

**UNIVERSITY OF YANGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

**THE PRODUCTION AND UTILIZATION OF  
GOLD LEAVES IN MYANMAR**

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MRes-Anth-3 (2008-2009)  
MASTER OF RESEARCH (ANTHROPOLOGY)**

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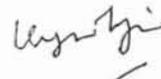
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## Abstract

Myanmar is a country where Buddhism flourished and in regions where many Buddhists reside. Many pagodas, images, monasteries and lakes can be found. They are significant symbols of the Buddha delicate to have memory by his devotees. On both the pagodas as well as the images, gold leaves are applied as a robe offering became interested in this traditional craft in Myanmar culture. This is named as "The production and utilization of gold-leaves in Myanmar" is the outcome of my research. This thesis will be written from the view-point of cultural anthropology. Sagaing, Mandalay and Yangon are chosen as research areas. It is composed with four chapters; the meaning of "*Shwe Saing*", its historical background, the region where is produced, and the gold-leaves workers' livelihood, the various steps of gold-leaf production and for what purposes is gold-leaf used are mentioned. The benefits derived from this research through the perspective of cultural anthropology will be explored.

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## INTRODUCTION

Myanmar is a country where Buddhism flourished and in regions where many Buddhists reside. Many Zedi (pagodas), stupas, monasteries and lakes can be found. They are significant symbols of the Buddha delicate to have memory by his devotees. On both the pagodas as well as the images, gold leaf is applied as a robe offering became interested in how these gold-leaf are produced, where and how are the producers of this fine craft and for whom are they produced and its purposes above all what is the place of gold-leaf in Myanmar culture and tradition. This thesis "The production and utilization of gold-leaves in Myanmar" is the outcome of my research.

This paper will be written from the view-point of cultural anthropology. Sagaing where the raw materials are made into gold-leaf is one of the data collecting areas by interviewing with the owners or producers and the workmen in their workshops. Photographs of gold-leaf production, tapes of conversation with the aged persons, who gave the oral history of gold-leaf and its origin are collected.

The pagodas are also the places to interview with male and female regardless age to understand the attitude of Myanmar in their use of gold-leaf. As a literature review, books written by learned persons in tracing its historical origin will be learned and photographs are used for their respective sections.

In Chapter (1), the meaning of "*Shwe Saing*" or gold-leaf is given. The craft of gold-leaf, its historical background, the region where is produced, and the people who are involved in this livelihood will be discussed.

In Chapter (2), how the gold-leaf is produced, the raw materials needed and the various steps of production will be described. The interview with big producers, medium producers and small producers, the men and women involved in it, division of responsibility and income will be discussed.

In Chapter (3), how gold-leaf is utilized or for what purposes is gold-leaf used are mentioned as the following. (1) Gold-leaf is applied to Pagoda and stupas as offering a gold-robe. (2) Images of the Buddha and nats also are applied with gold leaf in the same way an offering the robe and apparel. (3) Gold-leaf is also used by human beings for health and beauty purposes and (4) it is also used for articles people use in their daily lives.

In Chapter (4), the benefits derived from this research through the perspective of cultural anthropology will be explored.

## CHAPTER I

### Literature Review

#### 1. The meaning of "*Shwe Saing*" and its terminology

According to University Myanmar Dictionary "*Shwe Saing*" means a packet of 100 sheets of gold foil on thin sheet of paper. These 100 sheets of gold are called "*Shwe-ta-Saing*". "*Saing*" means a packet or a group.

In ancient times, gold-leaf "*Shwe Saing*" is called "*Shwe-Myat-Pa*". In archaic language, "*Myat-Pa*" means "any metal that is beaten into a thin sheet". In archaic language, the term "*Myet-Pa-Khut*" means "to beat gold to extremely thin sheet, to make gold-leaves".

In Bagan era, making gold-leaf is said as "leaf-gold, pour gold, apply gold". In *Kon boung* era, in the early region of king *Alaung Mintaya*, it is said as "beat gold". When it became Mandalay, Yadanapon era, they say, "*Shwe Saing*" gold-leaf making.

#### 2. Historical background of gold-leaf craft

The craft of making gold-leaf is presumed to have originated in India and Sri Lanka. Myanmar had intercourse with these two countries from Bagan era. According to *Saya Thaw Ka*, "This craft of making gold-leaf is presumed to have come from the valley of the Ganges in Central Asia, where the Buddha gained Enlightenment. It must have been brought to Myanmar together with the Buddha Sasana. But, evidence from antiques and strong inscriptions points to the Madras shore in southern India and Sri Lanka. This craft was first found and flourished in Pyu race lived in *Thirikhittaya* and ancient Mon race lived in *Thuwunna-bumi* Thaton. But these races could not establish a united country. It is only later when Myanmar race came after them that they could set up a united Myanmar *naing-ngan-daw*, the craft of gold-leaf making spread all over the country.

Myanmar came into the country about AD.800 and settled in middle regions of the country. They learnt the craft of gold-leaf making from the Pyu and Mon. In AD.1100, they were able to unite lower and Upper Myanmar and establish a grand and strong Bagan dynasty. From that time the Kingdom of Bagan had greater intercourse with the craftsmen of ancient India and Sri Lanka. The pagodas and stupas in Bagan resemble the

pagodas and stupas of India and Sri Lanka. So it is presumed that those arts came from there.

The gold-leaf craft probably came to Myanmar with the missionaries and merchants who came to Myanmar in those days. The Pyu and Mon learnt from the Indian. Besides, it comes from South Asian countries like Siam and Cambodia because Myanmar and Siam have a long history of contact with each other. *Thuwunna-bumi* Thaton in those days was a sea-port town, giving easy access to foreigners as seen in ancient history.

Some scholars believe that gold-leaf making in Siam, which may have come from India and then from Siam to Myanmar through to *Thuwunna-bumi* Thaton. The craft of gold-leaf can be found in these regions. In AD.1057, when King *Anawrahta* conquered Thaton (name of the country), he took back craftsmen of the ten crafts to *Bagan*.

The art of gold-leaf making together with painting, sculpture, lacquer ware and the others appeared. The craft of gold-leaf making is a branch of the goldsmith's art. In *Bagan* era, purifying gold and making gold jewellery became popular. People of *Bagan* wore a lot of fine gold jewellery. So the goldsmiths were able to make gold-leaf which is gold that is beaten to a foil.

In the history of *Man Shwesettaw*, it is recorded that "*Hti Hlaing Shin*", King *Kyansittha* donated two golden *Zayats* (Resthouses) and the two foot-prints of the Buddha applied with gold leaf". "King *Zeya Thein Kha*" also came to venerate the foot-prints and had them applied with gold-leaf". This gold-leaf craft did not disappear even applied when *Bagan* dynasty disintegrated. It can be said that this craft of gold-leaf is applied in *Inwa* era. Because, they had their clothes boxes inlaid with gold and precious stones.

This craft of gold-leaf flourished in the late *Inwa* era and *Toungoo* era. In U Kala's, *Mahayazawin* Vol.3, it says King Thiho presented *Sinpyushinmin* with the sacred tooth, who had the sacred tooth enshrined in *Wizaya* pagoda and donated. Then he donated 13 vis 70 ticals of gold to be beaten into gold-leaf and applied to the pagoda. So again the craft of gold-leaf is flourished in *Toungoo* era.

In the time of *Anaukphet-I-un-mintayagyi*, in AD.3605, a king by the title of MahaDhamma-raza, came to the throne who built a gold monastery, *Kaung-mhu-daw*

pagoda and *Mahamyatmuni* pagoda and had them (applied with gold-leaf fully). He also donated the gold umbrella to the pagodas. He was a donor of gold-leaf for *Ponyashin* pagoda too. These evidences prove that the craft of gold-leaf flourished in the latter part of Toungoo era and Nyaungyan era.

Gold-leaf continued to be used in Kon-baung era and *Alaung-Mintaya* U Aung Zeya, (1752-1760), built *Maw-daw-myin-tha* (*Shwebo myo-dount* pagoda). He ordered the gold-leaf department, to take the responsibility for the gold robe of the pagoda. In Kon-baung era, the gold-leaf craft was encouraged and rewarded. In *Yatana-pon* era, because of King Mindon is encouragement and patronage the gold-leaf craft reached its highest demand. He donated many gold-leaf packets to the *Shwedagon* Pagoda. His majesty gave lumps of gold from his treasury to be made into gold leaf. He gave a particular place for the skilled craftsmen to live and work in. It was named "*Heyma malar-myet-pa-yat*" meaning "Shwepywint, Shwepan (gold flower) production quarter". The quarter still exists till today, the posterity of those craftsmen carrying on their trade.

According to veteran craftsmen, their patron is Saya Mon who honorable person came from Shan States. He first began this craft in Myanmar, having learnt it from the Siam. So till today, people who work with gold remember their indebtedness to saya Mon. So in their workroom, and their houses, glutinous rice, laphet (pickled tea), bananas and a bottle of juice are dedicated to saya Mon and gold-leaf masters.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

#### **(1). Study Design**

This research will be conducted by direct observation, indirect observation, and participant observation, and key informant interview, tape recording and taking photographs.

#### **(2). Study Sites and Population**

The place of observation for gold-leaf industry is *Myat-par-yat* quarter, *Maha Aung Myae* Township, Mandalay. *Myat-par-yat* quarter is like a grant from King

*Mindom*, who earmarked the place with a gold chain for his royal gold-leaf beaters, producing gold-leaf for his pagodas and palace.

There are (1018) families in *Myat-par-yat* quarter and (130) families are in the business of gold-leaf production. There are (50) big producers, (40) medium producers and (40) small producers. The big producer needs a capital of above k. 500 lakhs (Myanmar currency), and 8 or 9 workmen. A medium producer needs above K. 30 lakhs and 6 or 7 workmen and a small family run business needs above K 10 lakhs. The daily wage workers are about (80) men and (102) women.

The paper production quarter in *Maha Aungmyae* Township are chosen to study about the production of gold-leaf paper. There are (25) families working in paper industry. *Nyaungkon* village in *Sagaing* division are chosen to observe how the three kinds of paper used in the gold-leaf are produced. There are (32) families, among them (25) families produce the "*Shwe Hlaung*" paper; "*Thanote*" paper and "*Lay*" paper.

To actually see where and how gold leaves are put to use at the pagodas and images, *Maha Muni payagyi* in Mandalay and the *Shwedagon* Pagoda in Yangon are chosen. And then interviewing with a nat-medium in Mandalay, person who is using the gold-leaves as a medicine, (e.g. gold-leaves are used for heart disease), and are studied the beauty parlors to observe how gold-leaves are used for beauty.

## Chapter II

### The production of Gold-leaves

In this chapter, what are essential for the production of gold-leaves, where the raw materials for the production of gold-leaves can be get, how they are produced, and the process of gold-leaves making are presented. Furthermore, the producers of gold-leaves, their workers, their relationship and their income are also mentioned.

#### 1. The making of raw materials

In describing how gold-leaves are made, *Shwe-pwa* paper, *Shwe-hlaung* paper, *Thanote* paper and *Lay* paper and other raw materials are described.

##### (1). Making *Shwe-pwa* paper

*Shwe-pwa* paper is a kind of paper used in making gold-leaves. This paper is added to increase the gold. It is made of *Hmyin* bamboo (name of bamboo), obtained from Nyaung-baw Township, Shan State and Pyin-Oo-Lwin, Mandalay Division. The process of the making *Shwe-pwa* paper is illustrated by photographs (See. photo. 1 to 13).

##### a. Immersion in lime water to make pulp

The bamboo are cut up into 1½ feet length and made into strips and tied into small bundles. They are pressed into pots with lime and kept for 3 years. It is to make the bamboo soft after (3) years. The bamboo is washed clean of the lime and boiled in earthen ware pots for (2) nights to make it soft. Then the bamboo pulp is pounded in a motor about (20) ticals of the bamboo pulp is mixed with a bit of water in an aluminum bowl and stirred with a dalet (It looks like blade of a fan.). This bamboo pulp mixture is poured onto a cloth stretched on a teak wood frame. It is spread evenly by bound. Then it is lowered into concrete water tanks, 5 feet x 2 ½ feet x 2 inches. The cloth sheet with bamboo pulp has to be kept still in the water and the pulp evenly spread with a round stick. Most of the cloth frame is lifted just above the water tank and drained for (3) minutes. Next the cloth frame is stood up and covered with an absorbent cloth which soaks up the water. Next, it is sunned out for one day, when the paper is dry to be peeled off the cloth. This cut into 6" squares which are sand papered to be free of dust and



**Photo.1. Cutting Bamboo**



**Photo.2. Putting the small bamboo bundles into the pots with Lime**



**Photo.3. Boiling earthen ware pots with the bamboo**



**Photo.4. Pounding the bamboo pulp**



**Photo.5. Balls of bamboo pulp**



**Photo.6. Dalet**



**Photo.7. Balls of bamboo pulp mixed with a bit of water and stirred with a *Dalet***



**Photo.8. Spreading bamboo pulp mixture on a teak wood frame**



**Photo.9. Spreading the cloth sheet with bamboo pulp with a round stick**



**Photo.10. Draining the water**



**Photo.11. Absorbing the water from the frame**



**Photo.12. Peel off the cloth from the frame**



**Photo.13. Polishing the paper**

fibers. They are polished in a brick underground vault to be safe from dust and sand. If the paper is not clean, it spoils the gold-leaf. This paper is a very important item in gold-leaf making.

#### **b. Polishing steps in the earth vault**

In the earth vault is an eight feet square sheet of brass on which the paper is beaten over and over again with two sticks. They are made from *Thaminthapho* tree (name of tree). The wood is hard and light and does not pray like other woods. These *Thaminthapho* wooden sticks polish the paper. When the paper is beaten thus, the original draft paper gradually becomes clear. Before beating them they rub the paper with oil from the cheeks and head for the oil content not to dry up. They beat the paper until it looks like oil-paper which is ready to be mixed with gold. They need (1200) sheets of *Shwe-pwa* paper to a packet of gold. Since, making this kind of paper is not strenuous work, it can be done easily by women. In Mandalay, street no (80) is the street of traditional paper producers from olden days.

#### **(2). Making Shwe-hlaung paper**

*Shwe-hlaung* paper is used in preparing gold. It is made from paddy straw. In the past, the straw is brought from the landowners in Patheingyi Township but today it is brought from, Shwebo region because it is the biggest agricultural zone. The price of straw is K.5000 (Myanmar currency) per 100 bundles of straw (2008 record). Because it is mostly done by women as it is not strenuous work. Sometimes the men may help out when more labor is needed.

To make *Shwe-hlaung* paper, the bundles of straw are put and in the heat of the sun for one day. Then they are pressed down with lime in glazed earthen pots from (5) to (8) days. Then, it is boiled with strong fire for one day, and left to cool for 3 days. Then it is put out to dry in the sun. Next it is put in baskets and taken to the river banks to wash off the lime. They have to tread on the straw. To finish in time just family labor is not enough. So they have to hire daily wage laborers at K.1000 per day after washing they have to pick off the rubbish and sun it the next day. When it is dry, they have to separate the rough and the soft and keep for a night.

The next day it is pounded in the motor. It takes the whole day and four labors. Again they have to hire daily 4 wage workers at K1500 a day and supply with food for that day. Sometimes if there are shortages of laborers, the members of family may volunteer to help out. The pounded pulp is pressed into a pot for one day. The next day, about (10) ticals of pulp is mixed thoroughly with water. Then it is poured onto a cloth stretched on frame. This frame is put on a water tank 6 feet or 5 feet x 3 feet or 4½ feet and 3 inches in deep. The pulp is spread evenly and sunned for a day when it is dry the paper is peeled off the frame cleaned of rubbish and soul and folded a hundred bundles of straw yields a thousand sheets of *Shwe-hlaung* paper. The process of the making *Shwe-hlaung* paper will be explained again by photographs (See. photo. 14 to 24).

### (3). Making *Thanote* paper

Gold is put into *Shwe-pwa* paper and hammered. But *Thanote* paper must be put on top and below so that *Shwe-pwa* paper can bear the beating. *Thanote* paper is made from the scraps of *Shwe-hlaung* left after they have cut up the required size. They use these scrap and left over pieces.

To make *Thanote* paper, the *Shwe-hlaung* scraps and leftover are collected and pounded to a pulp. Then it is soaked in water for one day. Next it is squeezed dry and pounded with *Thaminthapho* wood stick.

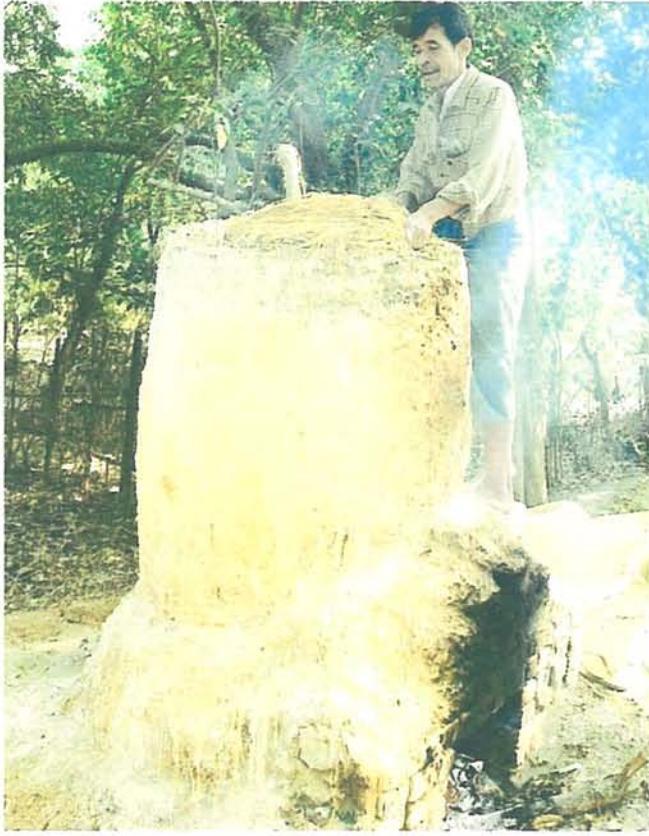
For each sheet of paper, 35 ticals of the pulp is mixed with water and thoroughly stirred with a *dalet*. Then it is powered on to the piece of cloth stretched over a frame. The pulp is evenly spread dry hand and put out in the sun to dry. It is peeled of the cloth when dry and help folded. Next it is cut up into 6 inches squares and again soaked in water. Then they have to make packets of one soaked sheet and (5) wet sheets and pressed down at the top. This makes all the sheets wet evenly inside. Then the paper is put on an iron sheet and beater over and over again with *Thaminthapho* wooden stick to polish it. This work is done by the men of the family. When it is done the *Thanote* paper is ready for use in gold-leaf production (See. photo. 25).



**Photo.14. Putting the bundles of straw in the heat of the Sun**



**Photo.15. Pressing the dried straw down with Lime in earthen pots**



**Photo.16. Boiling the straw with strong fire**



**Photo.17. Separation of rough and soft**



**Photo.18. Pounding the soft straw**



**Photo.19. Pressing the pounded pulp into a pot**



**Photo.20. Mixing the 10-ticals of pulp with water**



**Photo.21. Pouring the liquid of pulp onto a cloth**



Photo.22. Dry the paper in the Sun



Photo.23. Peel off the paper from the frame



Photo.24. Folding a bundle of straw

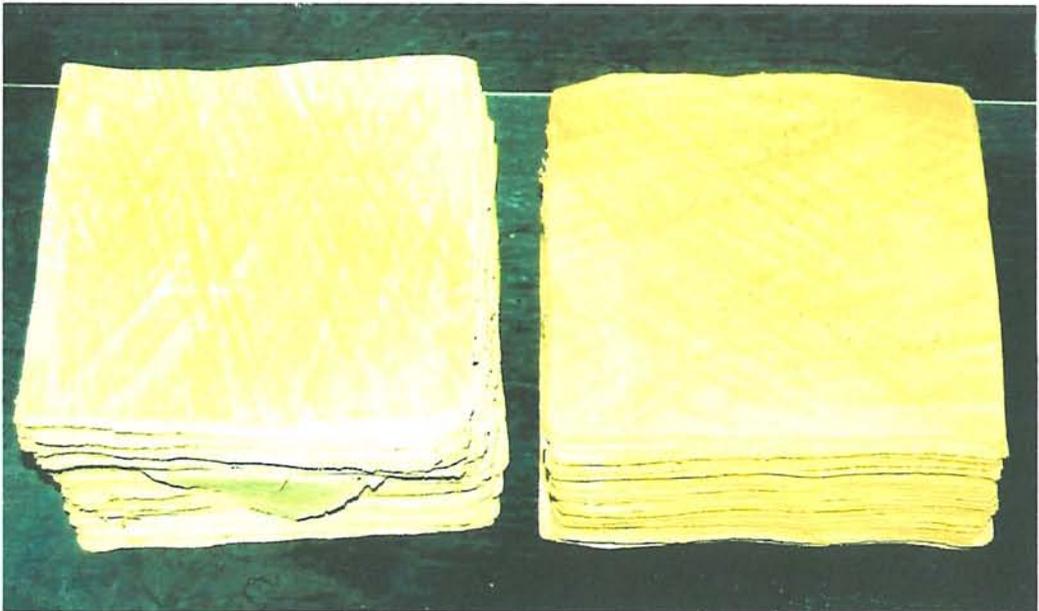


Photo.25. *Thanote* paper, yellow one and *Lay* paper, red one

#### **(4). Making *Lay* paper**

*Lay* paper is used in making gold-leaves (See. photo.25). It is made in the same way as *Thanote* paper. But they use straw pulp about 50 ticals pulp is mixed with water and thoroughly stirred with a *dalet*. The mixture is poured on to a cloth pieces stretched over a frame and sun dried. The dried sheet of paper is cut up into 6" square and polished by beating over and over again with *Thaminthapho* wooden stick. The finished products, *Lay* paper are used in making gold-leaves.

#### **(5). Other Raw Materials**

##### **(1). Sulphur powder**

Blocks of sulphur are mined in the mountains of Ban Mauk Township, Kachin State. While blocks of sulphur are ground by hand on slabs of rocks, the powder is put on a piece of cloth to pick off lists of stones and sand. The powder is carefully packed in a piece of cloth to avoid sand from getting in. It is used by rubbing the hands with it, so as to avoid gold from sticking on the flesh rock slabs, so it is done by the men of the family. Sometimes, a woman grinds it.

##### **(2). *Dan* (an instrument or fool made of buffalo horns)**

*Dan* is an instrument made of buffalo horn to handle pieces of gold in making gold-leaves. It is made by men. They cut 6 inches x 1/2inch of the horn. To make the lip flat, they use a gold smith's chisel after. The lip is flat and thin, the end part is rounded like a pen. So they make a *Dan* tool (See. photo. 26).

##### **(3). Table for working gold**

This table is a special table to put gold and other things needed to make gold-leaves. First, they need a teak wood plank one inch in thickness for the surface. The length and breadth is the choice of the worker after the surface has been planned smooth, it is rolled with a roller to make it very smooth. Then it is coated three times with black resin. They make the surface black, so that they could pick up the thin light pieces of gold easily.

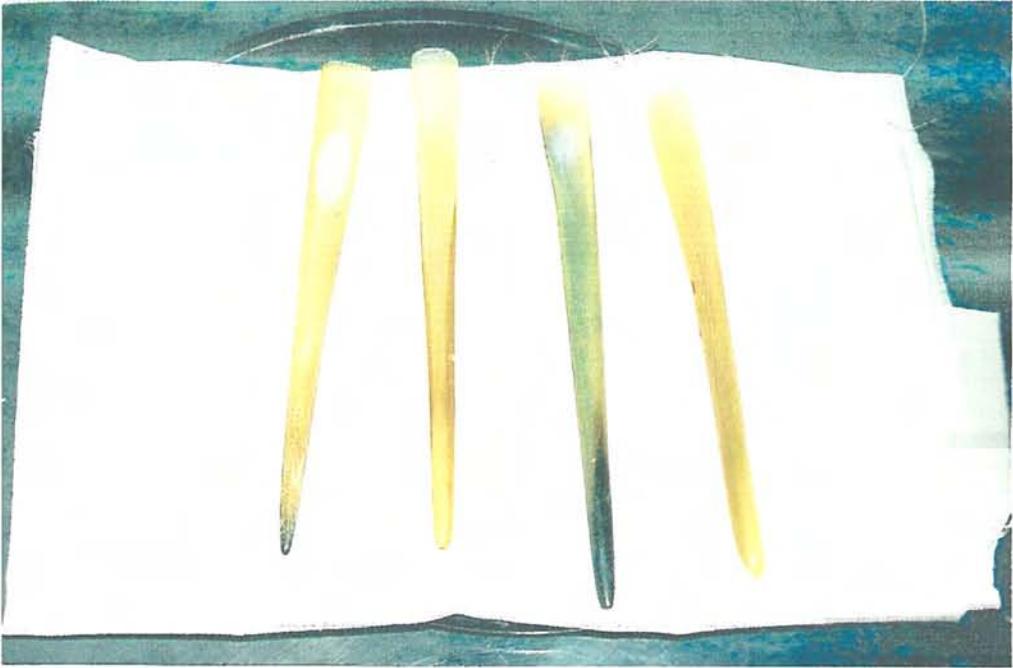


Photo.26. *Dan*



Photo.27. *Shwe-pyin* room

#### (4). Room for working with gold

This room for working with gold is called *Shwe-pyin-khan* in Myanmar (See. photo.27). The female workers only work in it. In every house of gold-leaves production, this room is essential. It is at the head part of the house. The room is screened with cloth curtains or glass to prevent air and dust from coming in. The young women who make gold-leaves work in this room. They must avoid from the taking the round bamboo tray or sieve into this room. They have a superstition that when they beat gold in that room, it will not be round and smooth, but have holes like those trays, the gold-leaves will have looks and will not be beautiful. The quantity also will be less and so their profit will also be less.

#### (5). *Shwe-Khut-Kyunk-Saing*

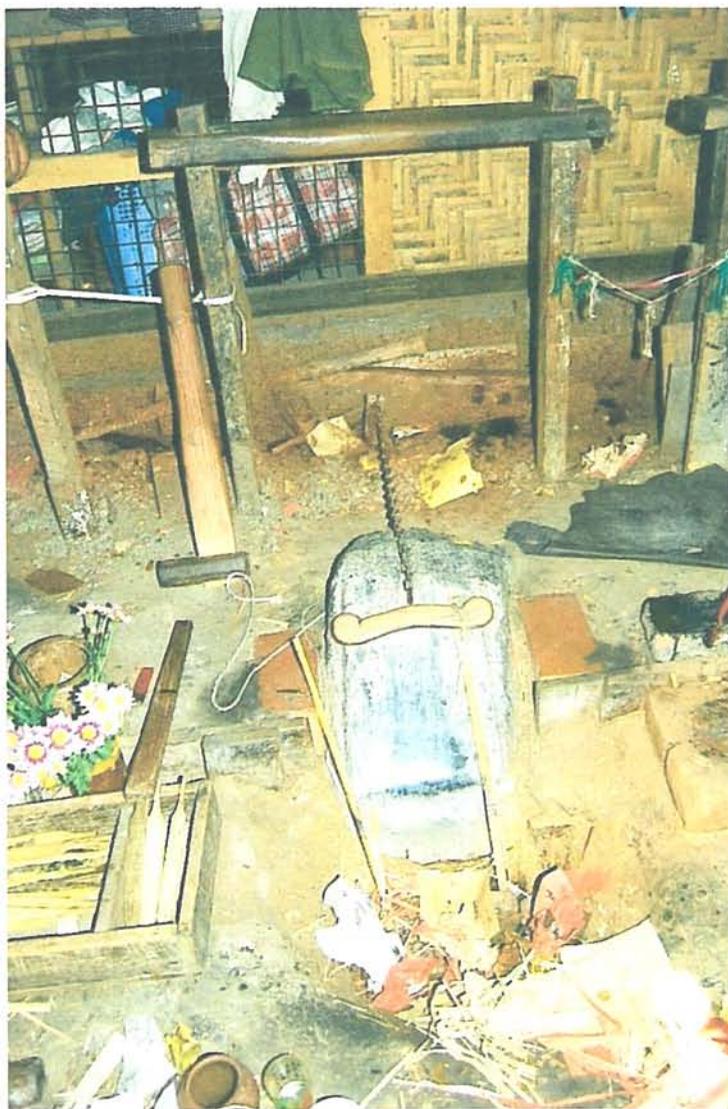
This is the men's domain and the business term for this room is *Shwe-khut-kyauk-saing* (See. photo. 28). This *Kyauk-saing* is not in the house. It is separate room from the house and only men can enter. It is to keep it clean and nobody must wear shoes in it. Women also demand to complete attention and must not be disturbed by the presence of women. They also believe that gold with increase only is they work with concentration and honestly. So, they do not want any distractions from their work.

#### (6). Stone on which the gold is beaten

This stone on which gold is beaten, is obtained from *Yankin* mountain, to the east of Mandalay. They are a kind of alabaster stone. A block of this stone must be (3) feet in circumference and (11) inches a surface of is necessary. With chisel and hammer stone is made even and smooth. It has to be rubbed with a small stone to make it smooth. When the stone is smooth, it has to take L18"xB12"xT2 feet and bury it 2 feet in the earth.

#### (7). Hammer to beat gold.

The hammer used to beat gold packet on the stone is called *Shwe-khut-tu* or hammer. The iron head is 2.5 in weight and the handle is made of *Padauk* tree wood. Other wood cannot be used for it. When the person is beating the gold with this hammer,



**Photo.28. *Shwe-khut-kyunk-saing***

his handle become hot because of having to hold it tight. *Padauk* wood is cool to touch and able to suck up the sweat and oil from his handle. This helps the gold to increase.

In the *Kyauk Saing*, there are the stones on which to put the gold packet, *Che-Kan-taing*, *Myinkhon* and *Pachut*, which are things used in beating gold. *Che-kan-taing* is a brick placed as out at side of the stone. *Myinkhon* is the seat for the gold-beater to sit which beating gold. The seat is placed 18 inches away from the head of the stone a plank is firmly attached to the *Myinkhon* or seat. *Pachat* is a piece of wood placed on the front surface of the stone. It is tied with an iron chain to the post below the *Myinkhon*. Then, it has two leather string on each side. The right side is tied loose and the left side is tied permanently to stumps in the ground. The packet of gold is tied with the *Pachut* string firmly to the stone.

### **(7). Deer skin bag**

The deer skin bag is also essential item for gold-leaves making. It is dried in the sun and the hair is removed by scrapping with a broken glass. Then, putting in a big sheet of *Shwe-pwa* paper into the deer skin 3 feet length by 4.5 inches breadth, fold, and stickled into an open bottom bag. Then, put in another deer skin bag cross-wise. Using two bags safeguards the *Shwe-khut* paper. Deer skin is used because it can stand the heat of the hammer and does not break or shred, so makes the gold increase. If deer skin is not available, stag or goat skin may be used.

By observing how the raw materials are obtained and prepare to make gold-leaves, (1) the terms used in the production of gold-leaves, (2) how the natural things are useful, and (3) the taboos of *Shwe-pyin* room and *Kyauk-saing* room in the gold-leaves making can be explored. And then, the making of gold-leaves will be presented continuously.

## **2. The making of gold-leaves**

There are two steps in the making of gold-leaves. They are preparation for gold-leaves making and actual production of gold-leaves.

## (1). Preparation for gold-leaves making

For the preparation, bamboo paper beating is called *Achan-khut* and beating gold into thin sheets is called *Shwe-let-saunt-chin*. The processes of these are as the following.

### a. Beating bamboo paper (*Achan khut*)

Beating bamboo paper is a strenuous job and is done only by men. To be able to put gold into new *Shwe-pwa* paper, the paper has to be beaten to be ready for use. The trade term is (*Achan-khut*) and the man who does this job is called (*Achan khut saya*) and his wage is K (7500/-) per a bundle of paper.

To beat the paper, a bundle of *Shwe-pwa* paper about (1200) sheets is divided into three portions, and covered with a wet cloth for (40) minutes. Next, it is packed in a dry cloth and weighed down with a stone for one day. Next it is put into deer-skin bags. Next, the bags are put between bamboo sticks and tied up and put on gold beating stone. *Achan khut saya* sits on the seat called *Myinkhon* and beats it with a hammer for about (5) hrs. Next, the bags are put into a big earthen jar buried in the ground, for about (4) hours. Then it is returned to *Achan khut saya* for a second beating. Then it is sent to the gold-leaves producers, who hang them on bamboo sheets and sun them for half a day. Then he cleans them of bamboo fiber with a rough cloth and sends it back the paper to the *Achan khut saya* who beats it like the first time and sends it back to the producer. This time, he rubs earth powder on both sides of the paper, suns them for half a day and sends back for third time to *Achan khut saya* only after the third beating the paper is given to the *Shwe-Khut saya* by the producers. The *Shwe-Khut saya* now puts gold on the smooth paper and has to beat it on the *Shwe-Khut* stone for half a day. Then, he stores it in the big jar. The next day, the paper is ready for use in making gold-leaves.

### b. *Shwe let sunt chin* (Beating gold into thin sheets)

*Shwe let sunt* means to turn a lump of gold into thin long sheets. This job is done by men. 3 ticals of pure gold is put on the stone and beaten until it becomes pointed at one end. Then it is put into a crucible which is put on live coals after (15-20) minutes the gold begins to melt while it is on the fire the workman has to stir the melting gold with a carbon stick. It is to make the bits iron and dust in the gold to stick to the bottom of the

crucible when all the gold has melted. And it has to be taken off the fire and let is cool and solidify. Then it is beaten on the stone again. This process of melting, cooling and beating has to be done (5-6) times while it is on the fire. They have to sprinkle salt on the gold. It is called "*Sa-cha*", and done to clean the gold of impurities. The gold sheets are rolled in a machine and put on the fire in turn. When the gold sheets become very thin, they have put coconut oil, so that the gold sheets will not stick to the roller. This very thin sheet of gold is called *Shwe thwe*. These are put in fire to clean off the oil. When it is cold, one has to rub his hands with ash and stretch the bent *Shwe thwe*. The 3 ticals of gold sheets is divided into four *Shwe thwe*, each weighing  $\frac{3}{4}$  ticals. Then, each *Shwe thwe* is folded and beaten and put on fire and cooled. This *Shwe thwe* is unfolded and cleaned by hand. It is put into the fire again and water sprinkled on it when the gold becomes red. Then, it is taken off the fire and cooled and unfolded. Now it is ready to be used in gold-leaves making.

## (2). Actual Production of gold-leaves

There are (8) steps in making gold-leaf. In the various steps, the light and small detail work is done by the women and the heavy work like beating gold is done by the men. Some work are shared by all, one must work with a steady mind and be alert. It is also important to have a good eye-sight. The pay is different according to the kind of work and the skill of the worker. A slow female worker may earn (K.1200-1500) for a day while a skilled quick worker may earn (K.2500-3000) for a day. Most of the workers live in *Myet-pa* quarter, but there are also workers from other quarters.

*Ayar-khut*, *Paza-khut* and *Shwe-khut* are jobs that are strenuous, long hour of concentrated work. *Ayar-khut* takes  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour and *Paza-khut* is one hour long. So a man can manage it alone. He gets kyats (2500) for beating a packet of *Paza*. But in *Shwe-khut*, (Beating gold) takes much longer than four hours, so they have to change and take turns and rest. It takes four men to beat a packet of gold. One must not be calculating shirk, but work in harmony and with complete understand among them. The workers are strong young men and middle aged men. The old men cannot do the strenuous work, but they become masters of the art and remain as directors.

### **1. *Ayar-tin chin* (Inserting gold between *Paza* and *Lay* papers)**

The young girl takes one *Shwe Thwe* weight in  $\frac{3}{4}$  tical of gold and cuts it into (200) pieces the size of a tamarind leaves (See. photo. 29). She then inserts one gold piece between *Paza* paper and *Lay* paper 3 inches square in size (See. photo. 30). They use a "*Dan*" made of buffalo horn to pick up the little piece of gold.

### **2. *Ayar-htu chin* ( Beating *Ayar* packet)**

After *Ayar-tin chin*, the packets of gold are sent for *Ayar-htu* to the *Paza-khut* saya. He puts the *Ayar* packets (the packets of gold) into the small deer-skin bag, puts it on the stone in the *Kyauk Saing* room. He ties it firmly with the *Pachut* strings. Then he sits on the seat and beats it with the hammer for half an hour (See. photo. 31). The tamarind leaf size of gold has become the size of a kyat coin. It is called *Ayarlone* (See. photo. 32). The *Paza-khut* saya then sends the *Ayar* packets to the gold-leaves producer.

### **3. *Paza tin chin* (Cutting and putting the ball of gold (*Ayarlone*) in the *Paza-khon***

*Paza tin chin* is the following process. The young girls take the sulphur powder with the right fore finger and rub on the both sides of *Paza-khon* . It is called *Paza-khon Put chin* (See. photo.33). *Paza-khon* is a bamboo paper, three inches square in size. They take the *Ayar* ball or *Ayarlone* from the *Ayar* packet, and cut it into (6) pieces (See. photo.34). Each piece is about the size of a finger nail. They put (1200) pieces of this gold are piece in each paper evenly (See. photo.35). This packet is called *Paza* packet

### **4. *Paza-khut chin* (Beating *Paza* packet) .**

The *Paza-khut* saya takes the *Paza* packet and puts it in the deer skin bag. He puts the bag on the stone and ties it firmly with *Pachut* strings. He sits on the *Myinkhon* and begins to beat the bundle of gold. He has to beat about (4800) times. It takes about an hour and the gold balls had become the size of a big chicken egg. The *Paza-khut* saya returns it to the producers.



Photo.29. The cutting of *Shwe-thwe*



Photo.30. *Ayar-tin-chin*

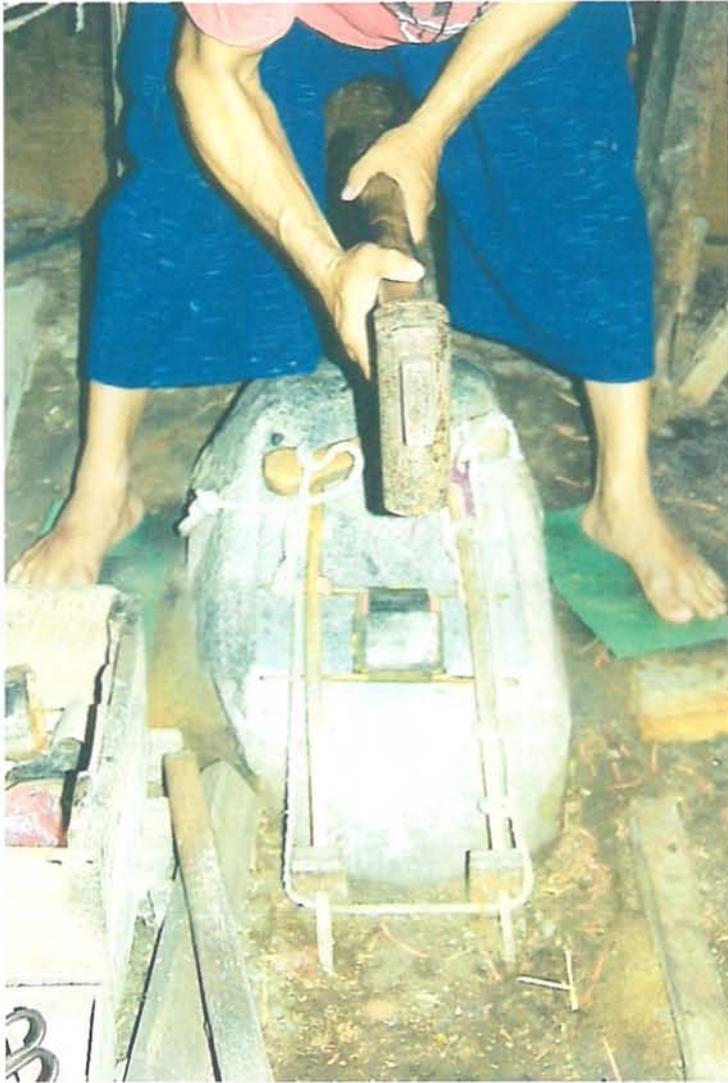


Photo.31. *Ayar-htu-chin*



Photo.32. *Ayar-lones*



Photo.33. *Paza khon put chin*



Photo.34. Cutting of *Paza chin*



Photo.35. *Paza tin chin*

## 5. *Seku put chin* and *Shwe tin chin*

*Seku put chin* is the rubbing the *Shwe-pwa* paper with sulphur powder. *Shwe tin chin* is the putting the *Paza lone* into the *Shwe-pwa* papers. The young women prepare the paper by cutting them into 6 inches squares. Then they rub the paper on both sides with *Myae Htou*, a small pillow made by cloth, dipped in sulphur powder (See. photo. 36). Next she takes the *Paza* packets from the *Kyauk Saing* and takes out 1200 gold balls. She uses a "Dan" to take them out. Then she picks the big gold balls and divides these into (3) sections. Then she picks the small gold balls and places one in a paper. Next she puts one section of the gold ball on either side of the small gold ball to make it into a square-shaped gold ball. She makes 700 square gold balls. Next, she puts these square gold balls in *Shwe-khut* paper neatly, taking care that no sand or dust gets into them (See. photo.37). If sand or dust should get in the gold balls, they will be spoilt when they are beaten.

At this stage, the gold platelets have become so thin that they cannot be handed by hand. They have to hold the *Dan* in the right hand and the left hand is like a fist with the thumb and little finger straight out. The Sulphur powder rubbed on the hands must be very fine and clean. It is done to prevent the gold from sticking to the hands although there are (1000) sheets of gold paper, only (700) sheets contain the gold platelets. The extras 300 sheets are left to use as *Dan-khan*. The packet is again sent to *Shwe-khut-kyauk-saing*.

## 6. *Shwe-khut-chin* (Beating gold)

The gold beating master takes the gold packet and ties it firmly with *Pachut* string to the stone. The gold master has (4) other beaters to help him. They beat the gold for (5) hours amounting to (12000) strokes. They use a water-clock to count the strokes coconut shell with a small hole at the bottom and a handle is placed in a basin of water (See. photo.38). They place this coconut cup, as soon as they start beating the gold when the cup sinks, it is 400 strokes and (18) cup is (1) hour. One person beats for (18-24) cups. Every time a man changes, the gold packet has to be turned around a man must concentrate his attention and count the number of strokes as he beats the gold. The gold beater's palms must be oily to ease the hardship and to be able to beat a long time. The



Photo.36. *Paza put chin*



Photo.37. *Shwe tin chin*

hammer's handle is made of *Padauk* wood which is hard and cool. It helps to lessen the heat of the hands. The palm oils not only helps to keep the hands from splitting but also believed to help increase the gold, that is in their terminology, makes the gold beautiful, spreading without breaks or faults after (5) hours of beating the gold has covered the whole sheet of paper (See. photo.39). They also believe that getting beautiful gold depends on the luck of the producers and the weather conditions. By this time, the gold balls have become very thin. The beater of gold packet sends it to the producers.

#### **7. *Shwe-hto chin* (putting in gold Between layers of *Lay* paper)**

The young women take gold balls from the paper and cut them into half. Then they stick a half of gold on to *Shwe hlaung* paper. Then they put it on *Lay* paper. They cover it with another *Lay* paper. Then they put another half on it and cover with *Lay* paper again (See. photo. 40). This process of putting gold halves in between *Lay* papers is called *shwe-hto chin*.

#### **8. *Shwe pyin chin* (Fill the gold in *Shwe-hlaung* paper)**

When the *Shwe-hlaung* paper is completely filled with gold-leaf is ready to be offered as gold robe at the various pagodas and Buddha images (See. photo.41). Those gold leaves are neatly and tied with thread in (100) sheet packets (See. photo. 42). They are called to "*Saing*". This packing into (100) sheets package is the last stage of gold-leaves production and is ready for sale at pagodas. It is sent to pagodas all over Myanmar, for Buddhist devotees to offer as gold robe to the images and pagodas in dedication to the Buddha.

By observing the various steps of producing gold-leaves, (1) what are essential for the production of gold-leaves, (2) where the raw materials for the production of gold-leaves can be get, (3) how they are produced, (4) the process of gold-leaves making, (5) the terms using in this craft, (6) how the work is divided between the man and the women, (7) how difficult and painstaking this ancient craft is and (8) can be presented.



Photo.38. Water-clock



Photo.39. *Shwe khut chin*



Photo.40. *Shwe hto chin*



Photo.41. *Shwe pyin chin*



**Photo.42. One hundred sheet packets**

### **3. Observation of the life of the gold-leaf workers**

Here, the producers of gold-leaves, their workers, their relationship and their income are also mentioned. There are (130) families in *Myet-pa-yat* who trade us making gold-leaves in them. There are (3) types of producers. The big producers work with a capital of over 500 lakhs. The medium size producers work with a capital of over 30 lakhs and the small family run - producers work with over 10 lakhs.

#### **(1). The big producers**

There are about (50) big producers who are now working with a capital of 500 lakhs. They are traditional workers who have carried on this trade since their forefather's time when the price of gold was K (300) a tical. They sell (4000-5000) packets of gold-leaf every year. When they sell by tender system, they share it among the other producers in the quarter. They also sell to single regular customers also. They produce most from August to February. Sales fall in June-July because of the rains when gold-leaves cannot apply to pagodas. Sales are fairly good in the remaining months. There are (8-9) workmen in the producer's house. The relationship between them is good. They lend money to the workers when they are in need and it may be deducted from their daily wages gradually. The producers also donate generously to their quarter *Dhammayone* (Dhamma house). Pagoda festival hold by people living in *Myat-par-yat* is the grandest festival in Mandalay. They invite about (1200) monks to their *soon-gyi-laung* (Communal offering of provisions and various articles to monks). The big gold-leaves producers contribute the donation for *Pahtan pwe* (Reciting ceremony of Buddhist scriptures) and giving sermons and meditation center and offering alms meals to the monks. The gold-leaves merchants get together for a *Soon-gyi-laung* at *MahaMyatmuni* pagoda in Mandalay and also do charities at *Shwedagon* pagoda in Yangon, *Kyait-hti-yo* pagoda in Mon state and other social affairs of the communities.

#### **(2). The medium size producers**

There are about (40) gold-leaves producers, working with a capital of about (30) lakhs. They started their business when gold was K.6000 per tical. They produce about (3000-4000) packets a year. Sales are good from August to December and fair in

the remaining months. They have (6-7) workmen. Some producers have come up from daily-wage earners. The relationship between the producer and the workmen is good. The workmen are fed everyday with tea and *laphet*. They are given bonuses in April and October. On the days when gold is beautiful that is more gold-leaves are produced, they are given more wages. These medium size producers also give in charity out of their income to their quarter festival as well the social affairs of their quarter in joyous or sad occasions.

### **(3).The small producers**

There are nearly (40) small producers. They work with a capital of above 10 lakhs, usually a manageable family run trade. They produce about (400-500) to (1000) gold-leaves packets a year. Sales are good from August to December and fair in the other months.

The producers are different and according to their capital outlay but their attitudes are the same. It is traditional family craft carried on from generation to generation, which they feel will last all their lives. They depend only on their trade for their families needs and spare even for charities. The relationship between the producer and workmen is good whether it is a big or medium or small one. The workers are kept happy with daily snacks, bonus and little extra. When trade is dull, the workmen can always depend on loans. The gold-leaves making is sedentary work and indoors. So they are also given holiday trips like pilgrimages to pagodas.

## CHAPTER III

### The Utilization of Gold-leaves

In this chapter, it intends to mention "where and why gold-leaves are used", the relation of Gold leaves and Myanmar Buddhist's religious beliefs, and the using of gold-leaves for health and beauty, and articles. The Myanmar Buddhist believes firmly in the benefit offering the robes to the Sangha (Monks). This practice of providing the Sangha with robes is from the time of the Buddha. The *Waso* robe is offered before *Waso* adduring the three months of lent. They also believe that the donor of *Waso* robe will never go to hell.

Furthermore, they believe that one who takes refuge in the Triple Gems, one who keeps the five precepts, one who donates "*Saye tan me*" (The gift in a religious offering to Buddhist monks), one who offers alms daily to the monks, on his alms round, one who offers the *Waso* robe, drinking water pond donor, one who builds a monastery for the Sangha, these people will never be born in the four abodes of hell.

Another robe is the *Kahtain* robe (The name of Robe). It is offered to the monks after the end of lent, from *Thedingyut* 1<sup>st</sup> waning moon day to full moon days of *Tazaungmon* within a period of one month. Here, both the recipient monk as well as the donor can receive equal blessings.

**The blessings or privileges for the monk** are the following-

- (1) He can go about freely without asking for permission
- (2) He can travel about freely without taking all the three robes
- (3) He can partake of the meal which is ,wrongly worded offering
- (4) He can keep extra robes besides the three robes
- (5) He has a right to share the robes belonging to the Sangha

**The donor of the robe** has the following blessings.

- (1) The donor can travel anywhere without harm.
- (2) No enemy can destroy his property
- (3) He will have bountiful food and safely from poisoning.
- (4) No loss of one's property, though long forgotten.
- (5) Will be rewarded in heaps and bounds in earning for one's livelihood.

Besides, there are also seven blessing for the charity of giving the robe. They are (1) to be free from fear or worries (2) be as beautiful as gold (3) have a brilliant personality (4) have a soft tender skin (5) be clear and pure (6) have plentiful clothes (7) can gain a noble monkhood in Buddha's time, such utterance of Buddha can make a man become instantly and aged venerable monk of 60 vassas, complete with the eight requisites of a monk. In the time of the Buddha, a woman robe donor like *Withakha* had a chance to wear a precious dress called *Mahalata*. It is jeweled garb which took five hundred gold smiths, four months to make it and worth millions and the cost of making alone in one lakh.

The Myanmar Buddhists offer robes of all kinds, such as cloth, robes, limewash, discogold, gold paint, gold-leaves, to the pagodas, Buddha images. They believe firmly in the blessings. So gold-leaf robe is of the highest quality because it is real gold belonging to the seven jewels.

Myanmar Buddhists use gold-leaves for many reasons, but their attitude towards gold-leaves is the same. They offer it at the pagodas and Buddha images an important days as fullmoon days of *Waso* (July), *Thadingyunt* (October), *Tazaungmon* (November), *Tobodwe* (February), Birthdays, Sabbath day, Saturday, Sunday, and school and office holidays.

According to the key informant interviews (28-2-2009);

- (1) Some want to do meritorious work with their pay first before using it for self. So on payday they go to a pagoda and offer gold-leaves to the Buddha image or pagoda.
- (2) Be rich or poor alike they want to give in charity generously with their hand earned money.
- (3) To avert harm or get a wish. They make an offering of gold-leaves. Very often they apply gold-leaves to the chest of the Buddha image to have peacefulness. Some apply to the knees and waist, to get relief from knee and waist pains. People who want to make money apply it to the right arm of the image and those who wish for fame apply it on the left arm. Those who want to be attractive and popular apply it on the face of the Buddha (See. photo.43). Students also often use the gold-leaves to be good in their

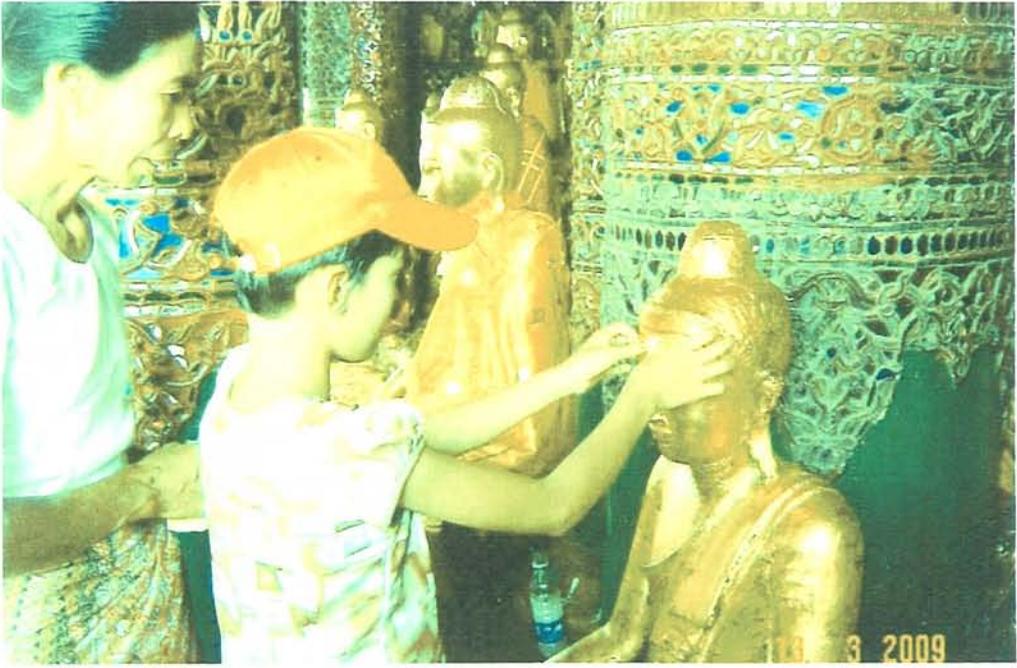


Photo.43. Appling the gold-leaf on the forehead of Buddha image



Photo.44. Scaffold

education. So, people using gold-leaves for an offering to the noblest person, the Buddha, can achieve something or to safeguard themselves from misfortune or just to gain merit for Nibbana.

Gold-leaves are used in all things concerning the Buddha. That is the Buddha images and relics enshrined in the Pagodas. The pagodas all over Myanmar made beautiful and golden bright with gold-leaves. These Pagodas are very important symbols of the Myanmar Buddhist. Where funds are low in some Pagodas, and since gold-leaf is expensive, lime or discogold or gold paint are used for robe as an inexpensive substitute. If the object is under a roof, the gold paint may last (4 or 5) years. If the object leaves to the wind and sun without a roof, the gold paint may last (2 or 3) years only. In other hand, if the gold-leaves will last (10) years, if it keeps under a roof and walls it is observed to last even (40) years. So it can be said that technology produced modern gold paint is much inferior in quality to the traditional craft produced gold-leaves.

In Myanmar, where the pagodas are well funded, Buddhism has annually applied gold-leaves to these pagodas. There is also gold-leaves application offering to the images as well. So, the utilization of gold-leaves at the *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda and the *Maha Myat Muni* Buddha image are studies to give examples.

### **1. Gold-leaves offering at the *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda**

*Shwe-da-gon* pagoda is a good example because in it is enshrined relics of the four Buddhas. It is also the pagoda visited by the greatest number of pilgrims from Myanmar as well as abroad.

The *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda was built in the life time of the Buddha, in other words, it existed more than (2500) years ago. In it is enshrined (8) hairs of the *Gautama paya*, walking stick of *Kakuthan paya*, water sieve of *Kaunagon paya*, bath robe of *Kassapa paya*. The Buddhist feels great veneration for the *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda because of these relics. The height of the pagoda from the foot to the diamond bud is (326) feet. There are (64) small pagodas surrounding it and (4) entrances as each with an entrance pagoda. It is applied thickly with gold-leaves from the foot base to the bell.

People who wish to offer gold-leaves robe to the pagoda may put their money into the donation boxes for gold-leaves placed at the four entrances. They can also go to

donate to the department on the pagoda platform and donate it to the pagoda trustees. They collect and save the money and every four years. The *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda and all the surrounding pagodas are offered gold-leaf robes.

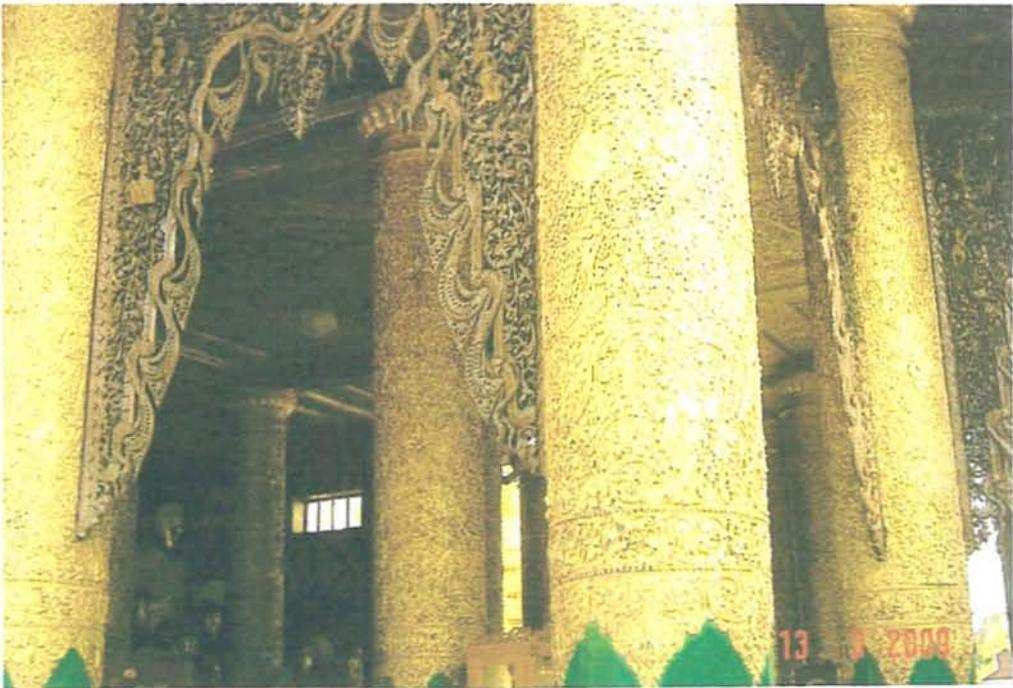
The other pagodas like the *Naung-daw-gyi* and surrounding pagodas too are offered gold-leaf robes. Wind and rain may wash away or break the surface of a pagoda all these are picked up as gold rubbish and auctioned to the public. The money by getting from auction is used to buy the gold-leaves and to renovate the pagodas. When the whole pagoda is covered with scaffolding, the man may climb the scaffolds and apply the gold-leaves to renovate the pagoda. At that time, people can offer gold-leaf robe personally (See. photo.44).

The *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda has four entrances and *Gundakuti* (Special chamber for the use of the Buddha). In the eastside entrance *Guntakuti*, *Kakuthanda paya* image and others, altogether numbering (32) can be found. They have placed three donation boxes for gold-leaves. In the southern entrance has *Kaunagamaha paya* image and (33) others and they have placed (3) donation boxes for gold-leaves. In the western entrance *Gundakuti* is the *Kassapa paya* image and others numbering (43) plus one standing Buddha image. They have placed (3) donation boxes for gold-leaves. In the north entrance *Gundakuti* is the *Gautama paya* image and (120) others plus and, (1) standing Buddha. They have placed (4) donation boxes for gold-leaves. In the (4) entrances *Gundakuti* buildings, one can personally apply gold-leaves to two images and two reclining Buddha in the eastern entrance *Gundakuti*, one image in the southern entrance, one image and one standing Buddha in the western entrance and three images in the northern entrance are earmarked. There are official gold-leaf stalls at the places. If a donor wants to apply to the whole image, they will calculate the number of gold-leaves required and the cost and the pagoda trustees will take the responsibility to do it for one.

Besides, the pagoda on the terrace of the *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda such as *Shin saw pu paya*, *Nayla paya*, *Po min kaung paya*, *Kya Chinthe' paya*, *Buddha's foot print*, *Baudi Mandaing* passage way, its throne, all the Myanmar handicrafts displayed in the east, west, south passages such as the posts, decorative wood work are all gold-leaves (See. photo.45 to 46). These traditional art works in the north passage are left in their original state to preserve without gold-leaves for fear of damaging them.



**Photo.45. Decorated wood work and posts with gold-leaves**



**Photo.46. Decorated wood work and posts with gold-leaves**

On the *Shwe-da-gon* pagoda, from the bell to the banana bud, one foot square gold plates have been fixed. However, the gold sheets are very expensive. So gold-leaves are still within the reach of the poor. There is fear of the craft of gold-leaves, dying away because of it. So the craft of gold-leaves will still drive for the many people who still prefer the readily available and affordable gold-leaves.

## 2. Gold-leaf offering at *Maha Myat Muni* image

In contrast to the *Shwe-da-gon* Pagoda, the *Maha Myat Muni* is an image. It was consecrated since the late time of the Buddha, who had blessed it seven times. Anyone can personally offer gold-leaf robe at the great image. The pagoda trustees have opened gold-leaf sale counters where one can purchase the gold-leaves and make the offering personally. The least number of sheets is five and above. There are donation boxes for gold-leaves placed in the *Gundakudi*. The average sale of gold-leaves per day is (100) packets but more on Sabbath and special days. For example, (130-150) packets on Sabbath days, (400-500) packets on *Tabodwe* fullmoon or *Kason* fullmoon day, *Waso* fullmoon day and on New Year's day. The year round average is (42000) *Saings* (According to data collection, 2009).

In the *Gundakuti* which house the *Maha Muni paya* has seven tier roofs (See. photo.47). The gold-leaves are applied every (10) years and user (8600) *Saings* of gold-leaves. It has (120) *Zedi yan* around it. Each *Zediyan* is offered (60) *Saings* of gold-leaves. The *Zediyan*s in the west, north and south passages too have their umbrellas applied with gold-leaves.

Every year the old gold is collected, cleaned and reused for the pagoda. For those people who offer gold-leaves to Buddha images and pagodas according to their birthday, and to obtain their wishes or to safeguard themselves from harm. There are *Jopyae-nanpye Payas* (Name of Buddha images) on the southwest corner of the terrace (See. photo.48). *Jopyae-nanpye* means that something done to obtain relief from malevolent influences of certain planets or stars. Gold-leaf is seen not only on famous pagodas but also on images in household shrines where it is a yearly ritual to renew the gold. The offering of gold-leaf robe and its place in Myanmar Buddhist religious ardour is seen where they have disfigured the sacred in Mandalay.



Photo.47. Seven tier roofs

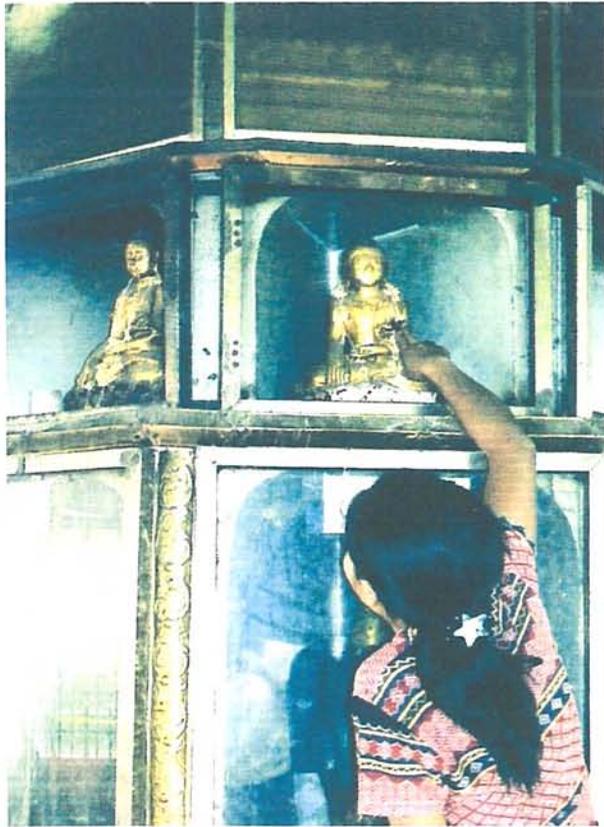


Photo.48. *Jopyae-nanpye paya*

### 3. Nat images are decorated with gold-leaves

There are many people in Myanmar who worship nats (spirits) and there are supposed to be (111) nats in all of these in *Tagaung* era, There are seven house-hold nats, in *Pantaung* era, *Kog gyi Kyaw nat*, *Sithu Shin nat*, *Thein kho Min nat*, *Lay kyun Mg Mg nat*, *Komyo Shin nats*, *Ma Pale'yin nats*, *Popa Medaw*, *Mandalay Bo-daw*, *amay yae-yin* and the four *Medaws Gyis*, *Maungdaw ahlone Bo Bo* , *U Byat Wi*, *U Byatta*, *Ma Ngwe taung*, *Shwe kyauk Saung Mg daw*, *Ma Mya Hnit*, *Than Phomin nat*, and *Ava era Amay Kyan nat*, are well known.

There are traditional nat worshippers all over Myanmar. According to the region and their beliefs, the images of nats are decorated with clothes and gold- leaves. There are also nat mediums who are sometimes possessed by the nat and make communication between human being and the nats. If they cannot afford gold-leaves, they use gold paint. These nat images are sometimes housed in grand palaces or *Nat-nandaws*. For example, *Pakhan guni village*, *Mandalay Taunghyon*, *Ko-myo Shin* have grand places and altars applied thick with gold-leaves which are donated by their worshippers.

Besides, in homes where worship of the home guardian nats, these are carried on as a tradition, the altar and the green coconut and hanger may be applied with gold-leaves or painted with gold. They are adored with great veneration and pray for fulfillment of their wishes and safely from harm.

### 4. Gold-leaves are used by human beings for health and beauty purposes

Gold-leaf is used in many Myanmar traditional medicines especially concerning heart ailments such as narrowing of the heart veins. Most traditional medicines for strengthening the heart contain gold-leaf. Some cook the whole goat's heart with gold-leaf inside it. Some aged people eat banana applied with gold-leaf to relieve their tiredness and children eat them to prevent small-pox and measles. Gold- leaf is also massaged, mixed with traditional Myanmar medicines used for rubbing the body to relieve body aches and pains.

With advances in technology, gold-leaf is used in many beautifying medicines and operations. It is especially used to make the face skin young and smooth by rubbing it in. Expectant mother eat gold-dust to give birth her children with beautiful skin.

## 5. Use of gold-leaf in articles

Gold-leaf is applied to many things used by people lacquer-ware and all articles inlaid with glass and applied with gold-leaf, *Pan-put* crafts (Craft of a turner) and carved articles and statues. In the passage way of *Ananda* at *Maha Muni* pagoda, this trade of inlaid color glass and temples for Buddha images, the throne or *pallin* of the preacher, royal bed, gold covered bowl for offering *soon daw* (the rice and curry), gold alms bowl, gold *Hintha* bird bowl, gold goblet, gold betel boxes for gold-leaf fan handles and fans, gold shoulder pole, gold letter box and stand, gold vases according to the old experienced craftsman of this art, all things used by royalty is applied with gold-leaves (See. photo. 49 to 50). Their most beautiful work of art is seen today in the Myanmar traditional orchestra.



Photo.49. Gold alms bowl



Photo.50. *Pallin* of the preacher

## CHAPTER IV

### Results and Discussion

This thesis is about the production and utilization of gold-leaves. It intends to give the knowledge concern with this ancient craft and how it has come down to us almost unchanged this craft for generations. Even the tools they use are the same as their ancestors, like the big 2½ viss weight hammer with the *Padauk* handle and the teak wood table and the stone on which they beat the gold. Also the deer skin bag in which the gold to be beaten in put and how the skin is so tough to stand the beating. Another curious instrument is the “*Dan*” made of buffalo horn to pick up the gold flecks. There is no other modern substitute for it.

The belief for superstition of not allowing any bamboo round tray or sieve is also very interesting. The coincidence of the wholes in the sieve causing the gold to break and have wholes is beyond understanding.

The next is the taboo of women entering the *Shwekhut Kyauk Saing*, the men’s work shop is another well-preserved tradition, as it affects the gold-leaf yield and destroying the quality of the product.

Gold-leaf production is completely a traditional Myanmar art and craft from the time of the Myanmar kings. It is something Myanmar takes pride in and preserves it for posterity. It is a very very strenuous work, even for men, but they feel they are working for a meritorious work as most gold-leaf are used for religious purposes. Gold-leaf production is done by not highly educated men and women. The work is physically strenuous and mentally boring as it is repetition of the same wait over and over again. But there complete harmony among the work with no thought of shirking and carelessness, as seen in the work team of five men beating (12000-48000) strokes for hours. The business owners also treat them well with snacks during work time and outdoor pilgrimages to pagodas and so on. They are also rewarded if work goes well with extra pay and loans in hard times. So the social conditions are good. But the pay is small compared to the strenuous work they have to do.

Today, the custom of the applying gold sheets to the famous pagodas in Yangon are prevailing. The price of these gold sheets are (5) lakhs for (1) tical of gold, (15) lakhs for (3) ticals of gold. So they are very expensive where as one (2- inches square) gold-

leaf costs only K300/- which is an affordable cost even to the poor. So whatever gold-leaf craft will survive for a long time, especially as Myanmar Buddhist, there is no other substitute for gold-leaves.

Gold-leaves are used for not only traditionally and culturally, but also modern technology especially in the field of medicine and beauty. It is said that this ancient traditional craft of gold-leaves making will survive and also need to preserve the art by making it less strenuous by modernization in production.

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□ - Research area  
(Myat-pa-yet)

ယခင် မြို့ဧည့်

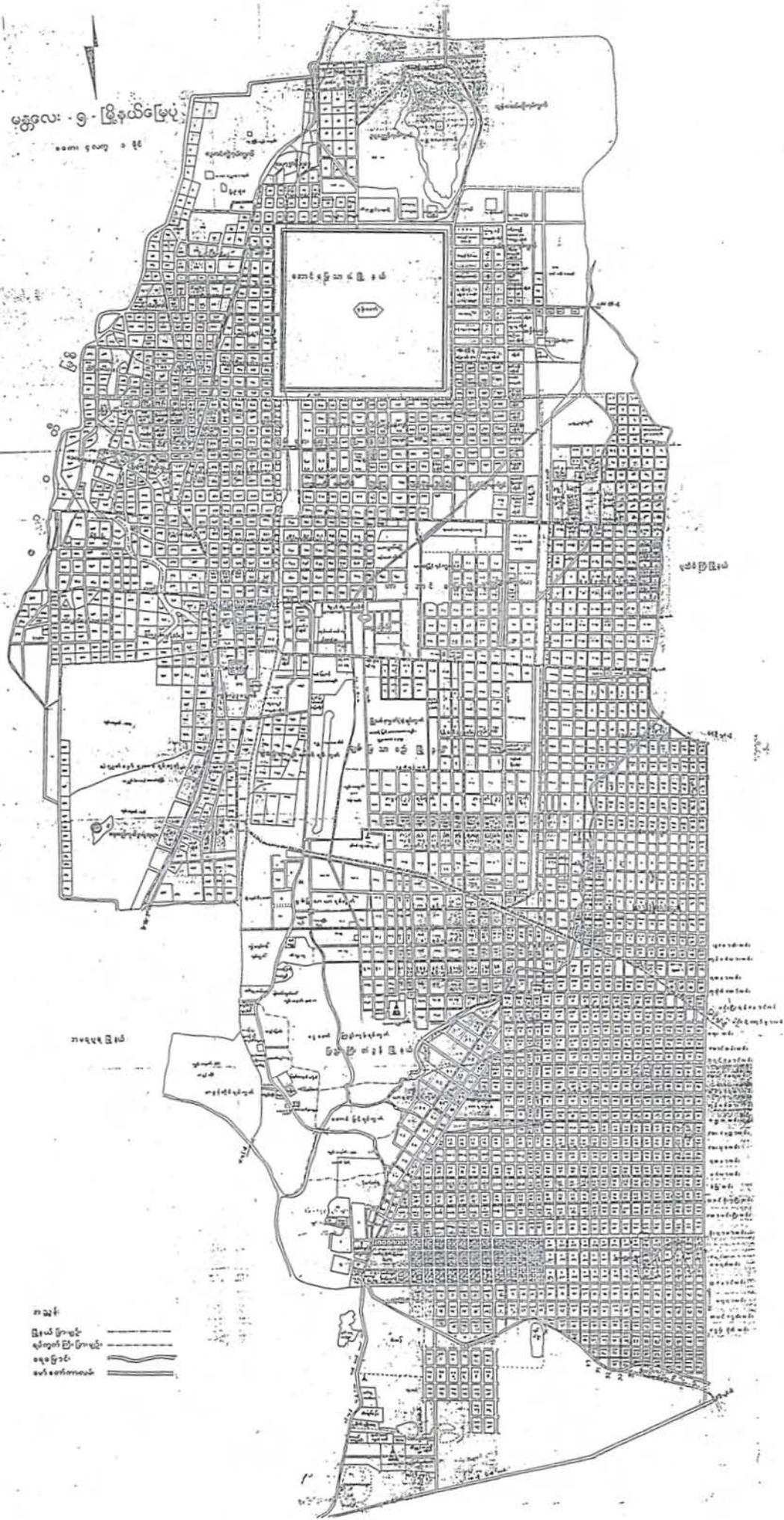


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မြန်မာ့ - ၅ - ဂြိုဟ်ယိုမြေပုံ

စကေး ၁ မိုင် = ၁၀၀၀ ယာ်



- ကုသိုလ်
- မြို့နယ် ဂြိုဟ်ယို
  - မြို့နယ် ဂြိုဟ်ယို
  - မြို့နယ် ဂြိုဟ်ယို
  - မြို့နယ် ဂြိုဟ်ယို

## References

၁. ကိုဦး.မောင်.သပြေညို(၁၉၇၂)မြန်မာ့ရွှေဆိုင်၊ စာပေဗိမ္မာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
၂. ချစ်ဦး.မန်း.တက္ကသိုလ်(၁၉၆၇)မှန်စီရွှေချအနုပညာ၊ စာပေဗိမ္မာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
၃. ကုလား.ဦး(၁၉၆၁)ဦးကုလားမဟာရာဇဝင်အတွဲ-၃၊ ဗဟိုစာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
၄. သာမြတ်.ဦး သီရိပျံချီ(၁၉၆၁)ပေါရာဏစကားအဘိဓာန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
၅. အရိယမထေရ်.ဦး(၁၉၇၉)ကထိန်အရသာ၊ အေးအေးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်
၆. ဘရှင်.ဗိုလ်မှူး(၁၉၇၅)အနော်ရထာအရင်ကမြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၊ မိုးကျော်အောင်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်

## List of Informants

1.	U Khon Kyi	80year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
2.	Daw Yi Yi	78year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
3.	U Maung Ko	74year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
4.	U Thaung Nyunt	70year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Shwe-Khut Saya
5.	Daw Tin Tin	69year	Segu Tan, Mandalay	Segu Producer
6.	Daw Kyin Mying	68year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
7.	Daw San San	65year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
8.	U Aung Myint	60year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Shwe-Khut Saya
9.	Daw Tint Tint	60year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
10.	Daw Than Than Oo	58year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Nat Saya
11.	Daw Swe Swe Yi	55year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
12.	Daw Mi Mi Khing	55year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
13.	Daw San San	55year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
14.	Daw Htay	54year	Shwe bo, Mandalay	Merchant
15.	Daw Tin Tin Win	51year	Yangon	Teacher
16.	U Aung Kyaw Oo	51year	Yangon	Merchant
17.	U Thaung Tun	51year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Paza-Khut Saya
18.	Daw Ni Ni Mar	50year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
19.	Daw Htwe Htwe	48year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
20.	Daw San San Myint	48year	Nyaung-gon, Sagaing	Segu Producer
21.	Daw Swe Swe Oo	46year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
22.	Daw Swe Swe Win	45year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
23.	Daw Hla Hla Maw	42year	Nyaung-gon, Sagaing	Shwe-Hlaung Producer
24.	Daw Kathe	39year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
25.	Ma Khan Mon Aung	35year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
26.	Ma Pa Pa	34year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
27.	Ma Su Hlaing Lin	26year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Producer
28.	Ma Khin Mar Aung	24year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
29.	Ma Yin Nwe Myint	23year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker
30.	Ma Soe Soe Moe	22year	Myat-pa-yet, Mandalay	Worker