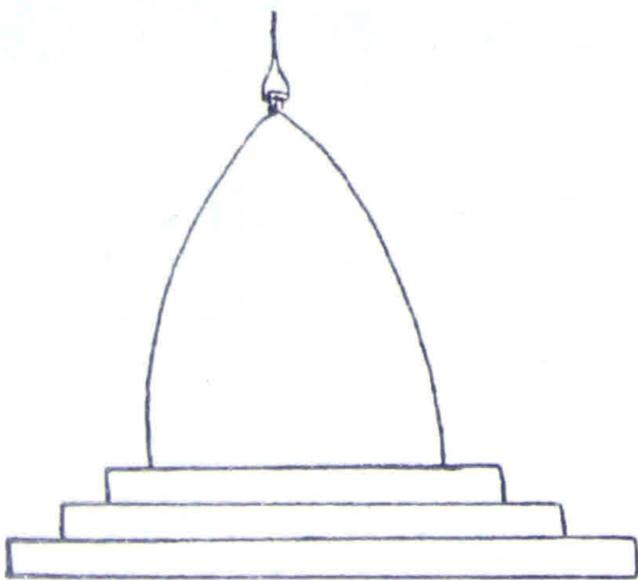
from - "Old Burma, Early Pagan" by G.H.Luce



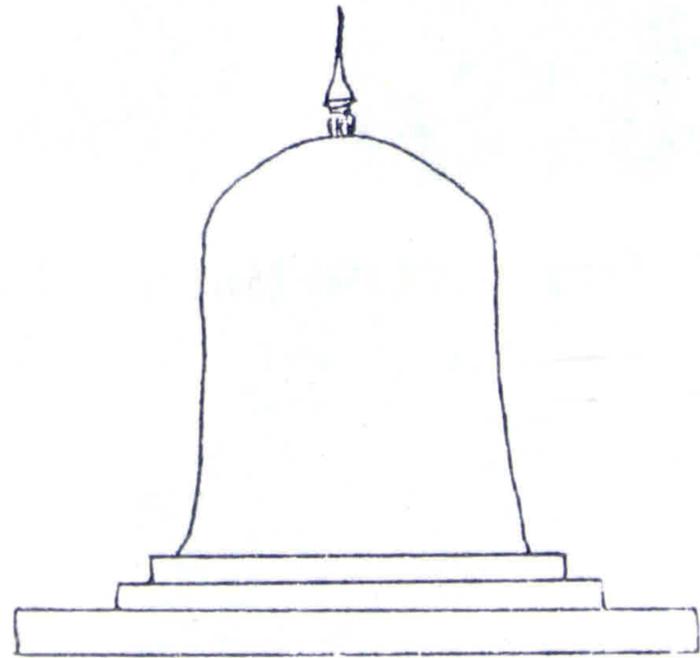
Sanchi Type (India)



A Stone Reliv-chamber Cover  
(Sri Ksetra)

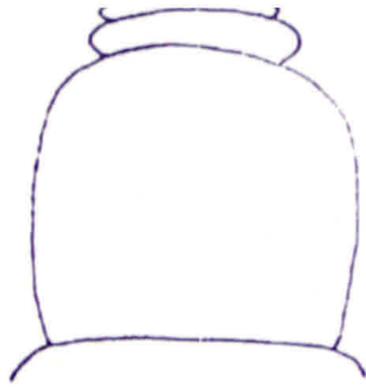


Bhura:kri: (Sri Ksetra)



Bobokri: (Sri Ksetra)

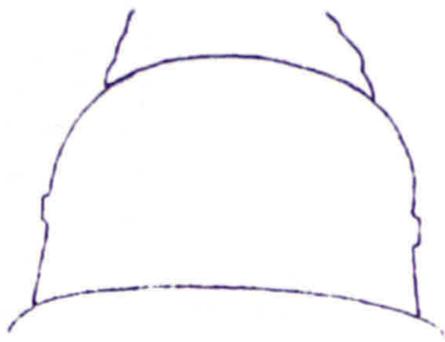
from - "The Evolution of Stupas"-by Sujata Soni



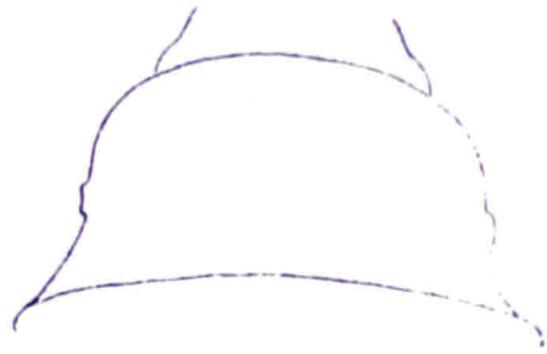
Bhū Bhurā: (Pagan)



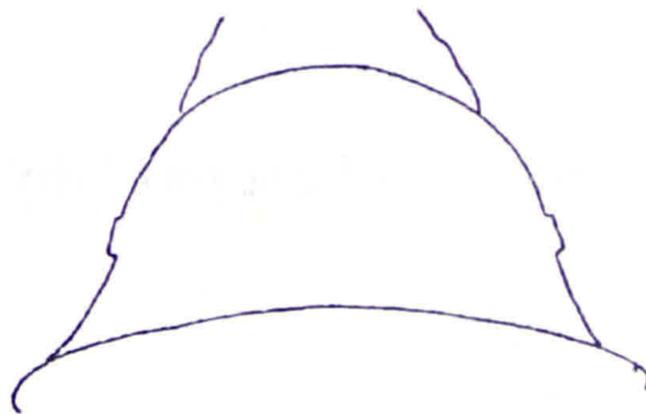
Lokanandā (Sī ripaccayā)



Rhwechamtoau (Pagan)

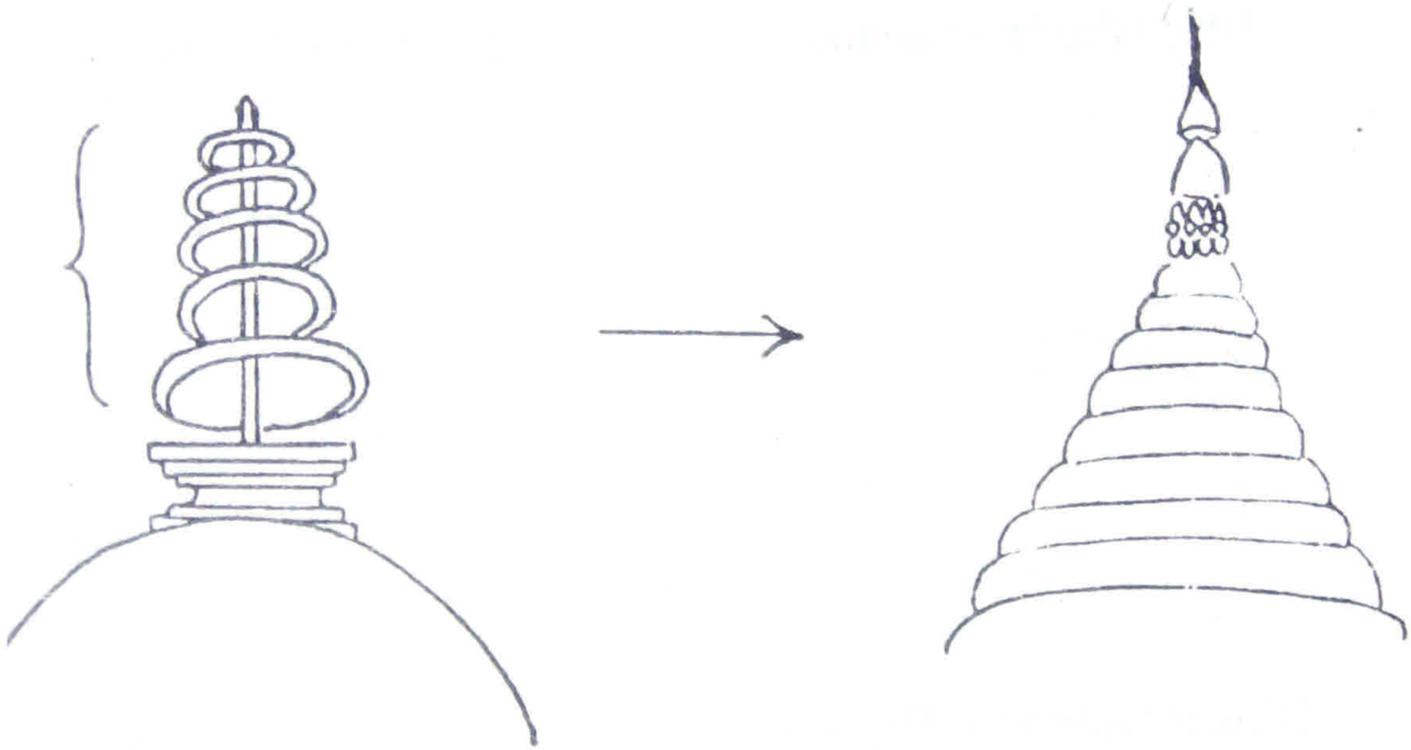


Rhwecañ: khum (Ñoni-ū:)



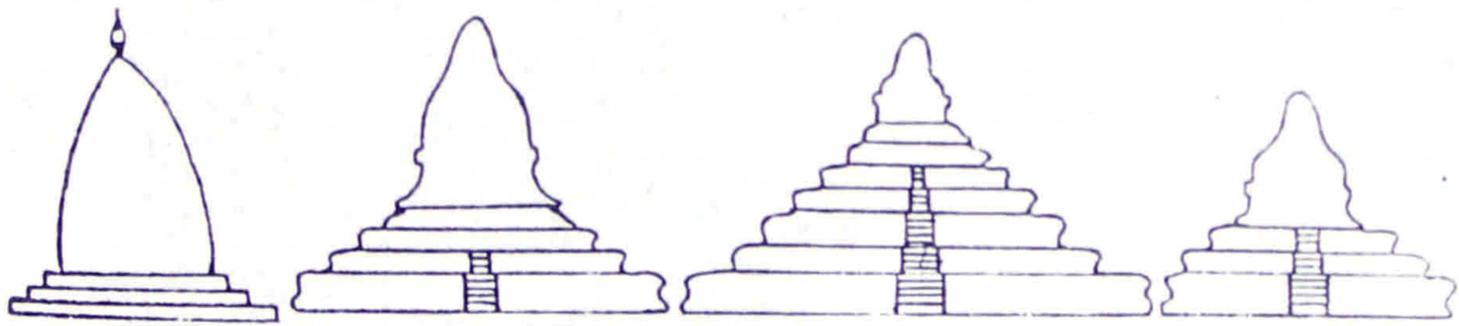
Rhwedagum (Rangoon)

from - "The Evolution of Stupas"-by Sujata Soni



Architectural Evolution of Sattavali into Tapering Spire

from - "The Evolution of Stupas"-by Sujata Soni



Bhura:krī

Lokanandā

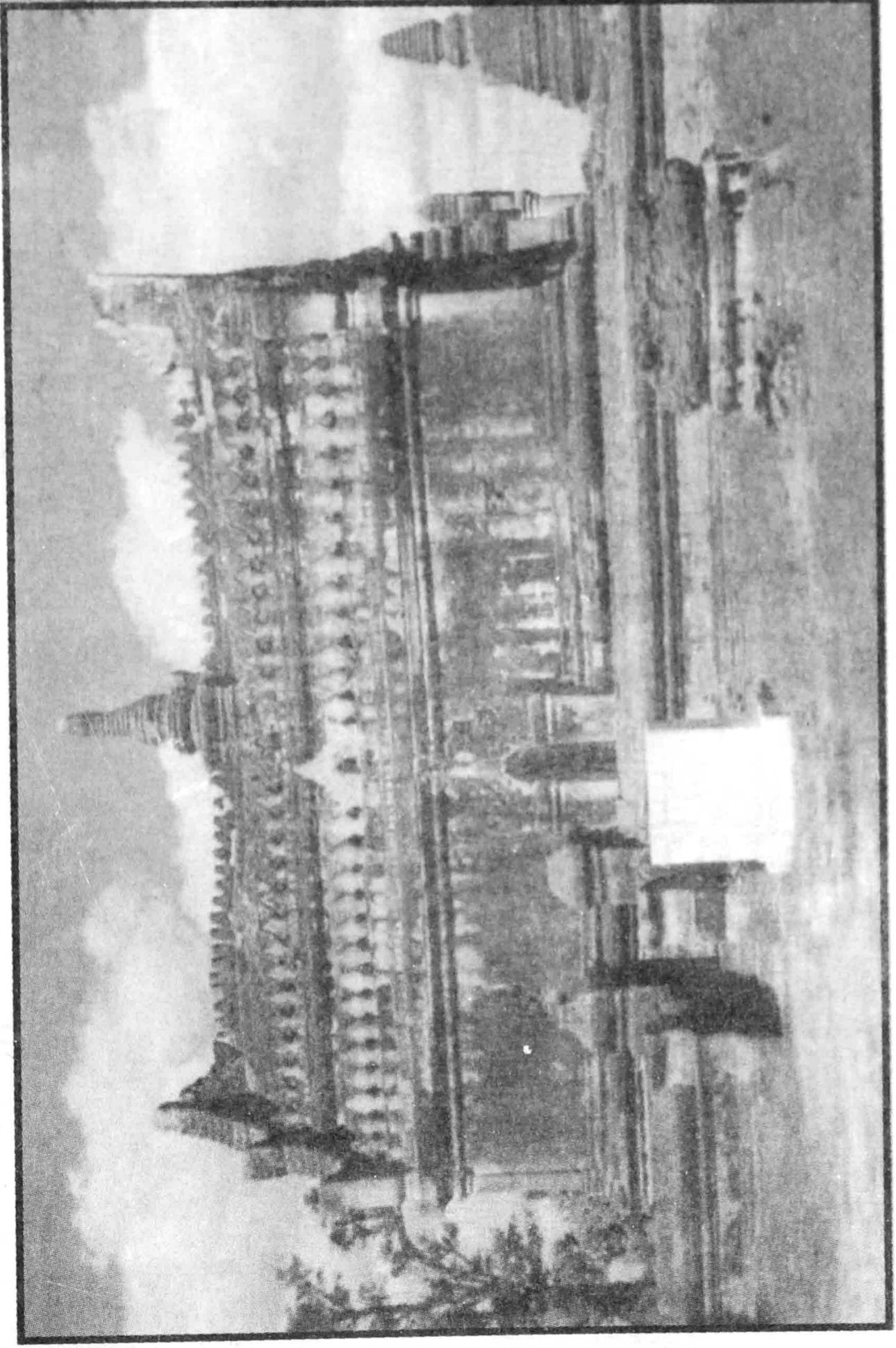
Rhwechamtoau

Rhwecañ:khum

from - "The Evolution of Stupas"-by Sujata Soni



Nat Hlaung Kyaung



Upāli Simā



**19 Outskirts of Vaisali: Lichchhavi Prince, Buddha and Ananda**

(from - "Bihar through of the ages" by R.R.Diwakar)

**M**yanmar Naing-Ngan and India have contact and exchange of culture from time immemorial. Buddhism and Hinduism also have many similarities. In this book the author has traced the impact of these two religions on Myanmar culture in terms of history, religion, civilization, tradition, language, law etc.



**The Hindu-Buddhist Impact**  
**ON**  
**Myanmar Culture**  
U Than Htun (Shwebo)

29  
7