

THE FOUR GREAT PAGODAS OF AMARAPURA

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Abstract

This paper, "The Four Great Pagodas of Amarapura" is a research on the famous pagodas of Amarapura belonging to the Konbaung Period. King Badon (1782-1819) founded the City of Amarapura, the name referred to as the Immortal City. As the capital Amarapura developed, many religious monuments-pagodas, temples, rest-houses (*zayat*), monasteries, etc were built at and around Amarapura. These religious monuments were built by the royalty, the nobility as well as by commoners. The pagodas well known today as the Four Great Pagodas are: The Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda, the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, the Pahtotawgyi Pagoda and the Taunghaman Kyauktawgyi Pagoda. The largest Buddhist monuments are found to the southwest of the palace site. All of them were built in the glorious period of Amarapura (A.D. 1784-1858). From A.D. 1784-1858 Amarapura was the religious centre for propagation, perpetuation and purification of the Buddha *Sasana*. Primary sources and secondary sources are cited and photos are given as illustrations wherever possible.

Key words: the Shwe Gu Gyi, the Taung Min Gyi, the Pahtotawgyi and the Taunghaman Kyauktawgyi Pagoda

Introduction

With the flourishing of the Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar, such religious edifices as pagodas, passageway, temples and public rest houses were built. Also in Bagan Period, there had existed various pagodas, stupas, temples and rest houses built by kings of successive ancestors. Also in the reign of successive kings in the Konbaung Period, kings, queens, chief ministers and ministers had built pagodas and religious buildings in donation while the pagodas and monasteries and lakes built by the ancient kings of successive periods were well maintained.

King Badon (1782-1819) founded the City of Amarapura, "the Immortal City". After building the city, there appeared a large number of pagodas and religious buildings in the surroundings of the city. Among these pagodas there were some historic pagodas as well. These pagodas are popularly known today as the Four Great Pagodas; namely

- (1) The Shwe Gu Gyi pagoda¹
- (2) The Taung Min gyi pagoda (The Nepukhan Kotawgyi)²
- (3) The Pahtotawgyi pagoda (Amarapura)³
- (4) The Taunghaman Kyauktawgyi pagoda⁴

Of the Four Great Pagodas, the Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda dated the earliest. It is situated on the west of the railway line between the Zegyo Quarter and Hman Tan Quarter.⁵ The first donor of the Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda was King Narapati Sithu (1174-1211) of Bagan Period, built on his royal tour.⁶ The pagoda had already existed long before the founding of the city of Amarapura. A legend has it that it was where Lord Buddha delivered a sermon to 500 Ogres. The Crown Prince Siri Maha Dhamma Bidhaza Thiha Thura, son of King Badon, and his Queen Siri Tiloka Maha Subadda Yadana Devi, reconstructed the pagoda which was situated to the southwest of the royal palace. For the purpose of reconstruction, King Narapati

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¹ Photo-1

² Photo-2

³ Photo-3

⁴ Photo-4

⁵ Ko Pyinnya (Amarapura), *Taunghaman Wun Kyin Thamai-wun-ne-ya-mya* (Historic sites in the environs of the Taunghaman Lake) Second Printing, Mandalay, Today's Mandalay Press, 2004, January, p.94 (Henceforth: Pyinnya, 2004)

⁶ Dr. Khin Myint Swe, Urban Society of Amarapura, The Immortal City (1785-1858), University of Mandalay, 2007, June, p.100 (Henceforth: Khin Myint Swe, 2007)

donated his own gold, silver and the expenses for brick, cement and labour charges and had an occasion of paying obeisance to the Three Sacred Gems and noble spirits in the winter of 1783. Then such miniature pagodas as the gold stupa, the silver stupa, the gold Buddha image and the silver Buddha image, together with the foundation bricks of gold and silver, were enshrined,⁷ and the pagoda, as well as the great wall, was well maintained. The Golden Passageway leading to the pagoda from the east and the Silver Passageway, the Golden rest house and the Silver rest house were built, and finally, a new gold pinnacle was offered to the pagoda.⁸ In addition to, the religious ground donated by King Narapati Sithu, 820 *Pè* (one *Pè* equivalent to 1.75 acre) for the Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda were also donated. The Crown Prince mentioned the names of sixty three men and women, young and old, who were in the service of the Yadana San Oo Pagoda of Rakhine brought along in the reverent carrying of the Maha Myat Muni Buddha Image. These people were appointed in the service of the Gugyi Pahto or Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda as *kyuns*⁹ (Pagoda Slaves). A roofed structure to the northeast of the pagoda houses a slab of stone inscription inscribed in the style of writing belonging to the reign of King Badon. It was built in the architectural style of a temple. Inside the temple is enshrined a large image of Lord Buddha. One can observe there the decorative stucco reliefs and stone sculpture in the style of Amarapura Period.¹⁰

Today, to the east of the Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda are the U Paw Oo Pagoda, the Aye Ceti Pagoda, the Ananda Gon Shin Pagoda, the Padonma Shwe Kokko Pagoda, the Yadana Yan Aung Pagoda, the Hsan Taw Shin Pagoda, the Yadana Kyaw Maw Pagoda, the Sanni Thukha Dhammayon (Religious Community Hall), the Nga-pin-yin Dhammayon, the Nagayon Pagoda and the Gyo-pye-Nan -pye Pagoda. To the west of the pagoda are the Zina Man Aung Pagoda, the Pyi Lon Chan Tha Pagoda, the Srikhettara Pagoda, the Mya Lay Su Dhammayon, the Shwe Thein Taw Dhammayon to the north, the Mya San Shwe Gu Pagoda, the Mya Nan Shwe Gu Pagoda, the Aye Nyein Yan Pye Pagoda, the Vithetha Thukha Pagoda, the Sabba thukha Dhammayon, the Chantha Muni Dhammayon and to the south, the Shwe Tha Hlyaug Pagoda, the Tawagu Pagoda, the Piya Dassi Pagoda, the Ngwe Hsadan Pagoda, the Shwe Hsadan Pagoda and the Shwe Gu Tha Hlaing Pagoda. On both sides of the passageway of the Ananda Gonshin Sutaungpye to the east, one can observe the paintings depicting the Sixteen Omen-Dreams of King Kawsala.

Also inside the Shwe Gu Tha Hlaing Pagoda can be found some mural paintings. Some painted parts have already fallen off, and so are under the preservation of the Department of Archaeology.¹¹

The large Buddha Image of the Taungthaman Pagoda is located at the head of the U Pein Bridge, in the south-west corner of Amarapura. The Image of Taungmingyi Pagoda, also known as the Buddha Image under the sun, was built by the Minister Athé-Wun Maha Min Hla Kyawswa in 1786 in the reign of King Badon (1782-1819). It is called "Ne-pu-khan Kodawgyi" because it is not housed but lies out in the open. It is also called the Hsinpyu Wun Pagoda. This might put us into consideration about the fact that the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, whose name was mentioned in the *Parabaik* (Palm-leaf inscription) Map drawn by the ancient Myanmar royal artists, may have been conferred the title of Hsin-Pyu Wun.¹²

According to the ancient legend, the Taung-Mingyi had a son. With the birth of this son, his prosperity rose like tide. Because the child was born with luck, he was named Mg Shwe Kan. However, this son of Taung Mingyi, who was in good relationship with King

⁷ Shwe Gu Gyi Inscription, Lines 43-52 (Henceforth: Shwe Gu Gyi)

⁸ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 100

⁹ Shwe Gu Gyi, Lines 63-70

¹⁰ Pyinnya, 2004, 94

¹¹ Pyinnya, 2004, 94

¹² Pyinnya, 2004, 9-10

Badon, had all kinds of affairs with the royal daughters and junior queens of the Western Palace Hall. More than that, the young man, Mg Shwe Kan wasted his youth by intoxicating himself with drinks and opium. When this news reached the royal ear of King Badon, the King reminded the Taung Mingyi of giving exhortations to his mischievous son. Fearing that the wrong doings of his son would bring woe to all the relatives, Taung Min Gyi himself executed his son at the cemetery of the Thayet Hnapin ("Twin Mango Trees"), so the saying goes. In grief over his son's death, Taung Min Gyi built four Standing Budha images to the west of the Taungthaman Lake. In grief, he then, died. In 1839 the pagoda was damaged in an earthquake of Amarapura. In 1850, the Hlwa Htaung Gyi (Saw-mill owner) U Hmon of Myinyon Quarter, Amarapura asked for permission from King Bagan and gave maintenance to the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda. He was handed an inscription about the maintenance of the pagoda as well as twenty-five gold cups and 200 viss of gold so an image of Lord Buddha in cross-legged seated position was built. The construction of the image was completed in 1853, when King Mindon first succeeded the throne. Also in 1888, the Taung Mingyi Pagoda, covered in undergrowths was cleared by Shwe Hlan Saya Phu, Amaik Ywa Thit to the east of the Theingyi Bazaar, Amarapura and the ceremony of offering a bountiful array of alms food to the pagoda was held on the fullmoon day of Tabaung.¹³

According to these data the four Standing Buddha images built by the Taung Mingyi had already collapsed because of the earthquake. There remains only the Buddha image in cross-legged position maintained by the Hlwa Htaunggyi U Hmon with the permission of King Bagan. But it is known as the Taung Mingyi Pagoda at present.

In the ancient times, the Taung Mingyi Pagoda had no roof or passage. Once it was offered the roof, but it was damaged and so no more offering of the roof was done. Later, after many years with the public donation of Amarapura (U Yin Kalay of Tayoketan raised a fund by mean of lottery by selling five *Hmus* per ticket) a prayer hall before the shrine was successfully built. From then on the name "Ne-Pu-Khan Kotawgyi" was no more on the lips of the local people and was known as the Taung Mingyi Phaya. In the chronicle of the British Ambassadors who visited the Taungthaman Bungalo in 1855 (as stated in The Court of Ava in 1855 by Henry Yule): "Like the statues in the Nile River basin of Egypt, a large image on the bank of the Taungthaman Lake of Amarapura looked smiling, gazing above the waters of the Taungthaman Lake."¹⁴

In 1939 measures were taken to build a roofed structure for the Buddha under the sun. The cost of a large brick pillar over the foundation was *kyat*.100. Thirty three pillars were raised, twelve being donated in the colonial period, as recorded in the inscription. The study of the list of pillar donors shows that measures were first taken in 1939 to build a roofed structure. Pillar No.10 was raised first on 29 August 1939. Of the twelve pillars, three were raised in 1939; two in 1940; three in 1941; and five in 1947. Although Pillar 20 was begun in 1939, it was postponed because of financial difficulties and completed only in 1947.

The cost of one pillar was *kyat* 100, and the total cost of twelve pillars was *kyat*.1200. The study of the list of donors reveals that Daw Jar Aye of Taung Min Gyi quarter, Amarapura, alone had donated *kyat*.400 for four pillars. So Daw Jar Aye had donated the cost of one to three pillars donated by the public. The pillar donors were from Amarapura, and only one was from Mandalay.¹⁵

In the pagoda precincts, there are the Shayhaung Nyi Naung Pagoda, built in the 1900s, cave and tiered roof structure, the Sattadhana Monzaleinda Lake; to the northeast of the ancient pagodas; to the west one arched passageway; and to the northwest corner the ancient Ordination Hall.

¹³ Pyinnya, 2004, 69-70

¹⁴ Pyinnya, 2004, 10

¹⁵ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 60

On the north side of the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, the Sartawpyin aya-shin (Learned Editor) U Pyin Nya in the reign of King Bodawpaya collected 6 *pyas* per day from the Kathe (Manipuri) Bazaar of Amarapura and built temple-like pagodas in the style of the Buddhas in Seven Religious Sites. Near the Thada-htana Pagoda, U Pyin Nya had built with the collected money the Sambodde Pagoda which enshrined small 888 Buddha images in shrine-like caves in dedication of the Enlightened Ones, as well as pagodas in which scenes depicting the Eight Conquests of the Buddha were drawn.¹⁶

In the Colonial Period in the precincts of the Taung Mingyi Pagoda, there existed a new pagoda. It was a Dhat-paung Ceti or pagoda of enshrined sacred relics close to the south of the Sambodde Pagoda. The plaster brick inscription at the eastern entrance of the pagoda read "completed in April 1922. It was built by the pooled donations of alchemists in May 1922. The Aung Chin Shit Pa Pagoda ("The Eight Conquests Pagoda") close to the south of the Taung Lay Lone Monastery had been maintained. On the wooden plank was written in the applied lacquer: " Maintenance completed in Tawthalin ME 1294(September 1932).

According to this line a new maintenance was done to the Aung Chin Shit Pa Pagoda and the Asiti Arahat Images in September 1932. Moreover, the tiered spire-roof brick structure of the Ganda Kudi ("Buddha's Special Chamber") in the Thata-htana Precincts was maintained under the supervision of the District Officer of Department of Crimes, Amarapura U Ba Hli and twenty four members in 1947.¹⁷ During the period of five years, from 1942 to 1946, the construction of the roofed hall for the Buddha Image was postponed. Of the inscriptions on the donation of the pillars, one on Pillar No.14 reads:

"5th waning day of Tazaungmon, M.E 1302 (November 1940), the National Safeguarding Young Monks Association, Amarapura donated Rupees.100 for building one pillar completed in Tazaungmon, M.E 1326".

To the northwest in the precincts of the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda there is an ordination hall. According to the inscription erected in that hall, it is written; "Completed on 14 waxing day of Tagu M.E 1291(April 1929). Donated by the Wun Dauk-Min U Phyu and wife Daw Ein Si's Family."

The inscription therefore shows that the construction of the ordination hall was successfully completed in 1930. Moreover, the donation of the western passageway of the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda was done on 9 December 1935:

"Donated by the passageway donors Saya Hla and Daw Kyin, son Maung Maung Sein and family of the west Hsin-tai quarter of Amarapura, Completed in the full-moon day of Natdaw, M.E 1297" (December, 1935).¹⁸

Thus the following maintenance tasks and donations were done in the precincts of the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda in the colonial days: (1) building a Dat-paung-Ceti (Pagoda where sacred relics were enshrined) in 1922, (2) maintaining the Aung Chin Shit-pa Pagoda in 1932; (3) repairing the Special Chamber of Lord Buddha of the Thada-htana Pagoda in 1947; (4) erecting twelve brick pillars from 1939 to 1947 to roof the Taung Min Gyi Buddha Image; (5) locating a site for the ordination hall in 1930; and donating a passageway in 1935. Therefore, it is learned that a combination of new buildings and maintenance was done.¹⁹ Today, having the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda at the centre, many more pagodas were built: the total number of pagodas has increased to 18.²⁰

The Maha Vizayayanthi Pahtodawgyi is located in the southwest corner of the town of Amarapura. It was donated by Sagaing Min or Bagyitawpaya (1819-1837). Bagyitawpaya

¹⁶ Pyinnya, 2004,72-73

¹⁷ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 57-58

¹⁸ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 60

¹⁹ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 61

²⁰ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 100

learned that there arose some miraculous rays above the ground allotted by King Bodawpaya for building a pagoda and from the plot allotted by Bagyidaw's royal father the Crown Prince and his mother the Crown Prince's Queen for building a monastery. Then Bagyidawpaya struck an idea of building a Si-kon-taw Pagoda that looked like the structure of a Ceylon Pagoda.²¹ On Wednesday, 15 March 1820, gold and silver foundations were laid down for the Si-kon-taw to the southwest of the Golden City.²² On Tuesday 28 March, 1820, brick, stone, lime, cement, cost for wood and 185,200 viss of silver for charges were drawn out from the Royal Treasury and Bagyidawpaya himself laid down the gold foundation brick. On Wednesday, 29th March 1820, the first relics were enshrined in the foundation. From the day of laying down the foundation of the pagoda King Bagyidaw himself supervised in building the pagoda.²³ Two mokes (porches) surrounding the pagoda, with four large enshrinement structure and twelve small enshrinement structures. Inside the central structure were 112 relics of the Lord Buddha, enshrined by the king himself. Those relics were enshrined in a ruby miniature pagoda which was housed by a gold miniature pagoda. Then the gold pagoda was housed one tier after another by the Moegyo (alloy of gold and copper) pagoda, the Silver Pagoda, the Copper Pagoda and the Incense Pagoda, etc. The Incense Pagoda was placed in a bejeweled basket and the miniature pagodas of gold and silver, gold and silver banners, gold and silver nucleus, gold and silver floral decorations, gold and silver miniature passages, pop-corn ball-like gold, silver and ruby balls, gold and silver beads, etc were displayed around the relic pagoda and enshrined there. Inside the large enshrinement structures the four miniature Buddha images of gold called Shwe Ko Lay (16 viss of gold) were also enshrined in each. The miniature images of the royal ancestors in couple up to King Sagaing and the Queen in the prayer position, along with gold and silver images of Lord Buddha were also enshrined. Moreover, many miniature images of gold, silver and alloyed pagoda and many miniature images of Lord Buddha were house there. Also enshrined were ruby image, emerald image, amber image, crystal image, diamond image, etc., and precious objects for enshrinement, as well as gold and silver inscription leaves of the Dhamma, were enshrined inside.²⁴

The meritorious deeds of the Royal Father the Crown Prince and Queen, which were the Mingala Weyan Monastery, well and firebreak, as well as the still-undone first foundation of 120 cubits in circumference and 120 cubits in height were successfully completed. In February 1823, the gold pinnacle of 12 cubits in circumference and 18 cubits and height up to the Hnget-myat-na level was ceremoniously raised. The title for the pagoda was chosen with the consultation of the revered monks and sages and the title " Maha Vizayayanthi" was inscribed on a stone slab and housed in a tiered, spire-like brick structure in front of the pagoda. The record stone inscription was erected inside a tiered, spire-like brick structure within the three brick walls in the northeast corner of the Si-kon-tawgyi.²⁵ The inscription has two sides and is 5 feet 10 inches high and 3 feet 7 inches wide. The lyrics of the inscription were composed by the Wutmaswut Nawade Maha Thinkhaya Sithu, Maha Thiri Sithu, the Second Twinthin Taik Wun, etc.²⁶

In all sides of the pagoda, the first platform housed a relief depictiong 376 stories out of the five hundred and fifty. The second platform housed a row of alabaster relief depicting

²¹ Pyinnya, 2004, 43-44

²² U Teikka Dhamma Linkara, *Myanmar Yet-swe Thamai* (History of Myanmar Calendar) Mandalay-Khit Sarpay, 1969, p.323 (Henceforth: U Teikka, 1969)

²³ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 97

²⁴ Myanmar Translation Society, *Myanmar Encyclopaedia*, Ni-pit, Vol.6, Yangon, Sar-pay-biman Press, 1962, 343-344 (Henceforth: *Encyclopaedia*, 1962)

²⁵ U Maung Maung Tin, *Konbaung-set Maha Yazawuntawgyi* (The Great Chronicle at the Konbaung Dynasty), Vol.II, Third Printing, 1967, November, p.370-371 (Henceforth: Tin, 1967)

²⁶ Pyinnya, 2004, 52

the Ten Birth-stories of Lord Buddha. In the third platform were carved small miniature Sambodde Buddha images.²⁷ Including the glazed reliefs depicting the Jataka stories around the pagoda has given us an opportunity to study the art of Konbaung Period.²⁸

After building the Maha Vizayayanthi Pahto-taw-gyi, King Bagyidaw donated the areas for the religious duties and the satellite pagodas. The areas for the religious duties were the Dawei Myin Pyet Land, fed by the irrigated water of the Thin Dwe reservoir fed by the Zaw Gyi River, in Myin Saing Township, including the five southern districts of Tampadipa Division and the plot of land awarded by the king to the group members of the Shwe Dah Mye Thin Taw. The chiefs responsible for the maintenance and various tasks concerning the satellite pagodas were Nga Mu Hon, entitled as Sadda Sukha, and Nga Kaung, Suddha Ponnya. The one and only accountant was Nga Ya. There were 27 families who were responsible for the satellite pagodas down to their generations and relatives: sixty three men, young and old, fifty seven women, young and old the total number being 120. In the surrounding of the pagoda brick monasteries were also built in donation: in the east the Pyokba Wun Monastery; in the west, the Pissima Wun Monastery; in the north, the Uttara Wun Monastery; and in the south, the Dekkhina Wun Monastery.²⁹

Those monasteries are probably monasteries where monks stay during the lent. On the walls of both sides of the southern and western arched passageway, the mural paintings recorded the name "Kuthodaw Maha Vizayayanthi Waso Kyaung". These monasteries are surrounded by walls called Maha Yan Tataing. They were also known as the Thayet Taw Kyaung Taik. Today no monasteries in the east and the west have remained, but only the ones in the south and the north remain.

Inside the wall, to the north west of the pagoda, there is a large Bo tree. G.E Harvey recorded that the Bo saplings, brought from India, where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, were grown in two large glazed jars in the northwest of the Pahtotawgyi Pagoda of Amarapura.³⁰ Today, according to the members of the Pagoda Trustee, the old royal white elephant died in the reign of King Badon and was cremated, and the ashes were buried at the foot of the banyan tree. Therefore, that large banyan tree or Bo tree had the figure resembling to the head of an elephant and is known as the Elephant Bo Tree.

On Friday, 21 May 1839, there took place a strong earthquake in Amarapura. Then the pinnacle of the Pahtotawgyi Pagoda touched the ground. In 1845, younger Royal Brother Tharyawaddy Min raised a new pinnacle of the Pahto-tawgyi Pagoda,³¹ to complete to deed of his royal brother. In the reign of King Bagan, on Wednesday, 14 July 1847, the Maha Sekkyu Thiha Pagoda's tiered, spire-like brick structure in Ava, which Bagyidaw had worshipped, got damaged. So the Buddha image was brought from there and was enshrined in a golden five-tiered, spire-like roof structure ceremoniously in the vacant plot to the south of the Maha Vizayayanthi Pagoda, together with the surrounding firebreaks.³² Also in King Mindon's reign, the damaged pinnacle was replaced with a new one of nine cubits in circumference and thirteen cubits and one handspan in height, which was raised under the supervision of the Popa Wun Dauk in 1872. In 1912, another earthquake brought the pinnacle to the ground once again. Thus, the pagoda remained without a pinnacle for seven years. In 1919, the local people of Amarapura raised a new pinnacle to the pagoda. On 16 July 1956, a

²⁷ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 92

²⁸ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 64

²⁹ Pyinnya, 2004, 52-53

³⁰ U San Oo, *Badon Min Let-htet-Ein-Ni-Chin Naing-gan-mya-nint Hset-san-ye* (Relations with neighbouring countries in King Badon's reign) (1782-1819), M.A Thesis, 1995, May, P.110 (Henceforth: San Oo, 1995)

³¹ Pyinnya, 2004, 60

³² U Maung maung Tin, *Konbaung Set Maha Yazawuntawgyi* (The Great Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty) Vol. III, Third Printing, 1968, p.64 (Henceforth: Thi, 1968)

strong earthquake occurred and the pinnacle, as well as the upper part from Chaya-thi to Kyamauk (lotus-upside-down level) touched the ground while the Phaung-yit was also damaged and the pagoda itself cracked.

"On 15 waxing day of Tawthalin, M.E 1319 (September 1957), Bhama-Khit U Ohn Khin and wife Daw Dagon Khin Lay raised a new pinnacle of nine cubits in circumference and thirteen cubits in height. The diamond pinnacle was ceremoniously raised by the former Prime Minister U Nu on 12 waning day of Tazaungmon, M.E 1319 (November, 1957).³³

In 1902, the enshrinement structure of the Maha Vizayayanthi Pahto-tawgyi was broken into and ransacked. U Phyto undertook the responsibility of the pagoda Neikbansaw (crier for the meritorious deeds) until 1926.³⁴

To the north of the pagoda, inside the wall there is an ordination hall. The inscription erected before the hall reads:

"Donated by the donor Daw Kyauk and family members, of Pyat-thatgyi Village, Amarapura, on the fullmoon day of the Second Waso, M.E 1321."

There are also a brick public hall (rest house) and a wooden public hall in the southwest corner of the pagoda. At the entrance to the brick public hall an inscription reads:

"Built in donation by Ma Ma Mi, of Tayoketan Quarter, Amarapura M.E 1269. Newly maintained on 15 waxing day of the First Waso, M.E 1358."

In the south direction of the pagoda there is a brick monastery. At the entrance of the brick monastery an inscription reads:

"Donated by U Sein Maung and Daw Than Nu and family, of Htan Tabin Quarter, Amarapura, to the supervision committee comprising the Thayettaw Kyaung Sayadaw U Te Zina and monks."

There is a Gyo-Pye Nan-pye Pagoda behind the Maha Vizayayanthi Pagoda. The inscription written below the pagoda reads:

"Donated by U Maung Lay and (Daw Mya Khin) of Tayoketan-lay Quarter, Amarapura, on the fullmoon day of Thidingyu M.E 1348" (October 1986).

Behind the pagoda was a prayer hall. Inside the prayer hall was written an inscription of record.

According to the pagoda trustees, the passageway without roof (" Ne-pu- Khan Zaung-tan") behind the pagoda was donated by the well-known Hermit U Khan Ti in 1291. To the south there is a prayer passageway. Inside there is an image of Lord Buddha. The inscription reads:

"The image " Maha Sekkyu Thiha" which King Bagan built in donation was moved to this site in 1209".

To the east there is a brick prayer hall. At the entrance a record reads thus:

"Donated by U Khin Maung and wife Daw Nyunt Nyunt, of Tayoketan Quarter, Amarapura, on 1 waxing day of Tabodwe, M.E 1361."(February 1999)

The prayer hall to the north is still being built with public donations. In the reign of King Bagyidaw there existed no passageways or satellite pagodas around the Pahtotawgyi Pagoda. Now there are some pagodas and passageways donated by the people. Around the pagoda are grown large shady star-flower trees, which had been grown by an anonymous donor. To the east, outside the wall, there is a pagoda called Mg O Pagoda. To the south of this pagoda, there is the former Thayet-taw brick monastery, new monasteries, pagodas and monasteries still under construction.

³³ Pyinnya, 2004, 61-63

³⁴ Khin Myint Swe, 1992, 64-65

To the east of the large pagoda, there is a large bell. On Thursday 13 February 1828, the ceremony of casting the bell was held. In the plot before the Maha Vizaya-Yanthy Kuthodaw, Amarapura, a large royal roofed structure was built. Under the supervision of the Pantin Wun Chun Taung Myosa Ne Myo Nanda Kyaw Thu, workers were engaged in casting copper into the images of crested lions and the bell. This large bell was entitled "Maha Meru-Maku-htha Ganda Raja".³⁵ The inscription on the bell was written by Maha Thinkhaya Maha Sithu. It weighs 150,000 ticals and 105,000 viss. It is ten feet and seven inches high and seventeen feet and six inches in circumference, seven feet and four inches in diameter and eight inches in thickness. It has been put under the preservation under the Department of Archaeology: it is hung from an iron beam supported by two strong brick pillars. It is housed under an umbrella-shaped roof. It is hung from the height of six feet. It is a valuable historical heritage and irresponsible hands might scratch or write on the surface of the bell, the inscribed letters can get damaged. So the original letters of inscription can be read at eye level. It stands as a witness to the quality of bronze casting in the period of King Bagyidaw. It was cast by the Pantin Wungyi Ne Myo Nanda Kyaw.³⁶

There are 24 lines in the bell inscription. It is now at least 189 years old.

Line 1 reads:

"At present 532,028 Buddhas had attained the enlightenment and entered Parinivana and it was Gottama who was the last Buddha".

Line 2 reads:

"King Mintaya enshrined the Buddha's relics, in the Thihataw Pagoda, Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda, the Shwezeegon Pagod of Bagan, Sandar Muni Pagoda and Maha wizayaranthi Pahto-taw-gyi, etc. Line 3,4 and 5 read:

When Bagyidaw succeeded the throne, the "Siri Tari Bawana Ditara Dipati Pavara Pannita Maha Dhamma Raza Di-Raza" was the Queen of the southern Palace. The Maha Vizayayanthy Pagoda was built in Amarapura and the city of Ava(Inwa) was once again restored. There was no taxation imposed on the public, but the king's own money was used to build the Pagoda.

Line 6 reads:

"Ambassadors from Cambodia, A-nan and Tonkin, etc. Assam, Janetiya and Manipura came and submitted gifts of obeisance".

Line 7 reads:

"A special account was written on the reconstruction of the ancient Inwa. In building the Golden Palace Apartments, the 131 cubit high tiered, spire-roof structure of Pyathat was built. The 1250 apartments were built. Included among them was the Zetawun, 116 cubits wide. There were nine arched doors with three tiered structure and forty five principal sites. In the External City, there were thirty seven structures and sixteen doors covering 2440 tas in area. The External Golden City was built by Thiri Nanda Wun, Maha Nanda Wun and the Royal Gardners. Line 8 reads:

On Monday 1st waning day of Tabaung, M.E 1185 (March 1823), how the *Sasana* was propagated and how embellishments were made in building the kingdom of Inwa.

Line 9 reads:

The Coronation Ceremony of Mintayagyi, the Great King, who pledged that he would rule the country with fair justice.

Line 10-12 reads:

Two years after the Buddha Biseka Ceremony, the King donated a large Buddha image. With queen and retinue, the king observed how the image was being cast. The

³⁵ Tin, 1967, 456-457

³⁶ Pahto-dawgyi, Bell Inscription, 1189

common people had an entertainment provided by various musical instruments. The image was cast in silver, gold, bronze, copper and zinc. Under the supervision of the Pantin Wun Ne Myo Nanda Kyaw Thu the plaster image was cast. The successfully cast image was entitled "Maha Sekkya Thiha".

Lines 13, 14 and 15 reads:

The title of the Senior Queen Siri Pavara Tiloka Maha Razeinna Yadana Devi."

Line 16 reads:

Father of Bagyidaw, the crown Prince Siri Maha Dhamma Vizaya Thiha Thura, was son of King Bodawpaya. Before succeeding to the throne, he passed away, as the Crown Prince.

Line 17 reads:

The list shows the Senior Queen of the Southern Palace was entitled to the revenue of Four Pin Si Villages, five Sataw Ma Villages and the taxes collected at ferry and jetty. She had the retinue of Thirty Bodyguard horses.

Line 18 reads:

The Senior Queen always learned on the Law of Transience.

Line 19 reads:

Her Donations: the Great Maha Aung Mye Bon San Monastery. Thirty thousand silver pieces were donated. It took three years for the construction to finish.

Line 20-21 reads:

On the ceremony of donation of the Great Monastery, the King was present on the occasion and royal sons and daughters, Shan lords and men in the royal service and the commoners were awarded gold and silver and fine cloths. After the construction of the monastery, the *Sayadaw* was conferred the title of Pon Nyabi Siri Thaddama Dhaza Maha Dhamma Raja Di Raja Guru".

Lines 22-23 reads:

The Bell was cast by Pantin Wun Ne Myo Nanda Kyaw Thu. Plaster image was cast. On Thursday, 13 waning day of Tabaung M.E 1189,(March 1827) one lakh fifty ticals of bronze, copper, gold and silver were cast. It was entitled " Maha Meru-Makuhta Ganda Raja". Lyric lines were inscribed on the bell at the Maha Sekkya Thiha Pagoda and the Maha Aung Mye Bonsan Monastery donated by the Queen.

Line 24 reads:

The lyrical line of the bell: Maha-Thinkhaya, Maha Siri, Pali-htoke-note, Poke-napanauk, Sithu-yauk-tha, Kyauk Na-zi-ya, Pannyawa hlyin, Linka Sagapye, nint-htwe-yo-pyun, hlyauk-chi-mon-ywe, Hso-htan-bwe-hton, Maw-kun-thon-thi, Nanthon-shwe-sa-Nidan-ti".³⁷

Of the Four Great Images, the Ganda Kudi Spire-like monument which houses the Maha Sekkyaran-thi Kyauk Taw Gyi Image, is located in Taung Thaman Village, Amarapura.³⁸ The donors were two. The donor of the image was Sagaing Min (Bagyidaw) and the donor of the monument was King Bagan.³⁹ As Sagaing Min was eager to build an alabaster image, men were sent to the Sakyin Hill: Kyaw Si Htaik Clerk Kyawsa Thiha Nawrahta discovered a gigantic alabaster of twenty two feet long, fourteen feet wide and over nine feet in thickness, in Sintku Township, in the province of Sone Siyinsu.⁴⁰

Bagyidaw handed money to carry the rock and awarded the workers to dig it out. Under the supervision of Kyaw Si Htaik Clark Kyawsa Thiha Nawrahta, after making offerings to the guardian spirits of the region, the Great Rock was dug out on Sunday, 17

³⁷ Pahto-taw-gyi, Bell inscription, Lines 1-24

³⁸ Hla Thamein, *Myanmar Naing-gan-takwin-Paya Thamai-Paung Choke* (anthology of Pagoda History of Myanmar), First Printing, Yangon, Maha Weiksa Press, 1968, p.55

³⁹ Pyinnya, 2004, 18

⁴⁰ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 99

May 1829. On Tuesday, 25 August, 1829, under the supervision of Officer of the Madaya Dam Maha Nandayit, Officer of Singu town Nay Myo Yekaung Nawyatha, Military Officer at Singu and Clerk of the Dam Ngasint Ku Myo Sit-ke and Hse-Clerk, over 6000 people from Mattaya, Kyaw si Htaik, Kut-Ywa Taung, Kala-Myo Village, Nga-Sint-Ku Township, brought the rock down the hill. On Thursday, 1 October 1829, the King, accompanied by the Senior Queen, came to the Sheinmaka Temporary Palace and observed the Great Rock for sculpturing the Buddha Image.⁴¹ Starting from Wednesday, 13 January 1830, the Great Rock was carried from Sakyin Hill to Amarapura, Under the supervision of Nga Ya Ne Myosa Wungyi, with the labour force of over 3000 people from villages of Sintku Township, the Great Rock was carried and it reached the Myaung Jetty, Mwe-Taw Village, on Tuesday, 16 February, 1830.⁴²

Under the supervision of the King and the Senior Queen, the Great Rock reached the Sha-Yaung Village, Mingun and then the jetty near Kun Htauk, Mingun, where the great bell bed been raised to a barge of rollers. On Friday, 7 May 1830, the king led the transportation of the Great Rock in obeisance from the jetty to the shrine where it would be sculptured and held in worship with the labour of 4400 men in royal service, 3860 royal boatmen, and over 8250 Asu or Group men in service, the Great Rock was carried to the shrine for 18 days from Friday, 21 May 1830 to Monday, 7 June. Under Nan Kan Kywe Wun Ne Myo Si Thu, Kinda Shwe Taung Zeya Nawrahta, who were skilled sculptors, the proportion and measure was taken for sculpturing the image.⁴³ Arrangements were made to hold the image in a passageway to the east of Bon Kyaw Monastery in the Ava Golden City. King Sagaing himself gave the right proportion of the image. Its title was Maha Sekkyaramthi, and was housed in a brick spire-like roof structure of Pyat-that, inside the Inwa Palace. When King Bagan (1846-1853) succeeded to the throne, the image was carried from Inwa to the Taungthaman Village, Amarapura. King Bagan laid the foundation for building the brick structure on Thursday, 26 April 1849.⁴⁴

The brick structure, however, collapsed and so, starting from Monday, 4 June 1849, under the supervision of Kyauk Maw Myosa Wun-gyi Thado Mingyi Maha Min Hla Thiha Thu, Blacksmith Interior Minister Thado Mingyi Maha Min Hla Kyaw Thu, 3000 royal boatmen were ordered to carry the Great Image in obeisance and it reached Mottama takha-pyin within 3 days. On Tuesday, 10 July 1849, the barge with spires on which the Buddha Image was seated was carried up by the steamer and was housed near the Taungthaman to the south of the Golden City.⁴⁵ In March 1851 the king came to pay obeisance to the Great Image of the Buddha. In the year 1851, a grand arched passageway was built at the Kuntaung level of the third platform were enshrine twelve gold miniature images, twenty silver miniature images, reliques and over three hundred gold and silver images donated by the common people on Saturday, 28 September 1850. In 1851, two great brick firebreaks were built around the shrine. On Tuesday, 29 October 1850, a pinnacle of seven cubits two Mike and four Thits in circumference and two cubits and four thits in height was offered.⁴⁶

The temple which housed the image was built by Patein Myo, Mabe Myosa Blacksmith Interior Thado Mingyi Min Hla Kyaw Thu. The construction was completed after one year on the auspicious occasion of October 1851. There is a stone inscription slab erected in the northeast corner of the Kyauk Taw Gyi Pagoda. The lyrics were inscribed by the Ta-

⁴¹ Tin 1967, 465-467

⁴² Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 99

⁴³ Tin, 1967, 468-471

⁴⁴ Khin Myint Swe, 2007, 99

⁴⁵ Tin, 1968, 72-73

⁴⁶ Tin, 1967, 82-84

hseik-Wun Min hla Raza Kyaw Htin.⁴⁷ The Ganda Kudi structure resembles the temple of the Ananda, donated by King Kyansittha, the Htee Hlaing Shin, of ancient Bagan.⁴⁸ The mouth of the Lake Taungthaman where the Kyauk-taw-gyi Image was raised from the lake to land was called "Kyauk-Taw-Gyi Pauk". In the northeast corner, there is a stone slab which says Maha Sekkyaramthi Pagoda. In the north there is a ruined brick structure of Che Taw-Yar ("The Buddha's Sacred Footprint"), twenty cubits long from east to west and ten cubits along from north to south. The Che-Taw-Yar had been moved to the northeast corner. At the back of the prayer hall were seated eighty eight statues or images of the Arahats.⁴⁹

A monk residing in the monastery of the Kyauk Taw Gyi informed that the image was formerly adorned with a sash and a crown. The Reverend Maha Gandayon Sayadaw Ashin Janaka Bivuntha commented that there are no Buddhist scriptures reading the description of adorning the Buddha image with such regalia, but only in Zinme Pannasa Treatise. So the Sayadaw himself had taken off the regalia.

One significant archway about the pagoda was the mural paintings. On four archways one can observe these paintings. They were donated by King Bagan, whose other donations could be observed in Sagaing, Amarapura, Inwa, Pakhan-gyi, Pye and Yangon. One significant archway about the painting was the two paintings of the angels ("Kaungkin Taman"), painted on the eastern archway. There are also paintings of the cosmos. Since these paintings show the costumes of the day, reflecting the mirror of the period, they are of great historical value.⁵⁰

On the mural painting on the southern side of the east archway are drawn pagodas, cetis, grand monasteries and small monasteries or apartments. There are paintings of "The Kutho-daw Maha Weyan Bontha San Kyaung Taw Gyi" and "The Kuthodaw Maha Sekkyamthi" Buddha Image, main roads, the then costumes of wealthy men, well-to-do men and men in royal service. There are many paintings of monks. Some paintings depict how trading went on between the mainland and the hilly regions; and the Shan traders and merchants on pilgrimage; the total figures on the southern wall being three pagoda precincts, one grand monastery and trees and hills. On the northern wall, there were figures of two precincts, two grand monasteries, two small monasteries, showing a procession of Shinpyu-Ahlu, children at play, Chinese ambassadors in the pagoda precinct, etc. On both sides of the northern and southern wall are drawn figures of celestials, men on wings, ogres, semi-god, Zawgyi, Hermit, Minister, and Generals. On the ceiling of the east entrance are drawn men on wings, a sacred footprint; beside these are two ogres; in the eastern circle of the footprint, lotuses, with floral patterns all around.

On the eastern side of the mural painting of the northern archway, paintings include three pagodas, entitled "Kuthodaw Shwe Gu Pagoda", a wooden monastery, people enjoying the boat race, people offering alms to monks, bullock carts in groups, monks on alms round, boiling water in an earthen pot, monk giving lectures, men and women cooking and offering alms. On the western side drawings include two big pagodas, small pagodas, the Kuthodaw Shwe U-min Pagoda of Sagaing, and the forests, many pagodas on the Sagaing Hill, a river at the foot of a pagoda, cargo boats and passenger boats, elephant, buffalo, deer, tiger, hunters prowling for the prey in the forest, a fisherman and his family cooking by the river, men and monks on pilgrimage in the passageway of Sagaing Hill; on both sides, men on wings, celestials, semi-gods; On the ceiling, four celestials and the Cosmos.

⁴⁷ Pyinnya, 2004, 36-38

⁴⁸ Pyinnya, 2004, 34

⁴⁹ Myanmar Translation Society, *Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Kya-khun*, Volume.2, Yangon, Sar-pay-beikman Press, 1962, p.47-48

⁵⁰ *Encyclopedia*, 1962, 47

On the southern wall on the west archway, drawings include three pagodas, two monasteries and one public rest house. The pagodas are the "Kuthodaw Shwe Phone Myint Pagoda, Shwe Phone Pwint Pagoda of Pye", and the "Kyaungtaw-she Kuthodaw Pagoda". Drawings include boats, men living on the banks, monks at pagodas, men on pilgrimage, offering alms and flowers and doing cleaning work at pagoda; on the northern side wall, three pagodas and others being Waso monasteries. The pagodas are the "Kuthodaw Mandalay Pagoda passageways", the "Kuthodaw Pagoda, Thè In Village, Kukhan Town", the "Loka Tharaphu Pagoda of Inwa, Pagoda in the Great Wall" (Maharyan) three monasteries are the "Maha Vizaya Yan Thi Kuthodaw Wazo Kyaung"; on the wall, men coming on pilgrim to the pagoda festival; beside the cart, families having meal; monks in the Waso monasteries, boats in the river; people cooking on the river bank; and on the ceiling, the Cosmos in full display.

In the mural painting of the east side of the southern archway, are included one large pagoda, one small pagoda and one brick spire-roof Pyatthat structure. The large pagoda is the "Kuthodaw Shwe Zee-Gon Pagoda of Bagan" and the brick Pyatthat is the "Pyatthat inside the Loka Tharaphu Pagoda's wall". The grand monastery is the Kuthodaw Waso Monastery inside the wall of the Maha Vizaya Yan Thi Pagoda and two small monasteries; on that wall, a river, cargo boats, fisherman's boat, passenger boats with passengers surrounding the royal figures of man and woman, a monk in a boat; among the trees, a group of Brahmins, three Shan traders carrying baskets of green tea, women gathering vegetables; elephants going down to the river; inside the jungle, buffalo, deer and elephants; a group of men entering novitiation approaching a monastery; mules carrying loads; children at play near the Waso monastery; couples; on the western side, one pagoda, one brick structure, three Waso-monasteries, one ordination hall. The pagoda is "The Eindawya Pagoda of Okkalapa"; the "brick spire roof Pyatthat inside the wall of the Loka Tharaphu Pagoda of Inwa"; the "Waso Monastery inside the Maha Vizaya Yanthi" Pagoda; the "Kuthodaw Ordination Hall of Okkalapa". In the mural paintings are included the drawings of men and women going round in Shin-laung Al-lu ceremony; people with clasped hands in prayer to receive novitiation; in the painting of the "brick Pyatthat", beside men in royal service, roofed bullock carts (probably belonging to the then Upper Class), men in fine clothes with clasped hands, animals afloat in the river, ambassador boats at sail; inside the jungle, elephant, monkey and lion-like figures. One significant archwy: on the road in front of the Okkalapa Myo-yoe Eindawya Kyaung, a procession of foreigners who were armed.

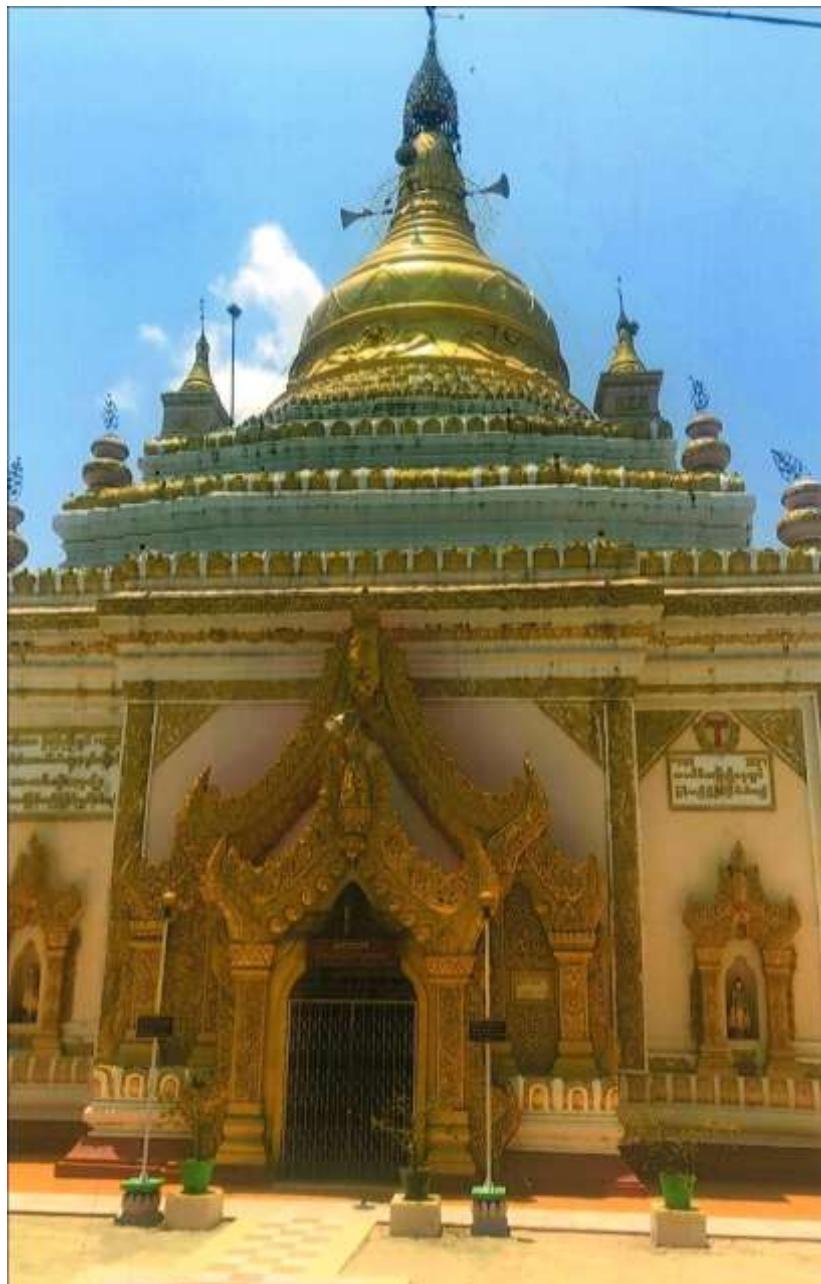
To sum up, the mural paintings of the Kyauk-Taw Gyi show that boats and sampans were mostly used in trading and transportation during the Konbaung Period, because the northern, the west and the southern archway walls have paintings depicting boats and rivers, except the eastern archway. But the paintings did not show the figures of the Shan coming down from the Shan hills. This implies that people themselves carried the goods or loaded them on mules. The paintings also give us a glimpse of the education status of the Konbaung Period: almost every child of school-going age learned at monasteries; at play underneath the monastery; following the monks on alms round.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the construction of the urban area of the Amarapura Golden City are included pagodas and *ceti*, monasteries, ordination halls, and the *Pittakat Taik* (Library). The majority of the large pagodas are located in the southwest of the Amarapura Royal Palace. There are pagodas donated by kings, as well as ones built by men in royal service and the commoners. The pagodas built by kings and queens still remain since they had been maintained in successive periods. But the pagodas built by the commoners mostly remain in ruins since they lack regular maintenance. Today, the Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda, the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda, the Pahtotawgyi Pagoda and the Taung Thaman Kyauk-Taw Gyi Pagoda, which have been known as the Four Great Pagodas are all located to the southwest and to the south of the ancient city. The ancient pagodas of Amarapura have been under the preservation of the Department of Archaeology. Local people regularly hold pagoda festivals. The Taung Mingyi Pagoda festival is held in March, and the Thatahtana Pagoda festival is held in October, when alms are ceremoniously offered to one thousand monks. Since the figures in the mural paintings of the Kyauk-Taw Gyi Pagoda show the action of offering alms to the monks, it can be assumed that the tradition of offering alms has prevailed through successive periods. However, the pagoda festival of the Taung Mingyi Pagoda is no more.

The Taung Mingyi pagoda, the Shwe Gu Gyi pagoda and the Pahto-Tawgyi pagoda, etc. are located in groups, as indicated by their location, art and architecture, then and now. There are about thirty pagodas in the pagoda group of the Taung Min Gyi pagoda, while there are over thirty pagodas and stupas near the Pahto-taw-gyi Pagoda.

**PhotographsPhoto (1)
The Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda**



Source: By the Researcher (1-6-2018)

Photo (2 a)
The Taung Min gyi Pagoda (The Nepukhan Kotawgyi)



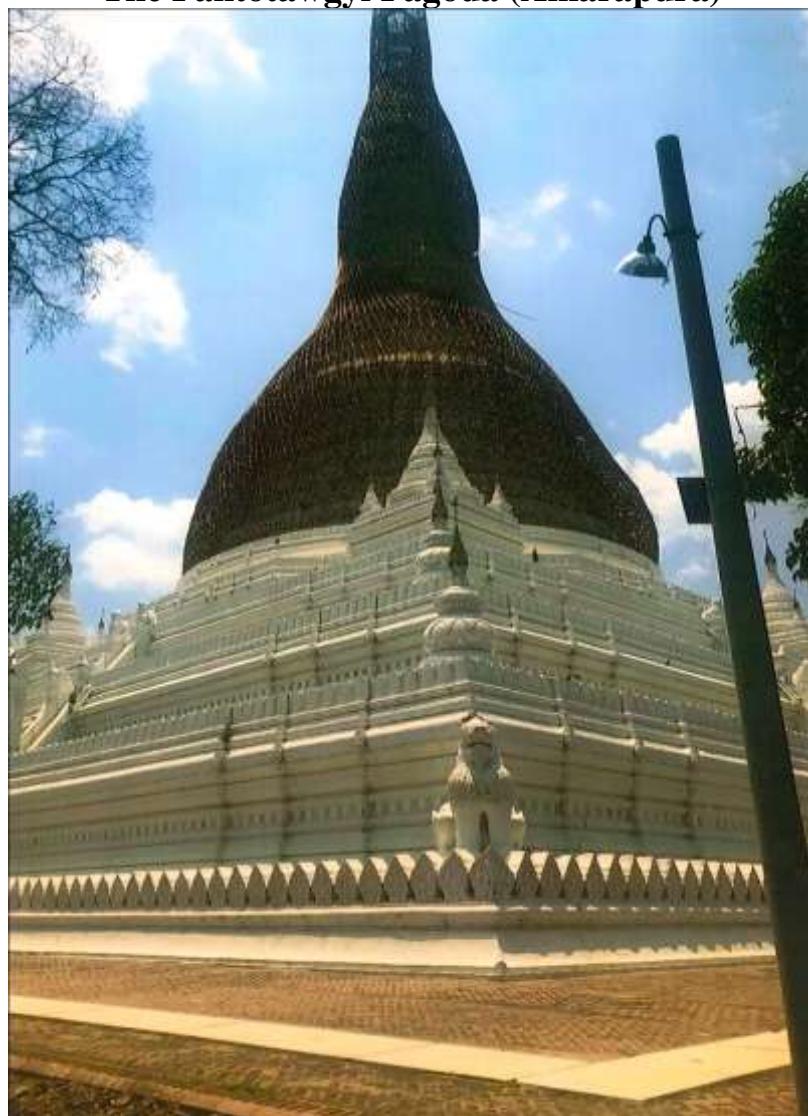
Source: By the Researcher (1-6-2018)

Photo (2 b)
The Taung Min gyi Pagoda (The Nepukhan Kotawgyi)



Source: By the Researcher (1-6-2018)

Photo (3)
The Pahtotawgyi Pagoda (Amarapura)



Source: By the Researcher (1-6-2018)

Photo (4)
The Taungthaman Kyauktawgyi Pagoda



Source: By the Researcher (1-6-2018)

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