

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST CULTURE IN MYINMU TOWNSHIP*

Htwe Htwe Kyaw¹

Abstract

Myinmu is a town situated on Mandalay-Monywa highway in the Sagaing District in Sagaing Region. This paper is compiled to bring to light that Myinmu Township is a historic place where Sāsana and ancient culture thrived. The age of this culture could be earlier than Pyu Period according to the findings from the current excavation. In compiling this paper it is based on the findings from the present excavation, ancient brick walls, stone inscriptions, bell inscriptions, palm-leaf manuscripts, folded paper manuscripts, ancient pagodas, pagoda historical evidences and Myinmu Township record. This paper is presented from different aspects of religion, social affairs, culture and Buddhist literature by employing historical and analytical methods. Presentation is also made on the fact that ancient people erected numerous stone inscriptions. This paper should be of value to research scholars attempting to get ancient cities to be included as world's heritages, research scholars of Myanmar history and literature scholars of Pāli and Myanmar literature.

Key Words: stone inscriptions, bell inscriptions, palm-leaf manuscripts.

Introduction

Myinmu town in Sagaing Division is an upper riverine tract situated on the right-hand side of the Ayeyarwady River. It is a peaceful, busy and thriving town which can be reached easily. It is a pleasant town with many historic pagodas. It is also quite developed in agriculture, economy, education, health, religion and social status. It is rich in archaeological heritage and steeped in Buddhist culture.

The surrounding area of Myinmu was a well-known place since the Stone Age, the Iron Age and the Pyu Period. Fossilized remains of man and animals were found on the banks of the Mu River in Myinmu Township. Stone Age implements and white glazed crockery were found at Htisaung Ywasokon. Bagan Period potsherds of pot holding water for libation were also found. Silver bowl with Pyu scripts and Pyu beads were also found in

¹ Assistant Lecturer, Dr., Department of Oriental Studies, Mandalay College.

* Best Paper Award Winning Paper in Oriental Studies (2014)

Pretender Maung Thant's Peku village. Pyumakara, letkyet, and silver bowl with Pyu scripts were found from U Hnaungkon Village to the west of Myinmu. Similarly, silver sash, silver girdle were also found. They were sent to the Ministry of Culture in Yangon. Moreover, goldware, Pyu beads, Pyu coins and copperware were also found in Kalapyan village, Allakappa village and Thamantaw village. Pieces of slag from iron smelter, ear-tubes, smoking pipes, and oil lamps were also found in Letpan village. Allakappa village still has old ruined town walls.

Moreover, there are many pagodas and stone inscriptions belonging to the Bagan period in Myinmu area. As the stone inscriptions contain records of donations show, Myinmu was an important town during the Bagan Period. As the pagodas had passed through successive periods of history, some of them are in a state of ruin. Some of the pagodas are still monuments of Buddhist history records. As there is a saying: "One written words is as good as a hundred verbal utterances", the stone inscriptions erected beside the pagodas are standing witnesses of the Bagan Period. The Setṭhamuni Shwekūgyi Pagoda and Shwepaunglaung Pagoda are the Bagan Period pagodas that still show ancient stucco works.

Similarly, that Buddhism thrived during successive Innwa, Konbaung, Colonial and Contemporary periods can be known from the stone inscriptions and bell inscriptions in numerous pagoda compounds. Moreover, the covered passages within the precincts of Shinpin Shwesawlu in Myinmu town are decorated with paintings of Buddhist history, Five Hundred and Fifty Jātaka stories, wood carvings in relief and stucco carvings. Therefore, when Myinmu town is studied from the Buddhist aspect through the successive historical periods, Buddhism is found to have thrived.

In compiling this paper, firstly location and area were determined. Next, data as evidence of Buddha Sāsanā having flourished in Myinmu area through successive periods were collected and studied. Field surveys and personal interview were carried out as well.

Geographic Location and Area of Myinmu Township

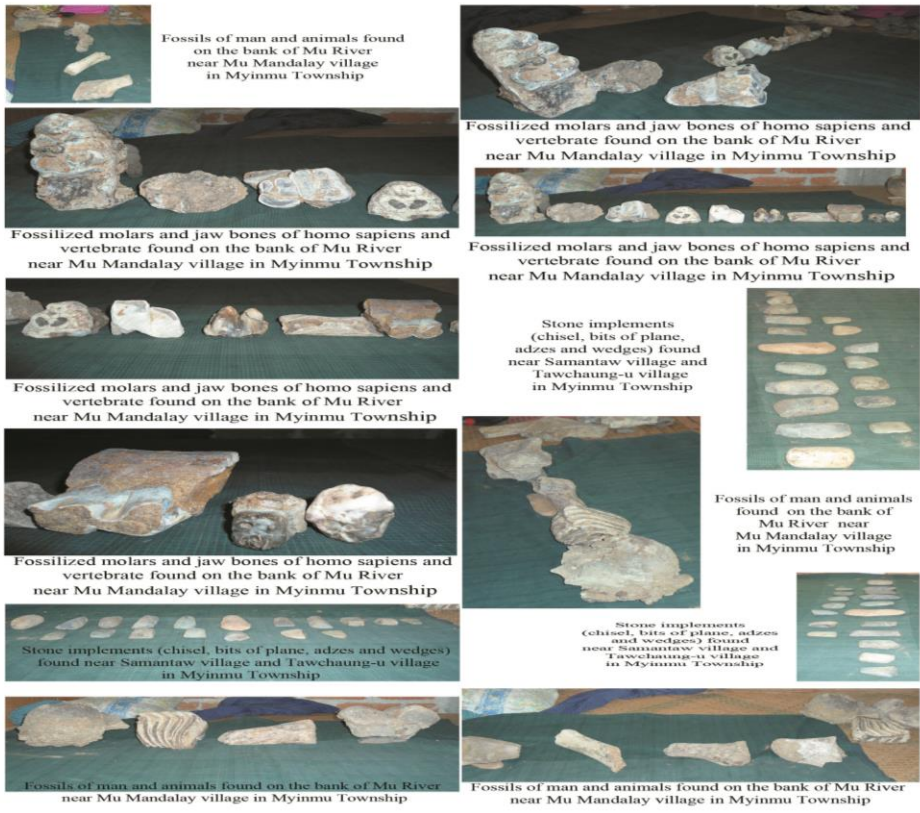
Myinmu Township is included as a constituent of Sagaing District, Sagaing Region. It is located on the Monywa-Sagaing-Mandalay highway. The town is situated on the right bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It is a port of call for river craft. As the town has a railway station on the Monywa-

Myinmy in Successive Periods

Based on the supporting evidences found in Myinmu Township, a description of Myinmu through seven successive historical periods: (a) Stone Age, (b) Pyu Period, (c) Bagan Period, (d) Innwa Period, (e) Konbaung Period, (f) Colonial Period and (g) Contemporary Period will be given.

(a) Stone Age

The discovery of fossils of man and animals on the bank of the Mu River near Mu Mandalay village and the findings of stone implements such as chisel, bits of plane, adzes and wedges near Thamantaw village and Tawchaung-u village are the evidences that show the inhabitation of Stone Age men in surrounding areas of Myinmu Township.¹



¹ မြင်းမူမြို့နယ်မှတစ်ပါး နံ-၇။ *Copper & Bronze Antiquities of Burma*, P.95.

(b) Pyu Period

During the period from the first to the ninth centuries A.D.¹ Pyu people settled in Myanmar by establishing towns and cities. Myinmu Township was also inhabited by Pyu people as supported by the coins used by Pyu people. Pyu coins were found in Kalapyan village in Myinmu Township. The village is considered to be a place where Thayekhettaya Pyus made settlement. On one side of the coin is a figure of a throne. On the other side of the coin are the figures of conch shell and the figure of Sirīvaccha house. The workmanship of the coin is neat and is considered to belong to the late Pyu Period.

On September 23, 1972, Pyu Period ornaments of hand and arm were found from in U-Hnaungkon village in Myinmu Township. The finds comprise 4 arm bangles, one ring with a figure of a mythical flying animal, two bangles in the shape of cog-wheel, a pot studded with stones, a ring in the shape of a lotus bud inset with one stone, a large bangle with a figure of a mythical flying animal (the total weight of gold is 36 ticals, ten annas and two ywes), 25 beads including pale pink, black, streaky white and pale green elongated bead and a bead with a figure of an elephant and a plate of lead with a cross sign (37 ticals 5 annas) in weight.^{2*}

The large bangle with a figure of a mythical flying creature is (19 ticals 5 annas minus two ywes) in weight. The minor crests of the mythical flying creature are decorated with the miniature figure of the creature. The inscription on the silver pot contains the following expression: “ရီ ဥ ဣ ဖံး ဝိး သွံ ဖံး မဒြ ကု ဒံ ထိ တွ ဥ လှ ယံ ဥ တု ဩ နီ လဝယ ယယ ယယယ”. It seems to be Pyu characters of six century A.D. They contains the names: “banvinsalin” and “banmadragā”. Not all the characters can yet be deciphered. * They are, however, considered to be Pyu language.

¹ *Buddhist Art and Architecture*, P.x. *The Pot-Pourri of Myanmar Culture*, P.164.

² ယင်း၊ နှုတ်-၇-၈။

* Myinmu Township security and administration committee kept Pyu Period ornaments of hand and arm by search party form. Reward of 2 thousand kyats was given to the donor of artifacts on December 21 in 1972 by U Tike Shwe (Chairman, Myinmu Township security and administration) and U Aung Thaw (Archaeological Research Department). Material was taken over by Archaeological Research Department.

* According to U Sein Mg Oo's report to Archaeological Research Department.

Copperware and ear ornaments were found in Allakappa village in Myinmu Township. These historical evidences were found at the site of the town wall remains.¹ In 1985 a silver pot with Pyu inscriptions and beads were found from the farm plot of U Nyo of Peku village in Myinmu Township. According to the report of Archaeological Research Department, the artifacts are considered to be the handiwork of Theyekhettaya Pyus.² Moreover, Pyu is the period when iron had come to be put to good use. Pieces of slags were found in the area around the Thanpho Thanchet Pagoda near Letpan village in Myinmu Township. It is considered to be a place where iron was smelted from iron ores for use by Pyus.

On April 20, 2013 at 10 a.m. on Saturday, the tenth waxing day of Tagu in 1375 M.E., goldware, three silver bowls, and multicoloured beads containing five figures of elephant were found on the farm plot of U Than Zaw of Thamantaw village about one mile to the south of U Buddhi Pagoda between Padathtaing village and Thamantaw village in Myinmu Township. These artifacts were handed over to the Archaeological Research Department and National Museum Directorate, Ministry of Culture (Naypyitaw). A reward of (21,032,654) (twenty-one hundred thousand lakhs 32 thousand six hundred and fifty four kyats) was known a to have been awarded to the donor of artifacts on December 4 in 2013. Therefore Myinmu Township is considered to be a place settled by fourth century Pyus.

¹ မြင်းမူမြို့နယ်မှတ်တမ်း၊ နှာ-၈။

² ရွှေစောလူ၊ နှာ-၅၂။

(c) Bagan Period

In looking for evidences pertaining to other historical periods, the Bagan Period stone inscriptions were found at the following pagodas in the Myinmu Township. King Kyansittha called Htihlaing Shin built the Nankyar Shwegū Cūlāmaṇi Pagoda at a place called Kantawminkyauing in 444 M.E. The King also donated land and men to that pagoda.^{1*} He donated land also to the Sin-u-ton Mahā Ratanā Cetī in the north of Kantawminkyauing in Tabaung in 467 M.E.² Min Letya, the Military Commander of King Alaungsithu donated land to the Shwe Yinnar Pagoda in Shwe Yinmar Village on the fifth waning day of Tawthalin in 478 M.E. “The son Military Commander who succeeded the father’s position donated again by inscribing on the Inscription Stone.”³ On Monday, the fifth waning day of Tawthalin in 478 M.E., the Military Commander Min Letya donated a grey horse to Shwe Yinnar Pagoda. He ordered to Thamanda Peiksī to found a village near the pagoda. It was described as “The village was founded after consultation with Sithawut.⁴ On the fourteenth waning day of Pyatho in 491 M.E., the wealthy man Nga Phon Thin, after asking permission from King Alaungsithu, donated land to Anauk Kyaunggyi of Hnanpekyu village in Myinmu Township.⁵

On Wednesday in Tagu month of 554 M.E., the wealthy man Uttama donated land, slaves and cattle to the Paunglaung Shin Pagoda in Myinmu.⁶ On the Sabbath Tuesday, the fifteenth full moon day in 555 M.E., it was described as “Min Thatthar donated land to Myinmumyo Min Thatthar Pagoda. The ceremony of pouring libation water was held when

¹ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၃၅၆။ This stone inscription was found in Kantaw Village in Myinmu Township.

* According to history of horoscope reigning years of King Kyansittha is 446-473 M.E. It is found to be in-discord with 444 M.E.

² မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၂၀၈။ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(စ)၊ နှာ-၇၁။ This cetī was found in Kantaw village.

³ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၂၃၉။ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(စ)၊ နှာ-၈၇။ This stone inscription was found in Shwe Yinmar village in Myinmu Township.

⁴ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၂၇၈။ This stone inscription was found in Shwe Yinmar village in Myinmu Township.

⁵ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၂၇၀။

⁶ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၂၇။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Paunglaung Shin Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

King Sithu came up the Ayeyarwady River.¹ It was described in the Myinmu Kinthugyi Inscription Stone as “In 557 M.E., the Chief of Toll Station donated land to the pagoda.”² It was described on the King Sawlu’s Inscription Stone. Now in Mandalay Palace, as “In 562 M.E., a meritorious deed of donation of umbrellas was made to Saṃgha in the place of Myinmu.”³ On Saturday, the first waxing day of Tazaungmon in 587 M.E., it was described on the Myinmu Shwe Paung Laung Pagoda Inscription Stone as “Elder Monk Kassapa donated land to the pagoda.”⁴



¹ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၃၅၆။ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၃၆။ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(ခ)၊ နှာ-၁၆၈။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Min Thatthar Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

² ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၃၆၅။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Chanthāgyi Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

³ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(ပ)၊ နှာ-၃၇၀။

⁴ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၁၇၉-၈၁။

On Monday, the seventh waning day of Nayon in 601 M.E., the wealthy man Nga Phon Swe Thin's list of offerings to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṃgha at Male Kuttaw Kyaung, prayer and curses were described in U Sun Htum Inscription Stone.¹ In 608 M.E., the meritorious deed of building a monastery and donation of paddy land by the son of Minister Kaccamaṅgalā were recorded on an inscription stone.² On Wednesday, the full-moon day of Kason in 614 M.E., Nga Phwe and Nga Lyaung won a lawsuit. It was recorded on an inscription stone.³ On Friday, the full-moon day of Kason in 636 M.E., the meritorious deed of building a pagoda and donation of land by the wealthy man Upakoat were recorded on an inscription stone.⁴ On Tuesday in Wagaung, 639 M.E., the wealthy woman built a pagoda near Myinmu. The list of donation of slaves and land, prayer and curses were recorded on an inscription stone.⁵

On Monday in 650 M.E., Minister Udeinkyi built a monastery and paddy land and slaves were donated. It was recorded on an inscription stone.⁶ In 654 M.E., Phumpachattara Nga Yin Pha and Phumpachattara Nga Nga Htwe Thin built Wunpekar Monastery and donated land; this event was recorded on an inscription stone.⁷ In 655 M.E., Minister Utein Nge built a Cave Monastery together with pagoda and donated land; it was recorded on an inscription stone.⁸ On Monday, the full-moon day of Kason in 660 M.E., M.E., Phumpasirḥā built a pagoda, a monastery and donated Buddha image and land in Myinmu place. The list of land donation, prayer and curses were

¹ စိန်ရတုသွေးလှူရှင်ဂုဏ်ပြုစာစောင်၊ နှာ-၇၀-၁။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Warzo monastery in Htisaung village in Myinmu Township.

² ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(၃)၊ နှာ-၈၂။ This stone inscription was found in Kanthar Htet Monastery in Myinmu.

³ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၁၆၃-၄။ This stone inscription was found in Kanthar Htet Monastery in Myinmu.

⁴ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၉၄-၅။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Sutaungpyi Pagoda in Htisaung village in Myinmu Township.

⁵ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၁၁၄-၅။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Sutaungpyi Pagoda in Htisaung village in Myinmu Township.

⁶ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(စ)၊ နှာ-၁၄။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwe Cetī Pagoda in Wunpyi village, Myinmu Township.

⁷ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၁၅၉။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Wunpeka Pagoda in Myitpauk village in Myinmu Township.

⁸ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၁၉၀-၁။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwe Cetī Pagoda in Wunpyi village in Myinmu Township.

recorded on an inscription stone.¹ On Wednesday, the thirteenth waning day of Kason in 668 M.E., Chanthapate husband and wife built a pagoda and donated land. Building pagoda, donation of land, prayer and curses were recorded on an inscription stone.² When King Alaungsithu came on a tour of the kingdom, he built a pagoda, a monastery and donated land. This act of merit was recorded together with prayer and curses on an inscription stone dated on Thursday, in 670 M.E., it was inscribed by Turaṅgapo son and father.³



¹ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၃၁၀-၁။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwe Gügyi Pagoda in Allakappa village in Myinmu Township.

² ယင်း၊ နှာ-၂၃၀-၃။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Chanthā Gyi Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

³ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၂၄၃-၄။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwesigon Pagoda in Padathtaing village in Myinmu Township.

An inscription stone dated 683 M.E., describes that Nga Htwe Thin donated land to the Chanthā Gyi Pagoda.¹ On Saturday in Tagu in 684 M.E., a wealthy man, Uttama donated land in Myinmu. This event was recorded on an inscription stone together with the list of donated land, prayer and curses.² On Monday in 694 M.E., Military Commander, husband and wife built a pagoda, repaired monastery and donated land. This meritorious deed was recorded together with the list of donated land, prayer and curses on an inscription stone.³ On Wednesday, the full moon day of Nayun in 788.M.E., King Moenyin Mintaya donated 300 toddy-palm trees; it was recorded on an inscription stone.⁴

The stone inscriptions of the Bagan Period bear witnesses to the thriving of Sāsanā in Myinmu area. The people in Myinmu area are found to be pious and have done meritorious deeds of building pagoda and monasteries and donation of land.

(d) Innwa Period

Myinmu was also well-known during the Innwa Period. It is described in the Glass Palace Chronicle that Minkyi Swa Sawke built the Sigon Pagoda and monastery in Myinmu in the Innwa Period.⁵ During the reign of King Minkhaung in the Innwa Period, Myinmu had many relationships with the royal capital. The inscription stones recording works of merit of the wealthy men are found beginning from late Innwa Period. During the reign of this King, sons and daughters of a wealthy man presented to the king much valuable ruby when the wealthy man passed away. King Minkhaung did not accept the gem. He gave it back to the sons and daughters.⁶

It is found in historical record, Myinmu was affluent with many wealthy men and plenty of staple grains and crops during Innwa Period.

¹ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Chanthā Gyi Pagoda in Muwaywahtaung village in Myinmu Township.

² ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ(တ)၊ နှာ-၂၉၈။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwe Paunglaung Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

³ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၃၂၅-၆။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Shwe Gūgyi Pagoda in Allakappa village in Myinmu Township.

⁴ မဟာမုနိကျောက်စာများ(စ)၊ နှာ-၁၆၈၊ ၁၇၅-၆။ This stone inscription was found in the compound of Tawkyauung Pagoda in Myinmu Town.

⁵ မြန်နှင်း(ပ)၊ နှာ-၄၃၄။

⁶ ယင်း၊ နှာ-၄၄၂။

(e) Konbaung Period

Myinmu also stood as a well-known place in the Konbaung Period. In 1172 M.E., King Sīri Mahādhammāsokarājā's Minister, Suvanṇabhi, Taiksar Maung Thar Myat, husband and wife donated a bell to the Sikhon Pagoda. The aim of the donation of the bell was described to be everlasting donation. The bell inscription contains lengthy prayers. What is peculiar concerning this bell inscription was the sharing of merit with the monarch, the queen, the sons and daughters together with parents, grand-parents, teachers, relatives and all sentient beings all over the thirty-one abodes. This bell can be found in the south-east corner of Shinpin Shwe Sawlu Pagoda.¹

During the reign of Myanmar kings, Myinmu was just a large village. The following description is found in the palm-leaf manuscript called "Sucitradesanā" which was completed compiling in Wagaung in 1173 M.E., by Tataingya Kyaung Sayadaw Venerable Ñāṇamañjū; "Tampadīpamhi raṭṭhamhi amarapūrasa nagarassa rājaṭṭhānino majjhimadisābhāge dviyojanādike puñṇakāmanivātassa myinmūtivhaya-gāmassa pāyappe sundaro pubbathūpo atthi."² "There was an elegant pagoda to the west of the village called Myinmu. It was a place which was about two yojanas from the royal capital of Amarapūra. It is an auspicious place fulfilled by the wishes of persons who desired merit."

The bell in the north-west corner of the Shwesawlu Pagoda compound is inconspicuous. It is approximately dated 1177 M.E. The donors of the bell were Maung Shwe, Shin Thar Htun and family living in Myinmu. The bell inscription contains peculiar expression as: "Bearing in mind the attainment of human life is hard to achieve, the bell is donated for attainment of human life satisfactorily." At another place, the bell inscription describes: "On the pagoda platform, a bell hanging from the two pillars is worth over a thousand coins, is donated."³

It was recorded on an inscription stone as: "On Monday, the fifth waning day of Wagaung in 1189 M.E., Tharakan Ordination Hall was consecrated with over ten Saṃghā including Paṭhama Saya, sixty years in monkhood, who had undertaken ticivaritta dhutaṅga at Tawya Kyaung, Gaing-ok Saya and Tawya Saya at Thanpho Ywahaung Pagoda." This

¹ ရွှေစောလူ၏ နံ၀-၄၅။

² ယင်း၏ နံ၀-၅၄။

³ ယင်း၏ နံ၀-၄၈။

inscription stone was found in the Tharakan Pagoda at the site of old iron smelting site near Letpan village in Myinmu Township.

It was also described on an inscription stone as: “The Lawka Mārājin Man Aung Shwekū Pagoda in Muwa-ywahtaung village in Myinmu Township was built by Kinwunmingyi Mahā Minhla Kyawswar on Sunday, the thirteenth waning day of Nattaw in 1193 M.E., 2375 B.E.”

In 1199 M.E., King Tharawady also known as King Shwebo and King Konbaung ascended the throne after dethroning King Bagyidaw. On the seventh waning day of Kason in 1199 M.E., Myawady Mingyi U Sa was arrested and jailed as an accomplice of Nanmadaw Menu and Minthagyi Salin Mintha Maung O. As town and villages given in fief and insignia of office were all withdrawn, U Sa was no longer a Myawady Myosa. He was described in history as Myawady Myosahaung. King Bagan ascended the throne in 1208 M.E. Myawady-mingyi U Sa, titled “Mahāsīrijeyyasūra” was given in fief of Myinmu village together with an official position.¹ Myawadymingyi wrote about the Myinmu village given in fief in his history of music as follows: “During the reign of King Bagan Myinmuywasa, Mahāsīrijeyyasūra, 83 in age, lives in peace together with sons, daughters, grandsons and devoting to dāna, sīla and meditation.” Myawadymingyi U Sa fondly recorded Myinmu village being given in fief.²



Konbaung Period
Tharakan Pagoda stone inscription
found in Letpan village in
Myinmu Township



Konbaung Period Lokamarajin
Man Aung Shweku Pagoda
stone inscription found in
Muwa Ywahtaung village
in Myinmu Township



Konbaung Period Bell inscriptions found in
Shwesawlu Pagoda Campus in Myinmu

¹ ရွှေစောလူ့၊ နှာ-၅၈။

² ယင်း၊ နှာ-၃၉။

(f) Colonial Period

Myinmu also stood as a well-known place in the Colonial Period. In 1248 M.E., Pyatthat Kyaung donor U Wa Pyaw, sister Daw Mai Thaing and son, U Shwe Loke, U Thar Su and family donated a bell. The bell inscription contains the title of the pagoda which was not described in other stone inscriptions as follows: “At the feet of Shinbin Sawlu, Atulānuttara Sambuddha being paid obeisance by living beings including monks and laypersons.” Then the prayer was also described richly. Moreover, the donation of the bell was also dedicated the King Thibaw and Queen who were taken away to India as follows: “Dedicated to Lord of Cakkra, Chief Queen, sons and daughters and high and low rank ministers ...” This bell was found in front of Kyauksartaik in the south-west corner of the Shwesawlu Pagoda.

The inscription stone firmly states the fact that the Shwesawlu Pagoda in Myinmu was destroyed and burnt by unscrupulous persons in 1249 M.E., after annexation of Upper Myanmar. The inscription stone is located in repository of stone inscriptions to the west of Shinpin Shwesawlu Pagoda.

The inscription stone was dated 1250 M.E. The stone inscription also describes the history of the Shinpin Shwesawlu Pagoda. After the Parinibbāna of the Buddha, the sacred relics of the Buddha were distributed among the Malla Princes and seven kings. Venerable Mahākassapa, after consultation with King Ajātasattu, collected the sacred relics of the Buddha from different localities by exercising supernatural powers and enshrined in a stūpa in Rājagaha. This account of the sacred relics was also recorded on stone inscription of the Shinpin Shwesawlu Pagoda. During the reign of King Asoka, the place where the sacred relics were kept was searched; it was described in the stone inscription: “King Sīridhammāsoka, the Crown of all Kings mobilized his troops and launched a search expedition for sacred relics in forests and jungles.”

When Sakka came to know about the search for sacred relics, he helped to open the relic chamber. Then King Asoka ordered his men to enshrine the sacred relics in stūpas all over the Jambūdīpa Land. It was described on the inscription that Tayzawlu or Shwesawlu Pagoda was one of the stūpas where King Asoka enshrined sacred relics as follows: “The Tayzawlu Stupa was included as one of the eighty-four thousand stūpas, the great merit of King Asoka.”

As an act of vandalism of scoundrels, the pavilion and the Shwesawlu Pagoda were burnt down in 1247 M.E., after the annexation of Upper Myanmar. It was recorded in the inscription as follows: “As Myanmar fell under the rule of India Province and due to prevalence of dacoits, the pavilion of the Shwesawlu Pagoda was burnt down and the pagoda cracked and collapsed.” The donor for the cost of repairing the ruined pagoda was also recorded in the inscription stone as follows: “Believing in the law of kamma and being keen in faith, Myinmu Myothugyi Inspector U San Paw and devoted wife Daw Min Ke repaired the pagoda.”

The donor, being a good state employee made use of the rewarded money he received in repairing the pagoda in accordance with the traditional custom of Buddhists: “Eating half of the income and donating half of the income legally obtained.” This event was recorded in the inscription as follows: “The Viceroy of India, on behalf of the Empress, who was pleased with the religious service, granted a reward of 500 rupees. Half of the reward was donated towards the repair of the pagoda.”

The Shwesawlu stone inscription is unusually different from other stone inscriptions of successive periods in which it contains the account of the mason who was responsible for repair of the pagoda. It was recorded as follows: “Consulting with the master mason called U San Nyein, living in Nyaung Yin village, the renovation of the pagoda was brought to completion.” Renovation work included the umbrella right the top to the ground including the pairs of figures of lion.

The inscription stone was also dated in the conclusion as follows: “For the information of succeeding generation of monks and laypersons the renovation of the pagoda was carried out in the 2250th year of the Buddha Sāsana.” The Shwesawlu Stone Inscription was inscribed after the annexation of Upper Myanmar by the British.¹

There is a bell in front of Foot-Print Pagoda on the platform of the Shwesawlu Pagoda. It was donated in 1266 M.E., by U Boe Gaung, Daw Zaka, daughter Ma Kyi Nyo, son Ko Sein Htun and family living in Myinmu. The aim of the donation of the bell was described as: “Donated to the Exalted Buddha for the benefit of attaining Nibbāna...”

¹ ရွှေစေတီတော်၊ နံဘေး-၄၁-၃။

The bell to the south of Shinpin Sawlu Pagoda was donated by U Kyar Paw and Daw Kyi Than's son, Pyatthat Kyaung donor U Bo Soe and wife Daw Shwe Nyeint, daughter Ma Khin Hteik and family in 1281 M.E. The inscription of this bell contains the merit they wished to gain before attainment of Nibbāna as follows: "On account of this work of merit, may we immediately attain Nibbāna where the eleven kinds of fire are extinct."

In 1288 M.E., under the auspices of the monastery donor U Kyar Paw, monastery donor Daw Mai Soe, the son, Broker U Sein Win and Daw Mai Hmi donated a bell to the Shwesawlu Pagoda. The peculiar feature of this bell inscription is the inclusion of the history of the pagoda. This bell is found in the south-west corner of the Shwesawlu Pagoda.

In 1312 M.E., under the auspices of parents from both sides, U Thu Kha and Daw Chit May donated a bell to the Shweawlu Pagoda. The peculiar feature of this bell inscription is the inscription of a succinct prayer as follows: "To be quickly liberated from the suffering of the cycle of rebirths and to attain Nibbāna where fires such as lust are extinct." This bell is found in the south-west corner of Shwesawlu Pagoda.¹



¹ ရွှေစာလုံး၊ နှာ-၄၅-၈။



Five Hundred and Fifty Jataka stories, wood carvings in relief, paintings, stucco carvings and Colonial Period stone inscription found in Shwesawlu Pagoda campus in Myinmu Town

(g) Contemporary Period

Myinmu town is included in the Sagaing District of Sagaing Region. It is convenient in communication and is a well-developed in terms of commerce, education, social and religious affairs. Myinmu Township has 23,183 dwellings, 24,346 households, four wards, 48 village tracts and a total of 84 villages including village tracts. It is populated by 111,986 Myanmar, 12 Kachins, 12 Kayahs, 3 Karens, 11 Chins, 3 Mons, 10 Rakhines, 27 Shans and 6 other races giving a total of 84 ethnic races. There are 44 foreign races comprising Indians, Chinese, Pakistanis, etc. The total population of Myinmu Township is 112,098 of which urban population is 14,822 and rural population is 97,276.

The economic activities of Myinmu Township comprises agriculture and animal breeding, condensed milk industries, palm plant fiber basket works, wickerwork such as bamboo trays and sieves, pottery, girdle work, sling for alms-bowl, hat-making with wheat stalk, foot-wear works, mechanical and handicraft industries, lodging, and transportation. Thus Myinmu is a centre of economic focus.

Concerning the education sector, Myinmu Township has a total of 96 basic education schools. There are 4 government high schools, 4 affiliated high schools, 2 middle schools, 11 affiliated middle schools, 7 post-primary schools, and 68 primary schools and 2 monastic education schools. There are also 2 multi-media schools equipped with computers and seven language schools with language lab.

Regarding the health sector, the township has one general hospital, one Tipiṭaka Hospital, one Tipiṭaka Cakkhupāla Hospital, five rural health centers, 21 branch rural health centers, one Mother and Child Care Centre, Indigenous Medicine Dispensary, one dispensary and eight clinics, non-Government organizations (Yasacariya, Myatsukha, Ñātisaṅgaha), health and social assistance organizations, Red Cross Society, Auxiliary Fire Brigade, War Veteran Organization, Maternity and Child Care Association and Women's Affairs Organization.

There are 1467 Buddhist pagodas, 212 monasteries, (144 Thudhammar monasteries, 67 Shwekyin monasteries and 1 Nghettwin monastery). There are 1806 Saṃghā, (659 monks and 1147 novices) in Myinmu Township. There are 67 nuns but there is no separate nunnery. Those nuns are living in the separate halls in monasteries.

At some Buddhist monasteries novices and students are taught both secular and supra-mundane education. In some Buddhist monasteries only supra-mundane education is taught. There are four separate monasteries where monks are taught Buddhist Scriptures. There is a temple for Hinduism, a mosque for Moslems and a church for Christians. There is freedom of worship for each faith.

Discussion

Myinmu area was a place where Buddhism flourished and is rich with ancient cultural heritage. It was a prominent area starting from the Stone Age, the Iron Age and the Pyu Period. Myinmu area is presented from various aspects in this paper.

On studying from the point of view of geology, fossils of man and animals were also found on the river banks near Mu Mandalay village.

On studying from the point of view of archaeology, stone implements were found in the surrounding areas of Thamanataw and Tawchaung-u villages in Myinmu Township. Pyu coins were found in Kalapyan village. Pyu hand ornaments, goldware, Pyu beads, silver pot with Pyu inscription, silver sash and silver belt were found in U Hnaungkon village. Ancient brick-wall, copperware and earthenware were found in Allakappa village. Silver pot with Pyu inscription and Pyu beads were found in Peku village. Pieces of slag from iron smelter, smoking pipe, oil lamp, and earthenware were found in Letpan village. Pyu ornaments of hands and arms (of 2220 years ago) and Pyu beads were found in Thamanataw village. Moreover, brick-buildings with multiple tiered roofs were found at the Shwesawlu Pagoda in Myinmu, Mya Theintan Pagoda in Wunpyi Village, Chanthāgyi Pagoda and Shinpin Mwaytawsit Pagoda in Muwaywahtaung Village.

On studying from the point of view of history, the standard of living was examined through the Stone Age, the Pyu Period, the Bagan Period, the Innwa Period, the Konbaung Period, the Colonial Period and the Contemporary Period. As the stone implements were found in Tawchaung-u village and Thamanataw village in Myinmu Township, Myinmu Township could be said to be populated in the Stone Age. Similarly as Pyu ornaments, etc., were found in Kalapyan village, U Hnaungkon village Allakappa village, Peku village, Letpan village and Thamanataw village in Myinmu area, Myinmu area must have been an important place in Pyu Period.

Although the stone inscriptions and bell inscriptions in Myinmu area are records of donation, as the dates in the stone inscriptions and bell inscriptions indicate the periods, they are invaluable historical evidences.

On studying from the point of view of Myanmar culture, as the pagodas, wall paintings, wooden sculptures, brick-buildings with multiple tiered roofs, figures relief, statues, gold painting on lacquer, goldware, silverware and copperware were found in the Myinmu area it may be inferred that the ten traditional arts and thrived in Myinmu area.

On viewing from the point of view of geography, the Mu River is found to join with the Ayeyarwady River near Nyaungyin village in Myinmu Township. Thus Myinmu area is found to abound with rivers and lakes.

On studying from social point of view, according to the stone inscriptions, slaves were found to have been donated to the pagoda. These slaves were unlike those of the Western feudalism. The slaves were donated to carry out multifarious tasks of the pagoda. Moreover, during the reign of King Min Khaung of Innwa, the king was presented with a ruby which was worth one hundred thousand kyats and a golden shawl by the sons and daughters of the parents who had passed away. The king did not accept the gifts saying that the sons and daughters should inherit the legacy.

On studying from the point of view of Pāḷi literature, Pāḷi words and words derived from Pāḷi were found to be used variously in traditions and matters associated with Myanmar culture in the composition of stone and bell inscriptions.

On viewing from the point of view of Buddhism, most of the stone inscriptions in Myinmu Township are records of donation. The stone inscriptions usually contain prayers and curses. Although curses have nothing to do with Buddhism, the donors, being very devoted to the religion, seem to have included them in the stone inscriptions so that the monuments they constructed would not be destroyed by others. After the Military Commander Letya had passed away, his son again donated land to the pagoda. By observing this, it is apparent that Buddhists are in the habit performing charity by dedicating to the deceased parents. In some bell inscriptions, the aim of donation of the bell was described, "The donation is made to attain the human life again as it is difficult to attain human life." According to this bell inscription, the donors were well acquainted with the

five things that are hard to achieve. Moreover, the merit of the donation is found to be shared with all sentient beings including kings, queens, sons, daughters, and ministers of different ranks. In praying, the ultimate aim for the meritorious deed is found to attain Nibbāna. By studying this inscription, it is found that Buddhists are in the habit of performing charity, that after the completion of the act of the donation, Buddhists are in the habit of praying and sharing the merit gained equally with others. The temples and pagodas built by the ancient kings are repaired or rebuilt by monks and people of successive periods. That is why they are in existence even to this day. Many pagodas are found in Myinmu area because the inhabitants of this area are devoted to the religion. If excavations were made in the area around Myinmu, the different cultures that thrived in this area will be brought to light furthermore.

Conclusion

The annual pagoda festivals in Myinmu Township are traditionally held in the villages on the specified days. The pagoda festivals are held annually because of the keen devotion of the lay devotees in Buddhism. In the Township of Myinmu, the Bagan Period stone inscriptions include one stone inscription recording the winning of a lawsuit and 24 stone inscriptions recording the meritorious deeds. The meritorious deeds, according to inscriptions, were donation of land, donation of slaves, building of monasteries and building of pagodas. Therefore, the Theravāda Buddhism reached Myinmu area as soon as Theravāda Buddhism reached the royal capital of Bagan. Moreover, according to further findings, the Theintawgyi Pagoda in Peku village in Myinmu Township was built by King Anawratha and the ground was consecrated for building an ordination hall by Shin Araham. It is also known that the Sutaungpyi Pagoda in this area was built by Ma Kyi who fell in love with Kyansittha. The Chanthāgyi Pagoda is also known to be built by Nyaung-u Phi. But there is no stone inscription as evidence.

Two Konbaung Period stone inscriptions were found in the compound of the Tharakan Pagoda and the Lawkamarazein Man Aung Shwekū Pagoda in Muwaywahtaung village. The Saṃgha of ancient time paid special attention to Vinaya as the life of the Sāsana according to the inscription. A stone inscription recording an act of donation during the Colonial Period was found in the precincts of the Myinmu Shwesawlu Pagoda. This donation record shows that public service personnel donated

half of his salary. This also shows people attached great importance to donation. According to the inscriptions of the seven bells on the platform of the Shwesawlu Pagoda, the people used to perform donation, say prayers and share the merit gained with the people at large in accordance with Buddhist tradition.

Moreover, wooden pavilions with tiered roofs and covered pathways within the compound of the Shinpin Shwesawlu Pagoda are found to be decorated with wood carvings in relief depicting events from the Five Hundred and Fifty Life Stories of Bodhisatta, paintings depicting the eight conquests of the Buddha, wooden carvings, paintings of the history of the Buddha and mural paintings depicting the eight major hells. As the art of works depicting the Jātaka stories are so accomplished that they enrich one's knowledge of the life of the Buddha and impart lessons on life.

Although the present paper is concerned with Buddhist Culture, the artifacts and information are found to reflect Myanmar tradition. Ancient brick walls and Pyu urns were found in Myinmu Township. Therefore, it may be inferred that there was a civilization which preceded the Pyu Period. It is believed that further excavation would yield more convincing cultural and historical evidences. Thus, those who study world heritage cities, those who search for the ancient cultural heritages, research scholars of Myanmar history and those who are studying Pāli literature and Myanmar literature would find firm evidences of the existence of an earlier civilization in the Myinmu area.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Sayagyi Dr. Win Swe, Pro-rector of Mandalay College for his kind permission to do this research. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Khin Myint Myint, Professor and Head of Department of Oriental Studies, University of Mandalay for her spiritual encouragement and Sayagyi U Thein Hlaing, Retired Professor, Department of Oriental Studies, University of Mawlamyine for their giving facts generously. I wish to thank the Mahāmuni Pagoda trustee and the villagers of Kantaw, Htisaung, Hnanpekyu, Muwaywahtaung, Nyaung Yin, Peku, Letpan, Thamantaw, Padathtaing, Allakappa, Wunpyi and Myitpauk, who gave me a great deal of help during my field survey.

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စစ်ကိုင်းတိုင်း မြင်းမူမြို့နယ်မှတ်တမ်း။ (၁၉၈၂)။

စိန်ရတုသွေးလှူရှင်ဂုဏ်ပြုစာစောင်။ (၂၀၁၁)။ ရောင်စုံပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

မန္တလေးမဟာမုနိတံတိုင်းအတွင်းရှိကျောက်စာများ (ပထမတွဲ)။ (၁၉၈၉)။ တက္ကသိုလ်များပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်။

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ရန်ကုန်။

မန္တလေးမဟာမုနိတံတိုင်းအတွင်းရှိကျောက်စာများ (စတုတ္ထတွဲ)။ (၂၀၁၂)။ သမိုင်းသုတေသနဦးစီးဌာန၊

နေပြည်တော်။

မှန်နန်းမဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး (ပထမတွဲ)။ (၂၀၁၃)။ ပြန်ကြားရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ ရန်ကုန်။

သျှင်ပင်ရွှေစောလူးဘုရားသမိုင်း။ (၁၉၈၉)။ ပိဋကတ်တော်လျှပ်စစ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ မန္တလေး။

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