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**A STUDY ON THE HISTORY OF HSOON TAW GYI
AND ITS PAGODAS FESTIVAL IN
BUDDISH LENT IN SAGAING**

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Abstract

Now a day, Myanmar is recognized as a tourist destination with a rich cultural heritage, blessed with a unique environment; snowcapped mountains, beautiful lakes, long rivers, lush tropical forests, beaches and archipelagoes. Thus, realizing the importance of the role of tourism in terms of its generating foreign exchange, contributing to economic growth, integrating friendship and understanding and creating job opportunities, Myanmar has given priority to the development of tourism and has been promoting Myanmar tourism based on nature, history and cultural heritage as our major Themes. Sagaing is traditionally a cultural destination popularly known as the Land of Pagodas.

Every Sabbath days of the Buddish Lent(Start from full moon day of Warso up to full moon day of Thadinkyut), Sagaing holds the series of Buddhist Festivals abbreviated to **“Pon-Taung-Ze-Chan-U-Nann-Nan-Lay-Pa-Htu-Shin-Ngar-Aung-Kaung”**. There are many groups of people (call Hsoon Taw Gyi teams) go to pagodas to offer Hsoon to Buddha’s Image during series of Buddhist Festivals in Sagaing. This paper tries to present the history of Hsoon Taw Gyi and its pagodas in Sagaing.

1. Introduction

Sagaing is the largest division in Myanmar and located in the north-western part of the country. The city of Sagaing and Sagaing Hills lie on the west bank of Ayeyarwaddy River in central Myanmar. Ayeyawaddy River flows from north to south and as it passes Mandalay it makes a sudden bend to the west. The city derives its name, Sagaing which means “the beginning of the bend”, from its position in the river. The city was founded by King Athinkhaya Saw Yun in 677 M.E. Sagaing is a city noted for its tradition in the history of Buddhism and is a unique place in the Buddhist world, as well as in Myanmar, a place of extraordinary tranquility and beauty. There are some kinds of Buddhist Festivals in Sagaing which are not the same as other Buddhist Festivals held in other Cities in Myanmar.

1.2 Objective

The objectives of this study are:

- To know the history of Hsoun Taw Gyi.
- To know the series of Buddhist Festivals in Sagaing.
- To know the history of Famous Pagodas which including in the series of Buddhist Festivals in Sagaing City.
- To understand the responsibilities of human being to preserve our culture.

2. History of Hsoon Taw Gyi

Hsoon Taw Gyi means a group of people who offer Hsoon to the pagoda every Sabbath days of the Buddhist Lent. Teams of Hsoon Taw Gyi have been founded in 1156 M.E. It was during the reign of King Bodawphayar. Later, the numbers of Hsoon Taw Gyi teams were increased and that caused many crowd around the pagoda during the Buddhist Festivals and it takes long time to get to the pagoda. To solve this condition Taungbaluu Sayardaw divided these Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams into two groups. They are Myo Hsoon Taw Gyi groups and Nall Hsoon Taw Gyi groups.

2.1 Groups of Myo Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams and Series of Pagoda Festivals

2.1.1 Groups of Myo Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams

1. Warchat Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
2. Myothit Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
3. Laykyunmyay Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
4. Yaitan Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
5. Byinyar Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
6. Moezar Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
7. Pabaetan Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
8. Takaung Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
9. Zaykone Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
10. Dawaizay Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
11. Ayemyawaddy Hsoon Taw Gyi Team

12. Naungkone Hsoon Taw Gyi Team

2.1.2 Series of Buddhist Festivals

- 1) Pon - Hsoon Oo Ponnya Sin Pagoda
- 2) Taung - Taung Phi Lar Pagoda
- 3) Ze - Zetawun Pagoda
- 4) Chan - Chanthargyi & Chantharya Pagodas
- 5) U - U Min Thonsel Pagoda
- 6) Nann - Shin Pin Nann Oo Pagoda
- 7) Nan - Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda
- 8) Lay - Lay Kyune Man Aung Pagoda
- 9) Pa - Paddamya Pagoda
- 10) Htu - Htupayone Pagoda
- 11) Shin - Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda
- 12) Ngar - Ngar Htat Gyi Pagoda
- 13) Aung - Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda
- 14) Kaung - Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda

2.2 Groups of Nall Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams and Series of Pagoda Festivals

2.2.1 Group of Nall Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams

1. Nann Hsu Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
2. Ohbo Hsoon Taw Gyi Team

3. Shwe Thamar Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
4. Yataung Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
5. Magyisin Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
6. Sitee Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
7. Hsoonchat Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
8. Tintate Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
9. Pagan Hsoon Taw Gyi Team
10. Kyuttar Hsoon Taw Gyi Team

2.2.2 Series of Buddhist Festivals

- 1) Kaung - Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda
- 2) Pon - Hsoon Oo Ponnya Sin Pagoda
- 3) Shin - Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda
- 4) Min - U Min Thonsel Pagoda
- 5) Mya - Paddamya Pagoda
- 6) Phi - Taung Phi Lar Pagoda
- 7) Mi - Shwe Myimi Pagoda
- 8) Baw - BawdiKyikepadie Pagoda
- 9) Chan - Chanthargyi Pagodas
- 10) Nann - Shin Pin Nann Oo Pagoda
- 11) Sae - Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda
- 12) Laie - Laiekyangthein
- 13) Kaung - Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda

Table 1. Name of Pagodas and Its Buddish Festival in Buddish Lents

Sr. No	Abbreviation of Pagoda Name	Pagoda Name	Days of Buddish Festivals
1	Pon	Hsoon Oo Ponnya Sin Pagoda	Full moon day of Warso
2	Taung	Taung Phi Lar Pagoda	8 th waning day of Warso
3	Ze	Zetawun Pagoda	New moon day of Warso
4	Chan	Chanthargyi & Chantharya Pagodas	8 th waxing day of Warkaung
5	U	U Min Thonsel Pagoda	Full Moon day of Warkaung
6	Nann	Shin Pin Nann Oo Pagoda	8 th Waning Moon day of Warkaung
7	Nan	Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda	New moon day of Warkaung
8	Lay	Lay Kyune Man Aung Pagoda	8 th day of waxing moon of Tawthalin
9	Pa	Paddamya Pagoda	Full moon day of Tawthalin
10	Htu	Htupayone Pagoda	8 th waning moon day of Tawthalin
11	Shin	Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda	New moon day of Tawthalin
12	Ngar	Ngar Htat Gyi Pagoda	Full Moon day of Thadinkyut
13	Aung	Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda	8 th waxing day of Thadinkyut
14	Kaung	Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda	Full moon day of Thadinkyut

2.3 Nature of Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams

There are two kinds of Hsoon Taw Gyi teams in each group: Aryondaw Hsoon Taw Gyi teams and Auk Htoe Hsoon Taw Gyi teams. Hsoon Taw Gyi teams go to the Pagodas to donate Hsoon with entertainment is called Aryondaw Hsoon Taw Gyi. Hsoon Taw Gyi teams go to the Pagodas to donate Hsoon without entertainment is called Auk Htoe Hsoon Taw Gyi.

Whether the place of Pagoda is near or not, Hsoon Taw Gyi teams used to walk to pagodas in order to show great respect to Buddha. Even the weather is too hot; they do not wear

shoes to show their great respect to Buddha. In regular condition, there are no people who can walk without shoes regardless of the weather and distance but ones who can do this with great goodwill and faith in this Buddish Festivals.

There are many pavilions along the way to pagoda to serve foods and drinks to Hsoon Taw Gyi Teams by the people who live near the pagoda.

3 History of Pagodas in the series of Buddish Festivals for Myo Hsoon Taw Gyi

3.1 Hsoon Oo Ponnya Sin Pagoda

Hsoon Oo Ponnya Shin Pagoda lies atop Nga-pha Hill, one of the 37 hilltops of Sagaing Hills. The Hill resembles a frog and hence it was known as Nga-Pha Hill. It was built in 674 M.E by a Sage U Ponnya of Pintaya Tazeeshin Thihathu. It enshrined Buddha relics revered by successive kings.

Since its construction, it is known to have the earliest Hsoon (Food, rice) offered by celestial beings before any by human beings. It is also the first pagoda offered Hsoon on the full-moon day of Waso every year of all hilltop ones.

It is 96 feet and four inches high. The umbrella is 25 feet and seven inches high. It is reputed to grant 14 wishes such as being free of killing by others, getting promotions, and having an insight into things and events. Annual Pagoda Festival day is Full moon day of Warso.

3.2 Taung Phi Lar Pagoda

Taung Phi Lar Pagoda was built by Taung Phi Lar Sayadaw in 1003 M.E. He was a monk who received the title of Tipitaka Lankara and wrote a famous commentary in Pali on the five books of the Vinaya called "Vinaya Lankara Tika". The original name of pagoda is "Laygyunsimi", because of the famous of Sayardaw, the donor of the pagoda, the pagoda was well knowned as "Taung Phi Lar" Pagoda.

However, there is another story about the title of Pagoda. Some people said they call it as "Taung Phi Lar" since the pagoda lies on the ridge that jutted west from the range from the south to the north from Sagaing to Mingun and thence the name Taung-phi-lar. Annual Pagoda Festival holds on every 8th waning day of Warso.

3.3 Zetawun Pagoda

Zetawun Pagoda is the oldest pagoda in Sagaing and it commemorates the occasion when the Buddha visited Myanmar with Ananda. According to Legend, this spot was then occupied by ninety-nine ogres, the leader of whom was named "Zeta". When the Buddha descended from the sky, He and Ananda were welcomed by 99 ogres, and in return for their piety the Buddha preached the Dhamma for seven days. All ninety-nine ogres attained the first stage of enlightenment while listening to the Dhamma.

When the Buddha and Ananda were about to return to India, the ogres requested the Buddha to leave something representative of Himself behind for them to honor. The Buddha obliged by presenting them His inner robe. This was enshrined in what become known as Zetawun Pagoda on the top of Sagaing Hills. To honor the chief ogre Zeta and to commemorate the event of spiritual attainment of ogres at this place, the name of pagoda called "Zetawun Pagoda". Annual Pagoda festival day is the new moon day of Warso.

3.4 Chan Thar Gyi and Chan Tharya Pagodas

U Kyan Thaing, Ministor of King Kyansittha in 420 M.E., built Chan Thar Gyi and Chan tharya Pagodas. The pagodas were located on the Hanthargiri Hill top. Chan Thar Gyi Pagoda is 63' high and Chan Tharya Pagoda is 45' high.

They are called Chan Thar Gyi and Chan Tharya because of they are so graceful that you fell as though you receive many blessing when you pay respect to these pagodas. Annual Pagoda festival day is 8th day of the waxing moon of Warkaung.

3.5 U Min Thonsel Pagoda

U Min Thonsel Pagoda is located on the Sagaing Hill, north of Hsoon Oo Ponnya Shin Pagoda. The Pagoda built in 687 M.E and it was built by Sayardaw Thangayazar, the preceptor of the King of Sagaing, Tara-Phya-Min-Gyi. He was on reputed to have made silver and gold by alchemy.

Sayardaw Thingayazar also built this cave with thirty entrances in variants. This cave also contains forty-five statues of the Buddha in memory of his forty-five years ministry of teaching. Annual Pagoda festival day is Full Moon day of Warkaung.

3.6 Shin Pin Nann Oo Pagoda

Shin Pin Nan Oo Pagoda locates on Myothit Ward in Sagaing. It was built by a monk who came back from Srilanka by enshrining the relics brought from there. So, the original name of Pagoda is “Srilanla-Pyan” Pagoda. The Pagoda was built in 606 M.E.

In 677 M.E King Athinkahaya Saw Yun named it as “Shin Pin Nan Oo” Pagoda. Annual Pagoda festival day is 8th Waning Moon day of Warkaung.

3.7 Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda

Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda was built by U Kyan Thaing, Minister of King Kyansitthar in 420 M.E. He used ten large baskets of silver to build these pagodas. According to legend, some people believed that he got this silver as a reward for arranging to have a relationship between Prince Parik Khaya and Princess Shwe Eain Si, daughter of King Kyansitthar. So, the pagoda was originally known as "Successful Conciliation". The original name of pagoda is “Yan Aung Myin”

But today everyone known as Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda due to it lies on the Nan Kaing Hill, one of the 37 Hilltops of Sagaing Hill. Annual Pagoda festival day is new moon day of Warkaung.

3.8 Lay Kyune Man Aung Pagoda

Lay Kyune Man Aung Pagoda is located next to Thayek-pin Seik Market in Thotapan village. It was built by King Taninganay, King of Innwa in 1086 M.E. The pagoda was built in an octagonal design to represent the Buddha's victor in all the eight directions of the compass.

It contains a cave with a 12' Buddha statue surrounded by figures of the 99 ogres in an attitude of reverence listening to His preaching. Annual Pagoda festival holds there on 8th day of waxing moon of Tawthalin.

3.9 Paddamya Pagoda

Paddamya Pagoda lies on the highest of the 37 hilltops of sagaing Hills called Paddamya Hill, it is situated the northern part of Sagaing Hill. It was recorded as having been built by King Thiridahma Sthawka. in 224 B.E.

Some historians say that it was built by a little peasant who picked up a highly valuable ruby on the farm. But there is no evidence to prove this. The pagoda is 43' in hight and annual Pagoda festival day is full moon day of Tawthalin.

3.10 Htupayone Pagoda

Htupayone Pagoda was built in Podan Ward of Sagaing in 806 M.E by King Narapate of Innwa who ascended the throne in 804 M.E. It was originally constructed to resemble the Htuparama Cedi of Anuradhapura in Srilanka.

Firstly, the Pagoda was constructed as Srilanka style. However its present shape is Myanmar style after restoration when the pagoda was damaged by earthquake. Annual Pagoda festival day is 8th waning moon day of Tawthalin.

3.11 Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda

Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda was located on the Sagaing Hill near the U-Min-Thonsel Pagoda. In 478 M.E, King Alaungsithu built this Pagoda. While on tour, the king was presented two Buddha statues by the king of celestials at zabu Thabye Tree. One was Shinhla statue built with a chip of the platform sat on by Buddha and the other was Shinbyu statue built with the southern branch of a Zabu Thabye Tree.

Earthquakes ravaged shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda many times. It was renovated by Hermit U Khanti and Yegangyaung Sauadaw, with a base of five rounded ladders and 231 rooms. Sayadaw Ashin ananda Thiti Naha the missionary of Dipa Ayemya Chaung repaired it from its bare pile of bricks. It is one of the best among religious edifices of Sagaing Hills. Annual Pagoda festival day is new moon day of Tawthalin.

3.12 Ngar Htat Gyi Pagoda

This pagoda located in Dawaizay Ward of Sagaing city and it was built by Min Ye Nandameit, the King of Innwa in 1020 M.E. The original name of Pagoda is “Weluwan”.

Originally the pagoda was in the bamboo glade and so it was known as Weluwun Pagoda. It was later called Ngar Htat Gyi for the face that it is surrounded by five tiers if covered stairways. Annual Pagoda festival day is 5th day past the Full Moon day of Thadinkyut.

3.13 Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda

Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda is located in Poedan Ward of Sagaing city. It was built by king Padon, also known as Bodaw U Waing of Amarapura in 1143 M.E. It was first called the royal residence pagoda to name the site of the residence when he was a prince. When he became king the pagoda was known as Aung Myei Lawka Pagoda.

At that time most of pagodas were built by brick but this pagoda was built by rock. Thus, it was known as Aung Myei Lawka Rock Pagoda. Older people called it Residential Site Aung Myei Lawka Rock Pagoda. Annual Pagoda festival day is 8th waxing day of Thadinkyut.

3.14 Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda (Yaza Mani Sula)

Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda is located near the village of Tin Teik, about 5 miles north of Sagaing city. The donor of the pagoda is King Thalun in 998 M.E. The pagoda was completed by 12 years later in 1010 M.E. It is similar in shape to the Mahazedi of Srilanka and the Sanchi in India.

Kaung-Hmu-Daw pagoda is well known for its egg-shaped design, which stands out among more traditional-style, pyramid-shaped Burmese pagodas. It is an important pilgrimage and tourist destination in the Sagaing Area.

Annual Pagoda festival day is Full moon day of Thadinkyut.

4 CONCLUSION

Now the age of Hsoon Taw Gyi is 221 years old since it was started from 1156 M.E. This culture is a valuable landmark of history of Sagaing, so to transfer this valuable culture to next generation is very important duty of Sagaing Generations. Sagaing should apply this culture in tourism industry to attract the foreigners.

4.1 Challenges

- ❖ Insufficiency of skilled labors and tourism professionals
- ❖ Need to be given more training programs for language skill and capacity building
- ❖ Insufficient number of International standard hotel rooms
- ❖ Limited infrastructure: roads and railways, electricity supply, telecommunication system and facilities
- ❖ Limited capital to undertake the necessary programs to develop tourism
- ❖ Weakness of tourism knowledge awareness among the people of Sagaing

4.2 Suggestions

In order to attract foreigners, Sagaing should prepare the facts such as strengthen the institutional environment, build human resource capacity and promote services quantity, strength safeguards and procedures for destination planning and management, development quality products and services, improve connectivity and tourism –related infrastructure, and building the image, position and brand of tourism in Sagaing.

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9. ဦးမျိုးမြင့်-ဆောက်လုပ်ရေးအင်ဂျင်နီယာ(ငြိမ်း) စီမံထူးချွန်(တတိယအဆင့်)၊ “စစ်ကိုင်းမြို့၊ ဝါတွင်းကာလ ဆွမ်းအလှည့်ကျ ဘုရားစဉ်ဘုရားများသမိုင်းနှင့် အခြားမှတ်တမ်းများ”

Appendix A



Figure 1.HsoonOo Pon Nya Sin Pagoda



Figure 2.Taung Phi Lar Pagoda

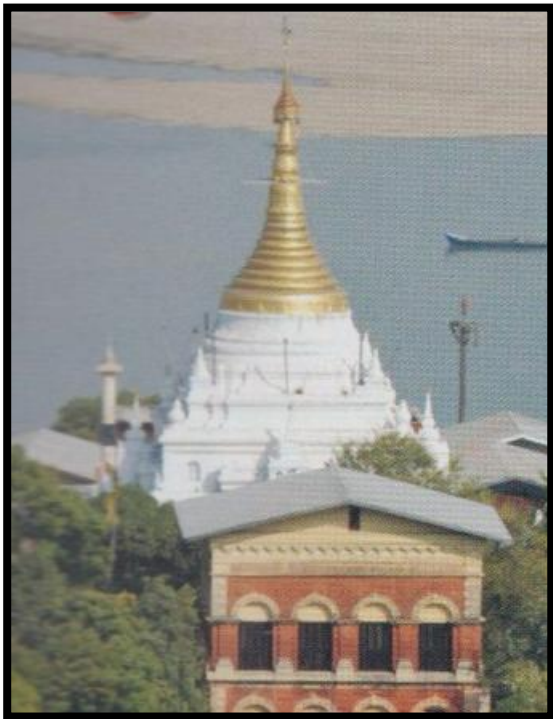


Figure 3.Zetawun Pagoda



Figure4.Chanthargyi&Chantharya Pagodas



Figure 5.U Min Thonsel Pagoda

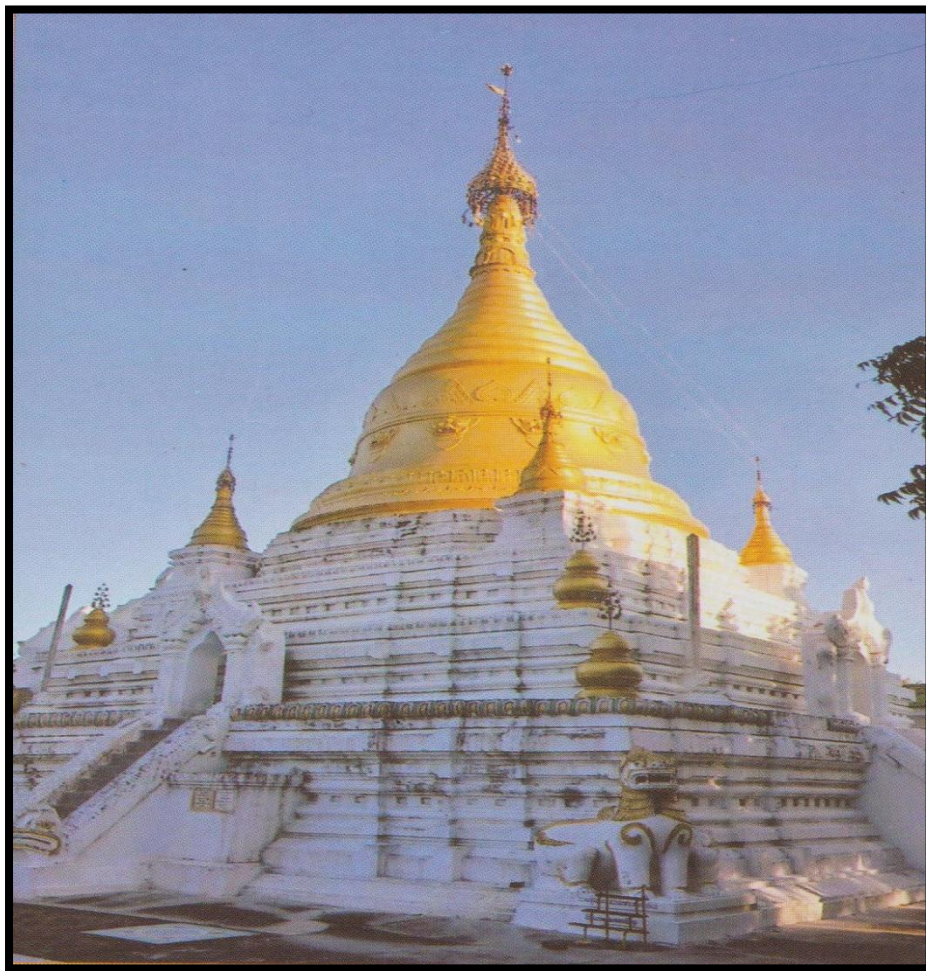


Figure 6.Shin Pin NannOo Pagoda

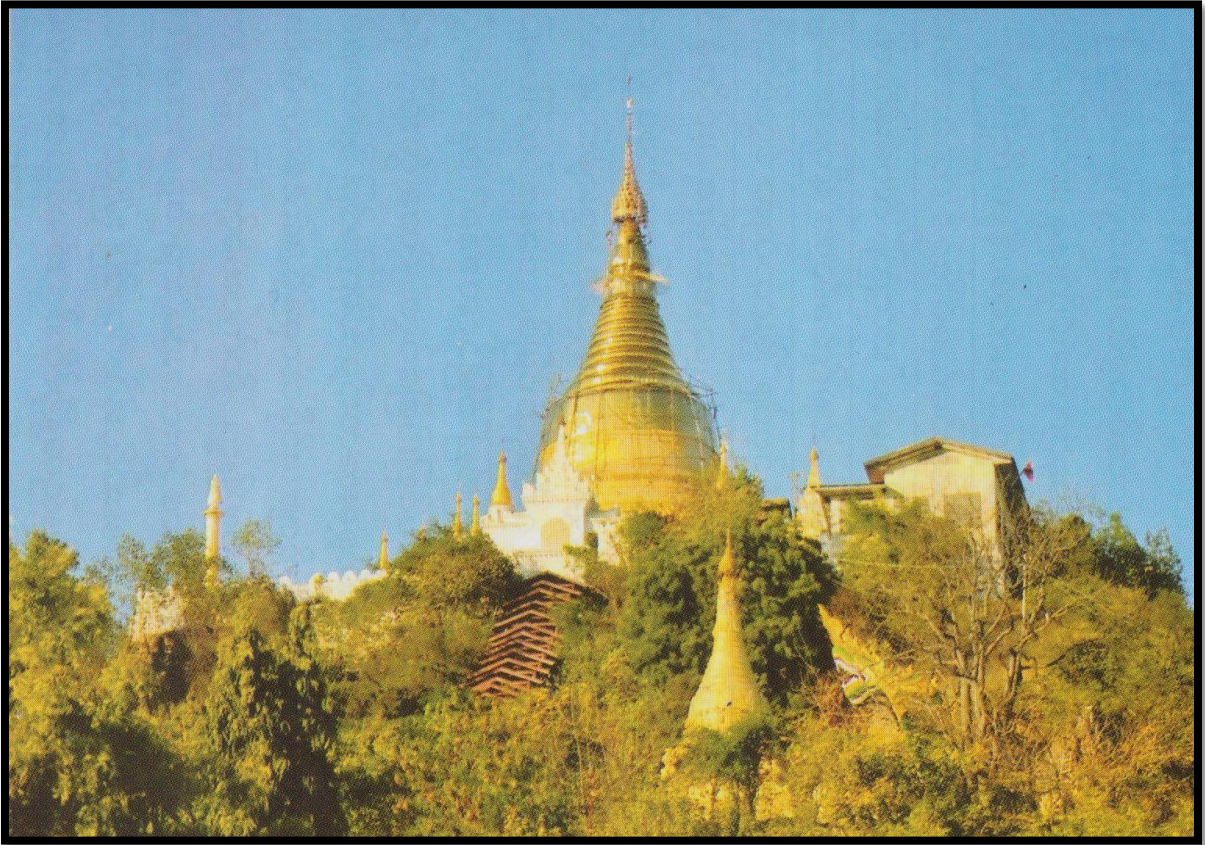


Figure 7. Shin Pin Nan Kaing Pagoda

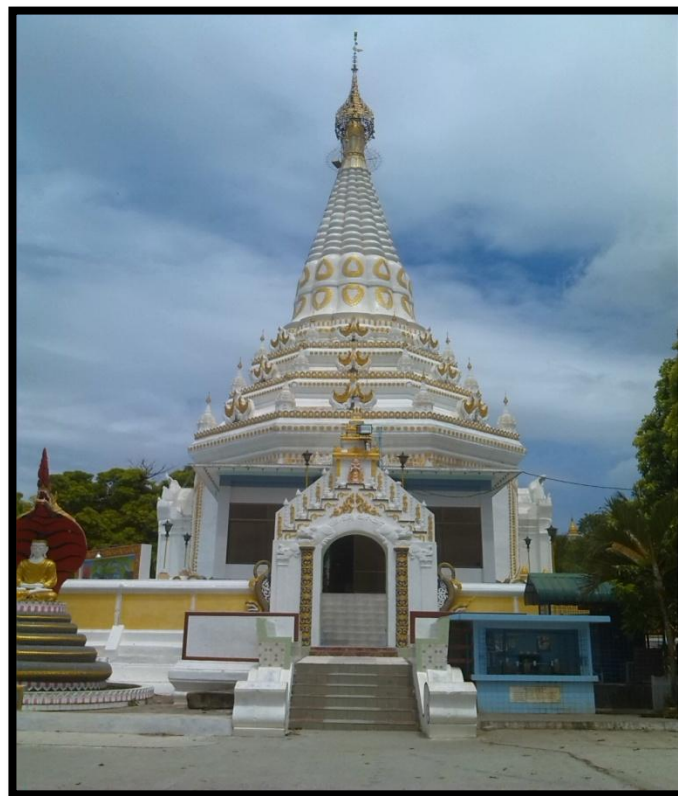


Figure 8. Lay Kyune Man Aung Pagoda



Figure 9.Paddamya Pagoda

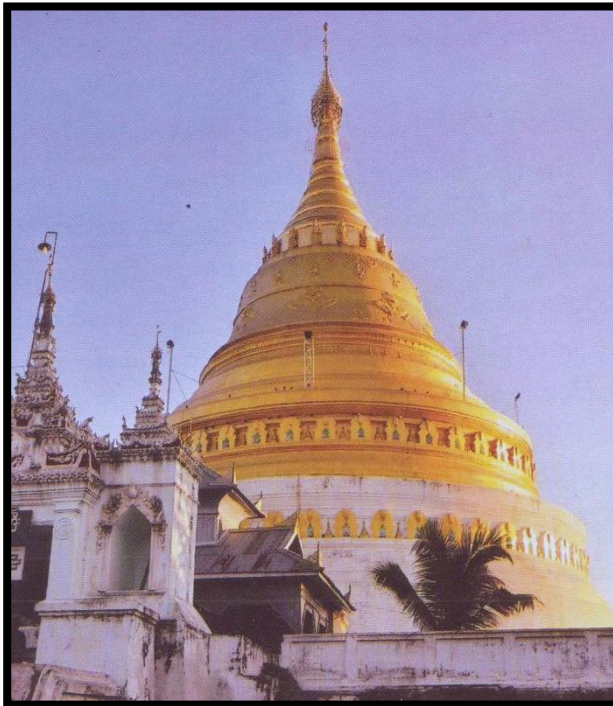


Figure 10.Htupayone Pagoda



Figure 11.Shin Phyu Shin Hla Pagoda



Figure 12.NgarHtatGyi Pagoda



Figure 13.AungMyeiLawka Pagoda



Figure 14. Kaung-Hmu-Daw Pagoda (Yaza Mani Sula)



Figure15.Hsoon Taw Gyi teams go to the Pagodas to donate Hsoon with Entertainment