

A Study on the Great Manuha Temple in Bagan

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Abstract

It was built by Manuha, the captive king of Thaton, in 1059 A.D. who was brought from Thaton to Bagan. It stands in Myinkabar village in Nyaung-U district. In the south of the Manuha, Nanpaya, Nagayon and Abeyadana are situated. The chronicles related that whenever Manuha spoke from his mouth, the radiance came. The image inside the Manuha temple is not a very distinguished structure being in the form of reduplicated square structure with a battlement terrace, the upper story being smaller than the lower, so that the entire building appears to assume the form of a Pyramid. The huge image which seems to crowd the temple. Three seated images of the Buddha with right hand in the gesture of touching the earth or bhumi-phasa face toward the east. The incooperation architectural style of Mon-Bamar. If we said Anawrahta or Anirudha was the sponsor for the spread of Theravada Buddhism, we would also say that king Manuha of Thaton was the main source for the spread of Theravada Buddhism because it was king Manuha from him king Anawrahta of Bagan propagated Buddhism. Its symbol is a "Bayakyiswar Manuha".

Introduction

There are over 2,000 religious edifices in Bagan covering an area of 16 square miles on the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady. They are different in size and in a bewildering variety of shape. Bagan was known as Tattadesa the Parched Land to the Mons. During the time of its greatness from Anawrahta to Narathihapate of about 250 years well-wishers and donors of different kinds, such as kings, queens, ministers, wealthy folks etc., successively take care of monks, copied sets of pitaka, libraries etc., according to their own wish. Because of King Anawrahta Bagan emerges into the clean light of history. Religious favour brought on by the flowering of Theravada Buddhism inspired the people of Bagan.

Manuha, the Great Temple is one of the historic temples in Bagan. King Anawrahta's Manuha Temple built by the two kings for the unity of Mon-Bamar, is situated at Myinkabar ward, Bagan.

It seems to be built that the Manuha Temple at Myinkabar ward among the ancient temples and pagodas in Bagan would last for five thousand years of Buddha's teaching and that the king of Thaton, Manuha, would gain merits.

According to the Glass Palace chronicle, Shin Arahán seemed to come to Bagan to propagate the true Buddhist religion from Mon region, Thaton to Bagan. He was also a monk who propagated true Theravada Buddhism in Bagan.¹

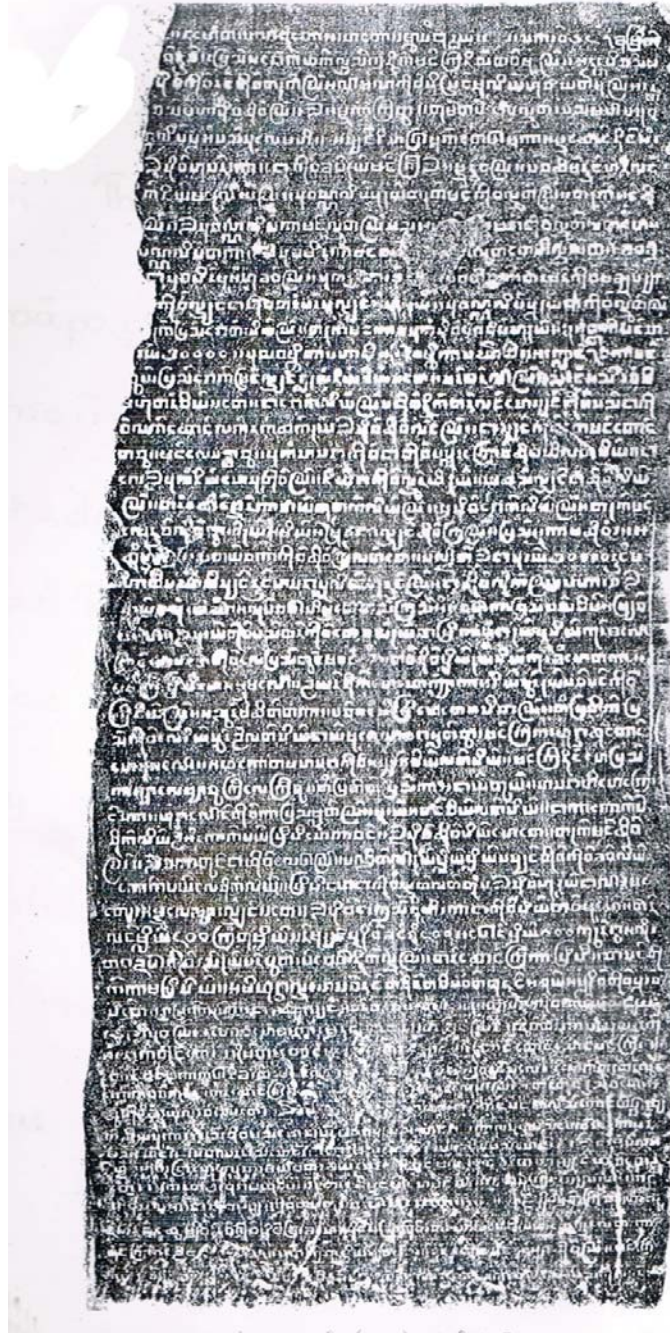
At the time of meeting with the king Anawrahta, Shin Arahán preached, the doctrine of Buddha. Afterwards, Anawrahta believing Shin Arahán's teaching, became Tharthana donor king completely trusting in Theravada Buddhism.

Since the arrival of Theravada Buddhism, at Bagan the dirty, filthy beliefs of Aris disappeared, too. Since then, the dirty, filthy beliefs of Aris were rejected and cancelled. Moreover, at Thamatee region, Thirty Aris teachers and their 60000 pupils, were placed under house arrest and made to become lay persons in the service of the king. Since that time, Aris beliefs completely disappeared in Bagan.

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¹ The Glass Place Chronical (ဝါ ၂၀၀၃၊ ၈၁-၂၅၈)

When Shin Arahan made King Anawrahta ask for the Pitakas, the three repositories of Buddhist scriptures in Thaton presenting gifts, the Mon king Manuha made diplomats return saying rudely. Consequently Anawrahta made war on Thaton and brought 30 sets of Pitakas as well as the noble eyetooth of Buddha, together with religious propagator monks, king of Thaton, Manuha, his queen, all persons of royal lineage, king's counselors, and retinue.²



မင်္ဂလာစေတီကျောက်စာ (ဒီသာပါမောက္ခကျောက်စာ)

² Shin De Thar Parmauk / / Stone Inscription of the Shin De Thar Parmauk (မင်္ဂလာစေတီ)

After this, Manuha, King of Thaton and the Queen with their relatives were placed in Myinkabar (Anurada) ward. The eyetook of Buddha and the relic of the Buddha were enshrined in the ruby casket and they were taken refuge in and worshipped without pause. After the Pitaka building had been built, 30 sets of Pitakas were removed there and worshipped. Monks who were brought from Thaton were grouped in four for carrying out religious duties and activities: 1500 monks, Nghet pit taung sect, 500 monks, Myinkabar Sect, 500 monks Tuyin taung sect were placed in four grand monasteries. 120 persons in the service of the king were given duty as the religious servants.³

Technicians brought from Thaton were grouped and placed. Technicians of painting, carving, making decorative work in relief with stucco, stone sculpture, goldsmith, silversmith, blacksmith, making items cast from bronze, copper or brass, craft of a turner, craft of a mason, were placed round about Pan byut yet pagoda. (a) Mingalar temple between Bagan and Myinkabar. Workers of glaze work were placed round about (Ahpaeядanar) in the Southern part of Myingabar. Practitioners of elephant-medicine and horse-medicine and experts of elephant-crafts and horse crafts were closely placed round about (Hsin-pya-gu, Myinn-pya-gu) in the Southern part of Bagan.⁴

Ones who could make guns, ammunitions and gun-pounder were placed in gun-powder-making ward (Yann Sann Village), ones who could make elephant equipments, were placed in Sinka Ywa, ones who could make horse equipments were placed in Kani Kaphu Village and ones who could make whips were placed in whip-village which was far away from Bagan.

Ones who could make round and oblong shields and arrows were placed in the northern part of Tharapol ward (Minn Nan Thu Village). In Bagan, people's residential wards and villages expanded and became thickly populated. As existing Bamars and Mons were mixed and added population became thicker and thicker.

Agriculture was chiefly done so that the three basic needs could be convenient. In Eleven Ledwin districts and six Minbu districts people were placed. For agriculture Meikhtila lake was dug through the work force of Mon-Bamar. Four big dams were built and twelve lake sentry villages were built. 43 sentry towns were built. Thus in the first Myanmar Empire, unity of Mon-Bamar was gained and in the entire Bagan together with King Manuha, the region was made shine as bright as the sun and the moon.⁵

Myinkabar village where Manuha Temple was situated is on the Nyaung OO – Chauk bus route in the southern part of old Bagan, Nyaung Oo district. In Myinkabar village the population is about (3304) and the main economic work is lacquer ware and bamboo-matting. There are about (11) ancient temples including Manuha Temple. They are Gu Myauk Gyi (Myinkabar), Myin temple, Pahto gyi, Shwe temple, Ngwe temple, Nan temple, Nagayon temple, Ahpaeядanar, etc. Besides according to the Manuha Temple scripture, it is mentioned that Myinkabar village had existed before Manuha temple was built.

Like the other temples in Bagan, Manuha temple festival is held at the Full Moon day of Tawthalin (September) every year. At the entry of the festival, on the evening of the day before Sabbath day, the entry of images and figures from monasteries as the fun, moving round of cart-shows were held lively with a teeming

³ Shin De Thar Parmauk / / Stone Inscription of the Shin De Thar Parmauk (ပုဂံမြို့မင်္ဂလာစေတီ)

⁴ U Kalar / / Mahar Yazawin Gyi (4th Edition)

⁵ Glory of Bagan (p. 11, 12, 13)

crowd. Performers dressed like characters from a Jataka that they liked were on the carts that went round the town. This is called Ni pat khinn (display of Jataka). Later on carts from Jataka stood in line, worshipping and dancing. Nowadays cart shows disappear and actresses from Ah-nyeint are hired and pagoda festival is held by cars. At the time of going round of the cart-shows, the platform of Manuha Temple is densely crowded with pilgrims from far and near.⁶

In the morning of the full-moon day of Tawthalin, at every tasaungs (halls), food, provisions and various articles are offered to monks collectively by the community. Since the dawn, the big bowl has been full of food on the Manuha platform. In the evening, plenty of silver trees are planted with music and dancing. Like the day before the full-moon day, pagoda platform is densely crowded.⁷

It is only mentioned in histories that Mon King Manuha who arrived at Bagan was placed in Myinkabar (Anurada) ward by King Anawrahta. The place of Nan Temple was the palace site of King Manuha and it was traditionally said that the temple was built there as a symbol of remembrance. Pilgrims who came from all directions were wrongly told that this temple was the prison of Thaton King. In reality, King Manuha did not stay as the prisoner in the hands of Bamars. He not only lived peacefully together with retinue and servants but also practice Dhama, Buddha's teaching. When he gained the correct path of sansara, he enjoyed meditation. Thus after he had known the nature of anatta (not self), he had no desire for everything and spent most of his time in the work of mental peace.

Then a desire to lay down a foundation of Theravada Buddhism in Bagan appeared in the mind of Mon king Manuha. That is the desire to build a temple after selling the cat's eye (gem), Manawmaya jewel that belonged traditionally to the kings of Thaton. As a Buddhist Mon king, the motivation to leave statues of Buddha in Bagan appeared. Besides Mon king Manuha had good will that he wanted Bagan citizens under the leadership of King Anawrahta to propagate Theravada Buddhism in Bagan after believing his meritorious deeds.⁸

Therefore after Manawmaya Cat's eye (gem) had been sold to the Myingabar (Anurada) wealthy man, king Manuha prepared to build Manuha Temple with the money (full of six carts) that was got from the sale of the cat's eye. The place to build the temple was not far away veering to the East-north and clean ground ceremony was held with monks after clearing and piling ground. Laying foundation ceremony was carried out in a single day. The building of the temple started on Thursday, Wagaung (the fifth month of the year) the second waxing day and was successfully finished after six months and six days. On building the temple, first and foremost, sit cross-legged Image was carved and relics of Buddha were enshrined. Secondly pose of Parinibbana, the reclining image of the Buddha was carved. On the day when the building of the image was finished, King Anawrahta from Bagan palace was requested to pay a visit and respect to the Image. Afterwards offerings were performed on the day the image was finished, to last for five thousand years of tharthana. Together with Payagyi Ayardaw (Ywa lay) Bagan Naung Kan village, one thousand land, three thousand Magyi si Land, Lay Kyun (Pinnya) Myaute bon village , fifty Ayetpay and in the environs of the Temple, coconut trees, plum trees, mango trees, pineapple plants, and flowers were grown and donated. on the Thursday 6

⁶ ကုလား၊ ဦး။ ။မဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး (တွဲ ၄)

⁷ ကျော်ငြိမ်း၊ ဦး။ ။ပုဂံမြို့ဟောင်းမြင်းကပါ၊ ဂူပြောက်ကြီးကျောက်စာ

⁸ Aye Hla, Dr./ / Condition of Bagan Period (pp. 180-182)

waxing day of Tabaung, 429 B.E. It is said in Manuha Temple scripture that ten persons were bought with money (2400) and donated with the cost of 80 persons.⁹

Thaton King Manuha built the unrivalled great Manuha Temple by the solidarity of Mon-Bamar, two kings, as the first sample skill of Bagan Theravada Buddhism.

Three images in the East of Manuha Temple are in the pose of Bumiphatha mudra. It can be found that Mon King Manuha's images are the biggest among the images in Bagan land.

According to the description and architecture, it can be believed that while king Manuha was building images, only the main image in the East, the reclining image in the west and the great Bowl were built at the same time. The next donor seemed to build shrine cave not to be touched with rain and sunrays.

Existing present Manuha cave temple is different from other Bagan temples due to renovation of successive eras and it is seen in different architectures as the great and strange temple. The person who could renovate King Manuha's two images and stone bowl is the great grandson of Manuha, Nagathamann.

As the good deed, Manuha Temple of Mon King Manuha and new generation of Mon, the great grandson, Nagathamann, is grandly located at the myingabar ward up to this day as the Landmark of propagation of Theravada Buddhism of Mon-Bamar.

Manuha great bowl was parallelly built with images of Manuha. After images had been finished, at the time of A-nay-ka-sa ceremony, the great bowl was offered with full of food put into the bowl.¹⁰

The bowl was made going well with the Eastern image like the images without roofs and walls. Since the time of arriving of the images into the cave under the roofs and cover, the image and the bowl were separate as if they were separate things. Since then, the image and bowl cannot be related. The images are placed in the stuffy, cramped and narrow rooms since the time of finishing of the Manuha Temple. The bowl that had no roof and cover, started to arrive under the spire-like roof and cover at about the later period of Yatanapon era. When that spire-like hall ruined, the bowl arrived under the roof and cover of big brick hall up to this day.¹¹

The diameter of Manuha bowl is 3 feet (10) inches, the height of it is 3 feet (1) inch and the thickness of it is one foot (5) inches. The height including bowl stand is about 7 feet 5 inches. The bowl is built at a straight line of middle image about 15 feet away from the plinth. Although most people say and regard it as the stone bowl, in reality it was made of brick and cement.

It is found that the number of people who offers the bowl with full of food increases. It is known that every donor's wish is fulfilled. The bowl can hold 40 baskets of food that is got from cooking of 17 baskets of rice.

According to the directive of Shin Arahan, King Anawrahta brought three sets of Pitaka and the King, the Queen and all to Bagan. Manuha Temple is the first pillar of Bagan Theravada Buddhism.

Before Anawrahta's Theravada Buddhism flourished in Bagan, although there were religious buildings in old Phyu town, Theravada Buddhism did not spread as much as Bagan.

⁹ ကြည့်ပန်း၊ မောင်။ ။ မွန်+ဗမာတို့၏ မနုဟာသမိုင်း (မြင်းကပါ)

¹⁰ အောင်မြင့်၊ မောင်။ ။ ဘုရားကြီးစွာ မနုဟာ

¹¹ မနုဟာသမိုင်း

However true Bagan Theravada Buddhism started flourishing under the reign of King Anawrahta, the great Manuha Temple was the first landmark of Bagan Theravada Buddhism. Afterwards, Anawrahta continuously built Shwezigon pagoda, Tankkyitaung pagoda, Lawkananda pagoda, Tuyintaung pagoda and Shwesandaw pagoda.¹²

From Anawrahta, Mon King Manuha to Tayoke pyay king and successive Bagan kings made efforts and carried out propagation of Theravada Buddhism. In brief, thus in Bagan land situation of numerous temples and pagodas was based on the Great Manuha of Mon-Bamar's unity. King Manuha enjoyed living at Myinkabar ward where Manuha Temple was, forever. This was proved by Manuha Temple.

Conclusion

In the year 1343 when the glory of Bagan was already passing away, an inscription recording the donation of a monastery noted that this realm of Bagan is so named; it is also called Arimaddanapura. The city which crushes the Enemies passed away in the past.

In conclusion, thus in Bagan land situation of numerous temples and pagodas was based on the Great Manuha of Mon-Bamar's unity. From Anawrahta, Mon King Manuha to Tayoke Pyay king, successive Bagan Kings made efforts and carried out propagation of Theravada Buddhism.

¹² Khin Maung Nyunt, Dr. Myanmar Superlatives.

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 ၃။ မန္တလာသမိုင်း
 ၄။ ဘုရားကြီးစွာ မန္တလာ (မောင်အောင်မြင့်)
 ၅။ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ (ရှေး/သု)
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Appendix



Figure 1 The Great Manuha Pagoda



Figure 2 The Great Bowl



Figure 3 The King and Queen of Manuha



Figure 4 The Bowl of Manuha